IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS MADE BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ARE NOT BINDING. THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DDOE) MAKES ALL FINAL DECISIONS REGARDING THE DAPA.


Brief Updates

DAPA Portfolio Scoring/Appeals – Brian shared that score reports, including those for parents, were sent out in late May and early June. This year district level reports also contained comparison data for other districts. The window for appeals will close on June 15th, with only one developer expressing concerns about being able to meet the deadline.

2006-07 DAPA year – Brian indicated that no additional changes are planned for the next DAPA year, beyond those discussed at previous Advisory Committee meetings. There will be some changes made to the test security policy/procedures in response to some issues that arose this year. Preparations for training are mostly complete, with some work still to be done for the Activity dimension.

Revision of the Alternate Assessment

The central focus of the meeting was on the revision of the alternate assessment. More specifically, recommendations made by external experts about a new alternate assessment were shared, along with responses to these recommendations from the DAPA ReVision Group. Discussion then occurred about these two sets of comments (see accompanying documents), resulting in some specific recommendations about the new assessment.

A summary of the Advisory Committee’s discussion and their recommendations are presented below.

Number of Standards to be Assessed

Logistical concerns were raised about the experts’ recommendation that multiple academic content standards should be assessed in the new alternate, especially considering that a portfolio approach to assessment was recommended by the experts. While the DSTP assesses most Standards, there was concern about the ability of the alternate to assess even several Standards without placing additional and substantial burden on teachers. Several comments were made that if it was possible to assess more than one standard through a single assessment activity, the new assessment could more easily balance requirements and demands on teachers. Finally, there was general agreement that the nature of the new assessment will determine how many standards can realistically be assessed.
Type of Assessment

Jim & Brian reviewed the options recommended by the experts (a portfolio or a combination of portfolio and performance-type tasks). Brian explained how the experts conceptualized a portfolio (as much simpler process, not as involved as the current DAPA). Brian indicated that Maryland’s portfolio system is similar to the idea recommended by the experts and he provided an overview of that approach.

Some discussion occurred about why the assessment should be activity-based and not a mass trial/table top ‘process.’ There was eventual agreement that an activity provides a context for a skill/behavior that is being developed and that generalization of these skills/behaviors to different real-world contexts is what’s ultimately desired for students. The group generally agreed that conceptualizing the ‘performance’ aspect of the new assessment as ‘task-based’ instead of ‘activity-based’ may be better. The group generally agreed that a combination approach might allow for the assessment to be sufficiently individualized while providing teachers more structure and guidance to make the assessment process easier. There was a preference for prescribed Standards with general guidance and examples for tasks/activities to access the Standards. Providing teachers with training and supports for accessing and adapting the general curriculum was cited as a necessary component to help teachers sufficiently prepare for the assessment.

Some concerns were raised about the impact of lower scores (as a result of the shift to child progress vs program based assessment) on students and programming. Brian clarified that that issue would be examined during the Performance Level setting process and adjustments may be made to the levels to account for potential impacts on the accountability system.

Note: Due to the rich and lengthy discussion about these two categories of the expert recommendations and the need for the AC to arrive at some recommendations of its own, the discussion was re-focused to that end.

Recommendations for the New Assessment

Focus of Assessment: Discussion centered around what the new assessment should focus on – the level of prompting/assistance necessary to respond to an assessment item (as per Colorado); the number of times a student can perform a ‘task’; the maximum level of performance a student can attain on a standard; or perhaps something else – since this was viewed as critical to additional recommendations.

The discussion quickly gravitated toward the third option as the most desirable, which could get at depth of knowledge/ability similar to the approach taken by the DSTP.

Recommendation: There was consensus that the assessment should focus on how a student performs in relation to a standard, providing a step down/up (e.g., recall level, synthesis, application, etc.) to make the assessment appropriate for all students covered by the assessment. It was also recommended that a student’s maximum potential to perform on the assessment should be taken into account scoring the assessment.
Type of Assessment:

**Recommendation:** There was consensus that a hybrid of a portfolio and performance-type assessment conducted over three points in time is desired. Such an approach should offer a combination of flexibility to better respond to a child’s disability and provide sufficient guidance to teachers to make the assessment process easier and more streamlined.

Retention of Existing Program Evaluation Components: There was consensus that the Interactions and Settings dimensions have been valuable in creating program change and in helping access resources and opportunities for students and that their loss might be detrimental; however, there was also consensus that these components are not consistent with the assessment requirements of the NCLB act. Brian indicated that there is no other state system to monitor these components and that none would likely be created given the current oversight demands on DOE.

**Recommendation:** There was consensus to not include program evaluation components in the new assessment, as recommended by the external experts. A recommendation was also made to explore alternative ways of facilitating interactions and settings outside of the assessment, including exploring DPASS as an option and focusing efforts on principals and administrators.

Additional Recommendations

- Since the ability of teachers to effectively administer the alternate assessment is partly determined their ability to understand, implement, and adapt the general education curriculum for their students, there was a consensus recommendation that a curriculum map (with accompanying training and supports) be developed. Such a map should convey what standards students are expected to be taught each year and provide guidance about teaching to those standards.