

AERA Special Interest Group on School Indicators and Profiles

NEWSLETTER

February 2002

In this issue:

Tidings from the Chair

Welcome to New SIG:SIP Members

Our AERA 2002 New Orleans Line Up

A Special Thanks to Reviewers

Inside the Beltway

Still More on *Leave No Child Behind*

Tidings from the Chair

By Peter Prowda

Connecticut State Department of Education

As I write this in mid-February, we at the Connecticut State Department of Education are trying to fully understand the ramifications of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. This law mandates that each state set up an accountability system with a system of rewards and sanctions. I bring this up because I believe that every member of our SIG should be acquainted with its provisions. Our group has a focus on indicators and profiles. Isn't an accountability system a slimmed down indicator system with attitude? And the accountability system mandated by this law has a whole lot of attitude!

To me, the accountability and reporting sections of the federal law seem to be the Texas accountability model on steroids. But will this bulking up be healthy? The heart of the Texas accountability system is a set of tests that do not place great emphasis on higher-order skills. Passing their tenth grade test is a requirement for graduation. Schools and districts that failed to get a given percentage of all their students and subgroups of students to a "proficient" level were identified by the state as low performing. Texas annually raises the bar determining the minimum performance level. Since 1994 Texas has had improving overall performance and a reduction of the gap between minority and non-minority students. So what is the problem?

The Texas accountability system, in any one-year, has identified roughly 1-2 percent of schools and districts as low performing. This is because the bar was originally set very low relative to average performance. Under the federal adaptation of this model, roughly 20 percent of all schools will start out at or below their target growth level! And the federal model mandates that schools get 100% of their students to the proficient level in 12 years. In our state, and others that have state tests that have been designed to elevate the curriculum, we figure that schools will have to annually improve performance by roughly 4 percentage points per year. I believe that annual growth will be difficult to sustain. And schools that start out below the 20th percentile will have to make up most of the difference between where they currently stand and the 20th percentile, plus the 4 percentage point annual growth. Quite a challenge, don't you think?

This level of performance must be achieved by each (significantly sized) racial and ethnic group, the economically disadvantaged, the non-English proficient, and students with disabilities. Each and every subgroup must count at least 95% of its members to avoid being identified as failing to make adequate yearly progress. While Texas is moving toward stricter participation of students, many of the reported earlier gains were made under more lax participation rules. We are particularly concerned how these requirements will play out with special education students.

No one will argue that there needs to be more accountability about the progress of special education students. We have found that many when faced with the challenge of taking our standard state assessment, with or without accommodations, were able to perform successfully. But what of those whose disability is such that they need to take an alternate assessment? Can they ever be judged proficient? We are not certain what flexibility the law permits. It would be one thing if a school or district special education program were identified in need of improvement, but that categorization under the law will apply to the school as a whole.

I am now working on the data tables for our annual "Profile of Our Schools." We produce this report in the spring to meet a statutory requirement to report on the condition of education. We also produce Strategic School Profiles that come out in November. Now we will have to work in a new statewide accountability report and generate the data for the district and school accountability report. One set of reports will provide information about the fall test. The accountability reports will allocate students to the school they attended the prior year and count only those there for a full academic year. We have yet to figure out whether we will be able to consolidate any of these reports. We run the risk of being report rich, with each one diluting the importance of the other and with the data just enough different to cause confusion. We are also contemplating how we will "concisely" report the results for reading, writing and math for three grades for total, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, special education, economically disadvantaged, migrant, non-English speakers and probably a couple of other groups that have slipped my mind. Oh, and don't forget that there will be a discontinuity in the reporting of race and ethnicity when

the new reporting categories go into effect.

The timelines mandated by the new legislation have altered the spring versus fall testing debate. We test in the fall for grades 4, 6 and 8 and get the test results back to schools in January. In Grade 10 the test is in May with the results getting to schools in October. This interval is due in part to our decision to include many open-ended items in the assessment. There has been a ground swell to move testing to the spring with results available before the start of school. To get open ended and writing samples scored in time for the start of the next school year, our spring test would have to start in February. Now, that may be spring in some parts of the country, but in Connecticut that is the middle of winter! We would have to consider whether the testing companies will have the capacity to deliver accurate reports and analyses on time if most states move to a spring schedule.

