

**Minutes of the Feb. 17-18, 2009 Meeting of  
The National Advisory Committee  
Nebraska Department of Education**

Submitted June 29, 2009

**Attending:**

NAC members: Wayne Camara, Brian Gong, Linda Poole, Richard Sawyer,  
Dallas Watkins

Contractors: Including from DRC – Dave Chayer, Patricia Johnson, Patty  
McDivitt, Richard Smith; from CAL – John Poggio

Nebraska Department of Education: Staff including Pat Roschewski, Jan Hoegh,  
Brian Halstead

Others: Cheryl Wolff, Governor's Policy Advisor

The meeting was held in the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel, Lincoln, NE, February 17-18, 2009.

**Welcome**

At 8:30 AM Pat Roschewski welcomed the group to the National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting and facilitated introductions. Pat mentioned the Open Meetings Act at the beginning of the meeting.

**Approve minutes**

Pat suggested that clarifications to the Dec. 3, 2008 minutes were needed, specifically regarding the legislation and what it requires of the National Advisory Committee. Brian Halstead provided specific language from the law, which states that this committee shall **advise** the State Board of Education and the Governor. Pat stated that the minutes serve as a form of advisement to the Department and would be sent to the Board. Brian Gong asked that Pat or Brian Halstead check with the Governor's office to determine specifically how advice be presented. Cheryl Wolff, the Governor's Policy Advisor, was present at the meeting. She stated that it is her role to monitor the actions of the NAC and report back to the Governor on progress made. She will most likely attend meetings to stay informed. She invited questions of the group and stated that she will seek answers to any question posed to her. Matt Eash and she will tag-team responsibilities to this group. Brian Gong summarized by noting that advising the State Board of Education and the Governor would be done primarily through sending the minutes of the NAC meetings; the NAC would also be glad to respond to specific requests.

The topic of National Testing was also discussed for clarification purposes. Pat shared a letter written to Brian Gong from former Senator Ron Raikes. (Included as attachment A) The letter outlined his intent regarding national test reporting. He intended that

districts continue the practice of choosing their national assessment instruments but beginning in 2009-10 the districts would report individual scores and sub scores for inclusion in the student achievement database. Linda Poole reminded the group about the Governor's hope that National Test results provide a means for comparability. Pat explained that given the way the legislation is written, tight comparability across all districts would not be possible unless every district chose the same tests, test forms, and general times of the year for testing. The letter from former Sen. Raikes explicitly acknowledged that the legislation did not require districts to employ the same national test. Brian observed that apparently the intent of the legislation was to allow students, parents, schools, and each district to have a national reference, but that there was no requirement that this national assessment be the basis for comparing across districts. Pat noted that in compliance with the law, the state board has made recommendations for grade levels and for tests, but districts may administer tests in grades other than those recommended.

### **Review of Development Plan for English Language Arts Assessments**

Patty McDivitt, from Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), talked about form development and the field test process. She shared the following:

- The initial goal was to develop two operational forms for each grade based on the field test process.
- There are five field test forms, each with six passages and a set of seven items. The passages vary in type and length and represent the set of genres included in the standards.
- The Department has examined each of the forms, made suggestions for revision, and will once again overview the forms prior to the field test.
- The goal is for Grade 3 to have approximately 40 items that correlate to 6-8 passages. Grades 4 through high school will have approximately 50 items, all based on the results of the field test.
- Once the field test is complete and the two operational forms are complete, the Table of Specifications will be reviewed and revised.
- To develop a third operational form, field test items will be embedded in the operational forms once the initial operational forms are developed.

The NAC discussion included:

- General support for the field test plan and the efforts to meet the very aggressive development and implementation schedule.

- Recommendations for how three operational forms might be used: Dr. Camara suggested keeping one form for breach purposes, not to be disclosed. Dr. Sawyer supported this suggestion. He also suggested that security issues will drive the usage of the other two forms. Brian suggested that the Department consider continuing the work of item/form development continually, as often times students remember passages. Dr. Camara suggested that item development continue so that one additional form can be developed per year. Dr. Sawyer supported this recommendation.
- Brian Gong stated that it is important to keep the ‘feel’ of the test consistent from year to year as much as possible. The Department should work with its contractor to establish test specifications/blueprints that include detailed specification and specified tolerances at the item, passage, and form levels.
- Dr. Camara suggested that 50 to 70% of the first operational form be released so that teachers have access to them. He emphasized that it is very important to get actual passages and forms in the hands of teachers. If releasing actual items is not practical, then at least multiple practice activities with items and passages should be provided.

