

Accountability Workgroup
MacKay Building, Pierre South Dakota
April 12, 2016

Call to Order

The first meeting of the Accountability Workgroup began at 10:00 a.m. on April 12, 2016, at the MacKay Building in Pierre, SD. The Accountability Workgroup was formed to make recommendations to the South Dakota Department of Education pertaining to changes in state, district, and school accountability systems under the recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

Members of the workgroup who were present were: Kelly Duncan, Board of Education and Northern State University; Joan Dunmire, Douglas School District; Linda Foos, Wagner Community School District; Kelly Glodt, Pierre School District; Becky Guffin, Aberdeen School District; Bonnie Haines, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate; Lara Hanson, Sioux Falls School District; Thomas Holmes, State Legislator; Cindy Lindskov, Dupree School District; Mary McCorkle, South Dakota Education Association; Katie Mellor, Sioux Falls Catholic Schools; Rob Monson, School Administrators of South Dakota, Wade Pogany, Associated School Board of South Dakota, Charles Sykora, Wall School District; Mike Talley, Rapid City Area School District, Paul Turman, Board of Regents, Karen Whitney, Todd County School District, and Jeremy Wollman, South Central School District.

Welcome

SD DOE Secretary Melody Schopp welcomed the members of the group. She gave a brief overview of discussions at the federal level pertaining to interpretation of the new federal law and the writing of the accompanying federal regulations.

Overview of ESEA Requirements and Changes under ESSA

Laura Scheibe, SD DOE, provided a slide presentation and explanation of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver (from No Child Left Behind) process that the state has been implementing for the last several years. She outlined the items that have been eliminated, changed and added to the ESSA law.

Outline of the Process

Terri Bissonette, consultant for McRel International, will act as the facilitator of the group through the process. She informed the group that three other workgroups would be working on various areas of the ESSA Act – School Improvement, Educator Effectiveness, English Language Learners. The three workgroups will be making recommendations to the Accountability Workgroup. The Accountability Workgroup will review all of the information and make final recommendations to the Committee of Practitioners and to SD DOE for use in writing a new State Plan as required by ESSA. As the new State Plan must be implemented for the 2017-2018 school year, the workgroup recommendations will need to be processed in the early fall to meet all of the timelines, including a review process by the Governor's Office. The plan will be submitted to the US Department of Education in January 2017.

Bissonette explained that the first objective of the day was to understand the background of school accountability per the state's Flexibility Waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The second objective was to understand the areas where state changes are permitted in the statutes, and the third

objective for the day was to formulate recommendations focused on specific aspects of the law and accountability. Bissonette helped the committee set norms for the meetings.

Work Process

Bissonette led the group through a series of small and large group discussions to consider a number of questions pertaining to the accountability system. The results of the group discussions are attached.

Wrap-up

The workgroup decided that their next meeting will be determined through an electronic survey of the members. More information will be sent to the workgroup pertaining any of their requests. The workgroup will also receive information about the discussion of the other workgroups prior to the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:50 p.m.

Discussion on the current system and areas where there may be opportunities for revision

Overall System:

- How do we translate static and defined indicators into an accurate representation of a dynamic, individual school environment? The tools being used to measure how schools are doing are 30,000 foot views, not up close and personal; there needs to be a balance between the big tools and the finer ones that reflect modern education. Schools need flexibility and options in the accountability system.
- Are the primary indicators we have the best? We currently have three or four indicators that determine whether a school is performing “well,” but do all those indicators correlate with each other, and is correlation important? Currently, attendance and student achievement at the elementary and middle school levels do correlate (if a student is in school, he or she is likely to do better on the assessments, and vice versa).
- How can you capture some of the other work schools are doing before the students are tested in third grade to get them to that point? School climate (in a manner that is not survey-based), opportunity dashboards, or other “measures” to reflect the whole school effort to educate a child could be options.

Assessments/Achievement/Academic Growth:

- Does the assessment piece have to be limited to Smarter Balanced or can we incorporate other measures, such as MAP testing, growth, etc.? Schools often are benchmarking three times a year to have that instant feedback on how students are doing; could that be incorporated into accountability?
 - The College and Career Readiness indicator includes multiple pathways to demonstrate that readiness. Can achievement or growth at the elementary and middle school levels incorporate the same concept of multiple ways to show proficiency, perhaps from a menu of state-approved options? This is particularly a concern for students on IEPs who are constantly taking assessments. Many voiced the desire for flexibility and options.
 - How do you collect the data at the state level to ensure consistency?
 - If you include diagnostic testing, how do you measure a student who moves in the middle of the year to ensure parity? And how do you communicate to parents if the two schools/districts are using different assessments?
 - What if there are no alt versions of the assessments?
- Should science be incorporated into the Achievement indicator? If not, what is the purpose of the science assessment? Is it part of the bigger picture of what we believe kids should know? In light of the new standards, it may be premature to incorporate it into accountability as a score right now.
- The 1 percent cap on participation is a significant concern, but unclear how to deal with it right now.

