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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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**Task Force to Develop a Performance-Based School Accountability System  
December 18, 2009, 9:00 am, Department of Education Board Room**

Attending:

X	Virginia Barry, Ph.D.	Commissioner of Education
X	Brian Cochrane	Director of Assessment and Accountability Nashua School District
	Paul Couture	Principal, Stevens High School, Claremont
X	Jerome Frew	Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District
X	Molly Kelly	Chair, Education Committee, NH Senate
X	Daphne Kenyon	NH State Board of Education
X	Paul Leather	Director, Division of Adult Learning, NH Department of Education
X	Scott Marion	National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Dover
X	Deborah McNeish	Principal, Conant/Rumford School, Concord, NH
	Judith Fillion	Director, Division of Program Support, NH Department of Education
X	Edward Murdough	Bureau of School Approval
	Kathleen Murphy	Director, Division of Instruction, NH Department of Education
X	Emma Rous	Chair, Education Committee, NH House of Representatives
	Vincent Spiotti	Bethlehem School Board, Bethlehem, NH
X	Deborah Wiswell	Bureau of Accountability, Curriculum and School Improvement, Division of Instruction, NH Department of Education

**Guests**

Representative Franklin Gould, NH House, Lebanon, NH  
Keith Burke, Assessment and Data Services Consultant, NH Department of Education  
Laura Hainey, President, AFT – NH  
Dean Michener, Executive Director, NH School Boards Association  
Karen Laba, New England Comprehensive Center (NECC), RMC Research, Portsmouth, NH

**NOTES:**

1. Deb Wiswell described the work to date of the NH DOE AYP Task Force in developing the input component of the SB180 accountability system. That task force will be moving to work on identifying the strategies for incorporating 'growth percentiles' in NH's federal accountability system.

She reviewed the agenda for today and invited all to ask for clarification or definitions when assessment "jargon" is being used and definitions needed.

2. Scott Marion, Center for Assessment, provided a summary of the full "adequacy accountability system," highlighting the two components – an *input* component and a *performance* component. Senator Kelly clarified that it was the intention of the legislation to expect participation in both the input and performance components, but that meeting adequacy on either one would be sufficient.

Scott reviewed for this task force the charge to the AYP Task Force regarding the "input" component of the system. Included in the legislation was a subset of the state's existing school approval standards, the requirement for schools to provide a 'narrative' and the consideration of ways to define requirements for the narrative to focus on the essential evidence to be included by the superintendent or school principal.

3. Deb Wiswell and Keith Burke demonstrated the "input" component sample completed to date by the DOE AYP Task Force. The demonstration consisted of a how-to video Keith created that will be included as part of the resources associated with the online system. Key elements of the input system are the text boxes requiring evidence to support the school's selection of "yes" or "no" on each of the school approval standards included in the legislation. Deb explained that the curriculum specialists for each of the standards captured the requirements of the full school approval standard into a set of statements to which the school responds, yes, no, or 'other' referring to situations when a school alternatively meets the standard. Text boxes open up for entering narrative evidence for "no" or "other" responses. Reports allow the school leader to see what the narrative collection and full responses look like, with working spell checkers and editing features.

*Question:* Will the system allow to save and continue later?

A: Yes, this will be done over several days in order to address all 12 of the required standards. Will also allow to go back and change the narrative if needed.

*Comment:* A standard setting group will need to define whether the 'other' explanations are sufficient to meet the school approval standards. Just entering 'other' does not indicate the school has met the standard.

Deb described some of the technology hurdles still being worked on to make the system as robust and efficient as desired. Goal is to make it as easy to use for the school as well as for the department reviewers as possible.

Keith showed a SAMPLE summary matrix/ table with the status of all the current school approval standards as collected by Ed Murdough's group using hypothetical data for all schools in the state. When the input system is fully developed, a matrix/ summary like this

could be used by the DOE or by a Superintendent to monitor which schools are meeting which standards, which have issues.

Q: Ed Murdough asked if the "other" boxes in the summary could be eventually changed to "yes" or "no" once the Dept. has determined whether evidence meets the criteria.

