

Operation Public Education
Accountability Design Seminar
March 19-21, 2002

REPORT

Overview

Accountability represents the catalyst for a crucial dialogue: “If you are going to hold us educators – administrators and teachers – responsible for what our students learn, then these are the changes in law, regulation, and resources that we will need in order to get the job done.” In this context, accountability is a tool to transform our schools into 21st century learning communities.

We know from experiences in several other states that “accountability” can be punitive on the one hand or meaningless on the other, and that it is often defined by legislators for political purposes. Our challenge in Pennsylvania is to have education stakeholders collaboratively develop a concept of accountability that furthers our common educational goal: helping all children achieve at high levels.

Operation Public Education created a process – spanning almost two years – of shared learning and dialogue designed to bring together teachers and their union leaders, school board members, superintendents and other administrators, and community representatives. They began together to bring into focus the outline of what a fair and credible accountability system should entail.

By this process, we recognize that accountability – properly defined – is both rich and complex. While a single test score should never be the sole determinant for a student, teacher, principal or entire district, student achievement data must have a place in the accountability discussion. Outcomes, no longer solely inputs, must be part of the evaluation process for all educators. Indeed, we believe that value-added assessment – examining student learning gains not just absolute scores – could serve as the cornerstone of any accountability system. Accountability must extend beyond student test data, as well; the work of administrators and teachers is certainly not entirely reflected in their students’ standardized tests, so we must also examine other ways of fostering and evaluating educators’ roles as instructional leaders.

The Accountability Design Seminar held in March brought together teams of educators who were ready to take this work to the next level. Four districts brought teams consisting of superintendents, curriculum supervisors, principals, teachers, their union leaders, and school board members. The goal of the seminar was two-fold: 1) to provide an extended context in which members of school communities could wrestle with the issue of accountability in a non-threatening and collaborative environment of learning and shared ideas, and 2) for each team to synthesize its work into a set of accountability principles that could guide its district and be shared with others across the state.

Following the seminar, *Operation Public Education* staff and the seminar presenters spent a full day discussing their own accountability principles and design ideas. This final day was the culmination of the work before *Operation Public Education* made public its plans to influence the debate over school funding reform and accountability legislation for Pennsylvania.

Presentations

Dr. Ted Hershberg, director of the Center for Greater Philadelphia, gave his perspective on the issues facing K-12 school reform. Hershberg was a newcomer to K-12 education reform when he began his work with *New Standards* in Southeastern Pennsylvania six years ago. Helping school districts implement standards pedagogy left him convinced that the needed reforms were not happening rapidly enough or in the systemic ways needed to improve student achievement. He described the ill-founded complacency that exists in our country about our education system and some of the obstacles that stand in the way of true reform.

While many people point to the economic success of this country as proof that our education system is working, in reality the economic gains have not benefited the large majority of Americans. In the last 25 years, almost all income gains went to the top fifth of American families. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York attributes this growing income inequality, in large part, to new technologies that favor the better educated.

First, Hershberg explained, we must recognize the monumental task that has been put before our schools: we must now educate all of our children – not just the top fifth – and educate them all to new and higher levels than ever before. The old system, with its emphasis on memorization, made sense in a manufacturing economy, but the skills being taught are not aligned with the new global economy of the 21st century. Recent National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) scores reported by *Education Week* (Jan. 2002) show the startling truth: the large majority of our children are not meeting the high standards we have set on the national level. State standards and assessments are only temporarily masking this reality. It is not fair to say that our schools are worse than they were 20 years ago - but they simply have not kept pace with the demands of a 21st century workforce.

Today, all children need to use technology, think – not just memorize, solve problems, and learn on their own throughout their lives. The challenges of the standards movement have forced districts to re-write curricula to align with standards and assessments, but very little focus has been placed on actually changing teaching practice. Schools are still largely places where teachers teach in isolation in the teacher-centered and memorization paradigm of the last 150 years. The standards movement is seen as another fad reform that will go away. This is resulting in precious little benefit for students or teachers and will not get us where we need to go. Professional development, therefore, becomes the first place to target resources and expertise. Any new funding and accountability system must address the need to invest in the knowledge and skills of educators and to create school cultures where collaboration – not isolation – is the norm.

While a single test score should never be the sole determinant of whether you have a good or bad student or teacher, student achievement data must be viewed as a crucial piece of information in holding educators and systems accountable. Student achievement data must not only be used to diagnose student learning needs, but in the aggregate, to inform goals at the classroom, building and district levels. For the first time, an empirical way of measuring student learning and teacher effectiveness exists in the form of value-added assessment. With this method there is now a fair way to include data in evaluating teachers, schools and districts.

“Investment with accountability,” the byline of *Operation Public Education*, was born out of Hershberg’s realization that unless we invest in our schools and put new rules in place to ensure that the funds are well spent, we will continue to fall short on the promise of standards-based school reform. He outlined the project’s goal of getting new legislation passed that would address what he calls the three-piece puzzle of funding reform: adequacy, equity, and accountability.

The adequacy piece of the puzzle has been addressed by the “Foundation Budget” project, a four-month process just completed. *OPE* hired lead consultant Ed Moscovitch, former budget director of Massachusetts and architect of their foundation budget, to help build a budget for Pennsylvania that more accurately answers the question: “What is the minimum – no frills – cost to provide every child regardless of zip code with a quality education?” The budget, which calls for a 22 percent increase in K-12 statewide spending, incorporates significant investments in professional development, early childhood, extra instructional time for struggling students, small classes in K-3, and up-to-date curriculum materials and technology.

