

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education**  
August 14, 2000 -8:30 a.m. - Room 223 State Capitol

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Excused:**

Sen. Karen Hale  
Sen. L. Steven Poulton

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Bryant R. Howe, Research Analyst  
Mr. Chet Loftis, Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Jami Momberger, 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 –**

**MOTION:** Ms. Linda Ogden moved to amend the minutes of July 31, 2000 to include more information on the improvements in student performance made at the Maeser Elementary School in the Provo School District and to postpone approval of minutes meeting until the minutes include that information. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Teacher and Principal Witness Panel –** Two teachers and a school principal were asked to focus on the following questions as they addressed the task force: (1) How should the legislature recognize and reward schools and school districts who show exemplary student performance or show significant improvement gains in student performance? (2) How should the legislature help schools and school districts whose students are not achieving acceptable levels of performance? (3) How should the task force measure and define "exemplary student performance" and "acceptable levels of performance?" (4) How should gains in student performance be measured? and (5) What assistance or interventions should be provided to schools and districts?

Mr. Bryce Passey, Mt. Logan Middle School, Cache School District, explained that following their attendance at a national teacher forum, he and Ms. Diane Crimm decided to sponsor a state teacher's forum. They invited recognized teachers from across Utah to participate. They chose "Excellence in Teaching" and "Teacher Leadership" as their focal ideas for discussion. Mr. Passey distributed and reviewed teachers' comments gathered from that forum.

Ms. Diane Crimm, Clayton Middle School, Salt Lake City School District, gave more information about the teacher's forum. She said that all forum participants were unanimous in their belief that any plan for school accountability should consider that schools are as diverse as

the students, families, and communities they come from. Ms. Crimm also discussed the attributes of a good teacher and what a good teacher does. Teachers must teach to the state's core curriculum, assess student performance, and make decisions about future instruction based on those findings. They should not focus on teaching to the test, but should focus on the student. Efforts of students cannot be measured based solely on the test scores and teachers will not want to teach in a school that has been labeled "not acceptable."

The best teachers will not be attracted to a school that asks them to teach to a test and not focus on making a difference in children's lives. Teachers need support in order to teach all students and the Legislature should support teachers who are effective so that they can continue to be effective in what really counts. Finally, Ms. Crimm emphasized that change happens when those concerned see and understand the need for change.

Mr. Passey stated that teachers attending the forum responded negatively to the concept of accountability because they perceive it only as something that is tied to test scores. Teachers feel they are already accountable to parents and students. He recommended a system where parents and students are formally surveyed regarding school performance. He explained that his school used a formal survey developed by a national organization. Any evaluation of school performance should include a measure of the support from school, parents, students and faculty.

Ms. Crimm noted four elements of an effective school accountability plan: (1) asks for input from those that the school is accountable to; (2) schools then use that input to develop a "blueprint" for their school that addresses the specific needs of that school; (3) includes a variety of assessment tools; and (4) calls for schools to reevaluate their school plan using survey results and standardized test scores to identify problems. Testing alone does not identify students who make progress in spite of learning obstacles. It also fails to identify students who are quick learners who are not being served. She emphasized that good teachers want to be accountable.

Ms. Janine Smith, Principal, Parkview Elementary, Salt Lake City School District surveyed over 40 teachers of at-risk students at her school in preparation for her comments to the task force. She stated that teachers are also at risk and feeling threatened. Teachers must have proper and exemplary preservice training. They need to be rewarded more for their experience and knowledge. Tracking students over time and considering their growth can be a benefit to teachers. The legislature should support teachers who are willing to restructure schools so that growth is made. She emphasized that students need to be pre and post tested at a site-based level in order to show significant gains.

Current assessment tools do not address the knowledge and diverse background of multicultural families that are associated with some schools. Schools need smaller class sizes and adequate teaching space, funding for extended day, summer programs and parent teaching

programs, school nurses, resources for truancy officers to address attendance issues, musical instruments (especially in the elementary schools), time to collaborate and be trained, and more assistance with instructional aids and secretarial help.

The Salt Lake City School District applied for and was awarded several grants last year. Business partnerships are needed to fund these grants. She noted the need to teach the vocabulary that will be used in the Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT). It is difficult to ask parents to send children to school when kindergarten is not mandatory. Another idea would be to send distinguished educators to schools to teach teachers and support them. She suggested that funding could be augmented if families could bring school supplies to the school. This could also help parents feel more involved in preparing their children for school.

Mr. Passey and Ms. Crimm expressed support for multifaceted tests and for Utah standards being in line with national standards. Development of tests should continue. These tests should be used to show growth for schools, but not to label them. They recommended adding a community evaluation to the test scores in evaluating the needs of schools.

Ms. Smith spoke in support of diverse ways to assess, especially programs to teach parents. She stated that growth is more important than actual test scores and that a school report card, if done well and accompanied by a school's plan, would be effective and should be publicized. She noted that school personnel also need to be trained how to positively communicate with parents.

Rep. Alexander noted that the intent of the legislation is to indicate to school districts what decisions need to be made and let the districts make them. He reemphasized that the Legislature's intent is not to micro-manage education and make decisions that should be made by the districts.

**3. Comment from State Office of Education** – Steve Laing, Superintendent of Public Instruction, reviewed three major concepts he feels are critical to the process of attempting to set a standard in the state: (1) the importance of using standards, assessment, and the accountability processes as means of informing instruction; (2) the importance of building local capacity and responsibility for student achievement; and (3) the importance of recognizing standards, assessments, and accountability processes as elements of continuous improvement.

