

Assessment Review Task Force

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

100 North First Street, Alzina Building, VTEL Room, 3rd Floor, Springfield, Illinois

100 West Randolph, James R. Thompson Center, VTEL Room, 14th Floor, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance

Task Force Members:

Michael Beyer

Caroline Bilicki

Lewis Cavallo Jr.

Linda Chapa LaVia (Rep.)

Kathy Davis

Sean German

Angela Henderson

Brad Hutchison

Rhonda G. Jenkins

Kimberly Lightford (Sen.)

Jaimie Lodge

Cathy Mannen (Co-Chair)

Susie Morrison (Co-Chair)

Gene Olsen

Lynne Panega

Terri Pigott

Bob Pritchard (Rep.)

Monique Redeaux

Julie Schaid

Kelly Sholtis

Rosemary Swanson

Members of the Public:

Amy Alsop

Jacob Mishook

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Staff:

Nicki Bazer

Mary O'Brian

Diana Zaleski

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff:

Jayne Sowers

Mariann Lemke

Thi Tran

Meeting Objectives

1. Orient members to the charges of the task force as outlined in Public Act 098-1075.
2. Review bylaws and vote on adoption.
3. Introduce the balanced assessment initiative.
4. Introduce resources available to support the charges of the task force.
5. Develop a plan for completing the charges of the task force.

Welcome and Introductions (Call to Order)

The first meeting of the ISBE Assessment Review Task Force began shortly after 1 p.m. on December 16, 2014. A total of 21 task force members joined the meeting from ISBE offices in Springfield and Chicago as well as two members on the phone. Co-chairs, Cathy Mannen, educator from Dr. Howard Elementary School, Champaign Unit 4 School District, and Susie Morrison, the Deputy Superintendent and Chief

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Education Officer of ISBE, welcomed the task force and asked the facilitation team members to introduce themselves. Dr. Diana Zaleski, Project Administrator, ISBE, introduced herself as did facilitator, Dr. Jayne Sowers, from MWCC at American Institutes for Research, and her support team Mariann Lemke and Thi Tran. Dr. Sowers asked task force members to introduce themselves and to state their role, such as in a school or district, or as a legislator. The variety of professions and roles indicated adherence to the requirements of the Act for specific task force members. The co-chairs asked if any public attendees were present, with one person responding in Springfield.

Meeting Protocols

Dr. Zaleski reviewed the requirements of completing the Ethics and Open Meeting Act (OMA) trainings and thanked those who had completed the trainings. The co-chairs presented a handout on *Robert's Rules of Order*, and participants reviewed the document to increase the use of methodical system and process. Dr. Sowers reminded the task force of the two meeting sites for each meeting, one in Springfield and one in Chicago, as well as the phone for those unable to attend in person. Dr. Sowers informed task force members that the meetings are open to the public and are of public record; therefore, the meetings are audio-recorded and documented by a note taker. Transcription and minutes will be available to the task force for approval at the next meeting. Co-Chair Morrison reviewed the state of Illinois assessment task force bylaws. Co-Chair Mannen requested a motion to accept the bylaws. Swanson motioned to accept the bylaws. Senator Lightford seconded the motion. The group took a verbal vote, with those in favor saying "Aye" and those opposed saying "Nay." The motion passed, with a majority in favor of accepting the bylaws.

Task Force Charge

Co-chair Morrison presented the charges of the task force, from Public Act 098-1075, as follows:

- Review the content and design of standardized assessments.
- Review the time and money expended to prepare for standardized assessments as measured against the purpose of the assessment.
- Review parent, student, and educator perceptions of the level and intensity of standardized assessments.
- Review other issues involving standardized assessments identified by the task force.

Co-Chair Morrison reminded the task force members that they must report findings, not recommendations, to the governor and general assembly no later than May 31, 2015.

Balanced Assessments (Presentation)

Dr. Zaleski presented on balanced assessment to the task force. Major points included the following:

- Balanced assessment system definition: The strategic use of formative, interim, and summative measures in student performance to address immediate student needs to inform ongoing instructional changes and guide long-term educational improvement.
- Formative assessments provide regular feedback, discussions, and assignments that allow educators to focus on how students need to be supported or challenged.

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- Interim Assessments are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction. Examples of interim assessment may include but are not limited to mid-year assessments, unit or chapter assessments, as well as authentic or performance-based assessments.
- Summative Assessments are designed to measure overall curriculum and program effectiveness. These assessments are standardized to allow comparison across student groups. Examples of summative assessments may include but are not limited to authentic or performance-based assessments with an accompanying rubric; end of course or year assessments; and a portfolio that has been used to collect samples of student work throughout the course or school year.

Dr. Zaleski stated that districts may create balanced assessment systems through the selection and use of quality local assessments.

