

Illinois Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Meeting Notes
December 18-19, 2017
University of Illinois, Chicago
1240 W. Harrison St., Suite 1535A

Attendees:

ISBE: Rae; Jason Helfer, Rae Clementz, Claudia Quezada

TAC Members: Laura Hamilton, Mike Russell, Jim Pellegrino, Jeff Broom, Diana Zaleski, David Conley

Center for Assessment: Erika Landl, Chris Domaleski

Introduction

After welcoming the TAC members to Chicago and conducting introductions, the Center outlined the purpose and role of the TAC which is to provide feedback to ISBE that informs the development of technically defensible and practically feasible design decisions. The recommendations from the TAC will be summarized on an interim basis through meeting minutes and ultimately in a final report.

The Center provided an overview of the 2-day agenda, discussed plans for future meetings and outlined the guidelines for TAC engagement. This was followed by a general discussion around the principles and priorities underlying sound accountability design and a brief overview of the requirements of ESSA.

Overview of ISBE State Plan

To set the stage, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) discussed the goals and priorities underlying the state's Consolidated State Plan (CSP) under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provided an overview of the system design. In its overview, ISBE highlighted three principles that influenced the design of the accountability system and the proposed system of support. Specifically, they noted that the system was designed to be: educative – provide information that informs continuous improvement; equitable – not privilege schools based on size, geographic location, students served, etc.; and non-punitive. ISBE also indicated that the system was deliberately designed to identify and utilize district expertise and account for school context to the greatest extent possible.

The TAC posed brief clarifying questions about the state's ESSA plan after which each TAC member was given an opportunity to share their observations about the system overall. A key question posed by the TAC members was the extent to which the different elements of the state's proposed plan were considered fixed versus flexible. ISBE indicated that much of the plan could be considered provisional as they were interested in defining the best solution given ISBE's goals and values.

Specifically the design of the system must identify schools that need to improve and, at the same time, allow for schools that show improvement to move out of identification status.

ISBE's overview in combination with the TAC's individual feedback served to highlight key design priorities and identify future areas for TAC discussion. Key recommendations provided by TAC members include:

- design decisions should be transparent, useful, viable and supported by a clear theory of action
- goals defined within the context of the system must be fair and attainable
- the system must be sensitive to improvement so that schools identified for support have a way to exit
- the definitions and goals around equity must be clearly articulated
- consider the contextual factors that may influence a school's identification as well as the type of supports that are appropriate
- the system must provide information that helps identified schools make informed decisions about how to improve
- constraints influencing the design of the system should be clearly communicated
- carefully consider the corruptibility of proposed measures (especially those typically used in a low stakes context)
- carefully consider the full-range of consequences (positive and negative) associated with the inclusion of proposed measures

The TAC acknowledged that some ideas and recommendations may not be feasible within the context of the state's ESSA plan, but should be recognized as elements for future consideration in the final report.

Academic Growth

Due to its prominence in the system, a key topic identified for review and discussion at this first TAC meeting was academic growth; specifically, how growth should be represented and operationalized within the accountability system. ISBE indicated that the growth measure should serve to highlight schools and educators that are doing a good job at improving their students' knowledge and skills even if that improvement occurred below the threshold of proficiency. Since different measures provide for different inferences about student growth (e.g., descriptive, predictive, value added), the state must articulate what it wants to say about growth (i.e., how it is defined) and select an appropriate approach.

The TAC discussed the linear regression model proposed in the state's ESSA plan. Several TAC members had concerns about using one prior score for this purpose due to potential bias, construct under-representation and regression to the mean. The TAC indicated that including additional reliable information (e.g., test scores)

could improve the quality of growth estimates and should be considered. The TAC suggested the linear regression approach be modeled in multiple ways (i.e., with additional test scores and using demographic covariates) so the implications of different applications could be evaluated.

In addition to linear regression, the TAC recommended modeling school-based growth using a value table approach, similar to that previously implemented, and the PARCC-provided SGPs. Due to concerns about the potential backlash related to the use of SGPs or other models traditionally associated with teacher evaluation, the TAC suggested that any model under consideration be brought to stakeholders for discussion and feedback. Ultimately, any model selected for use will need to be described in a way that is transparent and combats (through example and illustration) established misconceptions (e.g., that certain approaches do not allow schools to move out of the bottom 5% once identified).

