

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education**  
September 27, 1999 - 8:30 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. Jeff Alexander  
Rep. Kevin S. Garn  
Rep. Karen W. Morgan  
Rep. LaWanna "Lou" Shurtliff  
Jill Kennedy  
Lt. Gov. Olene S. Walker  
Linda B. Ogden  
Ila Rose Fife

**Members Absent:**

Kim Burningham

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Bryant R. Howe, Research Analyst  
Mr. James Wilson, Associate General Counsel  
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 –**

**MOTION:** Ms. Ogden moved to approve the minutes of the September 13, 1999 meeting as amended and that action on the minutes of August 30, 1999 meeting be deferred for further amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Accreditation of Schools by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges --** Connie Amos, State Office of Education, gave a brief overview of accreditation. All high schools in Utah are required to be accredited by a regional accreditation organization and the school pays the fee. Middle schools must be accredited by the state but do not pay fees. Accreditation of elementary schools is optional. In Utah, the accrediting organization is called the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and is recognized by the State Office of Education.

The most important element of accreditation is continuous school improvement. Schools must have a five-year action plan, a school evaluation, and on-site review, which takes place every six years. Ms. Amos reviewed the membership of state accreditation committees and how they classify or rank schools, based on the annual report and the site-evaluation. She also reviewed the accreditation standards which are reviewed each year and emphasized the importance of accreditation to tell schools how they rank regionally and nationally. She agreed to supply a list indicating the rankings of Utah schools and the reasons for schools that are ranked in the lower categories. Since junior high schools have not been completing the report, the list will include high schools and some elementary schools only.

**3. Testimony from Public School Teacher --** Ms. Ellen Stone, Former Teacher of the Year, Murray School District, addressed accountability on the elementary level. She noted a

common problem for teachers, no matter what the students' backgrounds, is lack of follow-through at home. She feels accountability is a three-pronged process, including the school, the student, and the parent; and that an accountability system should hold even elementary students accountable, assuming the teachers and parents are fulfilling their responsibilities. The lowering of scores in Utah can be attributed to less involvement from parents, more mobility of students, and the changing structure of a student's home life.

Ms. Stone indicated that it has been her experience that students who do not change locations, score higher on testing. Parents need to be aware and held accountable for how their lives are affecting their student's learning. Currently, parents are not obligated to suffer any consequences

It was noted that there are many good and bad elements of tests for elementary students. There needs to be a balance of factual knowledge and creativity assessment and the state needs to take time to develop or revise the Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) and then gradually introduce the new tests. Students could be required to utilize tutors, summer school, and remediation

**4. Revision of Core Curriculum** -- Dr. Steven Laing, Superintendent of Public Instruction, distributed and reviewed a summary of the revision of the core curriculum and the cost of assessments as previously requested by the task force. He explained the assessment series and what they include, when they are given, and the accountability involved. He said that the current budget for core curriculum and assessment is about \$1.5 million

Supt. Laing reviewed three scenarios listed in the report that indicated annual costs of assessment, the timeliness of scoring, and returning those scores to schools for their use. He reviewed those costs of almost \$3 million, with the writing test being scored with one reader.

Superintendent Laing addressed some concerns about the Texas model of accountability that would be well for Utah to consider before adopting an accountability system.

The task force discussed the issue that the district chooses various text books from a state-approved list. They determined there needs to be other resources as well as text books for teachers to use.

Supt. Laing reminded the task force that this is a national issue, because the norm-referenced tests would test things not taught in Utah. While his personal preference is to adopt scenario three because it provides a wide array of effect assessment tools, it may be too expensive for the state to implement. Scenario Two may be a more realistic option.

**MOTION:** Lt. Governor Walker moved that the task force adopt Scenario Two, as

outlined in the handout.

At the request of the chair, Lt. Governor Walker withdrew her motion.

**5. Review of Schedule of Proposed Community Meetings and Proposed Plan for Future Task Force Meetings** - Mr. Bryant R. Howe, Research Analyst, distributed to the task force a revised meeting schedule for the remainder of the year. This revised meeting schedule allows for time for community meetings to listen to public testimony on the task force's recommendations.

**MOTION:** Jill Kennedy moved that the task force adopt the revised meeting schedule. The motion passed with Senator Poulton voting in opposition.

Mr. Howe distributed a proposed schedule for community meetings. This schedule proposes that the task force conduct five meetings in Richfield, Cedar City, Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Provo.

