

Teaching in Kansas Commission II Sub-Committee

August 7, 2013

Present: Bill Bagshaw, Diane DeBacker, Scott Myers, Brad Neuenswander, Dayna Richardson, Vicki Seeger, Ron Vinduska, Craig Wilford, Mike Berblinger, Mary Matthew, Rose Kane, Bill Hall, and Bev Mortimer

Scott Myers stated the purpose of the meeting was to come to a consensus about extending the waiver for the requirement that personnel decisions will be made based on student academic growth as one part of the decision-making process. Extending the waiver would be from 2015-16 academic year to 2016-17 academic year. He presented a list of pros and cons related to pursuing the extension, making it clear that other considerations could be added. Pros and cons listed for extending the waiver include a) extended time would allow for additional professional learning opportunities, b) additional student academic growth data would become available, c) perceived needed relief for the field, d) loss of momentum and focus, e) possible changes at the federal level, and f) dealing with and responding to local politics.

Brad Neuenswander reviewed that current requirements include all districts giving new assessments during the 2014-15 academic year. There will not yet be a second year of assessment scores so that calculation of results is impossible for informing personnel decisions. The waiver extension would be asking for permission to delay personnel decisions based on scores to the 2016-17 academic year. The decision to extend the waiver is a state's choice. This group's task is to consider whether or not Kansas wants to extend the waiver.

Bill Bagshaw noted the soft mandates coming from the United States Department of Education. He reported that the team was involved in an intense process of rewriting guideline³ of the waiver. Applying for an extension would be a natural continuation of what is being accomplished with the rewrite. He said that there are daily requests for technical assistance for teacher evaluation and asked that buildings and districts continue to let KSDE know how we can support them.

Scott Myers said that professional learning will be planned for the fall including sessions on inter-rater reliability and the technical qualities of locally designed assessments.

Bill Bagshaw addressed the default list of student growth measures. A process still needs to be figured out for how a district is using the default list. If districts are using something besides the default list, a process for determining validity and reliability needs to be in place. Even for vendor-purchased assessments, a system for determining validity and reliability will need to be used.

Addressing the listed pros and cons:

Rose Kane believes that districts need relief and giving educators additional time to learn how to use the evaluation tool would be beneficial. Evaluators and teachers are still getting used to using the tool and adding in the state assessment data would be an additional stressor. She noted that educators haven't had time to adequately train on using the evaluation system.

Mary Matthew asked about how reauthorization of ESEA would factor into an extension to the waiver.

Diane DeBacker stated that we are not in control of reauthorization, and that the decision about reauthorization is not likely until the end of the year.

Brad Neuenswander reminded all in attendance that all schools have to have an evaluation system in place by the 2014-15 academic year. The question becomes, do we want to use student growth data in 2015-16 or 2016-17. Nothing else within the waiver or the process will change.

Dana Richardson suggested that a district pilot inclusion of the student growth data. She wondered if it would be possible to extend the waiver but have a district pilot this aspect of the evaluation system. She believes that it will make teachers and principals more comfortable if an extension is granted.

Brad Neuenswander said that new assessments would be in place in spring of 2014-15. Results will not be available until fall of 2015.

Ron Vinduska said that it will not be possible to talk about improvement in student growth data in 2015, so waiting for a second year of data makes sense.

Brad Neuenswander confirmed the interpretation made by Ron Vinduska. It is not possible to give a growth calculation until a second year of data is available. After the spring assessment of 2016 and results in fall of 2016, then, data could be used to make personnel decisions. Because two points of data will be available. Dana Richardson noted it is important to go deeper rather than faster.

Bev Mortimer discussed issues related to multiple measures. Many secondary teachers, especially, do not have assessments for their content areas (i.e. art, physical education, CTE). Extending the waiver will allow these teachers to experiment and practice with assessments they choose or design for their content areas. There is such high accountability for the state assessed content, that allowing this time will make the conversations more than just talking about state assessments. She noted that many could become overwhelmed with the accountability process without an extension.

Bill Bagshaw reminded attendees that guidelines for systems are to have data components, be reliable and valid, and be fair. Even with two data points, it is possible to have a group of students that present as an enigma, causing the data to be skewed. Everyone is working with new standards and still adapting to teaching with those standards.

Dana Richardson noted that some administrators have only worked with one system of assessments and accreditation, so the new standards will be an adjustment and time will be required to develop sophistication with KEEP.

Brad Neuenswander explained that KSDE currently has four years of state assessment data. A process is being developed to look at what growth was predicted to be and then analyzing what growth occurred. He said that good quality growth projection can be determined from the data. From this, we can then determine what a good target might be for teacher. This will all be analyzed this year. He said it is critical that we do not use data to make decisions in incorrect ways.

Mary Matthew asked about running data with the new assessments. Brad Neuenswander said that starting in 2014-15, we will have to start with new data and analyze again. Scott Myers noted that we will not be expecting 100% students to achieve at a proficient level, as in the past, because there are too many other factors that play into student achievement.

Bill Bagshaw discussed the necessity for all evaluation systems to meet the six guidelines from the Department of Education, and that a process will need to be developed to ensure that districts using a locally developed assessment also meet the guidelines.

Craig Wilford believes we are not ready to do this, but asked about what would be expected this year.

Brad Neuenswander noted that a compelling reason for requesting the extension has to be developed. Diane DeBacker said that the Department of Education is intent on “getting it right,” but that questions are not answered yet.

Mike Berblinger said that assessment could be “done to us.”

Diane DeBacker said that some things need to be acted upon quickly (on or before 2014) because people have opinions about these things. Teacher evaluation is on the radar of legislators and the public, but the legislators have not yet heard about wanting to choose to wait a year through the extension.

Scott Myers asked those in attendance to discuss the negative impact of extending the waiver. Bill Hall does not believe that loss of momentum or focus should be seen as a negative. Instead, the extension would be a benefit to KSDE to continue refining initiatives related to the waiver. He asked about local politics. Scott Myers has concerns that the Common Core will be viewed as a federal intervention and not moving quickly could allow discussions such as that to occur. Diane DeBacker said that politicians have “gone to bat” for teacher evaluation systems to be in place, and there are critics of taking more time. Brad Neuenswander clarified that the message has been clear that a tool has to be selected and in place by 2014-15. Just one component, using the system to inform personnel decisions, is being delayed. Bill Hall believes that an extension would be viewed as a “breath of fresh air.” Fighting legislators will continue and questions by the public and patrons will have to be addressed.

Bill Bagshaw said that we will need input from the field to put this component in place by 2016-17. He would like this group to be a facilitator of that effort to make certain those in the field have what they need for implementation. He encouraged input from the field on a continuous basis. Dayna Richardson said that one of KLFA’s goals this year is to get out to communities. They are going to ask every single organization what they can do to get the message out.

Brad Neuenswander discussed that good quality standards are in place. The assessments will be the tool to measure college and career readiness for our students.

The Teaching in Kansas Commission II Sub-Committee recommended applying for an extension of the waiver. Reasons for the recommendation include

- a) extended time would allow for additional professional learning opportunities,
- b) additional student academic growth data would become available,
- c) perceived needed relief for the field,
- d) and that districts are not ready for using assessment data to make personnel decisions,
- e) technical assistance is needed from KSDE.

Scott Myers said that the extension will be filed by September 30, 2013. The Department of Education will have an amendment template that will include a list of five required pieces of information.

A survey for building administrators will be sent out. Brad Neuenswander said that KSDE will be hosting regional professional learning based on information gleaned from the survey.

Diane DeBacker said that information about the application for an extension of the waiver can be shared with local entities like school boards.