The TAC outlined several design principles/characteristics it believed should be valued and considered when evaluating the different approaches to measuring growth for school accountability. These are listed below in the order in which they were discussed.

The state should value approaches that:

1. are relatively straightforward to understand and implement
2. teachers perceive as something they can directly influence
3. minimize school level instability due to n-size
4. minimize correlations with prior year status
5. demonstrate availability of the full distribution of growth outcomes to schools of various demographic compositions (e.g., poverty, SWD, and ELL)
6. are sensitive to changes in student achievement, particularly for students at the low end of the test-score distribution
7. minimize ceiling and floor effects
8. are reliable (i.e., provide for stable results across years in cases where the underlying performance of a school is not changing)¹
9. minimize punitive aspects
10. detect (not mask) important school level effects
11. are robust to changes in state assessment and differences in test characteristics

To the extent possible, existing data will be used to explore the extent to which different approaches support the priorities depicted in bullets 3-8. While there was a brief discussion around performance expectations, it was determined that decisions about “appropriate” or “expected” school-level growth should be deferred to a future meeting.

¹ It is important to note that the goal of accountability systems is to induce desired change which can promote lack of stability from year to year for low performing schools.

Next Steps

Prior to the next meeting, the Center for Assessment will work with ISBE to model several approaches to growth, including the following:

- Linear regression: using the prior year test score, multiple years of test scores, and available covariates such as poverty status and disability status
- Value Tables – original model and unweighted model
- Student Growth Percentiles – using the SGPs provided by PARCC

To the extent possible, the results of each approach will be provided for TAC review and consideration at the next meeting. The consistency of results across the different approaches will also be provided (overall and for different types of schools).

Finally, the TAC recommended estimating growth in high school using available prior measures such as 7/8 PARCC scores. Given the importance of growth within the state's model, and the large weight currently associated with graduation rate, the TAC suggested that the quality and utility of these additional measures were useful to consider.

Progress in English Language Proficiency

As an introduction to this topic, the Center provided a scan of state practices for addressing ELP within the context of ESSA and discussed the growth-to-standard approach currently outlined within IL's consolidated plan. This approach requires students to close the gap between their current performance and the score necessary to be deemed proficient on the ACCESS 2.0 (i.e., 4.8) within 5 years.

The Center also provided an overview of research addressing factors which influence the probability a student will reach ELP; specifically a student's level of English proficiency when he/she enters the program and his/her age. Since these factors are not considered in the state's proposed model, the TAC suggested evaluating the feasibility of the proposed 5-year exit criterion using WIDA norms (i.e., For which students is this target reasonable and for whom is it probabilistically rare?)

A key policy question noted by the TAC was whether student progress toward exit should be rewarded if it is not at a level that will ultimately result in a student exiting ELL status within 5 years. The TAC discussed this issue using a 2x2 matrix, reflecting combinations of adequate (i.e., growth rate sufficient to exit on time) and typical (i.e., that which would be expected given a student's age/starting level) growth.

	Adequate Growth	
Typical Growth	Yes	No
Yes	Always favorable	?
No	?	Always unfavorable

The TAC indicated that a model which sets unrealistic annual targets may have negative consequences for students who are clearly not on track, therefore growth to target trajectories that account for grade and starting proficiency may be more appropriate than the currently proposed procedure.

To inform future work related to this indicator, the TAC suggested that ISBE consider the following questions and activities:

- Explore trajectories based on the current approach (equal interval) to evaluate the reasonableness of the standard 5-year expectation for students (overall and by grade).
- Collect and provide the TAC with technical information about WIDA and the ACCESS scale.
- Talk to other states that are using WIDA/ACCESS 2.0 to see what they are doing and what is working well.
- Determine which schools are/are not likely to meet N-size requirements, and the potential impact of non-inclusion on overall school performance given the current design.
- Consider the feasibility of an approach in which schools receive credit for EL students that demonstrate skills related to academic success (e.g., attend school, engage in challenging courses, achieve good grades, etc.)

Future Meetings:

January 23: 9:00-12:00CT (WebEx)

March 6-7: 8:30-4:30 on the 6th; 8:30-12:00CT on the 7th

April 2-3: 12:00-4:30 on the 2nd; 8:30-4:30 on the 3rd

April 30: 12:00-3:00CT (WebEx)