Achieve Tool (Presentation)

Dr. Zaleski introduced Dr. Jacob Mishook from Achieve to explain the *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*. Dr. Mishook explained that district teams may use the inventory tool to take stock of their assessments and assessment strategy from a student perspective. The tool supports a process by which districts evaluate assessments students are currently taking; determine the minimum amount of assessment information necessary for essential diagnostic, instructional, and accountability purposes; and work to ensure that every district-mandated assessment is of high quality, is providing the information necessary for specific district purposes, and is supported by structures and routines that ensure assessment results are used to benefit students.

Dr. Mishook noted that the tool is adaptable for local district use. Dr. Mishook noted four stages of the inventory process including reflecting and planning, conducting the inventory, analyzing the inventory, and making recommendations. Dr. Mishook emphasized the importance of the types of questions asked, whether they are basic information questions, use or purpose questions, or operational questions. Dr. Zaleski informed the task force that an adapted version of the inventory tool is available online on the ISBE website. Dr. Zaleski stated that task force members should feel free to provide feedback and fill out an online survey regarding the tool. Co-Chair Morrison opened up the floor for questions after the presentation.

Review of Task Force Goals (Open Discussion)

Questions from the task force focused on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment and state-mandated standardized assessments. Co-chair Morrison reiterated the task force's goals of collecting data from five percent of Illinois schools as described in the Act specific to:

- Content and design of standardized assessments.
- Time and money expended to prepare for standardized assessments as measured against the purpose of the assessment.
- Parent, student, and educator perceptions of the level and intensity of standardized assessments.

Senator Lightford explained the history of the Public Act 98-1075, noting that some legislators felt "discomfort" in passing the PARCC assessment requirement. She noted that the task force will help school

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districts and the legislature determine if the PARCC assessment is working and providing appropriate feedback for teachers. Dr. Cavallo, Jr. commented that while the number of official required state assessments has not increased, state initiatives often lead to increases in assessments, for example with educator evaluation requirements or response to intervention. He suggested that the task force needs to look at the whole picture to determine the required assessments through the various initiatives—not only PARCC. Dr. Panega expressed her concern at the high school level and how assessments will affect high school districts. Swanson inquired of Senator Lightford as to the goal of the task force—whether it was to analyze state-driven assessment systems or individual district assessments. Senator Lightford responded that the state legislature’s goal was twofold: 1) to work alongside the newly established assessment model and 2) to simultaneously provide feedback on what is working or not working. She stated her purpose for the task force is to ensure information comes back to the legislature regarding funding, procedures, and overall opinions on the assessments. Olsen commented that the task force is a great opportunity for stakeholders to share perspectives and ideas to work toward a common goal. Co-chair Mannen emphasized that the task force members keep in mind the goal at hand and that all decisions made at a local level are connected to the PARCC statewide assessment. According to Co-chair Mannen, “There needs to be a holistic view.”

Dr. Pigott commented that formative and interim assessments are driven locally and at the school level. Good superintendents, principals, and teachers will administer formative and interim assessments locally. The task force has to be attentive to the local needs of schools. Bilicki commented that stakeholders generally have additional goals or purposes for serving on the task force. She asked who is ultimately accountable. Senator Lightford replied that she will compile the data and findings and will guide the legislature to the next steps. If the districts find anything helpful, she will draft an approach to move forward. Beyer commented that if ISBE could delay the PARCC assessment for a year, it would allow the discussion and feedback window about PARCC to continue. Dr. Panega commented that high school districts are vocal, and they are asking for a delay in the administration of the PARCC assessment for one year. She emphasized that high school superintendents are frustrated.

Dr. Henderson commented that she was glad to hear the clarification of the PARCC assessment. She inquired if funding will continue for other assessments, such as the ACT or SAT, when the PARCC is implemented. Dr. Cavallo Jr. commented that only PARCC will be recognized as the state assessment measure for accountability purposes. He emphasized the favorability of balanced assessments and inquired if ISBE will consider that idea.

Dr. Zaleski addressed the idea of using balanced assessments and highlighted the importance of the PARCC assessment in providing high-quality, meaningful information. Co-Chair Morrison stated that she believes in the balanced assessment system and emphasized how the task force should move forward and will need to remember the requirements from the U.S. Department of Education (USED). She informed the task force that the USED and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act require state accountability systems that include a state standardized assessment. The assessment must align to the state’s education standards and testing must occur for students in Grades 3–8 and one time in high school.

ISBE Superintendent Koch has asked USED in writing for a delay in the implementation of PARCC and has received a verbal “no” but is still waiting for a written response. Other states have asked the same question and have received similar negative replies. She noted the administration of PARCC to all students holds Illinois accountable for helping students achieve and meet the state standards. If Illinois does not meet the requirement of administering PARCC, the state, districts, and schools could lose billions of federal dollars.