**MOTION:** Linda Ogden moved to adopt the dates, times, and locations for community meetings as proposed. The motion passed with Senator Poulton voting in opposition.

**6. Recess to Subcommittees –**

- a. Elements of Accountability Plans -- Room 405 -- Chaired by Sen. Stephenson

Senator Stephenson welcomed the members of the subcommittee and reminded the subcommittee that it is charged with developing the essential elements of an accountability plan.

Representative Garn expressed a desire to have a general direction stated for the subcommittee.

**MOTION:** Representative Garn moved that the subcommittee recommend to the full committee the following: (1) a system of benchmarks that are established by the state that are global and general in nature; (2) staff should develop options, including a system of interventions for schools that are struggling, for what these accountability benchmarks and factors might include; and (3) that the subcommittee adopt Scenario 3, as earlier presented by Superintendent Laing as the preferred option for assessment tools that will be used to determine student mastery of content standards.

Representative Garn said that it is important that the state should find the money to implement Scenario 3, if this is indeed the best way to assess student mastery of the core

curriculum. In making this recommendation, it is important to remember that this does not preclude schools and school districts from adopting other, more comprehensive, assessment tools.

Linda Ogden expressed the need to protect student privacy.

Superintendent Laing asked if the intent of the task force is to collect these data at the classroom, school, district, or state level. Senator Stephenson said that much of this information could be made available on the Internet, as is done in Maryland. Representative Alexander stated that no matter how the data is conveyed to the public, full reporting of all of this information could take time.

Superintendent Darlene Robless, Salt Lake City School District said that her district already reviews CRT scores by schools and that the data review is quite extensive. She questioned what the purpose of the data is, to change the way teachers teach or to inform the public. There would be a concern about reporting data on the classroom level.

Representative Alexander stated that parents need to be informed about their school's performance. Representative Garn said that there are many details that have yet to be finalized. The motion would simply start the process by having the staff bring back some options for the task force to consider.

The motion passed unanimously.

Representative Garn asked about staging the implementation of the accountability system and the number of years it would require to be fully implemented. Linda Ogden said that the available funding will be a key factor. Representative Alexander said that time is needed to develop all the new assessment instruments that the subcommittee has just adopted.

Representative Morgan stated that some type of grading system might be worth considering but we need to be very careful and make sure that it is positive. She expressed concern with labeling a school "low performing" and that this would be negative, and if we are going to do this, we should not label at all. Representative Garn said that the task force needs to arrive at a balanced solution, and that parents and other groups are already labeling some schools anyway.

**MOTION:** Representative Garn moved that the meeting of the subcommittee be adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

**b. Rewards and Interventions -- Room 403 -- Chaired by Rep. Rowan**

Rep. Rowan lead the subcommittee's discussion. The group discussed:

- C Beginning as close to the school level as possible.
- C Letting the district try to help their school before the state intervenes.
- C Who will determine what interventions the school needs? School should do a self-evaluation first.
- C Resources for intervention - both from state and local.
- C Other states require an improvement plan.
- C Consider both school and student interventions.
- C Successful schools have increased volunteer help, which also brings more funding.
- C Once standards are set, schools will be able to assess themselves.
- C Published standards will put more pressure on schools.
- C Consequences need to follow standards.

Rep. Rowan reviewed her perception of a three-year phase-in plan for standards. The first year each school would assess themselves and make an improvement plan as they teach to the core curriculum. That year becomes a learning year when a baseline is established. The second year the measures the first year assessments and the district tries to help the schools, according to the school's assessment. The state intervenes where needed. The state also imposes rewards and consequences through a team. After the third year, the interventions would become mandatory.

Lt. Gov. Walker stated that the first year after assessment, the school should have resources available to them from the state to at least try to improve without intervention. The second year, numerous intervention teams would be required.

Mr. Carlston encouraged caution in giving the state too much power in intervention. Districts and individual schools need to retain most of the power. He feels that social promotions are not good, but that grade retention should be decided between teacher, parent, student, and principal. He noted the checks and balances that exist in the system.

The group agreed that intervention should be addressed after a year of standards being set and that draft legislation for standards and types of interventions would be available after the first year. They agreed that a four-year phase-in process would be good, that teachers need to teach to the core curriculum, not to the test, and that schools could appeal for more time for the first year's assessment.

Rep. Rowan adjourned the subcommittee at 12:37 p.m.