

APPENDIX E

Shortfalls and Innovations: A Summary of the Wyoming Comprehensive Accountability Framework

Two federal initiatives influenced Wyoming lawmakers to write teacher accountability law. In 2009, President Obama's U.S. Department of Education offered Race to the Top (RTT) funds, a component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), providing over four billion dollars for education. Then, in 2011, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver, a way for schools to avoid the 100% proficiency target. Both RTT and the NCLB waiver required a teacher evaluation system.

The Wyoming legislature, anticipating the federal requirements of the RTT and NCLB initiatives, assembled a Select Committee and an Advisory Committee on Statewide Education Accountability. Contractors were hired from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. They were commissioned to study Wyoming accountability and teacher evaluation, to lead the Advisory Committee and to write a report. *The Wyoming Comprehensive Accountability Framework: Phase I* was delivered to the legislature and became a footnote in the law.

Below is a summary of the *Phase I* report focusing on unresolved problems or shortfalls and innovative ideas or solutions--two of the statutory requirements of the October 15 report.

Shortfalls

Shortfall in Educator Evaluation:

- Standardized assessments do not address all dimensions of student learning and teacher effectiveness.
- A teacher evaluation system must use multiple measures including observation, student and parent surveys and student work. Getting teacher evaluations wrong can have the unintended negative consequence of worsening education.
- An accountability system must have pre and post assessments to measure teacher effectiveness.
- Technical quality and alignment of assessment are crucial. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) by Northwest Evaluation Association, anticipated in the law and earlier required if schools to receive Bridges Summer School funding, does not work for accountability purposes: this assessment does not have the technical quality to support the high-stakes decision of teacher accountability.
- Concerns about the ACT® Suite must be mitigated to avoid yet another measure of socioeconomic status.
- Many teachers are not tested--only reading, writing, mathematics and science teachers are. This is an intractable challenge facing states seeking to have a teacher evaluation system based on student performance, according to *The Report* (p. 53).
- Innumerable complications are inherent when attribute scores to all teachers.

- Data analysis is critical; State Education Agency (SEA) and local districts cannot currently handle all of the data analysis required without growing the government of schools/districts at the local and state levels.
- Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (Senate File 70, 2012) calls for review of Body of Evidence (BOE); therefore, an examination of the existing Wyoming graduation status (W.S. 21-2-304 and the State Board Chapter 31 Rules) is critical.
- Having End of Course exams required by the state is touted by the legislature as a way to mitigate the non-tested teacher issue. However, this action raises problems, such as increased cost, amendment of state statutes and myriad unresolved issues.

Shortfalls in Capacity

- Need to improve teachers: School leaders need and teachers need professional development.
- State level capacity is limited: "State level should be able to differentially respond to the varied needs of schools. This suggests a more nuanced approach than simply having all schools follow the same school improvement steps"(p. 67). Since the times call for "different form of support never seen before" (p. 69), the WDE is not poised to provide direction.
- Much training is needed on the Common Core State Standards since they are more rigorous.
- The benchmark adaptive approach will likely never work for diagnosing and monitoring student achievement (p. 67).
- Schools need support/intervention for SPED and ELL students.
- Schools need formative and classroom assessments for progress monitoring.
- Schools need Response to Intervention.
- Classrooms need differentiated instruction and support outside of classroom for targeted instruction.
- Teachers and students need extra time opportunities.
- Preservice at the college level needs to be improved so that high quality teachers graduate.

Shortfalls in Validity and Technical Issues of State Test

- State test must avoid unintended consequences.
- NAEP is often used as a measure but this measure has shortcomings: the results are not available at the district or school level and the standards are not tightly aligned.
- State must have common standards and assessment and must define what college and careers readiness means.
- Alignment is necessary between high school and college to reduce remediation.

Shortfalls in Assessment Characteristics

Since the assessment must be of the highest quality, there are many concerns named in the report:

- The assessment must be aligned with what is taught and must be consistent over time.

- To have fairness, all stakeholders in the high stakes test (parents, students, teachers, leaders) must know what is assessed.
- The standards and the assessment must encourage complex thinking; therefore, the test must have performance tasks such as constructed response.
- Wyoming must have a technical advisory committee to be sure the test is scaled appropriately.

Innovative Solutions

The Report suggests innovative solutions to attempt to mitigate the above-mentioned shortfalls.

Regarding instruction, the State must...

- Build capacity across the state by forming networks of districts that want to pursue learning on a given topic or challenge.
- Design and implement a well-conceived strategy to significantly raise the levels of achievement across the state.
- Improve instructional quality to increase student engagement (p.70).
- Seek input from educational stakeholders linking UW, districts, WDE, and other organizations.
- Conduct a needs assessment using data and conduct a survey.
- Link consequences to accreditation.

Regarding current tests to measure teacher efficacy, the State must...

- Avoid too much testing.
- Accommodate the ACT suite for special populations and use improvement and growth measures for a fair metric (p. 29).
- Avoid benchmark adaptive assessments because they do not measure depth of knowledge (p. 78).
- Track data.
- Use effectively formative assessments at the teacher-student level.