As the original developer of our state's profiles, I worry that this new narrowly focused accountability report will eclipse our 10-year old broad-based profiles. Now, Title I has always said, "supplement not supplant." But, that deals with money, not reports, doesn't it? Where does the concept of comparable reference groups now fit in? What will become of our indicators on computers per student, library books per student, percent of grade 8 taking algebra, percent of grade 8 taking a high school-level foreign language, physical fitness, kindergartners with PK experience, average class size, and instructional time? Are all the input, process and resource indicators we all have spent time developing now facing extinction? Will we all now have to focus our creative energies on what defines a quality teacher? Stay tuned.

The above represents my personal views and not those of the Connecticut State Department of Education. My interpretations may be totally incorrect! Now go to www.ed.gov/inits/nclb/ and see what has got me so excited and agitated!

Welcome to New SIG:SIP Members

By Peter Prowda

In the past year we have had 19 people join our SIG. From their email addresses, I have surmised that 12 are from universities, three from school districts, one from a government agency and three indeterminate. Let me take this opportunity to welcome Jennifer Adams, Gary Badarak, Thelma Bailey, Victoria Bernhardt, Patricia Bolanos, Patricia Brown-Ferrigno, Janet Chrispals, Robert Felner, Dona Ferrara, Susan Flinsbach, Jeffrey Haring, Dennis Hocesvar, Don Kester, April Langworthy, Norman Proller, Sue Rigney, Louis Trenta, Linda Tsantis, and Walter Wengel.

I hope that you will all actively take part in the SIG through attending our sessions at AERA,

sending a news item to our newsletter editor, submitting a paper for next year's conference, or volunteering as a paper reviewer. If you attend AERA, please stop by and introduce yourself.

Our AERA 2002 New Orleans Line-Up

By Ellen Forte-Fast

American Institutes for Research

Program Chair

Even though SIG:SIP Chair Prowda nixed my idea for a "Bourbon, Beignets, and Indicator-Etouffee" theme for our New Orleans sessions, we are definitely looking forward to a terrific program this year! In addition to a lively discussion of the ramifications of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) during our business meeting, we're sponsoring a paper session that will focus on indicators and accountability issues, soup-to-nuts (or gumbo-to-pecans, if you'll allow me to salvage any of my cuisine theme). Four paper discussions (previously known as round-tables), which address a range of technical and methodological issues relevant to our work, will complete our line-up this year. Details for each of our sessions are listed below.

Please note that our Business Meeting and Invited Panel session (Wednesday, April 3, 6:15-8:15 pm) will feature a targeted discussion of the accountability and reporting issues in NCLB. Sue Rigney of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) will provide an overview of the legislation and its developing interpretations within ED. Cherry Kugle of the Texas Education Agency and Mary E. Yakimowski of the Baltimore City Public School System will offer practitioner perspectives. We have no doubt that comments and insights from audience members will also contribute to the informative – perhaps even provocative – session.

Also with regard to the Business Meeting and Invited Panel session, please be advised that the actual time for this event is not correct in the main printed program. This session will be on Wednesday, as indicated above and below here, NOT on Monday as indicated in the main printed program.

I look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

And, by the way; did you know that Louisiana's state beverage is milk?

Paper Session (session 1.15)

Monday, April 1

12:00 to 2:00 pm

Marriott, Mardi Gras B, 3rd floor

Participants:

1. A Four-year Completion and Status Dropout Rate: Ten Years in the Making!
Bobby J. Franklin, Shana N. Corvers, and Bernard Bose, Louisiana Department of Education
2. An Examination of School District Accountability Indicators Available on State Department of Education Web Sites for Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee
Marie Miller-Whitehead, TVEE.ORG
3. Making Stakeholder Perceptions Count in School Accountability: Reporting Survey Results via an Interactive Web-based Reporting System
James E. Griffith, Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
4. Computing the Value of a School Performance Trend
Colin A. Martin and Carrie Booher, Gwinnett County Public Schools
5. Return on Investment Indicators in Education
Mark L. Davison, Jeffrey R. Harring, and Margret L. Irish, University of Minnesota

Chair: Jerry Mathews, Idaho State University

Discussant: Steve Fleischman, Education Quality Institute

Paper Discussions (sessions 13.74 to 13.77)

