

COLORADO STATE COMMITTEE OF PRACTITIONERS

November 19, 2004 Meeting Notes

Purpose: the State Committee of Practitioners serves to advise the State in carrying out its responsibilities under Title I

Members Present:

Sheryl Hutter, Melanie Jones, Paige Grubb, Jan Johnston, Jane Toothaker, Karen Benner (by teleconference), Carol Harris (by teleconference), Mary Ann Saffer, Evelyn Jacobi, Sandy McHugh, Barb Rhine, Larry Romine, Terri Howard, and Robert Finkle.

Ex-officio members: Trish Boland, Brad Bylsma, Laura Hensinger, & Alyssa Pearson

Guests: Anita Foxworth

I. Meeting notes from August 27th, 2004, reviewed for accuracy. No discrepancies noted. These notes will be posted on the Committee's website.

II. Updates

- New members: Terri Howard joined the committee following the electronic review of her application and vote by members. Ms. Howard is the Title I Coordinator for Centennial BOCES, working with nine rural districts in the North Central region of the State. An additional nomination form for a school board member was tabled, until it is clear as to the district's receipt of Title I funds. Committee members were provided an updated list of contact information.
- Federal Monitoring: The committee was reminded of the federal onsite monitoring dates of January 25th – 28th, 2005. The Committee co-chairs were invited to participate on January 25th and 26th, since the USDE has established that the Committee of Practitioners is an area of the monitoring process. Larry Romine indicated that he would be available to participate.
- District Improvement: Brad Bylsma shared information related to the parent notification of districts' identified for program improvement. Letters must go out to parents of all students enrolled in the 59 districts that have not made all their AYP targets for two consecutive years. The final draft of this letter is available for districts, should these choose to review it before it is provided to parents. The State had optimistically hoped to have the letter out to parents by early November, but there were too many logistics that delayed this. It is now more likely that the letters will be available in early December.

Larry Romine noted that districts appreciated the time put into the regional meetings that provided information on program improvement.

Jan Johnston requested clarification on the availability of translations. Brad indicated that Spanish would be available. Other translations can be made by

districts and billed back to the State. These district-translated letters will be made available upon request by other districts.

Sheryl Hutter queried Brad regarding an extension of the Program Improvement plan, given the delay in parent notification, and a concern regarding an excess of 15% carryover. Brad indicated that an extension wasn't necessary, since districts have known for some time of their program improvement status. A waiver is possible next year, should a district find that it carries over more than the 15% allowable.

Larry Romine asked about fulfilling the 10% set aside with district or local dollars, especially where all the Title I schools have made the AYP targets. The set aside is perceived as something of a hardship for some districts. Brad referred back to the law, which requires that districts commit to spend 10% of their Title I allocation. Thus, districts cannot fulfill this set aside with other funding sources.

Evelyn Jacobi shared what Poudre School District has developed in terms of expenditure of the 10% set aside. Much of this money is used to pay 10% of salaries of teachers in Title I schools. These teachers are required to develop a plan and provide approximately four (4) hours of professional development a week in their respective buildings. This PD may take the form of coaching, book study, etc. The rationale for this model is that schools must meet increased targets in '05 and the additional PD can assist with this. It also prevented the district from having to drop a school from Title I support. This is not believed to be a supplant issue, since the professional development provided by teachers is a new design.

Carol Harris had a related question about 'time and effort' sheets, which are required of employees whose salary is paid out of multiple sources or programs. She suggested that the state provide follow up information to the grants/fiscal workshops in the form of samples of timesheets, additional explanation, and clarification of this need in targeted assistance vs. schoolwide program.

Recommendation: The committee recommended that, with district permission, examples of the program improvement plans submitted to CDE be available to others, possibly on the web, so that more information is available.

Schools on Improvement: Alyssa Pearson reported that there are 89 schools that have been identified for improvement. As a result of increased 2003 and 2004 CSAP scores, 28 schools were removed from this designation in October.

Larry Romine questioned the possible confusion that may arise as program improvement letters are sent out to parents, yet in some of these districts there are no schools identified for improvement. Alyssa Pearson explained that other issues may exist in schools not served by Title I (these schools are exempt from improvement interventions) and the program improvement designation may highlight these other issues.

CDE will clarify with districts as to the status of Title I schools in their districts in order to ensure that the AYP determinations held at the state level align with those held in districts.

Schools identified for school improvement must develop a school improvement plan that is submitted to their respective districts. A template for such a plan is on the CDE website. NOTE: school improvement plans are not submitted to the State, since it is the purview of the district to review and approve the plans.

Additional comments included:

- The potential interventions associated with school improvement are causing a great deal of anxiety among schools and staff.
- The parent notification raises awareness among more people of the areas in which a school or district can improve.
- Inequality exists among small and large districts in that smaller districts have fewer targets and fewer subgroups of 30 for disaggregation. Small districts must be very low performing in order to not make the AYP targets.
- The interventions appear as punishment.
- A need for parent-friendly documents that explain the interventions associated with district and school improvement. (This may be addressed through the documents under development for the Title I Handbook.)

