**Mississippi Accountability Task Force Meeting**

**February 1, 2022**

**DRAFT Meeting Summary**

**Meeting Participants**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| First Name: | Last Name: | Organization: |
| Crystal | Bates | Wayne County High School |
| LaToya | Blackshear | Jackson Public Schools |
| Lindsay | Brett | Lee County Schools |
| Jermaine | Brown | Hattiesburg |
| Angela | Burch | Pascagoula-Gautier School District |
| Alan | Burrow | Mississippi Department of Education |
| Wendy | Clemons | Mississippi Department of Education |
| Alicia | Conerly | Lawrence County |
| Chris | Domaleski | The Center for Assessment |
| Deborah | Donovan | Mississippi Department of Education |
| Glen | East | State Board of Education |
| Steven | Hampton | Lamar County |
| Raina | Holmes | Jackson County School District |
| Christy | Hovanetz | Foundation for Excellence in Education |
| Lawrence | Hudson | Western Line School District |
| Tameka | Hyland | Vicksburg Warren School District |
| Tarrinasha | Jones | Greenville Public School District |
| Ryan | Kuykendall | DeSoto County |
| Lisa Renee | LaMastus | Cleveland School District |
| Greg | Paczak | Madison County Schools |
| William | Roberson | Oxford School District |
| Sonja | Robertson | Mississippi Department of Education |
| Robert | Sanders | Hinds County School District |
| Paula | Vanderford | Mississippi Department of Education |
| LaVonda | White | Rankin County School District |
| Sandi | Whiton | Mississippi Department of Education |

**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. In the best case, the ATF will build on one another’s comments and 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.

**Background: Accountability in Mississippi**

Next, Mr. Alan Burrow provided a review of the school accountability system in Mississippi. He briefly discussed the history of school accountability in the state before reviewing the policy priorities and rationale for the current system. Mr. Burrow also explained the accountability requirements of state and federal law.

Then, Mr. Burrow explained each component in the system for elementary and middle schools and high schools. He covered the procedures to calculate the indicators and described how the components are aggregated to produce an overall score and grade. Finally, he reviewed how the MDE engages in continuous review and improvement for the system, which includes input from the Accountability Task Force.

**ESEA Amendment Submission and Related Changes**

Mr. Burrow briefly reviewed the ESEA amendment requirements following approval of addendum in 2022 to address COVID disruptions.

Then, Dr. Domaleski explained that the MDE is considering an amendment to address exit criteria for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools. ESSA requires states to annually identify any school in which at least one subgroup is consistently underperforming.

Mississippi’s identification requirements are:

* Subgroup is in the lowest 50% of the overall accountability index AND
* Subgroup is in the lowest quartile of the 3-year gap to goal AND
* Subgroup scores in the lowest quartile of 3-year improvement toward gap-to-goal closure.

To exit TSI status, schools must address (no longer meet) each of these entry criteria and demonstrate 3-year average growth in subgroup proficiency that exceeds the target proficiency growth rate. Dr. Domaleski explained that many school meet the first exit criterion but almost every school fails to meet the second exit criterion.

Next, Dr. Domaleski described a proposal to adjust the TSI exit criterion so that it remains ambitious but is more attainable. In lieu of changes in subgroup proficiency rates, the MDE could use a true cohort measure of growth based on the transition table calculation procedures used for accountability. An analysis of data from 2022 showed that if the criterion were changed to a subgroup growth expectation of 50, about a third to a half of the schools that otherwise did not exit due to the second criterion would be eligible to exit.

The ATF was in favor of changing the second exit criterion by transitioning to ‘true growth.’ Many ATF members noted that this approach is better suited to detect changes across the performance continuum and is more coherent with the principles of the accountability model which prominently reflect the importance of growth for all students.

The ATF discussed but did not reach a clear consensus on 1) the growth threshold that should be used and 2) whether the calculation should be based on a single year or multiple years.

* Regarding the growth threshold, many agreeable that ‘50’ is a promising target for the threshold. The analyses revealed it is attainable but not overly lenient. Moreover, a score of 50 describes a performance profile in which at least half of the students are demonstrating academic progress on average.
* Regarding whether the calculation should be based on one versus multiple years, the ATF identified pros and cons of each possibility. An advantage of using a single year calculation is that TSI is an annual determination and it would more directly reward progress achieved in the past year. A multi-year approach, while less sensitive to recent progress, would be more reliable since its based on more data. Schools would likely be reclassified as TSI less frequently if a multi-year approach is adopted.

Ultimately, the ATF agreed in principle to pursuing an amendment based on changing the second exit criterion to growth, but did not offer a unanimous recommendation on the growth threshold or calculation period. Because the amendment needs to be submitted soon, the MDE will work with their technical advisors outside of the ATF to make final decisions and report back to the ATF at a future meeting.

**Industry Certification Self Reporting**

Next, Wendy Clemons discussed the issue of potential self-reporting of industry certifications for accountability. Ms. Clemons explained that the acceleration component of accountability awards credit based on the percentage of students taking and passing an SBE-approved industry certification course (among other options). The state supports two exams, but if a district chooses to test a student additionally (outside the RCU contract) to earn an SBE industry certification, it raises the question of whether MDE should allow the district an opportunity to self-report that achievement for acceleration in the accountability model.

The ATF discussed the merits and limitations of this alternative at length. On one hand, providing more assessment opportunities is important and there is precedent for allowing multiple attempts with ACT and ACT WorkKeys. On the other hand, ACT and ACT WorkKeys are associated with the college and career readiness component, which is different than acceleration. Repeated attempts in acceleration can have a positive or negative impact on a school accountability score. Moreover, it is not clear if the systems are in place to ensure fidelity of administration procedures in a manner that would, for example, meet the standards of a federal audit. While it may be beneficial to allow a student more than two industry certification attempts, doing so outside the ESSA accountability system may be preferable to the risks associated with incorporating the practice within the school accountability system.

Ultimately, the ATF did not endorse a recommendation and the issue was tabled.

**Accountability Foundations and Future Topics**

In the last session, Dr. Domaleski reviewed some principles and promising practices associated with accountability design and implementation from a national perspective. He invited members to identify their priorities for topics the ATF should address at future meetings. Suggestions included the following:

* Avoid overloading (and further complexifying) the ESSA system, consider innovations outside of school accountability
* Model stability is valued in order to measure change over time
* Examine the business rules for how/ when students are included in indicator calculations; high mobility may be distorting measures for some schools and districts
* Explore strategies to make college and workforce outcomes broader and more prominent in the model
* Conduct monitoring and evaluation studies to see if the system is having the intended impact
* Consider approaches for including chronic absenteeism in the model
* Broader measures of co-curricular accomplishments should be explored. These are often represented on community based report cards because they are not represented in the state system.
* Examine the performance threshold associated with college career readiness and acceleration; is it coherent and consistent with post-secondary expectations?
* Many schools are not accountable for some student groups because they don’t meet n-size requirements. How can we broaden accountability to include student groups more fully without sacrificing reliability?