

# Assessment Review Task Force

## Subcommittee Meeting Summary

Monday, March 30, 2015

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Illinois Federation of Teachers

500 Oakmont Lane, VTEL Room, Westmont, Illinois 60559

700 South College, VTEL Room, Springfield, Illinois 62704

Conference Call Number: 1-888-494-4032; Access Code: 7066563739

### Attendance

#### Subcommittee Task Force Members:

Michael Beyer	Bob Pritchard (representative)	Rosemary Swanson
Cathy Mannen (co-chair)	Susie Morrison (co-chair)	

#### Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Staff:

Diana Zaleski	Susie Morrison
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#### Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff:

Rachel Trimble	Thi Tran
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#### Guests

Amy Alsop	Sherry Teafin
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### Meeting Objectives

1. Review draft report
2. Finalize report for presentation to the Assessment Review Task Force on April 6, 2015

### Welcome

The subcommittee task force met on March 30, 2015, at Illinois locations in Westmont and Springfield (see above). Five subcommittee task force members and two guests attended the meeting. Co-chair Mannen opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Dr. Diana Zaleski then presented the agenda and objectives for the meeting.

### Draft Report Review

Dr. Zaleski noted that explanatory text would be needed to supplement the data tables. The subcommittee task force members expressed concern about the number of respondents and the methodology of sampling. The subcommittee indicated interest in extending the deadline of the public act in order to produce high-quality results that are representative of the State of Illinois. Subcommittee members agreed that they should produce a draft summary of their concerns and present it to the larger task force at the next Assessment Review Task Force meeting on April 6, 2015. Representative Pritchard confirmed these concerns and emphasized the need for more information. Co-chair Mannen summarized the subcommittee's thoughts and noted that the majority of the subcommittee has agreed to look at the data, identify what is missing, and define further information to be collected. The

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subcommittee will present these concerns to the larger task force and will identify a reasonable extension deadline.

## Subcommittee Report Summary

1. Survey responses were not representative of the state or the four subgroups—students, parents, teachers, superintendents—on a regional basis (tables 1–8).
2. A patchwork of tests is currently being used across Illinois to fulfill federal accountability requirements and requirements imposed by program mandates, grants, and educator evaluations. Presently, combinations of at least 20 tests are reportedly being used throughout Illinois for those purposes (tables 11–20).
3. Responding districts noted very few local assessments in addition to those already identified as used to fulfill mandated requirements (Tables 11 and 16).
4. One third of the tests used in elementary districts to fulfill mandated requirements did not appear to have value for local assessment purposes. There were not enough responses from high schools to fairly or accurately analyze this impact (Tables 11 and 16).
5. A wide range of time is reportedly spent on assessments. The range and standard deviation make it difficult to accurately determine the actual amount of time currently being devoted to assessments. Nonetheless, the bulk of time is reportedly spent on required assessments as opposed to those used for local purposes (tables 21–23).
6. By district, the number of tests reportedly administered to fulfill mandated purposes is about the same as the number of tests administered for local purposes and generally clusters from one to four. However, many districts reportedly administered no assessments for either purpose (tables 15 and 20).
7. About the same amount of money per student was reportedly spent on assessments used for mandated purposes as for local purposes (\$35). Collar counties (the five counties that border Chicago’s Cook County; i.e., the counties of Dupage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) reported a dramatically lower assessment cost per student (\$12).
8. The ratio of total negative comments (“Disadvantages”) to total positive comments (“Advantages”) was highest for federal accountability assessments and lowest for assessments used for local purposes. Negative comments were focused on loss of instructional time (mentioned by almost every teacher), disruption of schedules, student stress, and narrowing of curricular focus (tables 26–31).

## Suggested Changes to the Report

1. Appendix B should be organized by grade level of assessment, adding a column for average time to administer and a column for the typical time of year in which the instrument is administered.
2. Table 1 should include the total number of districts surveyed.
3. Remove the percent symbol in tables 1–3 because it is neither necessary nor meaningful.
4. Table 4 should group counties by region surveyed.
5. Comments by the subgroups should be organized by category; e.g., cost, time required, conflicts with instruction, competition for computer access.

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6. Create a new table of all the tests, with columns for “mandated” and “local” under each district type (i.e., elementary, high school, unit), summarizing tables 11 and 15.

## Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Ask the legislature for an extension of the final report deadline.
2. Given the school year and legislative calendar, it seems appropriate that we extend the final report deadline to December 2015.
3. We should re-administer the survey to obtain a better representation of the subgroups and regions.
  - a. Form a subcommittee to rewrite the survey, including items that elicit information on the number of times an assessment is administered, loss of class time, availability of computer laboratories, conflicts with multi-grade classes, and time and money invested in test-preparation resources.
4. We should develop a distribution method that will achieve better response results.
  - a. The state superintendent should directly communicate the need to respond to selected districts.
  - b. Selected districts should place the survey on their websites.
  - c. The survey should be publicized and made available state-wide.
  - d. Task force members should encourage their respective organizations to respond.

## Next Steps

The subcommittee determined that co-chair Mannen would lead the discussion at the task force meeting in Bloomington, Illinois, on April 6, 2015. Co-chair Mannen will present the topics discussed by the subcommittee, identify information that is missing from the instrument, and express the subcommittee’s recommendation that a subcommittee be created to develop the instrument. In addition, co-chair Mannen will describe alternative methods of distributing the survey to maximize responses and will suggest an extension to the public act report deadline. These suggestions and concerns will have to be accepted by the larger task force before any decisions or actions can be taken. Dr. Zaleski will send e-mail messages to task force members to inform them of the topics and decisions to be made at the next task force meeting.

## Additional Information of Note

- It was suggested that we consider a third-party organization to conduct the research.
- Rosemary Swanson does not intend to run for reelection. Consequently, Rosemary will no longer be a member of the assessment review task force after May 2015.

## Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.