Providing this kind of funding is the first step in helping schools build the capacity they need to do the job. The next piece – equity – is the requirement that these funds be distributed equitably across districts with a larger funding burden being placed on the state.

And, finally, accountability enters the conversation as a necessary component to complete the puzzle. If we are to convince taxpayers that their investment in education will produce results for students, we must offer a credible system of accountability as well. If educators are to accept accountability provisions they must have the necessary resources and supports in place to do their jobs. This becomes the ultimate quid-pro-quo. Such a compromise requires a new paradigm of collaboration between teachers unions, school boards, and administrations.

It is time, Hershberg claims, for school boards and administrations to invite teachers unions to be an equal partner in reform, and time for the unions to accept a seat at the table. When educators can work together to create a consensus about what it takes to improve student achievement then they present a powerful force for change.

The business community must lead the way in partnership with other education stakeholders. Individual business leaders and corporate groups must pledge their commitment to investment with accountability in order to ensure a quality workforce for the future.

“This work is hard enough,” said Hershberg. “Let’s stop fighting with each other and get on with the task.”

John Grossman, President, Columbus (Ohio) Education Association

Columbus is the largest city in Ohio and the fastest growing city east of the Mississippi River. It is the second largest school district in the state with nearly 70,000 students, almost 60 percent of whom are minorities. The district includes 146 schools, and 22 have over a 90 percent student turnover rate. The union’s 5,700 active teachers and 1,800 retired members make it the largest union in the area.

Until relatively recently, the union did not have a constructive role within the district. Around 20 years ago, however, it transformed itself and decided to begin acting as a catalyst for change in collaboration with the school district. The first step was for the union to state publicly that not every one had a right to teach, and that those who prove themselves to be inadequate should not remain in the profession. However, this did not preclude due process for all and no teachers would be dismissed without it. This step led the union to work with the district (outside of the collective bargaining agreement) to create a peer review program to assist and evaluate teachers in a fair and regulated way.

The program ultimately gained enough ground locally that NEA decided that it was an acceptable model. Originally only Toledo and Columbus sought to develop peer review programs, but now districts in thirty other states, including all of Florida and California, have followed their lead and created similar programs.

Grossman handed out the Peer Assistance Review (PAR) manual and began describing the system in detail.

A seven-member panel including four teachers and three administrators runs the program. One chair of the panel is the union president and the other is appointed by the superintendent. The 4-3 majority gives it the appearance of being teacher-dominated but all decisions require a two-thirds vote, so collaboration is always necessary. The panel hires consulting teachers who take leave from teaching and serve on a full-time basis for up to three years. These consultants evaluate all new teachers in the district, including teachers with experience outside of the school district. They are given up to 20 teachers to evaluate over the course of the year. Becoming a consulting teacher requires a rigorous application, selection, and training process.

PAR for Intern Teachers

The PAR program is required for all teachers new to the Columbus Public Schools, regardless of their experience level in other districts. Consultants are matched carefully by subject matter and grade level. The evaluation process consists of 20 in-class observations of at least one hour, including three full-day observations. Immediate feedback and detailed notes are given after each observation to help teachers improve their skills. The consultants must meet with each of their interns 20 times over the course of the year, significantly higher than “dipstick” evaluation which goes on in many districts that lack effective mentoring programs. This intern phase for new teachers lasts one year, after which a decision is made about hiring them for the following year. After this, a more traditional approach of administrator-run review kicks in.

After the initiation of the program, the union began studying turnover rates in five-year cycles. It found that 80 percent of the teachers in the first and second cycles were retained, and 68 percent in the third. It was determined that this increased turnover was the result of teachers being hired away from the district and recruited into the suburbs, not of teachers leaving the profession. Also, 4.8 percent of the 700 new teachers hired in 2000 were fired, a rate four times higher than the rate prior to the PAR process. Of last year’s teachers, 87 percent remain in the district.

Intervention for Experienced Teachers

In addition to the new teacher evaluations, consultants are also responsible for all experienced teachers who have been identified as needing help. These teachers are enrolled through a specific process laid out in the manual. The first step of this process is referral by either another teacher or a building administrator, which must be approved by both the union president and the principal. If the principal makes the referral, it must be approved by the faculty representative in the building. This ensures that the referrals are not simply the result of personality conflicts.

At this point the union president gets approval from the Association Building Council, made up of three teachers, one of whom is appointed by the principal. If they elect to move forward, the panel checks to make sure protocol was followed and, if it was, automatically enrolls the teacher in the PAR program. This process can also be started with a self-referral, in which case the teacher writes a letter to the union president and the case goes straight to the panel. Every year, at least half of the experienced teachers under review are there as a result of self-referral.

University Partnership

A key element of this program is its involvement with Ohio State University and other local universities. The university provides training for all consultants before they begin evaluating other teachers. There are also three courses taught through OSU which support the new teachers. In other classes, teachers research and study the ways that their students learn best. These classes are team-taught by the consultants and by professors from the university.

The union assists professional development by being involved with OSU in developing these courses and over 90 other ones. The course content is based on surveys that illustrate what type of development teachers are looking for. All courses are free.

Financial Incentives

In addition to the PAR program, there are other reforms involving optional monetary incentives for the teachers:

- **Gainsharing:** The system rewards teachers for achieving building-level goals. All teachers in the building receive the same bonus, which is a minimum of \$500 per teacher. Bonuses become \$100 larger for each category if schools contain high numbers of students in ESL or special ed classes, are enrolled in the reduced cost lunch program, or have high mobility rates or high numbers of at-risk children. The goals are linked to state proficiency exams.
- **National Board Certification:** The state of Ohio gives a \$2,500 incentive and free training for receiving National Board certification. The district adds \$1,500.
- **Nationally certified teachers** may also receive an additional \$1,500 if they volunteer to go to any school in the district where the superintendent feels their talents are most needed.
- A scholarship fund was established (paid for through union dues) to provide small scholarship awards to the children of Columbus teachers who are entering college.

