

Amended version of the
MINUTES OF THE
Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education
May 24, 1999 - 9:00 a.m. - Room 405 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Howard A. Stephenson, Chair
Rep. Tammy J. Rowan, Chair
Sen. Karen Hale
Rep. Jeff Alexander
Rep. Kevin S. Garn
Rep. Karen W. Morgan
Rep. LaWanna "Lou" Shurtliff
Jill Kennedy
Kim Burningham
Lt. Gov. Olene S. Walker
Linda B. Ogden
Ila Rose Fife

Members Absent:

Sen. L. Steven Poulton

Staff Present:

Mr. Bryant R. Howe,
Research Analyst
Mr. O. William Asplund, Assistant Director
Office of Legislative Research and
General Counsel
Ms. Heather Hobbs, Research Assistant
Ms. Wendy Bangerter, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

1. Call to order and Approval of Minutes

Following a site visit to Edison Elementary School in Salt Lake City, the task force members met back in Room 405 to continue their discussions. Chair Rowan called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Bryant Howe noted some corrections to the May 10, 1999 minutes.

MOTION: Linda Ogden moved to approve the minutes of the May 10, 1999 meeting as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Sen. Stephenson explained the statutory requirement of Legislative voting rules, which requires a majority vote in one house and a tie plus one in the other house. He noted that some members of the task force had expressed concern that they did not have an equal voice in voting on the task force or had less voting power than the legislative members. He explained that the committee cannot ignore the statutes, but they could set an additional voting threshold for the task force.

MOTION: Sen. Stephenson moved that the task force adopt the following policy on voting and the establishment of a quorum:

1. The establishment of a quorum requires:
 - a. a majority of the membership in one house of the Legislature;

- b. at least a tie in the membership of the other house of the Legislature;
and
 - c. at least a tie in the membership of non-Legislators.
2. The favorable passage of a motion requires:
- a. a majority of a quorum in one house of the Legislature;
 - b. at least a tie in a quorum in the other house of the Legislature; and
 - c. at least a tie in a quorum of non-Legislators.

The motion passed unanimously.

The task force answered test questions relating to the reading materials previously distributed to them.

4. Overview of Results from the Stanford Achievement Test -- Heather Hobbs, Research Assistant, distributed and reviewed the methodology of rating the results of the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT). One purpose of this research was to consider a performance standard that is used all over the United States and not just locally. Staff was asked to bring back a list of those schools that consistently score higher than the expected range.

Rep. Garn expressed concern whether the information that is being received from these tests is really what information is needed.

5. Overview of Current Testing Programs in Utah's Public Schools -- Dr. Barbara Lawrence, Coordinator of Evaluation and Assessment, State Office of Education, described the science of "psychometrics" as "all aspects of educational measurement, including test development, evaluating the technical qualities of testing instruments, interpreting the results of test data, and using test information to guide instruction and decision-making." She noted that the Core Assessment Program exists for the purpose of assessing the implementation of the Core Curriculum, and that no single measure is adequate to fully assess students' knowledge. Assessment instruments are created for different purposes, and should be used only for the purposes for which they were intended. She reviewed the two major components of the Major Student Assessment Programs in Utah—the *Stanford Achievement Test* (a norm-referenced test) and the State End-of-Level/End-of-Course Tests (a criterion-referenced test series).

Dr. Lawrence reported that Utah has a history of high levels of participation in the *Stanford Achievement Test* program, with 95% to 96% participation at grades 5 and 8, and 90% participation at grade 11. H.B. 33, enacted during the 1999 General Session, adds grade 3 to the *Stanford* program. She noted that the *Stanford Achievement Test* scores provide the most helpful information at the group level, and the larger the group the more reliable the information. Individual and

classroom level information from the *Stanford*, though it does provide some helpful information to teachers, parents, and students, is less helpful than the information from the Core Criterion-Referenced Test, which provides specific information about student's mastery of the Core Curriculum. The *Stanford*, however, does provide very useful information about the strength of the Utah education system by providing a comparison of Utah students' performance to that of a nationally representative sample. She also addressed the development of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, which are federally funded, national tests that are administered independently by contractors, and provide additional nationally comparative information for the State. The NAEP tests are based on curriculum frameworks that have been developed as part of the NAEP program, which can be correlated to the Utah Core Curriculum.

Dr. Lawrence also covered the following points:

- C The NAEP test is federally funded and governed.
- C Core Assessment Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) are developed to match the Core Curriculum, and each time the curriculum is revised it is necessary to develop new tests.
- C At the secondary level, criterion-referenced tests have been developed in the areas of science and math.
- C Compared to other state programs, Utah's graduation requirements provide students more flexibility in choosing course-taking patterns that fit their interests.
- C Test questions on the CRTs are written to assess specific standards and objectives in the Core Curriculum.
- C The use of grades in an accountability system is very difficult, because the basis for the grade may vary significantly from teacher to teacher. Instruments like the CRTs are more reliable, because tests given in a standardized fashion provide comparability of results across students, classrooms, schools, and districts.
- C Large scale assessments are good indicators for assessing the strength of a system (e.g., is the Core Curriculum being taught, and is it competitive with the curricula from other states?).
- C There is a great need to train teachers to understand and make better use of test results.
- C Class size is a big issue in meeting the individual needs of students.
- C The possibility of exemption from taking the *Stanford* may be applied to three groups of students: special education students, students with limited English proficiency, and any other student who, because of extenuating circumstances, needs to be exempted from testing (e.g., the student has experienced a recent trauma, the student suddenly become ill).
- C Utah's costs for the norm-referenced program are relatively low because of intense negotiations with the testing companies over the price of materials, and because

- scoring is done by the State Office of Education.
- C Criterion-referenced test results are released to the districts and treated as district property. The State Office provides a state summary as a service to the districts for comparative purposes. However, this will change with the implementation of H.B. 33.
 - C Recent trends in the large-scale testing results (*Stanford* and NAEP) show a decline in student reading ability at the elementary levels.
 - C There is a need for more funding to provide inservice training so teachers know how to use the information resulting from testing.
 - C National standards exist in most subject areas, but we do not have a national curriculum.
 - C Teachers should use results from Core Assessment to guide instruction and provide additional instruction where test scores show lack of mastery of the curriculum.

Dr. Lawrence suggested that the task force remember that student achievement and school accountability are two different issues, and should not be used interchangeably. Student achievement is dependent on many things, including such things as the instruction students receive, the availability of materials and resources, the motivation of students, support from the home. Some of these factors are beyond the control of school personnel, and should not enter into measures of school accountability. In addition, other factors of school function should be considered in judging the effectiveness of the school and school personnel.

6. Review of Proposed Task Force Principles – This discussion was held to the next agenda, but a draft of guiding principles was distributed to the task force members.

7. Other Business --

MOTION: Linda Ogden moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with Lt. Gov. Olene Walker and Representatives Alexander and Garn absent for the vote. The meeting adjourned at 12:14 p.m.