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Dr. Zaleski commented that the task force could help to streamline local assessments. Dr. Cavallo Jr. commented that districts still must use local assessment even though they may have choices in which ones. Assessments are required for RTI, educator evaluations, and other initiatives. German commented that inconsistency exists regarding which assessments districts may or may not purchase. Dr. Panega reminded task force members about the advanced placement (AP) assessments. She questioned as to if the task force could include a College Board member. Dr. Schaid inquired how PARCC is affecting ACT and AP assessments. Dr. Panega responded that the testing calendar is affected with an excessive amount of testing in the second semester for high school students.

Co-Chair Morrison noted that elementary assessments are replacing key instructional time, noting that the assessments are purposeful but not balanced. Senator Lightford commented that if the state does not have a balanced assessment system, it should determine which assessments are the best and promote those to achieve a balance. She reminded task force members of the different levels, regions, districts, and differences that exist between elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions. The discussion and findings from this task force related to those issues are what the Senator would like to see reported.

Olsen commented that the task force should produce findings that will serve the end users, students—and how to foster their learning and growth as the priority. He proposed the plan of writing down the group's questions, addressing the questions, conversing about the situations, allowing transparency, moving forward, and problem solving as a group. The value of assessments must be determined for all ages from prekindergarten to college. Dr. Schaid commented that the task force be careful in looking at assessments in isolation of standards. After the task force has finished, it should have findings that help students and parents understand what college and career readiness is.

Co-Chair Mannen noted that most of the comments had been from the task force members seated in Chicago and asked those attending in the Springfield ISBE office for their comments. Hutchison commented that he is looking at the focus of the task force as a systems approach: "How do we make assessments meaningful within our parameters, funding, guidelines, and standards?" Davis commented that, starting next year, kindergarten surveys will be a required assessment. She also is concerned about assessment tools and the use of them from a state level versus the interpretation of them on the local level. Lodge commented that the task force needs to gather data in the areas of a needs assessment; assessments currently used, and mandates related to use of assessments. These results could be compared to the state, district or local requirements. She sees developing an action plan and moving forward with collecting data as required in the Act.

Jenkins reminded the task force that parents need more understanding of assessments, noting that schools are still learning about the PARCC assessment and that parents are well behind in information about PARCC. She suggested how to work with other parent teacher associations and parent groups involved in preparing students for the test. Co-Chair Mannen concluded the open discussion by stating further comments or questions could be shared on the posted paper at the front of the room.

Determining How to Address the Charges

Dr. Sowers, as facilitator, reviewed the three task force charges and emphasized that the task force now needed to determine ways to address the charges and ultimately create a backward map from May 31, 2015, to meet the deadline. The two sites worked independently to consider ideas for meeting the charges,

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including how to collect the needed data. The ideas needed to adhere to three criteria: be focused on local assessments, be of no cost to administer and compile, and be able to be completed in a timely manner.

Co-Chair Mannen summarized the recommendations developed by the task force members seated in the Springfield ISBE office for those attending in the Chicago office. The Springfield task force members spent most of its time working through Charge 1: Reviewing the content and design of standardized assessments. Task force members agreed that the Achieve survey tool would be beneficial and useful with adaptations.

Key factors that the task force wants to understand better before developing the tool include the list of mandates from the state, the mandate process, student objectives, and how to incorporate student growth. The group commented that the task force should use a survey tool for local districts and schools. The tool should be online, with drop-down response boxes and open-ended questions. The group noted that, at times, different funding sources require different assessments to serve as evaluation of progress, which adds an additional assessment for students and teachers. The group commented that different people will answer the second charge differently (Charge 2: Reviewing time and money expended). The group concluded that there needs to be a school or district team that addresses the surveys to answer Charges 1 and 2 and that includes teachers' voices.

Those task force members seated in Chicago agreed with the majority of the comments presented by Co-Chair Mannen. They inquired who would be included in the sample population of data collection. Co-Chair Mannen responded that the sample population will consist of five percent of districts across the state according to the Act, although those attending in Springfield discussed that perhaps ten percent should be sought to achieve a five percent response rate. She suggested a few variables for selection of a variety of districts or schools other than those listed in the Act, for example, districts that have implementation for growth; half-day kindergarten versus full day kindergarten; or schools with different financial resources.

Dr. Cavallo Jr. commented that he would feel comfortable with these ideas and sending out an online survey to districts. However, he expressed concern as to whether the online survey would include parents. He feels that they will not be able to complete the survey. Those in Springfield, although not yet determining ways to address Charge 3 (Review of parent, student, and educator perceptions), agreed that parents would need a different survey. Those in Springfield discussed who should complete the survey. They considered curriculum and assessment coordinators, school leadership teams, and teachers. Dr. Zaleski questioned whether bringing together collaborative teams is feasible.