Mary Kelley, Assistant Superintendent and Bill Berger, Association President, Coventry (Rhode Island) School District

Coventry is a small district in Rhode Island made up of both suburban and rural neighborhoods. It totals 20 square miles and has a mostly blue-collar population of 36,000. Of the 5,800 students enrolled in public schools, about 20 percent are special needs and 20 percent are in poverty. There are six elementary schools, one middle school, a high school, and a new pre-school, and the district spends an average of \$8,800 per pupil. The general public in Coventry has shown strong dedication to public education, as a mere 500 students in a predominately Catholic town go to private or parochial schools. They also recently approved a \$34 million bond issue to build new schools and additions.

Berger began teaching in Coventry in 1965 and became president of the union in 1975. The Coventry School District still holds the record for longest school strike in the state which lasted three weeks in the 1960's. The district was famous for its school board and union problems, but since the early 1990's things have changed significantly. Berger and former superintendent Deasy decided to change the attitude of the town, so they organized an annual retreat for administrators, union leaders, and school committee members to sit down and discuss what was necessary for the students to achieve at high levels in Coventry. Since then, town meetings have run smoothly, everyone works

collaboratively, and the union contracts have been negotiated and settled far in advance of their deadlines. The union instituted three-year contracts which are negotiated for renewal beginning in the second year of the existing contract so that there is no risk of school not opening because of a dispute. The central question in all meetings between the union and the district is, “What’s in the best interest of the students?” Teachers know that if something is good for students, then it is invariably good for them as well. With this in mind, they have worked together to put productive changes into the contract.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) laid the groundwork for a nation-wide discussion on educational progress and accountability. The state of Rhode Island began struggling with ways to measure school performance and, as a result of this new discussion, developed the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) program. This is an annual assessment process for all districts in Rhode Island. It incorporates self-assessment on a variety of measures, student achievement data, and parent surveys. The goal was simply to force higher student achievement by raising standards for teaching and learning. This plan also called for reporting results from the classroom as illustrations of which tactics work and which do not. Coventry decided to use these new mandates as a push towards better teaching practices and analysis of current trends. Kelley described the process of culture change that began with the statement, “All children can learn at high levels”. She gave a series examples of attitudes that they encountered about this statement in the community and the many interpretations of this seemingly simple phrase.

Coventry uses several tools for measuring achievement, including the New Standards Reference Exams in math and ELA for students in 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. In all other grades they used the SAT-9 open-ended math and reading exams. They also used the Rhode Island writing exam in 3rd, 7th, and 11th grades, and the SAT-9 writing in grades 5, 6, 9, and 11.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Berger learned about National Board Certification in the early 1990’s and initiated conversations with the administration and the school committee about how teachers could be encouraged to seek this advanced level of certification. It took about a year to get agreement on the issue and begin implementing incentives. Now, over 22 teachers (out of approximately 500 teachers in the district) have the certification. The teachers who pass serve as role models and advisors in their schools, and discussions move away from traditional teachers’ lounge talk to a flow of ideas and collaboration. The town was willing to pay for the teachers to get certified, as well as pay for five days per teacher to work on their required portfolio. If they do not pass the certification, they get six credits for the work they have done. If they do pass, they get a bonus, which started at \$5,000/year and will be \$7,000/year next year and \$8,000/year by the end of current contract. The certification lasts for 10 years. For those who do not pass on the first try, just going through the process forces teachers to reflect on their practice in new ways and is therefore a uniquely powerful professional development tool.

Coventry recently did a study comparing the scores of students in the classrooms of NBPTS teachers with those of students in classrooms with other teachers. The findings do show a dramatic difference between the two sets of students, with the students in the NBPTS classes scoring significantly higher than other students, especially in language arts and reading.

Professional Development Center

The next step was for Coventry to improve professional development. They decided that a professional development center was needed for the district. To fund it, they eliminated the sabbatical program which was paying a teacher full salary and benefits for a year off. Instead, they are using that funding to hire a full-time manager of the center who is also NBPTS certified. Also, within the contract are three professional development days and additional incentives for participating in more professional development classes.

A New Evaluation System

The next important step was to change the evaluation system. Under the old evaluation system everyone got a satisfactory rating. There was not a single “unsatisfactory” or “needs improvement” rating, and the leaders saw that as a clear indication that the system was not really measuring teaching skill in an accurate way. A new system was designed by a volunteer committee of teachers and administrators who took a year to study other programs and conduct appropriate research. The final product was a process based largely on the National Board model, which includes portfolios and video taping of classes, as well as administrator observations. A rubric was developed using Charlotte Danielson’s *Frameworks for Teaching* and the PRAXIS Standards. Teachers are scored using this new system and are then placed in one of four categories: Distinguished, Proficient, Basic or Unsatisfactory. The new program was phased in over four years with 25 percent of the teachers being evaluated each year based on seniority. By the third year there was one termination, six non-renewals, two unsatisfactory teachers, and 15 basic, 122 proficient and 17 distinguished. These ratings are not linked to salary.