A: Keith replied that was the expectation.

Discussion of the eventual public access to and use/ misuse of the information in the system: Ed Murdough and Deb confirmed that the information submitted by schools does need to be public information but not necessarily in the matrix format. Ed explained that the public currently has access to the results of the school approval process if they request it.

Senator Kelly expressed her desire to have the process be more than a yes/no but rather a starting point for identifying which schools need support.

Ed reminded all that this system is not different than the current school approval process, except that a review of the submission will be more frequent than every 5 years. Schools now have 3 years to remove a "no" and appear before the state board after that. In Ed's experience, there will be fewer 'other' and 'no' entries than on Keith's sample summary matrix. Emma explained that one goal is to increase the number of site visits from the Dept. to verify and corroborate information provided by self-assessment, and Ed explained that a process is underway to coordinate all visits across program areas within the department.

Emma praised the balance of providing narrative and allowing flexibility in the demonstrated 'input' system so far. Deb reported that the Department internally sees great potential for this system to inform their work in support of schools.

Deb explained she has recruited several superintendents and principals to pilot the process in the near term. Jerry asked that the pilot schools monitor the time it takes to complete the form for the report of the pilot.

Representative Gould asked what verification will be conducted to confirm the accuracy of the submission. Deb W explained that, while superintendents and principals are required to sign to verify accuracy, the site visit is the ultimate check on the accuracy of the entries. Ed Murdough described the current system which includes checks of websites, request for programs of studies, posted calendars, etc. to check the accuracy of self-assessment school approval information provided by the schools. While this monitoring may not be as tight as desired, it has been generally effective. Deb W added a description of the internal "roundtable" process in which all DOE staff come together to share information about a district including its funds from external sources. This provides another vehicle for the department to monitor what is accurate about a school's systems and operations.

Commissioner Barry described the positive response of the districts and schools to their identification by existing accountability systems. She expects that responses to the adequacy monitoring will be similar and that schools will engage with the department in productive ways to design improvement plans.

4. Scott Marion returned attention to the performance component which is the charge to this committee. He pointed attention to the SB 180 requirement to use data that is currently collected by the department which are listed on the blue handout. Scott shared information about data collected by some other states researched by his colleague for CCSSO in 2007. He provided an overview of the literature about the quality indicators that might be useful to identify the quality of a school (yellow handout, titled *Potential School Quality Indicators* (From Perie, et al, 2007)).

Scott posed the question, does NH need to collect these indicators or is it in the position to collect these indicators? Scott proposed that it is not likely that NH will need all of them at the state level, but that schools and districts *ought to be* collecting and responding to the presence of these quality indicators for their own purposes in order to continuously improve.

Daphne Kenyon wondered whether the state should cede that much control to local school boards where a community doesn't support the highest aspirations for its schools and students. Scott suggested that, in many instances, the least effective way to achieve change is to require it through central control. He described an ideal situation in which the state supports the learning of the people involved to set their own goals, monitor their own progress, and pursue their own changes.

Emma described her thinking that, if a school is doing a good job, the results in terms of student learning should show up in the test scores. If that is the case, we end up referring back to test scores to measure adequacy.

Scott pointed out that an accountability system with multiple indicators is most robust, because each indicator tells a different story, and the collection of "stories" leads to a fuller estimation of the school's ability (or likelihood) of promoting high levels of student achievement. '

Scott described one option for looking at equity within the accountability system. For instance, a school's index score can tell whether students receiving free and reduced lunch or disability are achieving comparably to other groups of students. Or, the system could use growth rates on NECAP for different student populations which might be more informative of a school's quality.

Scott shared the set of indicators being considered for the Colorado performance system. Most components of the system are test-based indicators, but different slices of the test data, each of which reveals a slightly different perspective on a school's efforts. NH could use a similar approach with its NECAP data by looking not only at status from year to year, but adding growth rates by subgroup or growth percentile measures.

