



Assessment Working Committee

Georgia's State Plan: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Meeting Summary Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Chair: Melissa Fincher, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment & Accountability
Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

Co-Chair: Steve Barker, Superintendent
Coweta County Schools

Overview and Introductions

The Assessment Working Committee includes 5 Superintendents or Assistant Superintendents; 4 District Administrators – Assessment, Research/Accountability, Special Education; 2 Principals; 2 Teachers; 1 RESA Representative; 1 Alliance of Education Agency Heads Representative; and 5 GaDOE staff focusing on assessment and accountability, curriculum and instruction, special education, teacher and leader effectiveness, and policy.

All of Georgia's ESSA Working Committees report to GaDOE's ESSA Leadership Team throughout the development process. The draft ESSA State Plan will be presented to the Advisory Committee for feedback. There will also be a review period for the public, State School Superintendent, State Board of Education, and Governor's Office.

Benchmarks for this process include the following:

- July 2016: Charge, Orientation, Overview and committee-specific information
- August-October 2016: Stakeholder feedback shared with Working Committees as it is received
- October-November 2016: Draft ESSA State Plan developed
- December 2016: Presentation to Advisory Committee
- January 2017: Public comment period; Governor, State Board of Education, and State School Superintendent review; Overview to the House and Senate Education Committees
- February 2017: If necessary, reconvening of the Advisory Committee to make revisions
- March 2017: Submission of Georgia's ESSA State Plan to USED

The role and purpose of the committee, as outlined by the Superintendent include:

- Develop questions for stakeholders for feedback sessions throughout the state;
- Discuss stakeholder input, US ED's regulation/guidance, focus areas identified by the State Advisory Committee, and committee-assigned portions of ESSA; and
- Coordinate with other working committees to draft Georgia's state plan.

The Committee Chairs reiterated Superintendent Woods' charge not to be confined by a perceived 'box,' to be bold, and to develop a plan that works for Georgia – keeping students in mind.

Each committee member introduced themselves and stated what they think needs to be addressed. Several themes arose, including:

- simplification – work to ensure things are not overly complex and complicated;
- relevancy and utility – for all, but especially teachers and students;
- communication – why we assess and what it means
- purpose – clearly establish the purpose and uses

Summary of Committee Discussion and Outcomes

A brief presentation providing an overview of the requirements for assessments in ESSA, including state responsibilities was given. Many of the requirements mirror those promulgated by No Child Left Behind, but areas left to state discretion and flexibility were highlighted. While there are certain state and federal responsibilities that Georgia must follow, the committee should work to innovate within these requirements.

During the discussion, the committee identified a couple of areas to push toward in the state of Georgia:

- increase the utility of the state assessments
- a desire to contemplate more formative measures, without creating mandates (such as instructional sequence)

Given the communication challenges surrounding assessment, it may be beneficial for the committee to develop a theory of action for the state's overall assessment plan, with clear consideration of the role local assessments play. The committee discussed the inherent tension between flexibility and standardization: the desire for flexibility and the need for standardization so that accountability is equitable.

Committee members noted several topics that overlapped with the Accountability Working Committee and expressed the need to remain closely connected given the many contingencies between assessment and accountability.

Committee members worked in small groups to identify questions for stakeholder feedback. Each group reported out and the following questions were identified to solicit stakeholder feedback:

Question 1: Given the requirement for assessment and accountability, what *should* the role of assessment be?

Question 2: What can be done to improve statewide assessments for Georgia Public School students?

Next Steps

The proposed regulations for assessment and the assessment innovations grants will be emailed to committee members. Committee members will be polled to determine future meeting dates.