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SUBJECT: Extending ESEA “Accountability” Beyond Student Performance to Measuring, Scoring, Evaluating and Reporting Implementation of Systemic Changes – A Working Paper

I. Overview

- A. Under ESEA, all Title-I funded schools should be “accountable” not only for raising and reporting “student performance,” (See Redefining Accountability: Improving Student Learning by Building Capacity [“R.A.”], Appendix, *Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB*, Recommendations 1-2, 4, 6-8), but also for implementing the “systemic changes” that improve student learning. (See R.A., Appendix, *Joint Organizational Statement*, 2nd paragraph, last line and Recommendations 3, 9-12.)
- B. Improvement plan: As part of holding schools and districts “accountable” for implementing the “systemic changes,” each school or district receiving Title I funds would prepare a brief document stating key needs, issues and problems, as well as strengths, followed by a plan for improvement focused on key areas. School plans would be approved by the district, district plans by the state. (See R.A., Chapter III, “Accountability”.)
- C. Outline of reporting requirements - Each school or district should be required to:
 1. annually prepare a narrative report describing and rating the extent to which it has implemented each key school reform “factor” (or “systemic change”);
 2. annually evaluate how effective the implementation of each “factor” has been in strengthening the capacity of principals, teachers, parents and adult mentors to improve student learning;
 3. periodically arrange for approved, independent, experienced educators who are knowledgeable about each “factor” to evaluate how far the school and district have gotten in implementing the “systemic changes”, the effectiveness of implementation, and the impact on strengthening capacity and school improvement; and
 4. submit these reports, ratings and evaluations to the state and federal governments, as well as release them to the public. (See R.A., Chapter III, “Accountability,” A.2; B.1.b.; B.2.a., c., d. and e.)
- D. Two of the key areas in which schools and districts should be required to implement and report are professional development and family support for student learning. There are three key factors in each area, for a total of six “factors,” as follows:
 1. Professional development and support (FEA calls for federal aid in an amount equal to 20% of Title I funding, plus an equivalent state match)
 - a. peer collaboration of teachers and administrators
 - b. mentoring of teachers and administrators

- c. career ladders for teachers (See R.A., Chapter I, “Professional Development”)
2. Parental support (FEA calls for federal support in an amount equal to at least 2% of Title I funding)
- a. adult literacy programs
 - b. parenting skills programs – to empower parents to support their children’s learning at home (e.g., by restricting TV time, reading to the children, setting aside fixed space and regular time for homework, etc.)
 - c. adult mentors for kids without sufficient family support - along the lines of a much more intensive Big Brothers Big Sisters program, (about 4-5 hours per week of one-on-one time, not just that much time per month as now), or after-school, (weekend and summer) programs to provide adult role models, structure, homework assistance, culturally broadening experiences and encouragement to small groups of children, in lieu of preferred one-on-one adult:child mentoring. (See R.A., Chapter II, “Family Involvement”, esp. II. B. and C.)

E. FEA also supports strengthened parental involvement in the schools, which could be part of an improvement plan. (See R.A., Chapter II, “Family Involvement,” esp. II. A.) Further, state and locally-determined areas, such as curriculum development, could be included in a plan. We have focused on professional development and family support as two essential areas widely supported by experience and research. Schools with the greatest need/problems likely will need to focus on a larger set of factors, in which case they will need significantly more support (resources and technical assistance).

II. How to “Measure” some Aspects of Each Factor

- A. First, present a brief description of the nature of each “factor”/”systemic change” that a school is offering. E.g., for the “mentoring of teachers” factor, the description might be: “ Providing one-on-one classroom observation, advice and modeling of effective practices by experienced and accomplished mentor/master teachers to improve skills of beginning teachers”.
- B. List the number of school staff or families to whom the service is being provided. E.g.: “10 teachers”.
- C. Type of staff/families being served E.g.: “0-3 years experience”.
- D. Frequency service (or sub-service) is being provided E.g.: “2 sessions per week for each teacher, with one session of observation and one session of advice and modeling”
- E. Length of service E.g.: “1 hour per session”
- F. Number of years to be provided

E.g.: “3 years/teacher”

G. Costs/year: 1) average cost/teacher – E.g.: “\$6,000/yr.” and
2) aggregate cost/school – E.g.: “\$60,000/yr.

[Note that we have not actually done any cost estimates.]

III. How to “Report” on each “Factor”/”Systemic Change”

A. First, give a brief narrative description of the nature of the program/service that the school or district is providing and a concrete, fact-based description of all the major steps it has taken to implement this “systemic change” during the last year. (Each program/service should be designed based on the plan.)