He expressed support for the concept of standards and his appreciation for progress toward that end. However, he noted that the concept of using core assessment results has highlighted other needs that require funding.

The State Office of Education supported the passage of H.B. 168 and H. B. 177 during

the 2000 General Session. The bills position the state to utilize criterion referenced information to help schools provide better services to students. Assessment and accountability reporting is critical. Data needs to be consistently obtained and utilized to identify areas of teaching needs and interventions. Superintendent Laing emphasized that data must be high quality, defensible, accurate and be used to identify areas where more instruction or resources are necessary.

Accountability must recognize the context in which a school exists. Assessment of a school's achievement is contingent on instructing students for a period of time sufficient to make a difference. School attendance in Utah is compulsory, but beyond the ultimate control of the school. School achievement will also vary depending on home conditions. If rewards are deemed necessary, they should be limited to that given to Centennial schools and associated with those who have met standards so that resources are saved for more important areas of need. Consequences to schools should be left to the discretion of the local governing board of education.

Superintendent Laing noted that current law requires schools to have plans to meet the literacy requirements, provides funding to improve academic achievement, and requires the reporting of plans to boards of education for approval. Once the standard is set, there needs to be progress toward it and it should be realistic but challenging enough so maintaining it is a worthy goal. He recommended that the task force receive a presentation from Dr. Barbara Lawrence on the process and progress of establishing the individual performance standard and perhaps the concept of establishing school-wide standards. The task force should resist prematurely establishing school performance standards based upon current criterion referenced tests. These tests are being revised and no final decision should be made until the new tests are in use.

The task force should also discuss the trade offs between maximizing the time for instruction and getting assessment results back to the teacher in a timely manner. There is a conflict between having enough time to do the instruction, enough time to administer the assessments, and enough time to do the scoring and maintain the quality of that process to maintain its integrity and make it defensible. This year there were approximately 3 ½ million scores to generate and report, and there is a need to find ways to do that more quickly. He asked the task force to consider if it is better to provide more instruction and have the results come back after school is out or to test earlier in the year, not having had the opportunity to cover all the content, then have results back before the end of the year.

Superintendent Laing concluded by stating that there are three principles the task force should consider: (1) the importance of using all these efforts to inform instruction; (2) the importance of building local capacity; and (3) the importance of considering this as a long-term commitment.

Barbara Lawrence noted that writing assessments give more detailed information about writing than the multiple choice question so teachers know where they need to improve their teaching of writing skills.

**4. Comment from Utah Education Association** – Ms. Pat Rusk, Vice President, Utah Education Association (UEA) distributed and presented the position on benchmarks of her organization. She spoke in favor of standards that are raised over time, criteria for district-submitted plans that are research based, multiple assessment measures, and staff development for educators. She spoke in opposition to labeling and ranking schools. The Legislature should expect results, but allow local boards to determine the path to improvement.

The Legislature should establish a system for fair reporting that includes disaggregating the data by student groups. It should also mandate a standard for on-time attendance with additional resources provided to address it. School counselors and assistant administrators are needed in elementary schools. Also, testing results must be made immediately available to teachers so it can be used to guide instruction. Teachers need training on how to use that data. Professional development classes for both new and veteran teachers to learn how to meet the standards are also needed.

Ms. Rusk cautioned the legislature to consider any potential unintended consequences of what it is considering. She noted that the theme of this year's UEA convention is "Quality schools: How do we know students are learning?"

**5. Columbia University Conference on Accountability** – Superintendent Larry Shumway, Tooele School District, shared information he recently received at an accountability conference held at Columbia University. He discussed three types of standards: (1) core curriculum or content standard; (2) performance standards, and (3) standards of instructional opportunity. He suggested that high standards be set for students of all schools and should assure student success in the future. Although standards can guide school reform, they should not be used to determine a school's achievement rankings. Rankings should be based on student performance.

In addition to content and performance standards, the task force should also consider standards of instructional opportunity, which include supporting adequate teaching tools and facilities. He said that standards of opportunity include better professional development, increased technology instruction, reduced class sizes, and consider the quality of textbooks and their relevance to the core curriculum. He also suggested consideration of the length of instructional day or of the school year.

Utah should consider all standards of achievement, not just inconsequential skills, and determine what makes a world-class instructional opportunity. He encouraged the task force to

look at the research and determine what constitutes an optimum learning environment, irrespective of cost, and present it to the legislature as a model, even if the cost may seem prohibitive.

**6. Overview of Formulas Used in Other States to Categorize Schools and Schools and School Districts** – Jami Momberger, Research Assistant, provided information about other states and their formulas for ranking and categorizing schools based on student achievement. She distributed and reviewed some of those indexes and some of the composites different states use. The task force requested more information, specifically details on North Carolina’s testing system.

The task force discussed agenda items for upcoming meeting discussions.

**7. Other Business –**

The task force will meet with Utah School Boards Association Board of Delegates on Friday, August 25, 2000, 3:00 p.m., Utah School Boards Association, 860 East 9085 South, Sandy, Utah.

Mr. Howe noted the invitation to hear Douglas Reeves speak on Thursday, August 17, 9-12:00 to at Provo High School.

The task force was also invited by Bonnie Morgan, State Office of Education, to hear Mike Hadems speak on the core curriculum revision and the setting of standards.

**MOTION:** Rep. Morgan moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 p.m.

Next Task Force Meeting: Monday, August 28, 2000, 8:30 a.m.