

Illinois Assessment and Accountability Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Meeting Summary and Action Items

April 8, 2020

Via Webinar

UPCOMING MEETING

June 4th Webinar

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This document presents a summary of the key discussion points from the IL TAC meeting held via webinar on April 8, 2020.

This summary does not present verbatim minutes and, in general, avoids attribution of comments to specific individuals. The meeting summary is intended to document the salient discussion points which are often the result of input from multiple individuals.

A recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

ATTENDEES

ISBE: Rae Clementz, Jason Hefler

TAC Members: Jeff Broom, Chris Domaleski, Ellen Forte, Laura Hamilton, Erika Landl, Jim Pellegrino, Mike Russell, Diana Zaleski

Center for Assessment: Damian Betebenner and Adam Van Iwaarden

2019-2020 ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTING

Chris Domaleski began the meeting by reviewing the agenda. He emphasized that the focus of the meeting would be to address the near and longer-term issues raised by school closures and disruptions due to the threat COVID-19.

Subsequently Rae provided an update on the impact of school closure and state's response:

- IL requested a full waiver of assessment and accountability requirements and that has been approved. 2019 accountability designations will be carried forward in 2020. However, the state is not exempt from reporting on all elements, so one focus of this meeting is to discuss what and how information can be reported.
- The ACCESS window opened and closed prior to school disruptions. The state has 100% of these data so decisions related to exiting EL services can be supported in 2019-2020.
- All other accountability data are missing or incomplete. There is uncertainty about how to move forward, which is the focus of some of the TAC's discussion today.

Thereafter, the TAC and ISBE considered some specific questions about the data that are available and how to proceed. While there are some accountability elements that are largely intact, there are questions about whether it can be interpreted and used in a manner similar to previous years. For example, 9th grade on-track and graduation rate fall in this category, because district practices for waiving graduation criteria or awarding course credit will vary.

Rae presented an overview of information the state reports highlighting implications for reporting and use. Then, the TAC reviewed and discussed each ESSA school accountability indicator noting dependencies and potential implications for interpretation and use. The outcome of this discussion is summarized in the following table:

Indicators	Condition/ Dependencies	Implications
ELA/Math/Science Achievement	No information in 2020	Threats to opportunity to learn may necessitate setting new long-term and interim targets for accountability (i.e. don't assume 2020 targets can be shifted to 2021).
Growth (ELA/Math)	No growth in 2020. Prior year assessment results required to calculate growth in 2021.	If growth can be produced (e.g. using 2 year prior) the outcome may not be comparable to results in 2019. This may require guidance for appropriate interpretation and new performance expectations.
Grad Rate	Presently, the impact of school closures on graduation rate remain uncertain. Policies for awarding credit and determining diploma eligibility differ. Whatever happens for 2020 will have an impact in future years because percentage of 4-year graduates impacts percentage in 5 and subsequently 6-year rates.	There is the potential for factors that could depress or artificially inflate graduation rate. Guidance for appropriate and interpretation and use will require additional research and analyses.
Chronic Absenteeism	Attendance not calculated (in a consistent standardized manner) following school closures. It may be possible to calculate based on partial year (i.e. end-date pre-closure).	While chronic Absenteeism does not necessarily have an explicit time-based dependency, current performance expectations are based on a typical academic year. It is unclear if partial year data can be interpreted in a similar manner. TAC advises extreme caution regarding interpretation and use in 2020.
Climate Survey	These data are largely intact because	Because not all districts are included, it

	it's administered in early Nov and closes in Jan/Feb (except for Chicago Public Schools (CPS)).	likely cannot be reported in 2020.
EL Progress toward proficiency	Data are expected to be complete and intact.	All data were collected prior to school closures. Typical interpretation, use, and reporting should be supported.
9 th Grade on-track	Variability of practices for awarding credit raises questions about the utility of the data.	If reported it is important to provide guidance for appropriate interpretation and use.

In general, the TAC advises ISBE to only move forward with descriptive reporting in 2020 where possible (see notes in table above) with clear caveats as regarding appropriate interpretation and use.

CONCEPTUALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR 2020-21 AND BEYOND

Next the TAC shifted to discussion of accountability implications for 2020-21 and beyond. Chris Domaleski provided a conceptual foundation to start the discussion. He acknowledged the many dependencies that prohibit a return to ‘status quo’ in 2021. Therefore, it may be best to think of 2021 as a ‘transitional’ year preceding a new baseline year in 2022. This presents an opportunity for ISBE to explore some improvements and innovations during the transition, such as expanding measures of college/ career readiness and other ‘meta-indicators.’

The TAC emphasized there are many elements that will need to be addressed if performance classifications are to be produced in 2021 such as: goals, interim targets, weights, and aggregation rules. It will almost certainly be necessary for the U.S. Department of Education to provide some flexibility through amendments or waivers to permit ISBE the time and flexibility to analyze and implement these changes.

The TAC and ISBE emphasized the importance of building toward stability in the future and minimizing the frequency of disruptions or changes in the model. It appears 2022 will be the earliest that a new, more expansive and stable model could be in place. However, this is also influenced by potential changes in the assessment system, which are a prominent part of the accountability model. Stability can’t be achieved until the process of design, development, and standard setting for assessments are complete.

More broadly, the TAC considered what current situation reveals about the education system that influences thinking about the future of accountability, reporting, and support. For example, should the

state consider promoting and/or tracking access to technology, engagement, and ability to support distributed learning?

Moreover, the TAC emphasized the importance of focusing on inequalities and how the current situation could exacerbate achievement gaps. Tracking the short and longer term implications of the disruption on opportunity to learn for all groups is important. One TAC member suggested focusing on inputs (e.g. access to resources) as well as outcomes. This doesn't necessarily mean that input should be the focus of high stakes accountability, but could inform the state's approach to reporting and providing support.

With respect to the timeline, any changes that would impact report cards for 2021 would need to be determined by February of 2021.

Ultimately, the TAC was open to the idea of a 'transitional system' in 2021 and suggested ongoing emphasis on topics related to indicators and system design at future meetings.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GROWTH

Next, Damian led a discussion about the challenges for calculating growth and some alternatives to consider. Obviously, the chief barrier to calculating growth in 2021 is the lack of state summative assessment in 2020 to serve as a prior. One alternative is to use priors from 2019 as a condition for 2021 growth estimates. To explore this alternative, the Center proposes to work with ISBE to analyze legacy data such as 2017 to 2019 growth estimates and 2016 to 2018 estimates.

The TAC discussed what analyses would be useful to produce which could include: comparison of SGPs and MGPs in each condition, relationship of growth estimates to status and key demographic variables (e.g. percent of students in poverty) in each condition. In the best case, subjecting the alternative (i.e. 2 year) approach for calculating growth to all the criteria the TAC previously developed to evaluate growth is desirable.

Damian also suggested it would be valuable to use growth estimates to better understand the differential impact of the pandemic on student groups. Essentially, this involves treating the cohorts as fixed effects and evaluate changes in growth estimates from 19-21 versus 17-19.

A broader and likely more challenging issue is producing guidance for appropriate interpretation and use of growth estimates produced with older priors. TAC expressed concern that growth estimates produced with this methodology could be treated as comparable. We can do it statistically, but it is important to understand it conceptually.

In general, TAC was skeptical that any growth estimates based on older priors should be used for high-stakes school accountability. Sharing them as descriptive statistics to help understand the 'pandemic effect' (via comparisons to similar legacy analyses) may be helpful, however.

One TAC member suggested trying to investigate an upper/lower threshold for growth estimates that would signal a higher probability of sustained improvement or decline that is likely not due to a 'v-shaped' decline and subsequent improvement in 2020 and 2021. This is an acknowledgment that we'll likely have more confidence making inferences from the extreme estimates than distinguishing degrees of difference in the 'messy middle.' This is true in most any year, but especially important with the span of time between the prior and the outcome measure are more distal.

Ultimately, the TAC agreed that proceeding with the analyses would be helpful, after which the TAC can review results with ISBE to provide guidance for next steps.