### **Item Development and Field-testing Plan**

- Brian Gong suggested that an effort be made to develop largely parallel test forms, especially regarding similar numbers between vocabulary and comprehension.
- A suggestion was made to determine a fixed number of items at the Grade Level Standard level (vocabulary/comprehension).
- It was recommended that the both the field test and the operational test be administered in two sessions, over two consecutive days. Districts would have the flexibility to schedule the two days within the three week window. Each session would consist of three reading passages and accompanying items. The suggested time allotted would be approximately one hour per session, but the tests are untimed, so students could have more time if needed. It was decided that the field test will mirror the administrative processes as the operational test to the extent possible. In future years the three week test administration window may be extended as tests for additional subject areas are added.

***Update – June 09: The field test proceeded as was outlined and planned. Good feedback from the field. Both qualitative results and statistical analysis of the field test will be provided at the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting so the decisions about operational testing may be finalized.***

## **Scaling and Equating plan**

- The contract calls for an annual ELA assessment to be administered yearly in grades 3-8 and 10. Each test will be scaled independently; i.e., they will not be vertically scaled. The contractor is responsible for ensuring technical adequacy of items, forms, scores, and scales. The contractor intends to develop three forms and pre-equate them using a random equivalent groups design. Because the pre-equating is based on voluntary samples from the field test, particular attention was paid to the design of the sampling checks and analyses. Form A will be used to set standards in 2010, and will also provide the anchor for equating of subsequent field test items.
- Studies should be done to ensure adequate comparability, specifically between the scores from paper/pencil and online administration, as well as comparability (equating) to previous test performance.
- Department needs to decide what the reporting scale will be. The discussion raised considerations of ease of understanding and avoidance of misinterpretation. Several options were discussed regarding inclusion of indication of measurement error or confidence bands around student scores.
- Recommendation was made for online administration to have more structure in terms of who participates. The NAC recommended that a random stratified sampling process (identical to what occurred for the paper/pencil) should be used. In the next few weeks, NDE will send an email that will include the online capacity survey, as well as several questions to determine capability to participate online. The random sample will be drawn by NDE from the survey information.
- Additionally, it was recommended that a survey be given following the field test to determine effectiveness and efficiency of test administration.

***Update: Procedures were followed during the field test as recommended. A sample of schools who administered paper/pencil was selected, and a survey was given following the field test to provide information about effectiveness. This will be shared at the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.***

## **Confirmation Hearing**

The meeting was adjourned while the NAC members attended the confirmation hearing at the State Capitol. The NAC members reported that the confirmation hearing consisted of Brian Halstead introducing members of the NAC and NAC members responding to questions asked by members of the Education Committee. The members of the

Education Committee indicated they would make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding approving each NAC member.

The NAC meeting reconvened at 3:30 PM.

### **Standard Setting Plan**

- The contractor is responsible for conducting the standard setting for each grade-level test. Three achievement levels will be set: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.
- Dave Chayer and John Poggio overviewed some possible standard setting methodologies, specifically Bookmark and Contrasting Group. Dave overviewed each of these processes to ensure understanding among all TAC group members. Feedback was requested as to which method was preferred.
- Brian Gong asked Dave to address constraints that DRC is facing regarding the standard setting process. Dave talked about cost, stating that discussion had occurred regarding ways to cut costs; standard setting was one means.
- Brian strongly recommended that cost-cutting not be the driving force behind methodology selected. Standard setting critically affects the outcomes of the program for every student, is essential to the credibility and technical adequacy of the program, and is a relatively small item in the budget. If there is any way to bring experts in for a standard-setting process, that is the better route to go. A starting point could be contrasting group method, with a follow-up process to occur.

*Update: Decisions have been made to apply two standard setting methodologies, both the traditional bookmark method and a contrasting group method. Further detail will be provided at the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

**The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM and reconvened at 8:15 AM, Feb. 18, 2009.**

### **Calendar Scheduling for Next NAC Meetings**

Consistent with the practice of most state technical advisory committees, the next two meetings of the NAC were scheduled to ensure availability of all needed persons.