Pay for Performance

The most recent step was to develop a pay-for-performance process called, Recognition and Honoring of Outstanding Demonstrated Excellence (R.H.O.D.E.). This system was designed based on extensive research of effective pedagogy and authentic assessment. It is centered on the idea that professional development will improve teaching, that reflecting on and studying one’s teaching style can lead to better practices, and that there is a fair way to judge and evaluate a teacher’s instruction. It also draws heavily from the National Board model. Any tenured teacher can apply for the program and of the eight who finished the process last year, two achieved R.H.O.D.E. One was math teacher and the other is a guidance counselor. The district was particularly happy that the guidance counselor achieved this honor because they felt it was important to

demonstrate that all employees at the school had the chance. To make it easier to achieve R.H.O.D.E, teachers can bank scores and go through the process again without repeating the segments they already succeeded in. Recipients of R.H.O.D.E receive a bonus for four years. The stipend is currently \$2,000 and it will be \$4,000 by end of contract. Combined with National Board Certification, teachers can receive \$12,000 per year in bonuses.

Ultimately, these reforms have accomplished a culture change in the district where what is talked about in the teachers' lounge is teaching and how teachers can help one another get results from their kids. Teachers are treated like professionals, paid like professionals, and held accountable like professionals. This is in the best interest of students.

June Rivers, Assistant Manager of Value Added Assessment and Research at SAS inSchool, Cary, North Carolina

The origins of value-added assessment are in the specific model developed specifically for the state of Tennessee. After a group of small school districts sued the state for inadequate funding, Tennessee had to create a better system but to do that they had to justify a tax increase to the public. They decided to use student progress to hold schools accountable for measurable improvements.

So, what is value-added? How does it work? Value-added is a complicated statistical model developed by Dr. William Sanders for the state of Tennessee. There are now over 100 districts across the country using value added, and Sanders has moved his operation to SAS inSchool in North Carolina to become part of their web-based offerings to schools.

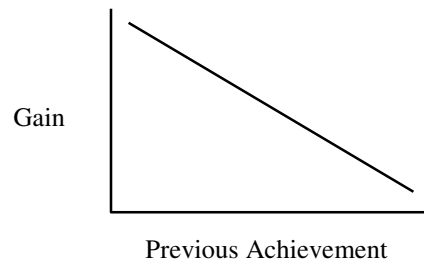
The value-added concept works under two key assumptions. The first is that the educational community is not responsible for all of the problems that children bring with them to the classroom everyday. Second, though, it *is* responsible for taking each student each year and helping him or her make academic progress whether they started the year at, above, or below grade level. While other statistical models have chosen to control for variables such as socio-economic status, race or gender, in Sanders' model each student acts as his or her own statistical control and is only measured against him or herself each year.

When comparing test data, Rivers explained that it is not important to debate the use of "norm-referenced" versus "criterion-referenced" assessments. The statistical methods used in value-added hold up using any variety and combination of standardized tests. Tests must be given to all students every year and the "scales of measure must be highly correlated with curricular objectives." If they are not, it is impossible to use the data to determine teacher effectiveness or real student achievement.

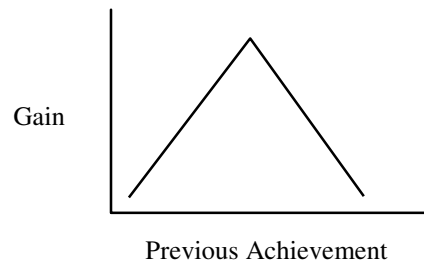
Knowing only what an individual student achieves from year-to-year reveals nothing about the quality of teaching. But if a record is kept for every student, it is possible to see patterns of achievement that are linked to teacher performance. As Rivers explained, it is then possible to make comparisons within grade levels, schools, districts and the entire state.

Rivers presented several graphs to illustrate how one might use the test data of a particular classroom to determine patterns in the achievement of groups of students.

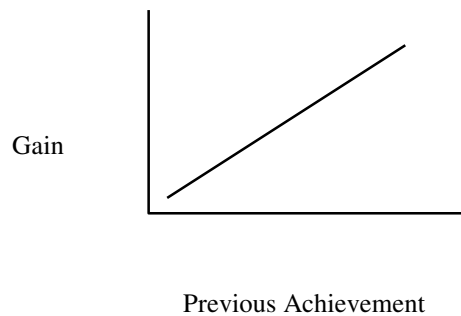
Shed Pattern - Pattern of achievement that indicates that the teacher is teaching to the lower achievers in the class and producing no gains for the higher achievers:



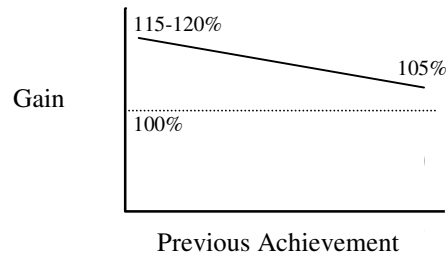
Tee Pee - Pattern indicates that the teacher is teaching to the middle range of students, at the expense of both low- and high-achievers:



Reverse Shed - Pattern indicates that the teacher is teaching to the high end, leaving the average and lower achievers further behind, a pattern often found in higher-income suburban districts:



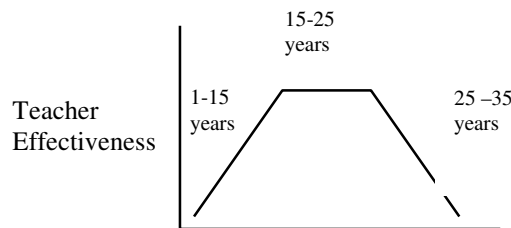
Sustained Growth - Considered to be the ideal pattern. Previously low-achieving children grow at least 120 basis points and previously high-achieving students achieve at least 105. Each child gains at least one year's worth of growth regardless of where he or she starts and the gap decreases:



The most startling of Sanders' original findings came when he charted schools across the state by their average value-added scores over three years. Schools with the highest value-added scores crossed boundaries of race, class, building size and location, as did schools with the lowest scores. Even some of the wealthier suburban schools considered among the best in their communities were not adding much value at all, but simply dealing with very able kids to begin with. Sanders termed these "slide and glide" schools.

