**Mississippi Accountability Task Force Meeting**

**January 25, 2024**

**DRAFT Meeting Summary**

**Meeting Participants**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| First Name | Last Name | Organization | Role |
| Lisa Renee | LaMastus | Cleveland School District | Principal |
| Ryan | Kuykendall | DeSoto County | Chief Accountability Officer |
| Christy | Hovanetz | Foundation for Excellence in Education | External Expert |
| Tarrinasha | Jones | Greenville Public School District | Principal |
| Jermaine | Brown | Hattiesburg | Director of College & Career Readiness |
| Robert | Sanders | Hinds County School District | Superintendent |
| Raina | Holmes | Jackson County School District | High School Principal |
| LaToya | Blackshear | Jackson Public Schools | Director of Planning and Evaluations |
| Steven | Hampton | Lamar County | Superintendent |
| Alicia | Conerly | Marion County | District Instructional Specialist |
| Lindsay | Brett | Lee County Schools | Principal |
| Greg | Paczak | Madison County Schools | Director of Research & Development |
| Alan | Burrow | Mississippi Department of Education | Director of District and School Performance |
| Deborah | Donovan | Mississippi Department of Education | Data Analytics and Reporting |
| Paula | Vanderford | Mississippi Department of Education | Chief Accountability Officer |
| Tim | Scott | Mississippi Department of Education | Director of Accountability Services |
| William | Roberson | Oxford School District | Superintendent |
| Angela | Burch | Pascagoula-Gautier School District | Principal |
| LaVonda | White | Rankin County School District | Director of Accreditation, Accountability, and Assessment |
| Glen | East | State Board of Education | Board Member |
| Chris | Domaleski | The Center for Assessment | External Facilitator |
| Crystal | Bates | Wayne County High School | Assistant Principal |
| Lawrence | Hudson | Western Line School District | Superintendent |

**Welcome and Introductions**

Following welcome and introductions, Dr. Chris Domaleski reviewed the purpose of the Accountability Task Force (ATF), indicating their role is to help the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) make good decisions about the design and implementation of the state, school accountability system. He emphasized that the ATF focuses on policy priorities and decisions to support those priorities that are technically defensible and operationally feasible. Feedback from the ATF is received as a recommendation to the MDE.

Next, Dr. Domaleski reviewed the ground rules and group norms for the meeting, highlighting the importance of making sure everyone has an opportunity to share their perspectives in an environment characterized by courteous, respectful discourse. The intent is to work toward shared understanding and consensus. However, from time to time, it may be necessary to take a vote to identify the group’s recommendations. When that occurs, dissenting views will be noted in the meeting summary.

Finally, Dr. Domaleski reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

**Overview and Updates from MDE**

Next, Mr. Alan Burrow reviewed the relevant state and federal requirements for accountability and described how accountability works within a broader system to support continuous improvement.

Mr. Burrow shared some updates to include:

* Feedback from the field suggests that more focus is needed on career and workforce skills and accomplishments in the accountability model.
* The state accountability system was recently audited by the United States Office of Inspector General. The primary findings are that the state should submit an amendment to the Consolidated State Plan (CSP) to address some recent changes. That submission is in progress.

*Acceleration*

Mr. Burrow shared feedback from US Department of Education (ED) which prohibits assigning points that exceed the published maximum values (i.e., ‘bonus points’). Moreover, legislation requires assigning the same points for AP courses with a ‘3’ or better as those assigned for dual credit (and other qualifying) courses earning a ‘C’ or better. In light of these constraints, Mr. Burrow compared the impact of three different approaches for acceleration:

* Actual: maintain double weighting for AP only (no longer permissible)
* Single: remove double weighting altogether
* Double: double weight dual credit and AP

The problem with the ‘double’ solution is that many schools and districts will exceed the maximum points (50) and be capped. This defeats the purpose since the indicator would no longer differentiate performance for many schools. The most plausible near-term solution that complies with law is to revert to single weighting across the board but this will reduce points, primarily for schools otherwise earning an A or B.

The task force discussed this issue at length and inquired if there were other solutions that would maintain an emphasis on the value of AP courses and mitigate the negative impact to accountability scores.

One idea was to adjust the weights to another value for qualifying AP and dual enrollment outcomes (e.g., 1.25 or 1.5). Another idea is to keep the double points and increase the maximum for the category. This would have a model-wide impact since either a) the overall points for the model would increase or b) added points for acceleration would necessitate removing points from another category.

The ATF agreed this should be the focus of discussion at a future meeting.

