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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, N.H. 03301

**Task Force to Develop a Performance-Based School Accountability System  
February 19, 2010 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
X	Paul Couture	Principal, Stevens High School, Claremont
X	Jerome Frew	Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District
	Molly Kelly	Chair, Education Committee, NH Senate
	Daphne Kenyon	NH State Board of Education
	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
X	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
X	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  
Dean Michener, Executive Director, NH School Boards Association  
Karen Laba, New England Comprehensive Center (NECC), RMC Research, Portsmouth, NH

**NOTES:**

1. Deb opened the meeting at 9:10 am, reviewed the agenda and handouts. She reminded participants of the requirement to report to the legislature in April on the progress of the activities of the Task Force in developing a performance-based adequacy accountability system.

Deb invited attendees to introduce themselves and offer any thoughts they have on conversations to date about the system:

- \*\* advise the Task Force stay alert to any legislation that might impact this process
  - \*\* recall talk about examining models from other states using "point systems"; Scott Marion will resend summary prepared for previous meeting; (*packet will be available on 4/2*)
  - \*\* schools asked to do a lot to gather data, would be tragic if Dept. doesn't have the resources to conduct the visits as follow up;
  - \*\* also worried about resources at Dept to follow through with its obligations after schools have completed their submission
  - \*\* reminded of the truth of the phrase, "the devil is in the details"; relatively comfortable with process to date; urge the group to consider the complexity of a point system, esp. as it relates to subgroups when analyzing gaps, disaggregating by ethnicity, etc; concerned how that will roll out for schools of different sizes, with different demographics;
  - \*\* within the system, hope we can find a way to involve schools, teachers in deciding how a school is going to make / provide adequate education; having individuals buy-in to the system is a critical factor in its usefulness
  - \*\* intrigued by the proposed NH Level 2 system, especially the incorporation of the locally defined goals, targets
  - \*\* appreciate providing the voice of a local high school leader; think two level system would benefit small schools; with SINI, DINI et al expectations, Level 2 fits right in
  - \*\* complications occur in some settings, such as our school being absorbed through a district wide reconfiguration; learned a lot from ELL designation to improve our work
  - \*\* hope to make some decisions on proposals on the table; appreciate great voices contributing to the conversation.
2. Deb reviewed the overview document for the accountability system showing the school and DOE responsibilities for both components (Input and Performance Based) of the system. A number of to-be-addressed and challenging issues for the dept. persist at this point in time.
    - Question:* Could we devise a system where everyone is adequate? Is that a problem? How will the courts react?
    - Discussion:* Setting the standard for adequacy should best be done after running the data to see where the "bar" should go. Standards must be credible.
  
    - Q:* Who will be involved in standards setting?
    - Response:* Certainly will want key stakeholder groups involved – teachers, administrators, legislators, schools boards. Scott described typical standard setting practices.

*Q:* Could we see the data first to see the usual range of measures for attendance, graduation, dropout, etc.? That would help clarify for members what the “norm” typically is as well as appreciating the possible ideals for each indicator.

*Response:* This committee would certainly look at data before bringing a recommendation to the standard setting committee. Several steps will be taken: examine indicator data, decide weighting of a set of indicators, decide what “score” will be considered adequate. In addition, the Task Force will need to look to see the impact of a particular standard on real schools to assure the system meets the intention of the legislation without detrimental unanticipated consequences.

As this group moves forward, it will be advisable to use the professional associations to gather face to face input in weighting of the indicators, for example, to improve acceptance and understanding of the system in the field. We have two years to complete this system; shame on us if we sit here two years from now and haven’t taken advantage of the opportunity to engage with these organizations.

*Q:* What about emerging national networks on assessment which are looking at new ways to measure performance, assessing students? If we devise something now, how aligned will it be with consortia in the future? There is a concern about having to change after this system in place because of efforts outside our control.

*Response:* The SB180 Legislation allows the department to submit changes in the future to amend this system. Task Force members asked that the Commissioner and Deb share information about new national assessment discussions at the next meeting of this Task Force.

3. Scott began his presentation of the proposals currently under consideration.

-- Structure of the system – one or two “levels” (slide 2)

*Clarification:* Level 1 (performance) is required by the legislation, in addition to the input component.