Similar analysis of the data showed that African-American students were routinely given the weakest teachers. Also, early high-achieving African-American students were suffering from being placed in classes with shed patterns that favored the lower achieving students, a process which over time ensures that the performance of gifted young students will deteriorate.

Rivers shared another interesting chart illustrating teacher effectiveness (as measured by their data) across years of experience:



The chart shows a pattern of increasing effectiveness in the first 10-12 years of teaching, a leveling off over the next 10 years and then a steady decline in effectiveness thereafter. While this kind of pattern may not be unique to the teaching profession, Sanders made the point that the damage being done to children is significant if they end up with several ineffective teachers in a row.

The most poignant illustration of the cumulative impact of teacher effectiveness was a study Rivers conducted for her dissertation. She used value-added data to study the likelihood of a student in the bottom quartile of a fourth grade class passing the Tennessee high-stakes exam given in ninth grade on the first try. Her analysis revealed the following:

- A student with a poor teacher sequence had a 15 percent chance of passing on the first try.
- A student with an average teacher sequence had a 30 percent chance of passing the first time.
- A student with a highly effective teacher sequence (two or more highly effective teachers over the following four years) had a 60 percent chance of passing the exam on the first try in the beginning of 9th grade.

The policy implications of this research are serious. First, it means that there is now a way to measure teachers fairly, not simply based on absolute scores. It also means that there must be a strong effort to shrink variability of teachers within buildings and across regions. Professional development should be used to identify teachers' weaknesses and develop strategies to help them improve their skills. Students should not be consistently assigned to the classrooms of the least effective teachers.

Rivers believes that, as part of a larger system of accountability that includes other evidence of teacher quality and student achievement, the value-added statistics can be an extremely powerful tool for accountability and improving instruction. She does not feel that they should be used as the only measure in a high-stakes system.

Adam Urbanski, President of the Rochester Teachers Association, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Director of the Teacher Union Reform Network (T.U.R.N.)

Urbanski began with a description of T.U.R.N. and his thoughts on the role of unions in school reform. T.U.R.N. is an organization of unions across the country that believe the role of the union should not only be to protect the bread and butter concerns of its members, but to act as a partner in meaningful reform that affects student achievement.

“Teachers will do well, only when their students do well,” says Urbanski. Unions must see that their clients are not just teachers but are students as well. Tying the fate of teachers to the productivity of the industry is a radical concept, but one that more and more union leaders are willing to embrace. If teachers are thriving, students should be thriving and vice versa. If not, something is wrong with the system.

In 1987, the Rochester Teachers Association negotiated a 52 percent increase in salaries and gave teachers more say in the decision-making of the district and in their buildings. While this was initially seen as a major victory, there was some trepidation in

the ranks about whether the public would blame them if student achievement didn't improve. Urbanski's response was, "They're blaming you now. You might as well get better salaries and have more of a say in the things you're being held accountable for."

With that, the district embarked on a series of reform efforts in partnership with the union. Some of these efforts were stunning successes. Some of the changes instituted are as follows:

- Parents are directly involved in teacher evaluation
- Peer Mentoring and Review program
- Institution of the "Professional Day"- workday ends when work is done, not when the bell rings and the kids leave.
- Home visits and advisory groups

There were some basic assumptions at play while developing these programs:

- Schools can't do it all but they need to own what is in their control.
- Class size reduction is not an automatic solution to every problem.
- Just teaching isn't enough. Learning has to be happening.

Rochester began with two goals in mind:

1. Make teaching more of a profession
2. Make schools more learning-centered

Urbanski shared some of the hallmarks of teaching as a genuine profession:

1. Shared knowledge base
2. High and rigorous standards
3. Professional preparation
4. Induction (mentoring)
5. Continuous learning
6. Nurturing students' readiness to learn
7. Professional discretion and collegiality
8. Promotion within the profession

Rochester's biggest success has been its Peer Mentoring and Review program (PAR), which they modeled after the one in Columbus, Ohio. They have done a study linking the test scores of students in the classrooms of intern teachers assisted by mentors and those of students in classrooms with experienced teachers, and the students of mentored teachers score higher than students with more experienced teachers.

Rochester established four teaching levels:

1. Intern – new to the profession and assigned to a mentor
2. Residency – working towards permanent certification, tenure, and a master's degree. Can only stay at this level for three years.
3. Professional – has a masters degree and permanent teaching credentials.

4. Lead Teacher – National Board Certified or chosen through application process and panel approval. Must be a mentor or take on other leadership responsibilities in the building. Receive an annual stipend on top of base salary. Mentor teachers still teach in their own classrooms 50 percent of the time. Lead teachers waive their seniority rights to be assigned wherever they are most needed in the district.

All vacancies in the district are filled by a committee of mostly teachers, and an intern teacher is never placed in the toughest setting (it's in the contract).