Tuesday, April 2

10:35 am to 11:15 am

Sheraton, 816-828, 8th floor

13.74

Using Cluster Analysis to Identify Disparities Among School Districts

Gilbert N. Andrada, Connecticut State Department of Education

13.75

Investigating the Quality of a Teacher Education Program

Dawson R. Hancock, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

13.76

Administrative Records to Examine High School Completion Rates

Lee M. Hoffman and Beth A. Young, National Center for Education Statistics

13.77

A Close Look at Iowa Public School Teacher Salaries

Xiaoping Wang, Iowa Department of Education

Business Meeting and Invited Panel (session 34.29)

Wednesday, April 3

6:15 pm to 8:15 pm

Marriott, Mardi Gras H, 3rd floor

Invited Panel Topic:

Accountability and Reporting Requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Presenter:

Sue Rigney, Team Leader, Office of Compensatory Education, U.S. Department of Education

Reactors:

Cherry Kugle

Senior Director of the Division of Performance Reporting, Texas Education Agency

Mary E. Yakimowski

Research, Evaluation and Accountability Officer, Baltimore City Public School System

A Special Thanks to Reviewers

By Ellen Forte Fast

I would like to thank the following people who served as reviewers for the papers submitted to our SIG: Marie Miller-Whitehead, Sid Vaughn, Duc-Le To, Colin Martin, Stephen Brand, Rolf Blank, Joyce McLarty, Cengiz Gulek, Carol Fitz-Gibbon, Richard Hofmann, and John Freeman. Each reviewed three papers, provided professional critiques, and got their reviews in early! A fine precedent for future years! Thanks for a job well done.

Inside the Beltway

By Rolf Blank

Director of Education Indicators

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The big news in education in Washington is the passage into law of H.R. 1—*No Child Left Behind*—the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The bill increases federal funding for Title I and other programs, authorizes a new block grant approach to states for teacher professional development, and makes a number of other changes, including elimination of Goals 2000 funding to states and funding for the National Education Goals Panel. For a website containing a summary of the bill and other resources, see <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/summary.html>.

Probably the biggest effect of H.R. 1 on states and districts will be the new requirements for student assessment and school accountability systems and reporting. All states will need to have statewide assessments aligned with state standards for reading and math for grades 3-8 and one high school grade, and by 2005 to have these assessments in science. States will need to establish report on the progress of each school using a statewide definition of adequate yearly progress for schools, and states will need to report disaggregated scores for several student groups. Many of the details of the law related to assessment and accountability, including schedule and deadlines, still need to be clarified.

CCSSO convened a meeting of state assessment directors at the end of January to discuss many of the issues and implications of the new law, as well as the new role for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The meeting was convened jointly with the EIAC subcommittee, NCES, and the Accountability Systems and Reporting (ASR) state collaborative. The ASR-SCASS is a group of 12 states that began working together in 2000 to address key issues, concerns, and strategies for improving the quality and usefulness of accountability systems.

In mid-February, CCSSO will be releasing a new publication, *Designing School Accountability Systems*, written by Brian Gong (Center on Assessment) in collaboration with CCSSO and the ASR-SCASS states. The report provides a framework of critical issues and decision points in design and implementation of accountability systems, and it provide examples of models being used by different states. Resources on accountability compiled by CCSSO and the ASR group, including information on the new H.R. 1 requirements can be accessed on the CCSSO website <http://www.ccsso.org/accountability.html>.

Still More on Leave No Child Behind

By Barbara Clements

Evaluation Software Publishing, Inc.

Newsletter Editor

Did you know that if you do a Yahoo search, you will get 905,000 hits for Leave No Child Behind? A cursory look indicated that many of the sites belong to state education agencies and education organizations. A couple of sites are listed above in this newsletter. Another site you might find interesting is www.educationadvisor.com. This site, hosted by Evaluation Software Publishing, Inc., contains many useful items related to the legislation and information systems that support the reporting of data to the federal government.

Another thing you might want to review is the U.S. Department of Education's Draft Strategic Plan for 2002-2007. It is available at www.ed.gov/pubs/stratplan2002-07/index.html. The Secretary is soliciting input into this Strategic Plan, which addresses the way the Department of Education (ED) will carry out HR1, as well as the performance measures expected of the ED employees. Included in this Strategic Plan is more specific information about the requirement for school report cards in HR1.

One of the projects underway at ED is the development of a Performance-Based Data Management Initiative. Recommended by the Office of Budget and Management, it is expected to transform current ED data collection and information management processes. This activity will involve state and local education agencies in planning for the seamless flow of data from schools, districts and states, as well as promoting the more effective use of data at all levels of the education system. More information about this initiative will be forthcoming soon.