Jan Johnston asked about whether the State may move to calculate AYP by grade level. Alyssa Pearson indicated that the State is not looking to go this direction. However, the State is looking at possibly changing SPED calculations to more closely resemble how ELL determinations are made. This would translate into tracking students who have been exited from SPED for two years, (as is done with ELL students) and including these students in the SPED category for this period.

Jane Toothaker remarked that one potential drawback to the possible change in SPED determination might be holding these students in a category for which they are not longer eligible. Testing demonstrates when students are not longer eligible for special education services. In addition, exiting from special education does not necessarily translate into being Partially Proficient or above.

Rob Finkle noted that few students with IEPs are staffed out. He has met with SPED directors and they report an increasing number of students diagnosed with autism. Some parents of students with disabilities are opting out of CSAP participation. Alyssa Pearson noted that parent refusal doesn't impact participation rates in AYP determinations.

A question arose as to whether BOCES are held accountable when partner districts do not make SPED targets: interventions go to the district not the BOCES. Committee representatives from BOCES indicated that they are being responsive to the SPED targets not made and working with districts.

Recommendations: Suggest that CDE communicate clearly about what the issues appear to be as a result of AYP determinations. While this is partially communicated in the State Report Card, additional communication is thought to be helpful.

Additionally, since SPED targets account for nearly 2/3 of the AYP performance targets not made at the district level, there needs to be assistance with external and internal communication of this information and coordination of technical assistance.

Continue to look at SPED procedures for AYP determinations.

- Colorado System of School Support (CS³): Anita Foxworth provided an update on the State's technical assistance to schools identified for improvement. There are currently six school support teams that provided week-long reviews. The reviews cover nine standards and provide an in-depth report that covers 88 indicators. As of November, fourteen schools at various levels of the improvement cycle have requested reviews. An evaluator has been retained for the project. Part I of this evaluation examined tools and training, as well as the technology. Based on the recommendations from this, the State has streamlined the report-generation process through:
 - Purchase of PC tables
 - Development of software
 - Revision to SST trainings, with a greater focus on rubrics and findings

Phase 2 of the evaluation will examine how to measure the impact of the CS³ project.

Several districts have expressed an interest in using the SST process with their schools that have been placed on Accreditation Watch. Jefferson County Schools has trained several teams in the process and is using it this year.

The School Improvement Grant has been linked to the SST review. The State believes that this grant will provide schools that undergo a review with the resources to implement some of the SST report recommendations.

Recommendation: Provide more information to the field about the SST process and consider providing districts with an overview training of it.

- Title I Handbook: Laura Hensinger provided an update on the forthcoming Title I Handbook. This product has as its purpose to act as a guide for Title I programs. It includes: an overview, definitions, fiscal information, timelines, examples, and resources.

Recommendation: Given the large turnover in Title I administrators, it would be helpful to have a compliance checklist.

III. Discussion Items:

Mathematics

Alyssa Pearson provided preliminary information about the 05 CSAP tests for third and fourth grades. It is possible that these scores will not be included in the AYP determinations next year for several reasons, foremost being that the baseline scores will all have to be reconfigured to include these additions. The time for this would not permit timely notification of AYP determinations.

Alyssa also noted that targets for math are increasing at proportionally greater percentages than for reading. This is because the initial baseline for math was considerably lower than for reading. This may impact schools and districts next year. For many districts that were identified for improvement, math performance among students with disabilities appeared frequently.

Monitoring:

Trish Boland provided an update on the State's monitoring of districts. The Consolidated Federal Programs Unit is now looking at the monitoring process as an assessment of risk of noncompliance. This means that the State would only conduct an onsite monitoring of those programs that appear to be in some difficulty. 'Flags' would be raised by such things as information in consolidated applications, electronic budgets, compensatory reporting documents, and required plans.

It was noted that districts could use a portion of their 10% professional development set aside for an SST review.

Consolidated Application

Paige Grubb recounted some of the challenges that arose this year for districts in the review and approval of consolidated applications. In one case, revisions were submitted electronically by the district but never received by the department. Such technology glitches resulted in diminished communication.

There also appears to be a long waiting period for approval from Grants Fiscal. With 178 districts, there are just two individuals that can give final approval. The committee agreed to write a letter to the Department that urged the addition of more staff to provide support to current consultants. Additionally, it was suggested that a 'return receipt' be automatically generated to districts once a file has been received.

Program Improvement

Given the earlier discussion of program improvement during the Update portion of the agenda, there was little to add. The Committee recommended that the State continue to pursue how to help students with disabilities in a collaborative fashion. Evelyn Jacobi notes that mobility continues to be an issue for schools.

IV. Agenda Items for Next Meeting: Distinguished Teacher and Student; Title I program successes (How long does it take for a student to show success? What's a successful program?); SST One-pager; CSAP data and 'information at your fingertips.

V. Remaining 2004-2005 meeting dates:

- February 25th, 2005
- April 29th, 2005