Arizona State Board of Education
A-F School Accountability Committee

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) 38-431.02, notice is hereby given to the members of the A-F School Accountability Committee and to the general public that the Committee will hold a meeting, open to the public, as specified below. The Committee reserves the right to change the order of items on the agenda, with the exception of public hearings. One or more members of the Committee may participate telephonically.

Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.02 (H), the Committee may discuss and take action concerning any matter listed on the agenda.

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(2) and (3), the Committee may vote to convene in executive session for discussion or consultation for legal advice from the Committee's attorneys concerning any items on this agenda and/or for discussion or consideration of records exempt by law from public inspection, including the receipt of information that is specifically required to be maintained as confidential by state or federal law.

Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting the State Board Office at (602) 542-5057. Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange the accommodation.

DATED AND POSTED this 21st day of August, 2014.

By: _____

Christine Thompson
Executive Director
(602) 542-5057

AGENDA

ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
A-F SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

Monday, August 25, 2014
12:30 PM
Arizona Department of Education
1535 W. Jefferson
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Room 122

12:30 p.m. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

1. GENERAL SESSION

   A. Presentation and discussion regarding the charge of the Committee and the timeline for Committee recommendations to the State Board.

   B. Presentation and discussion regarding proposed guiding principles for Arizona's school accountability system.

DRAFT STATEMENTS OF AGREEMENT TO GUIDE THE WORK

A through F system will examine solely academic information/data. Socio-economic status, ethnicity rates, parent education attainment rates, etc. will not have any bearing on the grades.

"A" schools must be truly excellent in their mission to graduate students prepared for college and work. Parents should be confident that an "A" school will provide a child with the skills needed to attend an institution of higher learning, upon graduation, without remediation.

All schools must have the opportunity to achieve "A" status. The formula shall not limit the number of schools that can statistically earn this top grade.

Multiple measures of performance provide more information about a school's performance than a single test score.

Take care that each measure matters and gives parents important and understandable information about how their child's school performs.

The formula must evolve appropriately, based on additional data becoming available, we must ensure each new measure captures what is intended and is not instead simply a correlation to income. Some portions of the new formula should be explored as pilot until data from the first year can be reviewed.

Simplicity must be balanced with transparency: All components of the Letter Grade must be transparent to parents in an easy-to-understand format. The information embedded in the Letter Grade is as important, if not more, than the Letter Grade itself.

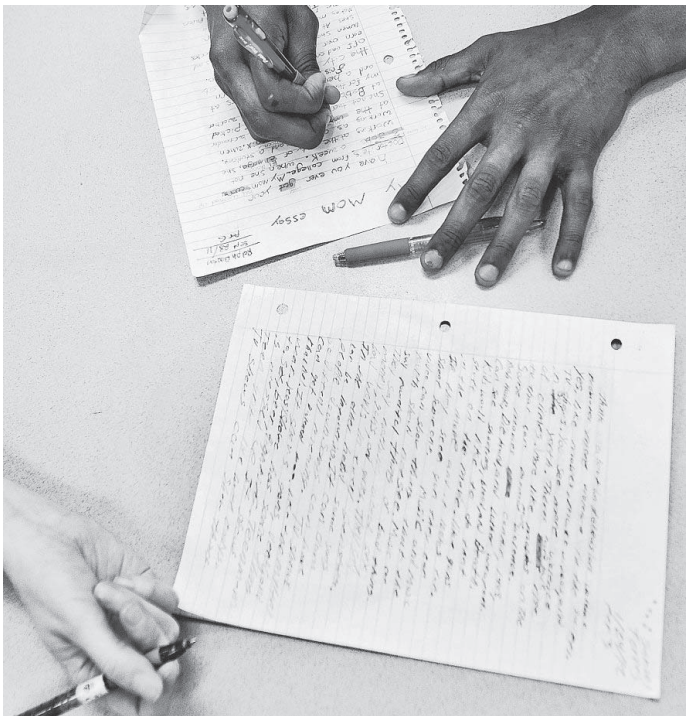
The formula must recognize academic growth as an essential element of measurement: Schools must not be penalized for low scores if significant gains are made over the course of the academic year.