Rochester also instituted a new evaluation system for teachers, which they based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards process. This evaluation results in one of four ratings for teachers (as judged by a panel of mostly teachers):

1. Unsatisfactory
2. Shows growth
3. Accomplished
4. Distinguished

This is separate from the knowledge and skill-based categories mentioned earlier and is used to help teachers reflect and improve on their teaching practice. It is not attached to salary. A teacher who is rated “unsatisfactory” or “shows growth” is placed in the Peer Intervention program.

Instituting these programs helped Rochester teachers begin to see themselves as professionals, to reflect on their practice more thoroughly, and to demonstrate their skills to others.

In trying to create a more learner-centered environment for students, RTA agreed on some basic “Principles for Learner-Centered Schools”:

1. Knowledge-based teaching
2. Student learning standards
3. Safe and disciplined environments
4. Active learning and student effort
5. Authentic assessments
6. Small “schools”
7. Leadership and management
8. Coordination of health/social services
9. Home and family involvement
10. Shared accountability

Urbanski concluded by saying that school reform comes down to two things: building good systems and building good relationships. If you have one but not the other, it will not work. Change will not happen. Relationships must also be real (50/50) partnerships, not short-term collaborations where one person ends up calling the shots in the end. This seems to be a tradition in American institutions and schools will not flourish under those

kinds of relationship models. Teachers need to have leadership opportunity and more of a say in decisions that directly affect them.

Gail Ryan, Director of Elementary Education and David Ramage, Coordinator of Technology Staff Development, Souderton Area School District (Pennsylvania)

Gail Ryan and Dave Ramage presented their work on professional development and standards-based reform in the Souderton School District. The district has approximately 490 teachers and 6,500 students.

Ryan is a longtime classroom teacher. She left the classroom for a staff development position, then became a principal, and is now the director of elementary education. Ramage was a middle-school music teacher before taking an assignment as a staff development coach; he is now the coordinator of technology staff development.

The Souderton Story

Souderton began implementing standards in 1995, when the district's strategic plan set out the goal of designing curriculum and assessment based on student standards. The new curriculum was intended to deal not simply with knowledge, or *facts*, but also with problem-solving, leadership, adaptability, group effectiveness skills and other *performance* areas.

Ramage described the importance of “systems thinking” – dealing with all of the elements of the school system as part of the implementation process for standards-based reform. He stressed the need to deal with change and how it impacts district professionals.

Souderton entered this process by developing a corps of Teacher Coordinators in order to create a base of core knowledge about standards and what it meant for teachers. Teacher Coordinators are named for language arts, social studies, math and science at the K-7 and 8-12 levels. In addition, Teacher Coordinators receive two release periods to work on implementing standards in their departments and across curriculum areas. By rethinking its structure, Souderton emphasized that standards-reform is not an add-on but a new way of doing things.

The district also stressed that standards reform is implemented differently in different districts, that standards and standardization are not the same, and that standards do not require that all teachers have to teach the same way. Instead, they stressed that “standards and assessments give us something that curriculum objectives, by themselves, never delivered: the ability to see how well we are performing and how much we are improving.”

For instructional practice, standards means: teaching becomes public, with an emphasis on collaboration and involving other members of the community; focusing the entire system on student achievement; and “improving the essence of teaching.”

The Role of Professional Development

Souderton set out to use staff development to “nurture a community of learners.” This involves collaboration and pedagogy but moves beyond that to building relationships among the key stakeholders. Staff development had to become continuous and job-embedded.

Ryan quoted Tony Alvarado, former superintendent of District 2 in New York. Alvarado describes professional development as focused on a goal, done in groups, hard, smart work; and “what we’re about.” Gail noted that in her experience at Souderton professional development is by far most effective when it is done collaboratively by groups of teachers working together. In addition to teachers, the learning community includes *all* employees of the school district. Souderton implemented several structures to encourage collaborative learning:

- *Yearly professional growth goals:* 10 hours of learning in addition to the school day, in activities such as book groups and colloquia that are designed to encourage discussion and sharing among professionals. One of Souderton’s internal accountability mechanisms is to have teachers share how they developed as professionals, using student work as evidence.
- *FLEX time learning opportunities:* Teachers have three in-service days designed for customized learning. The plans must be submitted to principals for approval and are important because they encourage teachers to personalize their learning;
- *Instructional improvement through teacher development:* Teachers’ personal learning plans include five options: clinical supervision, professional colloquium, serving as a leader/facilitator for collaborative professional development, peer coaching, and self-directed development.
- *Three full-time staff development coaches:* The staff development coaches oversee the district’s professional development. The coaches offer classroom support, linking instruction to standards and modeling for teachers.
- *Induction plan for new teachers:* Each new teacher is assigned a mentor and principals are held accountable for working with the novice teachers in their buildings. Souderton has developed “interview protocols” to help teachers focus their observations of each other on student learning. Mentors and inductees each observe the other twice per year. As part of the experience, they interview students in the classroom about their learning. There is also a listserv where new teachers and mentors post questions, comments, and journal entries. For example, Dave posted the question: “What is a learning community? How have you seen it develop in your classroom? What are the next steps you’ll take?”

The district is encouraging teachers to volunteer to have a lesson in their classroom videotaped so that they can examine two key questions: What are the teachers’s learning goals for the students? What is the evidence in student work and how is it assessed? The purpose of this process is to help teachers – especially new educators in the induction

process –think about their instructional practice analytically. Souderton has also developed a CD-ROM that provides a “glimpse into the classroom” that accompanies the written standards materials; every teacher and administrator received a copy of the CD-ROM.

All of these techniques are intended to build a rich dialogue around practice. Each principal also has roughly \$1,200 per year to send teachers to their colleagues’ classrooms; teachers can visit outside schools and classrooms to see other practitioners; and Souderton reimburses 100 percent of tuition for teachers who receive an “A” in the course they take.

