VERMONT
AGENCY OF EDUCATION

The Balanced Accountability Model

Initiative Goals:

With the larger goal of improving outcomes for all students, statewide, the state's Balanced Accountability Model:

- Provides a more comprehensive assessment measure for use in educator effectiveness than can be provided by standardized testing alone
- strikes a balance between standardization (e.g. mastery of a set of realistic essential outcomes by all students) and personalization (flexible pathways for demonstrating learning standard proficiency)
- Reflects a commitment to continuous improvement of learning for all students
- Reflects a commitment to providing meaningful opportunities to learn for all students
- Simultaneously reflects the diverse realities of Vermont's large districts and small, rural schools
- Promotes providing all students with diverse, high-quality, and equitable opportunities to learn

Current Status of the Statewide Accountability Model:

The current statewide school improvement model uses summative test (NECAP) performance data as virtually the sole measure for school effectiveness, with supplementary measures (graduation rate, NECAP participation rate) playing a minimal, supporting role. Although the AOE has sought to engage schools in broader, richer conversations about their needs and desired outcomes, NECAP scores and ESEA requirements are currently the starting point for most state-led school improvement conversations, and provide the sole lens for formal state assessments of school improvement plan quality.

Current Challenges Stemming From This Model

Conclusions regarding the problems inherent in the current model are widely recognized and supported by evidence:

- it has not produced success nor does it offer adequate promise in meeting its overt goal of closing the achievement gap
- it does not reflect the content or complexity of Vermont's desired educational outcomes,
- it does not reflect the outcomes identified by Vermont policy (including Act 77 and EQS) as being necessary for the twenty-first century learner;
- the value added testing approaches now promoted by the federal government have not achieved and show limited promise for validly measuring growth.

Each of these flaws, when examined separately, would justify reflection on the current model as an insufficient lens through which to assess school performance. Taken together, they require us to reevaluate our system: to better serve our students, and to better reflect the education philosophy already guiding so many of our effective state and local practices.

Elements of the Balanced Accountability Model

To meet these goals, and in accordance with the goals of recent Vermont education policy, the Vermont State Board of Education, and the Governor's office, the AOE is developing a new Balanced Accountability Model that includes the following components:

- Performance assessments
  - Includes state and locally-developed tools with common scoring guides
  - Aligned with Act 77 and EQS initiatives, including proficiency-based learning and Personalized Learning Plans
- A more narrowly articulated role for standardized testing
  - Will continue to inform local level decision making re: school improvement efforts
  - Will continue to inform state-level practice and professional development
- Surveys of teachers, parents, and students
  - Used to capture data related to non-cognitive skills and school climate
  - Aligned with Act 77 and EQS goals of increasing parent and student involvement
- Standards-based evaluation of educator quality
  - Evaluation measures for Superintendents, Principals, and Teachers
  - Builds on the work of the Educator Effectiveness Task Forces

All four components will be supported by an inspectorate model featuring teams of educators from the AOE, LEA, and school level. Inspectorate model teams will conduct local level visits, and will have the ability to collaboratively delve into school performance data with school and LEA teams.

The four components of the Balanced Accountability Model and supporting Inspectorate Model were presented to the State Board of Education (SBE) on January 21, 2014. The SBE passed a resolution that afternoon approving the model; although the details around all elements of this model are currently being developed, the AOE expects its core principles and components to stay intact, going forward.

Expected Resulting Changes in Practice

The overarching structure and guiding philosophy of this model are established to the point where it is possible to predict how its implementation may inform work in the field, and work in the AOE.

The Agency of Education currently uses many different types of evaluation measures when working with schools, but most of those measures aren't incorporated into the current school accountability model. The Balanced Accountability Model will allow teams to align their school evaluation tools to a more comprehensive framework, and has the potential to incorporate measures of effectiveness that teams within the AOE have found to be especially informative, in the past. Similarly, it will support the

elimination of redundant evaluation measures, agency wide, and will provide a pedagogical and philosophical framework to apply to all current school evaluation efforts. An Agency-wide alignment of school-evaluation models will be a critical part of the implementation of this initiative, going forward.

The inspectorate model, like an accreditation model, supports visits by practitioners across sites, and thus supports transfer of learning across sites.

The Balanced Accountability Model will also inform state and local level conversations about data analysis and data-driven decision making. Conversations about the effective use of data have been occurring throughout the state for years, but this model will give them some additional purpose and structure, and will provide a common baseline, statewide, for effective measures of school performance.