*Decision:* Defer discussion of whether to establish a two level structure until all can be present.

Potential indicators (slides 4 - 8)

**Inclusion –**

**Participation** rate at 95% (current AYP standard)

(updated method for calculating for federal purposes using average participation rates over 2, 3 years; submitted as amendment to the state accountability workbook)

**Discussion** – minimum ‘n’ of 40 to avoid harm to small schools; what would be the goal of this indicator? Each indicator should include a discussion of the rationale for the standards, in this case using 95% versus 92% or 97%; in this case, the 95% is already a federal standard; most NH schools are currently well above this rate

**Agreement** on participation rate 95% by the averaging method currently in place

**Attendance/ truancy** -- proposal to use the percent of students absent fewer than 15 days

**Discussion** – how does this play into new ways of thinking about “out of seat time”?; concerns about consistency of counting attendance in block scheduled settings; local interpretations apply for attendance;  
Reframe the proposal – use attendance or truancy? Members prefer attendance which offers a greater chance of consistency than using truancy, which varies more widely across schools/ districts

**Agreement** on using attendance rate as currently defined and calculated; not using truancy

## **Achievement**

**NECAP Status** – proposal to use index scores as currently reported

**Discussion** – future of NECAP may change pending changes at the federal level, but the decision on using this indicator can apply regardless of the particular test form; Deb and Scott described the “index” system currently in use, which credits schools for performance levels at a level of detail beyond a strict “yes” or “no” whether students met or didn’t meet proficiency; in an index system, schools receive credit for students who are “almost proficient”;

**Proposal** – use the average index score across all tests, weighted by number of tests taken; Scott proposed that status score be weighted at 20 or 30%;

**Decision:** members decided not to address overall indicator “weighting” at this time

**Agreement** on using average NECAP index score as an indicator

**NECAP Growth** – for grades 4- 8, reading and math only

**Proposal** – use growth percentile methodologies as described in previous meetings; the challenge remains to decide what target to set as a credible indicator of growth; as mentioned at opening of the meeting, standard setting/ target setting is a process following the decision about which indicators to use

**Recommendation:** Scott recommends that, when indicators are weighted, the growth indicator count twice as much as status.

**Decision:** Again, as noted above, decisions about how to “weight” the indicators are deferred until the next meeting.

**Discussion:** growth percentiles are much more acceptable as a measure since it shows how students move from where they are to where they end up; a measure that’s fair to kids; growth also has advantages as a discussion point for school improvement

**Agreement** incorporate growth percentile as an indicator, with specifics to be decided pending reports from AYP Task Force meetings.

**Achievement Gaps** (slide 8) -- status and growth

**Question:** does the Task Force want to include indicators that set standards about ‘gaps’ in this accountability system?

**Proposal:** pick out “key” groups and compare scores;

**Discussion:** Scott described one way of grouping students into “super subgroups” by reasonable characteristics, as in Utah; Deb reiterated that

no subgroup will be un-reported – all are now and will continue to be reported on state reports; one argument that gaps should be included is that generally NH does very well on whole school achievement measures particularly on national assessments, but disaggregation reveals differences in achievement among certain groups; want to consider gaps, but keep it simple, for instance socioeconomic status, or “advantaged” super subgroup; reaching a decision on which groups to include can be done at the next meeting, after running data; it is interesting to note that data about gaps in achievement has always been reported and available, but gains in certain subgroups weren’t seen until federal and state agencies started holding schools accountability for the performance of all students; not sure can make a judgment whether to include a gaps indicator or not until we see the details, for example will cell size stay same if using “super subgroups”?; since it is our moral obligation as educators to serve *all* students, that suggests that gaps indicator must be part of the accountability system