Dr. Panega commented that administrators and teachers at the high school level are exhausted. High schools would welcome the idea of an online survey, but they are still struggling with the PARCC assessment. Lodge suggested that ISBE send the surveys through electronic mailing lists that are already in existence and that represent active bodies and teams that are already in place. Dr. Mishook commented that if there is a difficulty between the rigorous timetable to complete the survey and report (by May 31) and the amount of information in the Achieve tool, then not every aspect of the tool is needed. There are other avenues to use this tool and process for a longer time frame and larger audience. Dr. Schaid commented that the group needs to have a reasonable timetable.

The prior comments led into a further discussion regarding drafting a plan of action and the necessary steps to move forward. The task force commented that there needs to be two different strategies, one for the districts and one for the parents. Logistically, the task force believes they will start with the Achieve tool and draft a survey. Dr. Zaleski asked the task force if they would want to draft a version of the survey using

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the Achieve tool and on completion of that step, at the next task force meeting, if they would review and provide feedback on the draft. Dr. Pigott inquired what variables they are to use and whether this sampling would be stratified. Dr. Zaleski responded by asking the task force if they would want draft options for sampling procedures. She informed the task force that the next scheduled meeting is on January 5 followed by a February 2, 2015, meeting. Dr. Pigott expressed concern that the task force needs to meet in January to draft a survey and be timely.

Co-Chair Mannen brought the task force back to the original discussion, which was to determine how to move forward to Charge 2: Review time and money expended to prepare for standardized assessments as measured against purpose of the assessment, and asked them to consider ways to address this charge. The task force did not provide ideas for Charge 2 except to include it as part of the district survey. Co-Chair Mannen asked the task force about Charge 3: Parent/student perceptions, noting that this charge requires qualitative data, which are harder to capture. The data have real-life impact on students and teachers beyond cost and time. Co-chair Mannen concluded the activity by informing the task force that the next goal of the meeting was to backward plan and create a timetable of tasks to accomplish. Dr. Sowers reminded the task force that the Public Act requires them to meet at least four times. The dates and times are flexible although it must be when the video-teleconferencing rooms are available.

Creating a Plan (Next Steps)

The task force began a discussion about the next steps and how to prepare for the next task force meeting. Dr. Pigott commented that the next step, if the task force agreed, is to form a list of questions for a draft of the survey. The task force would use the survey tool from Achieve and have the final survey complete and sent to the respondents as soon as possible. Dr. Cavallo Jr. commented that he agrees with these actions and that after ISBE drafts the questions, the next meeting will allow the task force to review and discuss the questions.

Dr. Zaleski commented she would collect the information from the task force members on which questions they think should be on the survey and draft a survey. Swanson agreed that ISBE and Dr. Zaleski should draft the questions. She reminded Dr. Zaleski that she should send the task force members questions that she feels are needed for drafting the survey, if the OMA bylaws ensure that there is no violation in collecting information from task force members to draft a survey without a formal meeting.

Co-Chair Mannen opened the floor to the Springfield task force members to comment on the discussion. Dr. Panega inquired if it will be difficult to address the different levels of elementary, middle, and high schools within a district. Hutchison responded that the survey should have a drop-down menu to allow teachers and school administrators to respond to their school level. Bilicki asked if charter schools would be included in the data collection. Dr. Zaleski responded that she does not know and this would need to be answered. Dr. Cavallo Jr. informed the task force that he believed the legislation will not apply to charter schools as many state mandates do not apply to charter schools. Olsen commented that “collar counties” (those surrounding Chicago) should be represented somehow in the survey. This is in response to the Act’s description of the sampling:

...at least 5% of school districts that represent a regionally equal sampling selected from among those counties of this State other than Cook County and the 5 counties contiguous to Cook County and shall include a school district located in a city having a population over 500,000 [Chicago].

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Dr. Angela Henderson commented that the survey should include attitudes and perceptions of the level and intensity of standardized assessments. Dr. Pigott commented that parents need a different survey because of their lack of understanding of the full picture of assessments. Bilicki commented that even informed parents do not know everything at the school level. Dr. Henderson commented on the importance of figuring out what the task force wants to understand from the parents. Dr. Cavallo Jr. reminded the task force that it is easy to influence results from perception surveys.

Co-Chair Mannen concluded the discussion by asking the task force if January 5, 2015, was an appropriate date to meet and, if not, what would be an alternative date. A task force member proposed that the meeting be changed to Monday, January 12, 2015. The co-chairs will check their calendars for availability, and Dr. Zaleski will check the availability of the conference rooms. Co-chair Mannen opened the floor for public attendees to express their comments; they made none.

Adjourn

A task force member motioned for the meeting to adjourn at 4 p.m., and several members of the task force seconded.