The next meeting, originally scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>, was changed to July 7, 2009, tentatively 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM. An additional meeting was scheduled for October 27, 2009. Both meetings will be held in Lincoln, NE.

### **Standard Setting Plan, Continued Discussion:**

- After further discussion it was decided that both a student-based method and an item-based method should be used together to set achievement level cutscores. In the spring of 2009 CAL will electronically collect from teachers the predicted proficiency data about students. These data will be used for a contrasting groups method. Then in 2010 when the standard setting occurs for the operational test, groups would be convened to do a content-based method such as Bookmark or Angoff. The contrasting groups information would be used to create initial cutscores for the consideration of the panels using the item-based standard-setting procedures.

### **Accommodations**

In response to a question from the NAC, Nebraska shared that it had developed a “Quick Guide to Testing Accommodations” for distribution this spring. The guide includes testing administration practices, appropriate for all students, and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities as well as students learning the English Language. The NAC responded that this was good practice and highly supported getting this information to schools prior to the operational administrations.

### **Data, Reporting, and Report Design**

- The contractor is responsible for designing reports, in consultation with NDE. In addition the contractor is responsible for issuing reports. The reports include a student report, school summary of students, school item analysis, district report, and state report. The contractor will provide these reports in paper and electronic format. In addition, the computer-based architecture makes available a number of other reports.
- A discussion occurred regarding the scores to be collected, reported and displayed: scale scores, raw scores, and percentiles. The recommendation was made to report out scale scores for a total reading score with subscores for vocabulary and comprehension. One option discussed was whether to center the reporting scale on the Proficient cutscore for each grade. The law requires reporting of scores and sub scores. This topic of reporting may be discussed further at the next NAC meeting.
- The timing of the feedback and data reporting was discussed, especially regarding the practice tests. It was decided that in the four practice opportunities in 2009 answers would be posted on the March “mini-tests;” no answers would be provided on the field test items, but a summary report about the field test would be provided to each building. On the fall 2009 practice test it was decided that districts participating in the online administration would receive immediate answers, and those administering paper/pencil would have access to the answers posted on the web. No achievement level information will be provided with the practice tests since no cut scores will be set until August 2010 with the operational test data.

- Preliminary discussions began but no final recommendations were made about data return on the operational test and the timeline. It was suggested that NDE examine the score reports from other states for suggested models and timelines. DRC provided reports from several states, and the group examined them with the understanding that more research needed to be done to decide Nebraska's approach.

### **Test Administration Training**

- The plans were presented and discussed for training local test administrators, including district test coordinators and those involved with the computer-based administration. The issues included administration policies and procedures, field test procedures, test security, appropriate testing practices, and accommodations. Specific attention was paid to the extensive supports to be provided for the computer-based assessments, including mini-tests, on-line tutorials and practice materials, and on-line feedback.

### **Transition Issues for Accountability**

- The implementation of new ELA assessments has implications for Nebraska's accountability system. In particular, the potential of different achievement levels being set would affect the percentage of students proficient or above, and schools' performance in relation to AYP targets, which were set with the previous achievement levels.
- With the change in assessment practices comes the transitioning of state accountability. The ratings for local assessment quality and for student performance will be eliminated as requirements with the implementation of each operational state test. That means that by 2010, a new state accountability system must be in place. The discussion of the group centered around culture, communication, and possible models of accountability systems: What is the purpose of the state accountability system? What indicators should be included? Should state and federal accountability be separated, or be integrated? Brian emphasized that the overall question when building an accountability model should be: *What do we want to do overall?* What design decisions should be considered now as we work toward that desired end?
- The NAC suggested that the Department be aware of what other policy makers are interested in. The Department is currently seeking input about these accountability questions from various stakeholders. The State Board has been having facilitated discussions; internally the Department has had a Department-wide discussion on these questions. Additionally, as accountability is considered, the Department needs to think about what is needed in the future and to be certain that the design decisions made now will support what is wanted in the future. A contracted advisor is helping the Department develop possible models for further discussion within the state. These models should be ready for discussion at the July NAC meeting.

