

Thursday, March 10, 2011

Teacher Measure: Value-Added

Cindy Rudolph brought several concerns to the group from a previously sent email. The email discussed the following:

“There are compliance issues coming from NCDPI that is going to create havoc for teacher compliance with Value-Added if everyone does not get on the same page.

I am pleading to "let's put this out there" before we create a volatile situation we should avoid given the current economic climate and the current disruption created by budget cuts.

- *Formative Assessments - From my understanding, Thinkgate will soon become statewide. I asked this question specifically to June Atkinson last Wednesday and she stated she anticipates to see development in this area in the next 6 months. Thinkgate will be part of the "cloud" at NCDPI. How is CMS going to use formative assessments compared to the state? Where will the flexibility be - at the state level or the LEA? Margaret Heritage, from the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing is considered the "guru" of formative assessment. We need to be very careful as a district on how our students perceive these tests - to them, a test is a test. To garner valuable data to drive instruction, we must make the experience have a valued purpose (Choice Theory, Dr. William Glasser, Harvard). This is critical to success. Your comment from your email "But we also believe that they (tests) will enable us to improve student achievement faster than ever before," can be accurate. However, we have to develop a trust relationship with teacher/student, teacher/school admin, school admin/district, and teacher/district to achieve this goal. If there is no reflection on our practices - including test development, then we can test and evaluate data all we want and not improve achievement.*
- *Summative Assessments - How are the CMS summative assessments going to align with the summative assessments NCDPI will be developing to meet the needs of RttT and the ACRE Project? Is CMS going to be in compliance with the common assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards to be developed by SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) by 2014-15? Which, by the way, will be based on Revised Bloom's.*
- *What about the technology piece and making these assessments available on-line? How are they going to be administered? From my understanding, the ultimate goal is to test on-line; there will be a window for pen and paper, but that will be phased out. Do we have a plan for this technology infrastructure?*
- *How are these summative assessments going to correlate with Section D of RttT and the state's idea of effective teaching vs. CMS concept of effective teaching? I am having a difficult time correlating the information in Strategic Plan 2014 and concept of teacher effectiveness and value added as being addressed by NCDPI.*
- *How are we going to line the data from these assessments up with professional development needs that are being required by RttT? Do we even need to do this? Perhaps we don't, but my belief is our district needs to easily funnel into state (and federal) compliance. I try to apply that philosophy to my classroom. Everything that*

comes out of my mouth and every activity is aligned to the SCOS, which is aligned with each specific study guide, which is directly correlated to the classroom assessment divided by goal, which is in line with the EOC. If, as a district, we diverge away from state compliance we will only serve to exasperate effective teachers. Teacher morale is already a huge concern. Effective teachers have personality traits that make them effective; we cannot inundate them with more "documentation" paperwork than we currently do. These effective teachers want everything they do to be their best - there is not anymore time in the day to work. We are burning them out. It is difficult to adjust to the new teacher evaluation tool, much less the concept of Pay for Performance. In hindsight, it would have been better for CMS to implement the new evaluation tool a year earlier; perhaps this would give everyone an initiation period to become accustomed to the expectations before throwing out the value added Pfp idea.

- What about special populations and meeting IDEA compliance on these tests from both the academic as well as resource costs? Are EC students taking the same exam as honors? What about OCS students and those with virtual teachers due to the EC teacher not being highly qualified in that subject matter? We also have ESL compliance to contend with. Maybe this isn't something that needs to be developed right now, but if we are to meet the goals of Strategic Plan 2014 on the current timeline, we definitely have to be thinking in that direction.*
- Is anyone from accountability going to be on the CMS team at the Summer Leadership Conference? Information for that program just went out from DPI and will align to RtT and teacher effectiveness compliance. This PD is going to be huge in NC and NCDPI is choosing regional PD developers to make this happen. Let's get in on the ground floor and shape it the way we want. One of the things I have learned from dealing with situations in Raleigh is if CMS, Wake Co., or Forsyth Co. do not participate in creating and shaping the vision and mission for these types of things, then what we end up with is a skewed perception of school "realities" that do not fit the needs of a district such as ours. This will be a great opportunity for confluence of ideas, collaboration of resources, and the opportunity to save man hours and money. This would be the perfect situation for PD - Barbara Ann Temple, and Accountability to make a huge impact on teacher support services tied to data.*
- I have several other concerns regarding the concept of equitable measures for value added at the high school level. I can tell you this - when we move to value added Pfp - every district administrative decision will have to be scrutinized carefully before "live" implementation or the idea of "equitable" will not apply. Zone superintendents, principals, etc. will lose flexibility to make decisions that possibly could positively impact student performance unless we would create zone specific value added measures. Keep in mind teachers will be concerned with summative assessment performance and growth, principals and LEAs often have to make decisions based on AYP compliance. These two performance indicators, while both having value, can thrust administration into making decisions that will create a direct conflict situation. This is an obstacle that has to be addressed beginning with accountability. I don't even really want to think about that because it totally overwhelms my brain! CMS will open themselves up to potential lawsuits if this pay is not "equitable.""*

The group members discussed how the findings and concerns could be best summarized and presented. The high school group also raised the following concerns:

“The key concern is to what extent we can stay away from how the Added-Value algorithm is going to be applied, since such areas will be addressed in other groups. The example was mentioned that the designer of an engine needs to know how the engine is being used. In this context, everyone expressed the desire and the intent to also participate in the follow-up groups.

Such major concerns include:

- *The low correlation between the preliminary results of the VA-Formula and the value-added measures used by the State (.6 to .7). After all, we are State employees. For example, one might be a great teacher by CMS measures but not by the State or vice versa.*
- *The discrepancies between the upcoming State measurement system and the CMS choice.*
- *The conflict between a focus on the new VA-measure versus Proficiency which is expected to impact teachers significantly (Graduation rate, NCLB, certain different measures for principals, etc.)*
- *The fact that there may be different VA-Formulas for different subject areas.*
- *The consequences resulting from the restriction of having to be a 'revenue-neutral' solution.*

In principle, the team agreed that our final report needs to focus on the VA-Algorithm, in particular, existing concerns and recommendations for improvements. Depending on the formulation of the final presentation, there may be minority reports.

Some of the current concerns include:

- *Most important is the objective that the VA-Measure needs to be transparent and easy to understand for all teachers. Teachers should be able to understand how certain actions or events impact their performance evaluation, in particular, for feedback for improvements.*
- *The large number of variables is overwhelming.*
- *Most members were in agreement, that we need to see the results of **simulation** runs in order to be able to assess the meaningfulness of outcomes for certain scenarios. Ideal would be an interactive model. We understand that Andy will provide that in our next session.*
- *At least a .95 correlation with measurements used by the State should be a prerequisite for the acceptance of the new algorithm.*
- *Each parameter of the VA-Algorithm should be relevant and realistic (for example, using the actual absence days in the period that is being assessed versus absences in a former school or school year). Not a linear curve!*
- *The current VA-Algorithm does not address and reflect the circumstances related to EC students. Lots of details available.”*