

MINUTES OF THE
Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education
September 11, 2000 -8:30 a.m. - Room 223 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Howard A Stephenson, Chair
Rep. Jeff Alexander, Chair
Sen. Karen Hale
Sen. L. Steven Poulton
Rep. Loraine Pace
Rep. Karen W. Morgan
Rep. LaWanna “Lou” Shurtliff
Rep. John Swallow
Kim Burningham
Lt. Gov. Olene S. Walker
Linda B. Ogden
Ila Rose Fife

Members Excused:

Jill Kennedy

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: It was noted that Representative Swallow was mistakenly not listed as being present at the August 28, 2000 meeting. Rep. Shurtliff moved to approve the minutes of August 28, 2000, as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Education Improvement Initiatives in the Juab School District – Delanie Hathaway, President, Board of Education; Kirk L. Wright, Superintendent; Diane Jacobsen, Elementary teacher; and Will Besinger, High School Teacher; reviewed the assessment and accountability program in the Juab School District. They stated that they completed a strategic plan with input from district staff, parents, and community leaders. Staff development and a new teacher evaluation process are an important part of the initiative. While improvements have been made, the district still wants to improve in the following areas: standards that are spiraled from K-12, time and resources to construct appropriate assessments and align curriculum, and resources for interventions that need to be upgraded.

Superintendent Wright explained that before the district began development of its system, it defined what standards are and are not. The local board of education also adopted a district philosophy on standards. It established a strategy for what the district will do to maximize student achievement. That strategy included measuring student learning based on the College Boards standards, utilizing the state core curriculum for each level in measuring student progress toward system ending standards, developing specific evaluation instruments that measure teacher effectiveness in achieving student results on the college boards and academic competencies, continuing to develop relevant curriculum based on proven academic content, and certifying

student learning based on legitimate mastery of the college board standards. Superintendent Wright also reviewed the formal district assessments currently in place. In grades 5, 8, and 11, students are expected to complete and pass a writing assessment. Beginning this year, students will be tested on a quality reading inventory. Superintendent Wright emphasized that standards should be generic, interdisciplinary, and limited in number. It is also critical that schools invest in quality staff development training

Ms. Jacobsen reviewed how she uses test results in designing further assessment and her instruction for the school year. She stated that the teachers are held accountable, but that the administrators should also be held accountable for teaching their staff the skills they need to improve student achievement.

Mr. Beisinger, a high school science teacher in the Juab School District, explained how he uses assessment results to design his lesson plan. He noted that this program works well with the principal coaching the teacher and gives teachers a better feeling of support.

Superintendent Wright stated that staff development is being funded through career ladder money and experimental funding. He recommended that the task force proceed cautiously and use multiple assessment tools, especially to rate teachers and schools. As principals in his district evaluate the work of teachers, principals use a tracking sheet to document what they are doing to help teachers. He stated that they have tried to eliminate low-level activities, but keep the high level ones.

3. High Stakes Testing in Other States – Lily Eskelsen, who teaches half-time at the Salt Lake City homeless shelter as well as serving in a leadership role with the National Education Association, presented her views on how teachers are teaching and how schools are being managed. She stated that accountability is shared between school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Ms. Eskelsen reviewed the accountability system being used in Florida. Under this system, schools are given a letter grade based on the scores from one test. Schools that receive an “A” or “B” grade are given rewards. For schools that receive an “F,” the parents of students in those schools are given vouchers that allow their children to attend other schools.

Ms. Eskelsen reviewed some of the unintended consequences of the Florida school accountability system. One consequence is that principals have difficulty hiring teachers for low graded schools. This means that administrators must hire low quality teachers. She spoke strongly regarding literacy, but against teachers teaching to a test because students do not receive as well-rounded education.

Rep. Swallow asked how the task force can solicit the ideas of professionals to help improve our schools. Ms. Eskelsen replied that policy makers should first “do no harm.” Simply putting a letter grade on school will not, by itself, lead to improvements. A simple grading system

does not take into account all the complex factors that affect school achievement. There are many indicators that should be examined. One good part of the Florida initiative is its emphasis on national board certification for teachers. Other states, such as North Carolina and Georgia, also encourage teachers to become national board certified.

Obtaining national board certification involves a rigorous process for a teacher. In Florida, a teacher who obtains national board certification is given a ten percent salary increase. A board certified teacher may also receive a ten percent bonus for being a mentor to other teachers. The state of North Carolina pays a teacher \$1,500 towards the national board certification fee.

Sen. Poulton asked if it was not a positive step that the Florida school that Ms. Eskelsen attended was able to increase its test scores in the second year of the accountability program. Ms. Eskelsen said that an increase in test scores did not necessarily mean that the quality of the education in the school improved.

Lt. Gov. Walker asked Superintendent Wright if, in light of Ms. Eskelsen's comments, the Juab School District has a balanced emphasis on academic and non-academic activities. Superintendent Wright noted that the success of a school cannot be measured based solely on an academic test. The effects of other components, such as participation in music and sports, cannot be measured on a standardized test.

Kim Burningham emphasized that all members of the task force are working on the same goal: to help students achieve. In reaching this goal, we must measure what students have learned. For the past several years, the state has attempted to develop an accurate measurement system. The issue now before the task force is how to convey the information collected from this measurement system to parents, teachers, students, and others in the educational community. The task force needs to strike a balance between ensuring the privacy of students while still reporting necessary information. Too much revelation is an invasion of privacy. Teachers also need inservice training on how to use the data that is generated from the testing. However, data should be reported in such a way that students and schools do not feel inferior.

Senator Poulton said that the task force should remember that its goal is to improve the lives of students. He said that based on Ms. Eskelsen's testimony, he believes that some parts of the Florida initiative are positive. The task force needs to find a balance between providing information on how schools are performing while not hindering student motivation.

Mr. James Wilson, Associate General Counsel, reminded the task force that legislation passed last year had specific revisions and components requiring schools to be identified so those needing help can get it.

4. Review and Discussion of Possible School and School District Reporting Formats – Mr. Bryant R. Howe, Research Analyst, distributed and reviewed information on a sample prototype report card for an elementary school that includes most of the data elements required by HB 177. The task force discussed what should and should not be included in the report card. They determined that only the minority percentages when there are more than 10 students needed to be reported.

Rep. Morgan recommended that the State Board of Education, along with the district superintendents, consider what should be reported on the report card, by statute, and make recommendations to this task force.

Dr. Gary Carlston, Associate Superintendent, State Office of Education, stated that under the current school report card law, each district must report certain data. However, each district has chosen its own format on how the data are presented. Districts will often add other data to these district report cards. Under HB 177, a consensus needs to be reached on the format. He suggested that schools submit an electronic format first.

MOTION: Rep. Morgan moved that the State Office of Education, the State Board of Education, and the PTA work with the school districts to establish a format for the report card and present it to the task force at the October 9th meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Barbara Lawrence, Coordinator, Testing and Evaluation, State Office of Education, suggested that the electronic report card be very detailed, but more simplified to go into the homes.

Mr. Howe also reviewed a sample school report card for secondary schools. This report card includes outcomes on end-of-course testing and assessments. He reviewed the data indicators required by HB177 and those that are not, but would have to be required by the SBE.

Rep. Alexander suggested that the task force members come prepared having studied the data elements currently required to be included in school report cards and the proposed additional indicators that are being studied by the State Board of Education. The task force should also be prepared to consider how to weight test scores and what test scores will be reported.

5. Other Business –

The next meeting of the task force will be held on Monday, September 25, 2000.

MOTION: Sen. Poulton moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.