The district also encourages administrators to continue their learning process through retreats, book groups, conferences, and other professional development opportunities. Souderton uses technology to support its staff development for teachers and administrators, particularly through designing CD-ROMs that support the pedagogical improvements the district is asking of its educators. Ramage shared examples from several of the district’s CD-ROMs.

There is also a staff development website that serves as Souderton’s main source of information for teachers and administrators. The information and learning tools are not intended as a replacement of human support but are instead designed to supplement it and provide access to development 24 hours a day.

Moving Toward Accountability

Souderton does not have a formal accountability system; it has focused thus far on creating a culture of continuous learning. Important next steps include addressing teacher observation, looking at student data, communicating with parents, internal communication, continued conversations at the grade level, alignment of report cards and standards, and supervision and evaluation.

The district’s mantra is “learn or perish.” Teachers are expected to be learners and to engage in collaboration throughout their careers. Ryan said that she believes that the structures Souderton has put in place have made change easier – and more acceptable – for teachers.

District Accountability Principles

Teams from the Springfield, Haverford, Boyertown and William Penn School Districts worked during the two days to synthesize their learning and formulate principles of accountability. This was not an easy task given the amount of material presented and the many ideas and questions generated in discussions. At the conclusion of the seminar, each team shared their work as well as their continued questions and hopes for the future. Each team felt that this was a “work in progress” and so presented their principles as the beginning of an on-going and important dialogue.

Springfield School District (Delaware County)

An Accountability System Must:

- Be created by a collaborative group of association and administrative/board members.

Create structures that:

- Provide professional development tied to student achievement data
- Measure the success of teachers and other educators
- Recognize and reward excellence
- Remediate and help struggling educators
- Support new educators

Haverford School District (Montgomery County)

An Accountability System Must:

- Be conceived and nurtured in a collaborative culture, committed to continuous improvement
- Provide clarity to goals and standards for educators and students driven by what we value as a community
- Measure progress towards those goals and standards by using multiple sources (e.g., portfolios, test data, peer review, and other student performance measures)
- Support and evaluate new teachers by instituting stronger induction and peer mentoring programs.
- Support and evaluate experienced teachers and administrators using peer expertise and evidence of demonstrated excellence in and out of the classroom
- Use student achievement data to monitor student growth, improve instruction and review curriculum
- Provide opportunities and set goals for professional development for all stakeholders that continuously improve the system and move us towards our goal
- Reward demonstrated excellence by providing leadership and recognition opportunities
- Provide compensation for all educators that rewards initiative towards continuous student improvement (value-added)
- Remediate and respond to failure by utilizing supports at the threshold level

William Penn School District (Delaware County)

An Accountability System Must:

- Foster a culture that looks beyond where we are to where we want to be
- Be created by a collaborative team representing all stakeholders of our community

- Create a system to foster and support staff development initiatives to improve student achievement
- Provide financial and program support

Boyertown Area School District (Berks County)

An Accountability System Must:

- Provide clarity to goals and standards for educators and students in a collaborative environment of all key stakeholders with the central goal of raising student achievement
- Measure and communicate progress towards those goals using multiple measures and providing the public and the district with uniquely appropriate information.
- Evaluate and support new (first three years) teachers in a manner that is sustained and rigorous and that is coupled with standards-based professional development.
- Evaluate experienced teachers in a manner that reflects research-based best practices and that incorporates multiple measures of student learning

Facilitators Ginger Adams and Ian Rosenblum applaud the work of the teams and the openness with which they addressed this difficult and complex topic. It was made clear in all of the presentations that there is a need for more opportunities to collaborate on issues that center on student achievement in this manner. Time to discuss things beyond the day-to-day management issues is so rare in schools that the groups felt strongly that they should pursue, on their own, opportunities for this type of learning, reflection, debate, and goal setting. Two of the districts represented will be doing on going work with *Operation Public Education* to develop their own strategies for change and focus on student learning and educator quality.

“Dream Team” Report

The seven presenters, Superintendent David Campbell (Upper Moreland School District) and *OPE* staff met on the third day to develop their own set of accountability principles and to sketch some of the features of an accountability system that reflect those principles. As a starting point, Ted Hershberg reviewed *OPE*'s accountability principles and asked for the group's reaction:

Operation Public Education Accountability Principles

In order to establish the proper context for a discussion about accountability, we begin by assuming the following context:

1. Adequate school funding, equitably distributed among the state's 501 school districts
2. Collaboration among the key stakeholders

3. Rigorous student academic standards
4. Alignment of these standards with curriculum and annual assessments
5. A “value-added” method of analyzing longitudinal student achievement data

With the above prerequisites, an accountability system that is fair to educators and credible to the public is characterized by:

1. Systems designed to improve classroom instruction
 - a. Culture of collaborative professional development
 - b. Data-driven decision-making
2. Performance goals and methods of measurement
 - a. Units of accountability at the educator, small group, school and district levels
 - b. Multiple measures for teacher and administrator evaluation, one of which must always be student achievement data
 - c. School and district performance targets based on whether students are achieving sufficient annual “value-added” growth and are making satisfactory progress toward absolute standards
3. Rewards and consequences
 - a. Opportunities for career advancement and compensation based on proven professional achievement beyond an educator’s degrees earned and years of service
 - b. Remediation for educators who are performing below a satisfactory level, with job termination for those who do not sufficiently improve
 - c. Outside expertise and capacity-building for schools and districts that are not meeting their student learning growth and/or achievement goals

Adam Urbanski responded that, while these principles would represent an improvement over the current system, they were not radical and systemic enough to produce the needed results. He shared an idea now being considered in Los Angeles to introduce public school choice across the entire public school system. The group discussed this approach in Pennsylvania and agreed that the size and geographic diversity of the state’s 501 school districts would make this approach less effective anywhere but in large urban districts. Hershberg agreed that it would be something to keep in mind in the future for urban districts in danger of state takeover.

