

**Accountability and Assistance  
Advisory Council  
March 11, 2009  
Worcester Technical High School  
Minutes**

Attendance: Andrew Churchill, Dr. Deborah Dancy, Dr. Judy DeLucia, Joseph Esposito, Dr. Anders Lewis, Annie McKenzie, Beverly Miyares, Linda Noonan, Dr. John Portz, Dr. Pat Schettini, Steven Sharek, Susan Therriault; Eva Mitchell, Catherine Sullivan, Tyreese Thomas, Dr. Karla Baehr, (ESE)

**1. Deputy Commissioner's Update**– Deputy Commissioner Karla Baehr provided updates on the Fall River district review and the Regional State System of Support. *questions and clarifications*

- The Council asked that the protocols used for the Fall River review be made available.
- ESE coordination with the Readiness Centers should ensure that criteria are in place to evaluate the quality of services to districts. There needs to be a balanced approach with a focus on school and district improvement.

**2. Discussion of Proposed District Standards for Accountability and Assistance**  
– *feedback and questions from the group*

- Many members emphasized the importance of taking all three sets of standards (EQA, NEASC, and the national self-assessment standards) to prioritize a set of easily communicated and simplified “power” standards. The self-assessment process and the district review should use an aligned set of indicators that are presented in a hierarchy if the purpose is for districts to use them as a basis for improvement.
- ESE should be mindful of how these standards align with the new federal direction.
- ESE should be clear about what constitutes “evidence” of meeting each standard.
- The self-assessment process presents a challenge for schools and district to make time for substantive discussion. It is “doable”, but districts need assistance in developing the structure and resources to make it happen.
- ESE should provide an analysis of the FTE’s required to perform the functions called for in the standards.
- ESE should be clear about the research that supports each of the standards and use “observable change in student achievement” as criteria for each one.
- ESE is on the right track, it just shouldn’t be 80 pages.
- ESE messaging and communication about the standards and indicators must be aligned and consistent.

**3. District and School Intervention at Levels 4 and 5 of the Accountability and Assistance Framework** – *feedback and questions from the group*

- The Framework should be clear about how and under what circumstances district reviews are being conducted.
- Can ESE track elementary and middle-school students to high-school graduation outcomes? If an elementary or middle school is consistently producing students that are more likely to require remediation in order to meet high school graduation requirements, they should be held accountable in the Framework.
- ESE should ensure that the reviewers are truly “independent” and put protocols in place to compensate for individual biases.
- It is encouraging that Level 4 is not based on NCLB and takes into account improvement indicators.
- ESE must set clear expectations for districts so as to minimize confusion between state and federal accountability statuses. ESE must communicate this new Framework to the field in a thoughtful and strategic way.
- Level 4 exit criteria must be very clear for those districts that enter based on qualitative indicators.
- The Essential Conditions should be aligned with standards in the self-assessment process.
- Karla clarified that although the Commissioner makes the determination for districts that enter Level 4 based on qualitative indicators, the Board would be informed.
- The district will have a key contact from each of the Assistance and Accountability Offices – this is consistent with the recommendations of the Readiness Project subcommittee on accountability.
- Concerns were raised about the Accountability Monitor being external given the variability of knowledge and skill among external service providers.
- There needs to be more clarity around the necessity for having both an Assistance Liaison and an Accountability Monitor. What exactly is the division of labor?
- Many members questioned the composition of the Level 5 independent commission. While there was agreement that this commission should be led by Board-appointed members, there was debate about how to include local representation. ESE should be careful not to create an inherently divisive commission. Should all five members of the commission be subject to Board approval? How does ESE keep the community “in the game” while holding them accountable? Should the Board just be disbanded? Is it realistic to think that the superintendent be accountable to two separate entities?

**4. Discussion of the 10 Essential Conditions – feedback and questions from the group on the Draft Revised 10 Essential Conditions**

- ESE should clearly align the 10 Essential Conditions with the district standards.
- #2 of the revised document does not capture all of the content in the original 5<sup>th</sup> Essential Condition.

- This document focuses too narrowly on ELA and math.
- ESE should consider including an Essential Condition regarding attendance.
- ESE should clearly define the language used in the 10 Essential conditions.
- ESE should consider the Effective Schools research and their “7 correlates” as an alternative.
- ESE should link the 10 Essential Conditions and the district standards to research proving its impact on student achievement.

**5. Agenda Planning and Next Meetings**

- A meeting on May 13th was put on the calendar