B. Present all the items called for in #III above – “Measures”.

C. Describe concretely:

1. each of the significant obstacles that the school/district has encountered in seeking to implement the “factor”;
2. the steps it has taken to overcome the obstacles;
3. the results of the efforts taken to overcome the obstacles; and
4. what the school/district proposes to do during the next year to further implement or improve the effectiveness of the “systemic change”.

IV. How to “Score” or “Rate” Implementation of Each “Factor”

A. Purposes of “Scoring” or “Rating” – Before proposing a scoring system, we think it is valuable to keep in mind that there are at least three different purposes that “rating” or “scoring” could serve in this “accountability” system (keeping in mind that the systemic changes and improvement factors are developed in accord with the improvement plan noted in I.B.):

1. Helping each school/district figure out which “systemic changes” it is having the most difficulty implementing, and thus what changes it might make.
2. Helping the district/state/Regional Labs, etc. figure out where they need to concentrate in providing technical assistance to the school or district. (This is after an initial evaluation has been done, so it is for the purpose of improving the capacity-building effort).
3. In conjunction with ongoing public reporting of student achievement/assessment results, helping the district/state figure out where and when they should intervene more aggressively because the schools or districts are having the most serious problems in implementing the “factors”.
4. But we note that measuring and rating how much each systemic change has been implemented are not the same as evaluating how well the change is being implemented and how successful it has been in improving staff or family capacity, which are also necessary; that is, both rating implementation efforts and evaluating their success are necessary.

B. Nature of “Scoring” for Each “Factor” – To have a rating system that is sufficiently precise to be a useful tool for a first level evaluation of the implementation of work on the "factors," without demanding excessively fine distinctions and unduly burdening the stakeholders, we recommend a:

4 point scale. E.g.: “0”, “1”, “2” and “3”, with

“0” = “not implemented at all”

“1” = “partially implemented”

“2” = “substantially implemented”

“3” = fully implemented”

C. Qualifications for Scorer - For the system to have integrity, it would be very important for each scorer to be an experienced teacher or administrator knowledgeable about the particular “factor” s/he is rating; when the periodic reviews are conducted (pursuant to I.C.3., above), the reviewers would also need to be independent of the school or district they are rating.

V. How to Evaluate Improvement in Each Factor and in the Plan as a Whole

A. The quality of implementation of each factor (e.g., mentoring) and of the systemic changes as a whole must be evaluated. To accomplish this requires some qualitative information as well as the measurable components. For example, what was the quality of mentoring provided? This evaluation process should be both formative and summative. (In shaping requirements for this going forward, it would be valuable to examine literature on evaluating mentoring programs, collaborative professional learning, etc., and evaluation literature in general, particularly such literature that involves participants (e.g., teacher and principals) in the evaluation process.) Examples could be mentee evaluations given to an independent party; independent observations of the mentoring process; self-evaluation by mentors; and evaluation by “head mentor” (could be a principal). Each of these activities should be done periodically during the year for formative purposes, as well as summatively at the end of the year. In addition, mentors should have time to share their insights and help one another improve as mentors.

B. In addition to a summary score for each factor (in IV. above), each school/district and independent rater(s) would prepare a brief evaluation of success and problems to date, with recommendations for improvements and any proposed alterations to the improvement plan and its programs/services.

VI. Relationship of This “Accountability” System to School Improvement Plans

In the Forum on Educational Accountability’s concept of “accountability,” the implementation, “measurement” and “reporting” on the implementation of each of the “factors” would *not* occur in isolation from the other “factors” nor from the community. To the contrary, how each school/district would implement each of the selected factors would be planned in basic terms by the principal and other key school staff, in

collaboration with parents, teachers and other staff, as part of preparation of a “brief school plan tailored to the needs of each school” before any of the “factors” would be implemented. Again, districts would approve school plans.

This plan would include making any additional, particular reforms perceived to be necessary to meet the individual needs of each school and would have to be finalized for each school within a “reasonable time” after reenactment of ESEA (e.g. no more than 1 year). The plan would then have to be implemented by each school according to its own terms and schedules beginning promptly thereafter (e.g. within 3 months). Plans and reporting should also address questions of the extent to which the school has the resources to do its job well. Disaggregated learning outcomes would also be reported for each school and district. Research programs to study how best, under various conditions, to implement key factors in systemic change, and their impact on learning outcomes, should also be supported by the federal government.

VII. Bottom Line

FEA believes that this emphasis on “accountability” for implementing, measuring and reporting on the implementation of the “systemic changes” – coupled with major revisions in assessment, expected rates of improvement, and forms of assistance and interventions - would dramatically shift the emphasis of ESEA from “testing and punishment” to helping schools and districts actually make the most essential school improvements.