**Accountability Performance Standards**

Next, Dr. Domaleski led a discussion about establishing new performance standards for accountability. New standards are required to be compliant with state law that requires resetting standards when student proficiency is at 75% or greater and/or when 65% or more of the schools or districts earn a ‘B’ or higher. In 2023, 71% of districts and 74% of schools earned a ‘B’ or higher, respectively.

Dr. Domaleski reviewed the general approaches for establishing accountability performance standards which are:

* Norm-referenced: standards are based on the desired distribution of performance (e.g., the top 10% of schools receive an ‘A’)
* Criterion-referenced: standards are based on a performance definition, profile, or other factor (e.g., to get an ‘A’ 90% of students must reach proficiency)
* Hybrid: combines elements of both norm and criterion-referenced methods

After reviewing the pros and cons of these methods, Dr. Domaleski discussed approaches for combining indicators which include the following:

* Compensatory: higher performance in one indicator can offset lower performance in another (e.g., index or weighted composite).
* Conjunctive: performance on all indicators provides the overall decision
* Disjunctive: performance on any one indicator provides the decision
* Profile: defines specific performance patterns required for each classification decision

Task force members were asked to discuss the following questions in small groups and then share feedback in the full group.

* What general approach do you recommend for establishing performance standards?
* What factors should be most influential?
* Should the MDE consider a different approach for weighting or combining indicators?

Feedback from the discussions is summarized below:

* Most participants support a hybrid approach with an emphasis on the role of criterion referenced standards. Schools and districts should have a clear idea of what performance is expected and it should be theoretically attainable. Avoid an approach that contains or forces a distribution of performance each year.
* Academic outcomes, especially growth, are very important in the model and the influence should remain strong. Factors associated with college and career success should also be influential.
* Consider how disjunctive or ‘menu’ approaches may work as part of the state’s accountability system, such as to reward a wide range of college and career outcomes.
* It’s important to make any changes to the model before setting new standards. In the best case, model decisions and performance standards should be resolved before they are implemented so schools and districts will have a clear idea of how they are evaluated and what the performance expectations are.

**Accountability Priorities**

The ATF reviewed feedback about potential changes to the model. Some groups have emphasized the importance of including a broader range of indicators such as factors related to post-secondary success and skills that go beyond academics such as: leadership, teamwork, interpersonal skills, etc.

Next, Dr. Domaleski reviewed the ESSA requirements for accountability and provided a national scan to show how other states are designing their school accountability models with an emphasis on which indicators are included.

He also discussed different frameworks for addressing broader indicators that go beyond academics. Since there are scores of frameworks addressing a very wide-range of factors, it’s important to establish priorities. Moreover, if such factors are going to be included in accountability, it’s important to consider how they will be measured and how to minimize corruption.

Following the presentation the ATF divided into group to discuss “What should be prioritized and why?” Each ATF member was given a worksheet to take notes and guide discussion. Groups were asked to consider:

* Will the indicator meet ESSA requirements?
* Should the indicator be included in state accountability or addressed in another way?
* To what extent do schools influence the indicator?
* To what extent are there credible measures of the indicator?
* To what extent is the indicator susceptible to corruption?

Takeaways from the group discussion included the following:

* There was a clear and consistent view that attendance/ chronic absenteeism should not be included in the accountability model.
* Continue placing a strong emphasis on growth
* The elements that make-up acceleration and readiness are important but there may be ways to broaden the indicators and incorporate them in the model, which is consistent with discussions earlier in the meeting. Broadening this category might include indicators such as: internships, work experience, entrepreneurship, military.
* Many participants placed a high value on ‘beyond academic’ indicators but expressed concern about putting such factors in the model due to challenges in measuring them and possible corruption. Instead, consider approaches that are outside the model such as reporting and support. Also consider providing some local choice regarding indicators.
* More discussion is needed on this topic to ensure the system is as comprehensive and fair as possible.

**Future Topics**

In the last session, Dr. Domaleski invited members to identify their priorities for topics the ATF should address at future meetings. Suggestions included the following:

* Many participants expressed gratitude for engaging the group with challenging but important topics.
* It’s important to make sure that any changes to the model are made before new standards are set. These activities should be complete before schools and districts are held accountable for these new expectations. Establish a timeline soon.
* Explore strategies to make college and workforce outcomes broader and more prominent in the model.
* Continue to explore how to appropriately weight acceleration and other model components given the new constraints on capping points.
* Ensure decisions are clear, transparent, and sufficiently straightforward so they can be well understood.
* Clarify retesting policy for tests required for diploma eligibility.