**Reframe Proposal:** See some data on selected groups, try out defining some super subgroups

**Agreement** – need further details to offer judgment

**High Schools** (slides 10-13) - recommend same proposals as for K-8 where applicable

**Inclusion:**

**Participation**

**Proposal** – use 95% participation as for K-8

**Agreement** – 95% as currently required

**Attendance**

**Proposal** – use attendance rate as currently defined and measured

**Agreement** – as currently required and defined and calculated

**Achievement:**

**NECAP Status**

**Proposal** – use average NECAP index score across all tests

**Agreement** - Yes,

**Graduation rate**

**Proposal** – use currently calculated graduation rate

**Agreement** Use cohort graduation rate data for 4, 5, or 6 year rate when available

**Dropout rate**

**Proposal** – as currently state defined

**Agreement** – *Yes, use both true dropout rate and new cohort graduation rate data*

**Other postsecondary measures**

**Discussion:** part of the current conversation about tracking students after high school is limited by the limits of existing data systems; currently report post secondary 'plans', but there is no certainty about those plans; the challenge of tracking students who enter college is how to judge how much high schools can be reasonably held accountability for their performance or their trajectory; data collection on this aspect requires the cooperation of higher education, which is do-able for public institutions, but not for private colleges; may be possible to phase in this indicator later when the data systems are more capable

#### 4. Discussion of Level II: (slides 16, 17, 18,+)

Scott provided some thinking around a "phased in" Level II of the Performance System as proposed at the last meeting. This group will need to decide IF there should be a level II (locally defined goals and targets), whether a Level II should be required or optional, and how Level I and Level II Performance Indicators will be evaluated to determine adequacy.

Other issues to be addressed–

- \*Guidance on what counts as a valid locally defined goal; what counts as an academic goal? (should the goal address academics, students achievement, process/ infrastructure? Or should schools be allowed to propose a goal in any aspect of education?);

- \*Consider requiring a school to offer its rationale (logic model, theory of action) for identifying particular goals and targets

- \*Department will have to establish criteria for acceptance/ approval of locally defined goals and targets

**Discussion** – why would a school bother proposing a Level II local goal? In earlier conversations in this Task Force and the AYP Task Force, school personnel indicated they wanted to have the opportunity to demonstrate their performance adequacy beyond the standardized tests and other statewide measures currently in place. But if the Level II goals and targets don't have "value" in determining adequacy, little reason to go through the effort.

If a school can't pass on Level II alone, perhaps the system could allow Level II performance to add to or complement Level I, or to highlight special features of the school.

Another idea floated was to measure Level I, use it internally only to identify schools in need of support, but not publicize the assessments. However, the legislature requires public reporting of this and all data, so keeping the assessment internal would not be possible.

Level II could be "extra credit" or bonus points, or offer an alternative approval or plan. Another idea would be to use Level II to qualify for perhaps a 1 year "extension" to reach missed standards for Level I, with the Level II goal as the 'action plan' for meeting the missed indicators.

Superintendents want flexibility, and they would want a system in which Level II results are valued, where meeting the locally defined goals contributes to the final "adequacy" decision. If Level II indicators are not contributing to the final adequacy judgment, then it only means more work for the school with no benefit.

**Consensus of task force members remaining was that Level II should be optional, but valued in a meaningful way to contribute to the overall adequacy decision. However, missing Task Force members should be included in the final decision.**

One member offered a caution on the content of the interim report to legislative leaders due in April – do not make decisions about 'levels,' indicators, standards or targets public before gathering stakeholder input.

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Prepare presentation of national assessment discussions at April 2 meeting (Commissioner Barry and Deb Wiswell).
2. ALL Task Force members should send their responses to the questions posed on slides, 21, 22, 24, 25 to Deb Wiswell ([dwiswell@ed.state.nh.us](mailto:dwiswell@ed.state.nh.us)) before the next meeting.
3. Deb will bring the summary of point systems used in other states to the April 2 meeting.
4. Scott and/ or Deb will prepare samples of the "gaps" data for examination at the next meeting.

**NEXT MEETING: Friday, April 2, 2010, 9:00 – 12:00, NH Department of Education, Board Room.**

### **Open Questions:**

1. Structure of the system --
  - One 'level' – state defined indicators
  - Two 'levels' -- state define and locally defined
2. State defined indicators
  - 'quality,' importance, value/ weighting/ contribution to overall judgment
3. Outliers
  - small schools; schools with untested grades (K-2)
  - reconfigured or 'new' schools, no testing history
  - high schools and growth

Notes compiled and submitted on 2/22/10 by Karen Laba, NECC