ESSA IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

ESSA Subcommittee Meeting – Data Collection and Reporting

Date, Time: Monday, June 27, 2016, 9:00 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

Location: 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

ALSDE Facilitator:	Melinda Maddox
Members present:	Shag LaPrade, Deborah Love, Patrick Patterson, Tony Thacker (presenter) and Dom Martel (presenter)
Members absent:	Nichelle Nix

Summary:

Discussion included what content and data must be collected and reported in compliance with federal regulations. Committee members were also asked to define "easily accessible manner" and "timely." The committee also discussed what information is essential to inform educational improvement for all kids. The session concluded with a discussion of data privacy and security.

Next meeting: Friday, July 22nd, 9:00 a.m., 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

All notes below are comments with committee members and the ALSDE facilitator.

Work Group's Purpose and Charge

- Maddox presented the challenge to the group: Ensuring the "timely delivery of complex information to a wide range of stakeholders" as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Maddox explained the timeline for Alabama's ESSA transition plan. Working groups will meet from June to August. The initial draft of the state plan will be written between September and March.
- U.S. Department of Education is taking public comments of proposed regulations for state plans and data reporting until August 1. Available on U.S. Department of Education website.

Agreements for Subcommittee Work

- Maddox presented the rules for the subcommittee meeting. A committee member asked that a rule be added to require votes for committee recommendations. The committee will be sharing all perspectives.
- A member recommended adding a rule that the subcommittee works towards consensus.

Meeting Format

- The meeting would start with a review of ESSA requirements.
- Subcommittee members would then discuss how Alabama can provide "essential information to inform educational improvement for all kids" in a way that is "easily accessible" and "timely."

Review of ESSA Requirements

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Memorandum

- Maddox shared a CCSSO memo, which gives an overview of the State Report Card Requirements.

Overview of Requirements – Dom Martel – Coordinator for Information Systems

- The state needs to submit descriptions of the data groups and data categories it collects to be in compliance with federal government rules. The state must publicly report the data in an annual report card.
- The Alabama State Department of Education has a "data center" website with descriptions of the data it has on hand.

Continued… Overview of Requirements – Dom Martel – Coordinator for Information Systems

- The new data required by the Federal government includes: preschool enrollment, data on school climate, and accelerated coursework.
- ESSA also requires school-by-school and LEA-by-LEA finance data. Alabama does not collect this data by school, and the state is working to determine how to meet this requirement.
- Data must also be disaggregated by new subgroups, including students that are homeless, military-connected, and in foster care. Graduation rates will also need to have those new subcategories added.
- Alabama will also need to cross-tabulate student data, which it currently does not do.

Questions about requirements

- Is there a margin of error designation that was included in the reporting requirements since many people choose not to report?
- A member suggested that people are nervous about data collection by the federal government.
  - There is no margin of error in the reports, and the federal government was looking for raw numbers.

Facilitated Discussion

Definition of "Easily Accessible Manner"

- Q: What is accessible or timely; expressed the need to be sure the question is asked, "Should this point be collected and shared?"
- There is data that Alabama is required to share, but the subcommittee can recommend that no information be collected beyond what is required.
- Another member shared that there might be data that the state is not required to collect that may be useful for research.
- A member clarified that there is a difference between collecting data to share with press or researchers versus what Alabama may share with the federal government.
- Another member said that any data used for research should require consent and disclosure, whether or not the research is used for financial gain. Also recommended that a complete list of data points that are going to be made available be defined before discussing how it will be accessed.
- Clarification: Alabama does not report any child level data to the U.S. Department of Education. It is only reported at school level or greater.
- The state will be required to disclose some data, and it will need to determine the most appropriate and effective way to make sure stakeholders use it appropriately.

Continued… Definition of "Easily Accessible Manner"

- Questions asked as to who pays for the data processing; it is currently unclear.
- Concern about cost of making data easily accessible in a short timeframe.
- A member recommended using social media and notifications to minimize costs.
- A member recommended that reports and data be posted on local schools' websites as soon as it is available.
- Districts are required by the federal government to have report cards. The school districts need to have their own report cards or the states need to prepare for them.

Definition of "timely"

- Definition of "timely" for providing assessment data is required by U.S. Department of Education.
- A member recommended ten businesses days for all data, since most is tabulated on computers.
- Maddox said that not all students take tests on computers, which could cause delays.

What is essential information to inform educational improvement for all students?

- A member asked the group to consider what data parents and other stakeholders need to make decisions about schools that they may not have.
- Question of whether there is a need for more information that is not already shared.
- A member said that parents will look at the data, but they then want to ask questions of the people in and around the school.
- A member asked whether parents do not look for data because they are not interested or because the data is not accessible.
- Many people do not know that they can search for and access financials from the school system. In places like Huntsville with high capacity of PhD, they expect to have this data available.
- A member said that increasing access to data could create inter-district competition and brand certain areas as failing; districts may resist making the information available if it creates a negative image.
- It is currently a requirement that districts either report the data publicly themselves or link to the state report.

Data security and privacy

- The State Board has a resolution regarding a data privacy policy and asked for thoughts on district data security and privacy policy.
- It is paramount that every school district has a policy to protect that data.
- Recommendation that the policy not just address external security, but address privacy – whether the information should be used at all.
- Today there is not any remedy if privacy is violated, and there are no limitations on what agencies can collect data on students or parents. If the state is going to have any information collected on a student or parent, they should always have access to it. A parent should have access to any information collected during the process of enrollment. This is especially true if a school is willing to share that information with someone else.
- Policies are not just security but are meant to address privacy as well.
- There is tension between privacy and acquiring useful data that helps ensure a positive future for every child.
- The more access parents may have at home, the more it creates vulnerability in data security.
- Recommended that parents access the data in schools if needed.

Action Items for Next Meeting:

- Review ESSA website.
- Review State Department of Education Website – State Report Card and Data Center.
- Pick out other states and look at their websites. Look at user-friendliness.
- Review guidance from the State Department of Education on following the law. Comment period closes on August 1.