

MINUTES OF THE
Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education
Monday, June 7, 1999 - 9:00 a.m. - Room 405 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Howard A Stephenson, Chair
Rep. Tammy J. Rowan, Chair
Sen. Karen Hale
Sen. L. Steven Poulton
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:

Rep. Jeff Alexander

Staff Present:

Mr. Bryant R. Howe,
Research Analyst
Mr. O. William Asplund, Assistant Director
Office of Legislative Research and
General Counsel
Mr. James Wilson, Associate 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. Task Force Business

Mr. Bryant Howe, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, noted some changes and amendments to the minutes.

MOTION: Linda Ogden moved to approve the minutes of May 24, 1999 as amended, including the text submitted by Barbara Lawrence, State Office of Education. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Assessment in the Salt Lake City School District –Ms. Joan Reynolds, Director of Testing and Assessment, Salt Lake City School District, explained the assessment plan being used by the Salt Lake City School District. She reviewed some guiding principles they use and emphasized that no single assessment or type of assessment gives an adequate picture of a student's progress and that multiple assessments are needed. She pointed out that the assessing process is as important as assessing the student and that teachers are the best assessors of a student's growth. She introduced a Cumulative Assessment Report (CAR), which gives a collective view of a student's progress. She reviewed sample questions from two fifth-grade Stanford Achievement Tests and from a reading booklet and a student response booklet. She explained the process of scoring the assessments, which gives teachers an idea of how each student is learning and how they are thinking. She noted the correlation between poverty and the lower scores of children in certain types of assessment.

She pointed out that because of funding allocations, the Legislature has tied schools to one standard

of testing and encouraged them to consider multiple assessments that consider a student's work rather than test scores only.

Sen. Stephenson referred to "No Excuses," a report published by the Heritage Foundation, which indicated that there does not have to be a correlation between low-income and test scores. He asked Ms. Reynolds to come back with a response after she has studied the document.

3. Public Testimony -- Julie Peck and Chet Litton, parents of students in the Jordan School District, expressed their concern for the dramatic drop in students' SAT scores at a school in the Jordan School District. They also expressed concern about the inadequate number of textbooks in the schools and programs to encourage achievement and progress of students. Ms. Peck compared two schools her children had attended in two different school districts, and noted the big impact that a principal with vision can make to the school environment. She also noted that differences in the schools included: continuity between grade levels, more parent involvement, higher expectations, teacher training and adequate supplies. Mr. Litton expressed concern for the lack of accountability at the school and district levels. He distributed and reviewed a document titled, "Standards, Accountability, and Funding."

The task force discussed why there can be such disparity between school administrations and programs.

Supt. Steve Laing informed the task force that the Core Curriculum is adopted by the State Board of Education and that a committee approves books which are made available for schools to purchase. He noted that HB33, "Enhancing Academic Achievement in Public Schools," 1999 General Session, will assess what is being done with the Core Curriculum in each district.

4. Review of Guiding Principles --

Task Force member, Kim Burningham, introduced an alternative to the draft Guiding Principles of the task force. He encouraged the task force to pinpoint which principles were agreeable to everyone and then identify who is responsible for them.

The task force discussed minimum standards that the schools should exceed, but noted that the state should establish standards, but not dictate the application in the local district. They also noted other issues they would like to discuss in detail in future meetings.

Mr. Wilson distributed a list of guiding principles codified in statute several years ago that identified the responsible parties.

5. Other Business --

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Rep. Rowan noted that 12,000 e-mail letters were sent to school teachers in the state and that Legislators can access the responses to those letters. Efforts are being made to get the school board members access so they can read them as well.

She also announced that the Provo School District is hearing from school officials from Brasso, Texas on Friday, June 11, 1999. The Texas district has a working standards and accountability program.

Sen. Stephenson announced that David Allen, head of a Kentucky program to assist low-performing schools will share that program with the State Office of Education Title I personnel on June 23, 1999. Any interested task force member is invited to attend the breakfast meeting.

MOTION: Sen. Poulton moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