Four-year cohort graduation rate and high school completion:

- What does four year cohort look like? Can mobility be taken into account? 5th year Special Education students? How do you define a fair cohort?
- How to equitably handle students that come in that fourth year that are not going to graduate. When they don't finish, we get ding'ed.

Attendance:

- There is no state policy for recording attendance, so every district has its own policies on exempt and nonexempt. That makes it difficult to compare one district's 95% to another district's.
- As an indicator, it makes sense because of the direct correlation to achievement. But also because of that direct correlation, schools get double ding'ed.
- How can we ensure a fair policy for attendance at virtual schools?

College and Career Readiness:

- More flexibility in the CCR indicator.
- CCR: need more options/flexibility beyond just ACT and NCRC. This should include dual credit, AP, etc.
 - Large schools and small schools have different opportunities, so system has to be fair across the board.
 - Can dual credit/AP used as check boxes for college readiness?
 - Career readiness only has NCRC. Can we include CTE course strands, other options?
 - How do districts show they are getting kids ready for something after high school, whatever that is?
 - What about the limitations inherent in dual credit, NCRC, etc.? In particular, some of the students with the most severe cognitive disabilities do not have access.
 - Could we look at job placement/job training?
 - SD My Life – could schools get points for doing it? Allows you to extend “CCR” down to the lower level of middle school.

Subgroups:

- Possible additions beyond Gap group could be:
 - “Transient student,” which would need to be defined. This would help schools understand those students and their needs better, their differences.
 - Students with low attendance rates. This might encourage districts to do more with them, to the extent a school has control.
- In particular, given the newly added subgroups, are we making the system too complicated by having too many?

Special Case Schools and Multiple Tracks of Accountability:

- Public schools must be accountable, but programs are taking students who are outside the “norm” and doing great things with them. Room to have a different lens with those schools?
 - How to do this without unintended consequences? Fine line to walk.
 - Also should take into account that there are programs within a school; not all special cases are their own attendance centers.
- Multiple tracks:
 - Alternative schools and colonies may have different means to get the end goal, but end up at a similar bar. Shouldn't treat those students differently and hold them to different expectations, but again, flexibility is key.

Teacher and Principal Effectiveness:

- Remove some of the prescriptions and make SLO-setting and accountability easier on staff.

Keep or Change or Eliminate – Initial Recommendations

Keep:

- Growth indicator, either in its current form (which has not yet been used for accountability) or in a means that provides more flexibility to schools
- If we are required to use a statewide summative assessment for achievement, keep Smarter Balanced.
- Gap and non-gap groupings
- College and Career Readiness as an indicator
- The High School Completion portion of the indicator, perhaps with more options
- Academic Achievement

Change:

- Exercise any flexibility available for the four-year cohort indicator. Possibilities given included defining in a different manner who is in and who is not in the cohort, including looking at special education students and students who have been homeschooled for the majority of their school career. Several also objected to a school getting a “ding” on four year cohort if the student transfers in to the school in the remaining weeks of a school year – in this circumstance, the school has had little ability to influence that student’s educational career. (NOTE: Current practice allows an exemption only if a student has transferred in within the last 15 days of the school year).
- Push for being able to test above 1 percent on the alternative assessment
- Some noted the desire to return to the previous (Average Daily Attendance) method of calculating attendance
- Consider changing the grade for the high school assessment. Options included 9th, 10th, and 12th grades.
- Redefine the parameters of Full Academic Year.
- Participation rate penalties when a school or district faces parental opt-outs
- The college and career readiness indicator, including more flexibility and additional pathways to demonstrate success. Some participants were in favor of removing the ACT as a component of college readiness.

Eliminate:

- Requirements for a system for teacher and principal effectiveness, including the growth component
- Some members indicated a desire to use local tests to measure achievement, rather than a statewide summative assessment.
- Four year cohort as currently calculated.
- Several disagreed with calculating Attendance as a measure in general.

Workgroup Requested Information

- What of what was discussed can be changed under ESSA, and what cannot?
- Gap and non-gap subgroups: How they work and their definitions.
- More information both about what is in state law and in ESSA; what can be changed in state law, what may be outdated in state law, what in state law cannot be changed?
- More information about accountability systems in other rural states that might look like SD.

- How many priority schools have been able to move out, either NCLB or waiver? What are they doing if they have moved out? This would serve to inform what the state measures to determine school improvement classifications.
- Definition of four-year cohort in the new law.