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Small Schools Grants

Discussion of Draft Metrics and Examples

Statutory Authority

System for Awarding Grants Based on Points in Each Category

At the May and June meetings, the State Board advised that a points system would be the most appropriate approach to announcing metrics. To meet the statutory requirements the Board examines

- (I) The school's performance on the Snapshot Academic Proficiency (up to 4 points)
- (II) The school's equity results on the Snapshot Academic Proficiency (up to 4 points)
- (III) School's student-to-staff ratios (up to 4 points)
- (IV) Submission of a merger report (1 bonus point)

Additionally, out of concern for equity, the Board wishes to also add a fifth measure to account for student poverty (up to 4 points.)

In all, 16 points are possible with the merger report serving as an "extra bonus" if submitted.

Important Notes for The Worked Example

The following caveats apply:

- Only school year 2016-2017 data were used across all categories. AOE recommends using the average of three consecutive years of data, consistent with AOE calculations for Vermont's accountability plan, when the actual calculations are made.
 - For this example, we only used Smarter Balanced assessments as that data was readily available now. (see description of additional data for final calculations below, Category 1)
- The law calls for annual application and award of grants. Schools will be subject to annual changes in eligibility based on the metrics discussed below.
- We have intentionally not produced the names of schools in the example because the Board has expressed its intention to agree on principles, rather than results.
- The State Board has not yet made a final decision on some elements of the framework. AOE assumed that 9 points would be needed to be eligible for a grant. This may or may not be the Board's ultimate determination.
- The example framework uses a total of 35 schools. One or more of these schools may be eligible under the geographic isolation metrics, rather than the metrics discussed here.

Category 1, Academic Excellence

The Board directed the AOE to use the same data used by the Annual Snapshot's Academic Proficiency category.

Specifically: English language arts grades 3-9, mathematics grades 3-9, science grades 5, 8 and 11, physical education, English learners making appropriate progress (all grades), percent of English learners attaining proficiency (all grades), 4 year and 6 year graduation rates, percent of seniors with one or more test meeting career and college ready benchmark (SAT, ACT, AP, IB, CLEP, ASVAB, IRC/CTE Certification), percent of graduates who are enrolled in college or trade school or working full time within 16 months of graduation.

Points Possible: 1, 2, 3, or 4, with 1 being the Snapshot indicator, "Not Meeting," and 4 being the Snapshot indicator, "Exceeding."ⁱ

Category 2, Equity (Results)

The Board directed the AOE to use the same data as used by the Annual Snapshot's Academic Proficiency category and compare the performance on all metrics listed below between historically marginalized student subgroup and the school population as a whole.

Specifically: English language arts grades 3-9, mathematics grades 3-9, science grades 5, 8 and 11, physical education, English learners making appropriate progress (all grades), percent of English learners attaining proficiency (all grades), 4 year and 6 year graduation rates, percent of seniors with one or more test meeting career and college ready benchmark (SAT, ACT, AP, IB, CLEP, ASVAB, IRC/CTE Certification), percent of graduates who are enrolled in college or trade school or working full time within 16 months of graduation.

Points Possible: 1, 2, 3, or 4, with 1 being the Snapshot indicator, "Not Meeting," and 4 being the Snapshot indicator, "Exceeding."

Category 3, Equity (Population)

The Board directed the AOE to use Free and Reduced Lunch eligibility as a proxy for poverty.

Points Possible: 1, 2, 3 or 4, with 1 being the schools that fall in the quartile with the lowest FRL eligibility, and 4 being the schools that fall in the highest quartile for FRL eligibility.

Category 4, Student-to-Staff Ratio

The Board directed the AOE to calculate student-to-staff ratios in the manner recommended by AOE experts. In the opinion of the Agency staff most familiar with the staff data, several categories of staff should be excluded. In some cases, these jobs are frequently contracted services, but some districts directly employ individuals for these jobs. In other cases, relating to special education services, staff are required by legal mandate.

Accordingly, ratios used in this document include all categories of school staff, as reported to AOE, excluding the following as these are variably hired or contracted out making comparisons difficult:

- Preschool/PreKindergarten Teachers
- Special Education Ungraded Teachers
- EEE Directors
- Special Education Directors
- Maintenance and Security
- Student Transportation Staff
- Food Service Staff
- Enterprise Operations
- Community Services Operations
- Facilities Acquisition and Construction

Points Possible: 1, 2, 3, or 4, with 1 being the schools that fall in the quartile with the lowest student-to-staff ratios, and 4 being the schools that fall in the highest quartile for student-to-staff ratios.

Bonus Category, Merger Report Submitted

The Board directed AOE to include the statutory category, “the district’s participation in a merger study and submission of a merger report to the State Board pursuant to chapter 11 of this title or otherwise” as a category that would earn an applicant one or more bonus points. These points are not to be counted in the total, discussed below, but may help an applicant school reach the total points required for grant eligibility.

The AOE assumed that the Board did not wish to award a bonus point for schools whose participation in merger activity was related only to so-called “existing district” status, under the three-by-one and two-by-two-by-one structures in Act 49 of 2017. No points were awarded to those schools in the example framework.

Points Possible: 1.

Totals Required for Grant Eligibility

The Board has not yet determined how many total points should be required for grant eligibility. In this document, the total for all categories is 16. (Four categories worth a maximum of four points each.) This does not include the merger report bonus point. AOE used 9 points for the examples below.

Examples

The following conclusions are drawn from the example framework which is modeled in the attached spreadsheet. the schools that would be approved in this example:

- 21 out of 35 schools would be eligible with a requirement of 9 total points out of 16.
- Of the schools that would be eligible:
 - 8 scored either a 3 or a 4 on academic excellence.
 - 5 scored either a 3 or a 4 on equity (results.)
 - 17 scored either a 3 or a 4 in equity (population.)

- 11 scored either a 3 or a 4 in ratios.
- 13 submitted a merger report.
- Of the schools that would not be eligible:
 - 4 scored either a 3 or a 4 on academic excellence.
 - 0 scored either a 3 or a 4 on or equity (results.)
 - 5 scored either a 3 or a 4 in equity (population.)
 - 1 scored either a 3 or a 4 in ratios.
 - 5 submitted a merger report.

Decisions Required

The Board needs to make decisions on the following questions today:

- Confirm the AOE's assumptions on the following issues: exclusion of certain staff categories, eligibility under merger report bonus.
- Finalize the points possible for each of the 4 categories (academic excellence, equity (results), equity (population), student-to-staff ratios) and the bonus category.
- Finalize the total points required for grant eligibility.
- Finalize geographic isolation mileage or time.

¹ At the June State Board meeting, the Board directed the AOE to use a system of points that ranged from 0-3. Upon discussion with the Agency staff responsible for the Annual Snapshot, we learned that pre-existing systems rely on a 1-4 scale, rather than 0-3. This document recommends a 1-4 point scale for consistency.