Measures must be clear; schools must understand which students are included in each measure and for which outcomes they are being held accountable.

Each measure shall be aligned to a learning or school environment goal that has been established for students so that the accountability system provides valuable information for schools to improve.

The accountability models shall provide valid, reliable and actionable information to a variety of stakeholders.

DRAFT



Improving schools begins with forging a consensus on three fundamental questions. TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

Without a strong foundation, Ariz. education will not improve

The farce that is Arizona's system of grading schools was on stage again last week.

Arizona's public school system is often described in crisis terms. That is, in significant part, overwrought. Arizona kids as a whole do worse than the national average on the federally administered National Assessment of Educational Progress test. But when results are disaggregated for socioeconomic factors — comparing Whites to Whites, Latinos to Latinos, low-income kids to low-income kids — Arizona results are right at the national average.

That, however, is cold comfort. Our student mix is what it is. Our educational challenge is greater than that of other states. And we are not doing enough to ensure that virtually all students have the foundational literacy and numeracy to make successes of themselves.

According to the results of the school-grading system, however, our schools are doing great. Fully 65 percent of Arizona schools received an A or a B rating.

So, how can school performance be stellar when student achievement is unsatisfactory?

The state statute that prescribes the letter-grading system for schools says: "A school or school district assigned a letter grade of C shall demonstrate an average level of performance." But plainly that's not the case. If 65 percent of schools receive an A or a B, then a school receiving a C is clearly below average.

The school-grading system can't even pass a math test.

There is nothing more fundamental for a public school system than deciding what students should know, how to determine whether they are learning it, and what to do if they aren't.

Arizona has never established that and stuck to it. Now, we're starting over.

Under the old, locally developed standards and test, there has been modest progress in student achievement. Nevertheless, large numbers of kids are still lagging unacceptably behind. A fifth of students aren't passing the reading test. Nearly 40 percent aren't up to standard in math.

There has never been an effective accountability system — for schools or students — for falling considerably short of what the state has determined students should know. Instead, we got grade inflation for the schools.

The old standards have been replaced with Common Core, the national education standards that are generating controversy in Arizona, but for the wrong reasons.

There is value in having commonality among the states in educational standards, both for benchmarking and accommodating the high degree of American mobility. Common Core isn't a federal conspiracy to take over local schools.

But it is designed to prepare every student for tertiary education, and therein lies the seeds of its inevitable failure.

Today, only 45 percent of young adults ages 25 to 34 have an associate degree or higher. Universal college readiness is neither achievable nor necessary, unless college is to become the new high school.

In Arizona particularly, the public education system needs to successfully walk before it tries to run. Students with foundational literacy and numeracy can pick up whatever else they missed if they get motivated to pursue higher learning or training later in life.

Students graduating high school without foundational literacy and numeracy face a much higher mountain to climb and a life on the economic margins. Start there.

ROBERT ROBB

The Common Core standards have been adopted and relabeled Arizona College and Career Ready Standards due to the controversy, and a new test will be selected. But, at this point, no one knows what will be done with the test results.

For students, the state Board of Education is leaning toward recommending that they somehow be incorporated into student subject grades. A new grading system for schools based on the new test will be devised, but there's little reason to believe it will be any more honest or useful than the existing one.

What's the point? Pretending to hold schools and teachers accountable on how students do on a test that has little or no consequences for them is a waste of time.

In discussing education, educators want to jump directly to more resources, and understandably so. They are coping with a prolonged financial squeeze.

Improving student achievement, however, begins with forging a state consensus on those fundamental questions: What should students know? How do we determine if they are learning it? What happens if they aren't?

We are a long way from such a consensus.

Reach Robb at robert.robb @arizonarepublic.com.