Scott summarized his presentation by proposing NH adopt a performance component at two levels --

Level 1 – for all schools, limited set of indicators, focused on outcomes like test results; applied consistently across all schools; focused on 'unarguable' outcomes, like NECAP, graduation rate, postsecondary assessments, attendance (see slides)

Differentiated indicators across three types of schools: All schools, K- 8 schools, and High Schools.

Level 2 – locally determined– some considerations before adopting a locally determined component --

- ◆ Limited set of school or district determined goals/ targets/ indicators;
- ◆ perhaps the follow the child framework and indicators;
- ◆ local board required to approve goals, targets and indicators;
- ◆ local district publish local goals/ indicators and progress;
- ◆ NH DOE would have to set guidelines on appropriate process and outcome indicators;
- ◆ NH DOE would have to approve goals and indicators but not necessarily specific targets or benchmarks.

Scott summarized the considerations for the performance component –

- ◆ Level 1 will meet the requirements of SB180 on its own
- ◆ Should level 2 be required or optional?
- ◆ How should level 1 and level 2 findings be combined?

*Discussion:* Brian pointed out that student growth and performance lag behind school change processes, so there may be someone who puts all the right things in place but results aren't showing the impact of those changes. Scott provided an example where the school could identify measurable progress points based on the implementation of their improvement initiatives.

Paul Leather wondered how the state would determine whether the Level 2 targets were sufficient. Keith explained that there would need to be a rubric or framework within which the quality of the goals/ indicators are assessed.

Keith offered his thoughts that the level 2 system allows schools and districts to declare what they value, an exercise that may benefit both the schools and the community by triggering productive dialogue on important issues.

Jerry Frew pointed out that it will be important for local organizations and system leaders to hear from the DOE about the quality of their goals/ targets indicators for level 2. Scott agreed that there is lots of prep work to be done for Level 2. Jerry added concerns about the equity of using SAT and AP indicators from a socioeconomic perspective, since not all students can afford to take multiple tests because of fees.

Commissioner Barry expressed her belief that Level 2 is essential to promote the transformational change needed to make a difference in the current education enterprise. Level 1 relies too heavily on test scores alone, moves away from looking at individual students and their progress as the Commissioner has seen in some schools. She proposed that Level 2 should not be optional.

What about the additional burden on schools to define a level 2 goals/ targets/ indicators? Several members commented that high performing schools are already setting their own goals, indicators; a level 2 requirement would be no additional burden on them. In contrast,

schools that struggle in student achievement may not have the skills and leadership to engage in a meaningful goal setting/ continuous improvement effort.

Emma Rous described her thinking that the system could be conceived as providing incentives for schools to engage in meaningful planning for change. Scott commented that it may be more of a control issue, where control of the goals and targets is in the hands of the local educators. If the system is structured that way, the process becomes a shared responsibility for student performance rather than the State "doing it to us" again.

Jerry reminded everyone that NH has growth model data and this committee could use the existing data to define an 'adequate' rate of growth for students.

Some expressed concern about testing only 3 of the 10 curriculum areas in the legislation. Does this push us further down the road towards the narrowing of measures? How does the art, music, social studies teacher fit into this system? Members suggested that the school could choose to include a broader range of measures than just the NECAP subjects in its level 2 component.

Concern was raised about confusing the purpose of the system between a school improvement function and an accountability function. As the legislation is written, this is an accountability system, not a school improvement function. The Commissioner offered her view of a 'tiered' system to accommodate needs across a spectrum of school performance levels.

An additional consideration is how the system is perceived, whether the local component is in there or not. Will others see it as AYP all over again? It will be critical to focus on the communication of the system to a wide audience – communities, school boards, legislators, media.

5. Deb explained that decisions will not be made today. Pilot for the input component will be starting soon, and principals will provide feedback on the usefulness and efficiency of the input system.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Scott and Deb will respond to the Commissioner's request to know what other NE states are doing for accountability.
2. Scott will prepare a rough outline of a proposed performance system based on today's discussion for the next meeting.
3. Ed Murdough will present an update on the site visit system at the next meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:** Friday, January 29, 2010, 9:00 – 12:00, NH Department of Education, Board Room.

Notes compiled and submitted on 12/21/09 by Karen Laba, NECC