Expectations

The first step in creating an effective accountability system, offered Urbanski, is to establish standards for teachers, administrators and districts that are clearly articulated and developed collaboratively. The second step is to design professional development

around those standards and the third step is to assess your progress towards those standards. This is what creates a healthy system in which educators and students can flourish.

Teacher and Administrator Evaluation

The group discussed examples of evaluation systems for teachers and administrators. In Rochester they have four tiers or ratings in their evaluation system –*Intern, Resident, Professional* and *Lead*. Teachers are placed into one of these categories based on the outcome of their evaluation, which in turn, is based on a clear rubric of standards for best practices and supported with peer review. Their standards include knowledge of subject, pedagogy, home and family connection, and professional growth. They do not use student achievement data at this time. Urbanski explained that data is used to inform instruction but not as a verdict on the teacher’s performance. This enables teachers to see data as non-threatening and to be more open about the results of their students, thus encouraging collaboration. He feels this is a good way to introduce the use of data at first but is not against ultimately using it as one of several measures in an evaluation. The group liked the four-tiered structure and wanted to explore how student learning outcomes could be incorporated.

Administrator evaluations should incorporate the same principles as teacher evaluations. Administrators should be held to high standards for instructional leadership, creating a culture of shared learning and accomplishing building or district goals for student achievement.

Student Achievement Data

Hershberg offered that the beauty of the value-added approach was that it was seen as less threatening to teachers. He suggested incorporating value-added into a career ladder structure and using it as a means for teachers to progress from one level to the next on the salary schedule. Urbanski liked this concept.

Urbanski cautioned against mandating things like Peer Assistance and Review and value-added, suggesting that the best way to get them to be broadly accepted is by offering incentives to districts who are ready to use them and then let them catch on.

Ryan spoke of Souderton’s struggles to use achievement data more effectively. Kelley spoke of the fears and lack of knowledge that teachers have in dealing with data. It takes a big investment in time and professional development to create the type of culture change necessary to get teachers more comfortable using data to inform their practice and set goals. Since you can’t legislate culture change, you have to legislate behaviors that you think will produce that culture change. More discussion of value-added as part of an accountability system led to an agreement that *OPE* should pursue getting value-added in state law if possible, but with the caution that it may require phase-ins and incentives to properly scale it up the way *OPE* is envisioning it.

Professional Development

How do we incorporate the need to turn schools into learning communities into accountability legislation? Again, it begins with setting the standards for everyone in a building, that they will “learn or perish,” the Souderton motto. Evidence of professional growth activities should be part of every teacher’s evaluation, and evidence of leadership for creating a culture of collaboration and professional growth should be part of every administrator’s evaluation. Urbanski suggested that we consider instituting special state grants for districts that are doing innovative things to create learning communities. For example, flexible scheduling, creating learning centers, etc.

Remediation

What do we do when the goals we have set for individuals, buildings and districts are not met and children are not growing at an appropriate rate? At the individual level, the group agreed that Peer Assistance and Review was the best example to draw from. Given the resistance, however, to peers evaluating peers, it was felt that it couldn’t be mandated but that there should be incentives for districts that implement a PAR program. The minimum requirement at all levels is that each district must produce remediation plans that are vetted by a state committee. Visiting teams appointed by the state to help failing schools and districts should work in partnership with the district. Districts must first offer their own analysis of the problem and plans to improve, then work with the visiting team to refine and execute the plan.

The Legislation

To summarize the group’s discussion, we can conclude that our accountability legislation would have two parts. First, the mandates for each district and second, a set of incentive grants (which *OPE* has since named “Innovation Grants”)

The Mandates

- High standards for the evaluation of teachers, administrators and schools, based on multiple measures, but including student achievement data
- Value-added analysis of annual testing data
- New mechanisms for evaluating teachers and administrators against those standards that include student learning outcomes
- Career ladder or other flexible compensation structures that are linked to evaluations and which incorporate rewards for National Board certification or other demonstrated knowledge and skill
- Remediation plans required at all levels and must incorporate expeditious response time. Failure at the building or district level will result in the assignment of an assistance team. Struggling teachers and administrators are best identified through peer assistance and review

Building a System of Incentives (Innovation Grants)

The second component in our accountability legislation would offer incentives for the culture changes that are crucial in helping students achieve. Some possibilities offered by the group include grants for:

- District action plans to improve student achievement created in labor-management partnerships (Rochester example)
- Creating learning centers for teachers and administrators (Coventry and Souderton example)
- Innovative scheduling solutions that provide more time for collaborative professional development (Rochester example)
- National Board fees and bonuses (Coventry example)
- Group, school and district performance awards for high student achievement gains (Columbus example)
- Peer Assistance and Review pilots (Columbus and Rochester example)
- Partnerships with universities (Columbus example)

We hope this type of legislation will represent the best practices already in use in other parts of the country and bring them together into a cohesive plan to help educators, schools and school districts better meet the demands of standards-based reform. While legislation cannot alone bring about the necessary culture changes, it has the potential to significantly alter the way we do business in schools and will offer incentives to reward those willing and ready to innovate and challenge themselves in new ways.