State Testing Review Committee Minutes

June 19, 2014

Illinois State Board of Education Participants:
- Mary O'Brian
- Angela Chamness
- Dan Brown
- Laura Quimby

STRC Members in Attendance:
- Kyle Cole
- Laurie Miller
- Steve Cordogan
- Gene Olsen
- Paul Zavitkovsky
- Jim Shriner
- Melissa Taylor
- Dan Cox
- Rebecca Vonderlack- Navarro
- Steve Murphy
- Jean Korder
- Didi Swartz
- Ben Boer
- Monique Davis

Others:
- Carolyn Mock (NWEA)
Opening remarks and welcome
- Mary O’Brien opened the meeting at 11 a.m. She reminded the members that this committee is a statutory committee meeting to review the state’s testing program.

Introductions
- Each member introduced themselves and stated their position in the education community.

Review/approve meeting minutes
- Members reviewed the minutes of the April 17, 2014 meeting.
- Motion by (Jean or Melissa) to approve, seconded by Jim Shriner, motion carried.

Review of legislative session
- Copies of legislation now sitting on the Governor’s desk to be signed were given to the members. The changes between the current legislation and the proposed legislation were highlighted and discussed, including the removal of reference to specific assessments, the alignment of science grade bands to comply with federal mandates and match Illinois district configurations and the reconfiguration of the State Testing Review Committee. The review and reporting responsibilities of the committee were considered, and members asked that the Superintended provide some guidance on how the committee could be most beneficial to agency and state work. It was noted that a second committee was commissioned for the short-term study of standardized assessment use in districts during the legislative session. Members raised questions about the overlapping interests and responsibilities of the two groups, an intersection that has not yet been clearly defined.

Funding
- A handout providing a basic breakdown of the assessment budget was shared. Numbers are based on actual numbers last year and projected numbers for this year. While grade level student counts are generally stable, an added challenge at high school is trying to calculate numbers for end of course testing in Algebra II, Math III and ELA III because these courses represent students from multiple grade levels. Past student course data does not appear to provide a very clear picture of what the numbers currently represent in terms of universal alignment between course title, the new ILS and the PARCC frameworks. A change in these numbers could impact the distribution of funding within the PARCC contract. As well, the distribution of students at any (and all) grade levels in terms
of testing modality (paper/pencil vs. computer-based) impacts funding within the PARCC contract. It is the hope that any funds within the PARCC contract that are not expended to cover the additional cost of paper/pencil tests may be redistributed to fund additional and optional high school computer-based tests for interested districts. PARCC, ACT/WorkKeys, DLM and ACCESS are the large-scale assessment contracts anticipated and budgeted for FY 2015.

- Issues related to the costs of paper/pencil vs. computer-based PARCC test were raised and discussed. Estimates to date have been made using conservative figures based on preliminary technology readiness data. The committee discussed means of collecting better data and incentivizing the use of computer-based testing. Funding is prohibitive in this regard.

**Transition Planning**

Messaging will be sent out regarding administration of PARCC, ACT and DLM. PARCC will be administered at grades 3-8 and for courses covering the content of ELA III, Algebra II or Math III. PARCC will serve as the accountability assessment for the state. ACT Plus Writing and WorkKeys will be offered to districts, but is not required. Each home district with grade 11 students may decide to have all grade 11 students participate in ACT, WorkKeys, both or neither. The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) is the alternate assessment that will be offered in the 2014-2015 school year for students with the most severe and profound cognitive disabilities.

Concerns about the use of PARCC and acceptance by the higher education community were considered. The need for preliminary data and more research around comparability to current placement exams was raised. These are studies that are planned by the consortium. The existence of a higher education committee within PARCC (ACER) was also mentioned. ACER has been an important voice in making decisions related to college and career ready determinations, and continues to play an important role in defining policy related to higher education and the use of PARCC.

**Preliminary Field Test Survey Results**

- A handout with preliminary field test results was shared. Additional information should be forthcoming in the next few months as additional field test data is returned. We know that Illinois participation in both the performance based assessment (PBA) and end of year (EOY) components of the test was strong, but that test administrator’s expressed some frustration with the technology. Many reported that they did not do a lot of pre-work to prepare for using the technology. There were some issues of sessions timing out on students, which was reported consortium wide.
The manuals were one of the key sources of frustration. They were reported to be too wordy, too lengthy, and generally not user friendly.

There was an issue about how the word “SESSION” was used inconsistently throughout the manuals and training videos to describe different situations. This caused a number of frustrations throughout the field training. Other terminology that is sometimes used interchangeably, such as “component” also needs to be made clearer in its intended use.

The committee discussed the field test notification cycle and how this may or may not have impacted participation and impressions of the test, particularly the technology.

Technology Readiness

The process and use of proctor caching was explained and other tech options were discussed. A spreadsheet was provided as a model of the data being collected related to technology readiness. Meeting participants contemplated the data elements, the difficulty in securing accurate data, and made suggestions for alternate means of gathering the information.

As a means of encouraging the transition to computer-based testing, the committee suggested asking the following questions and/or creating speaking points around the following bullets:

- How do we help your district move forward and make it successful?
- Computer-based assessments and universal design provide greater access for kids
- Computer-based assessments allow for faster turn-around of data
- The timing with changes in the accountability system make this a low-stakes environment and provide an opportunity for setting a new baseline

The group also mentioned that there is a legitimate issue between keyboarding and touch screens for some students, and use of new tools such as the Equation Editor and highlighting tools also have to be addressed through tutorials and use. Some suggestions for assisting districts included a webinar to help districts set up practice tests and providing more concrete indicators around timing and scheduling, which are major concerns for districts.

One participant shared concerns that a colleague mentioned about reading on technology. Passages on a screen are made to fit the width of the screen which is much wider than a page in a book or a column in a periodical. This makes quick reading impossible since our eyes are not trained to read this way. This was shared to bring awareness to the issue.

Suburban districts have the devices and the infrastructure but the trust is not there. They want the assurance that everything will go perfect. Teachers, as
individuals, want to be well prepared. They desire their own software for writing PARCC like items.

**Communication strategies**
- There were a lot of good communication ideas shared during the meeting. If there are any more suggestions, please share them.

**Additional topics**
- Questions were posed about PARCC test accessibility for EL learners and translations.
- A presentation of the IAA standard setting (which had not been done in a number of years) was shared and discussed with the committee. Normally, there are 15 operational items. This year there were 35 items administered, 20 of which were designated as operational post-administration. In addition, the scale score was changed. The two different methods used for the standard setting. Preliminary results are not yet posted – they are due to be posted at the beginning of July.
- A reminder was given about the reconstruction of the STRC member because of a language change in legislation.

**Public Comment**
- No public comments were made by Ms. Mock.

**Future meeting date and location**
- The next STRC meeting will be held in Bloomington on August 4, 2014.

**Adjournment**
- Meeting was adjourned 4:10 p.m.