CPS Continuous Improvement and Data Transparency (CIDT)
Accountability Technical Advisory Group
Meeting #3 Summary

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11 March 2024 | 12:00-4:00 PM | CPS Central Office, Lower Level Room GC107

ATTENDEES

A-TAG Members: Nelson Gerew, Paul Zavitkovsky, Paula Barajas, Alahrie Aziz-Sims, Monica Bhatt, Cy Hendrickson, Sara Kempner, Nicole Abreu Shepard (Unable to attend: Elaine Allensworth, Pavlyn Jankov, Peter Leonard)

CPS CIDT Implementation Staff: Augusta Smith, Jeff Broom, Lauren Brumett, Vakiea Griffith

Center for Assessment Staff: Chris Domaleski, Erika Landl, Laura Pinsonneault

Meeting Materials

All meeting materials are available on this A-TAG webpage: https://sites.google.com/view/cidt-atag/home

AGENDA

Welcome and Setting the Stage

Laura Pinsonneault welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and the meeting's purpose.

Next, Jeff Broom reminded the group of meeting norms, stressing the ongoing nature of the work and the resulting need to lean into discomfort and accept non-closure. To help set the tone for the meeting, he invited the group to respond to these questions about the Continuous Improvement and Data Transparency (CIDT) policy:

- What are the key points of the District's new approach to accountability?
- What are the biggest changes from SQRP? What things are new? What aspects of SQRP no longer apply?
- Name one thing you think it's important for stakeholders to know about the new framework - you can choose families, teachers, school leaders, etc.
- What's a question/concern you have about the new framework?

These themes arose in the subsequent discussion:

- Key points of the District's new approach to accountability
  - Shared responsibility for schools and the district - and one member commented that the proposals reviewed before the meeting still seem to place responsibility for school improvement primarily with school leaders.
  - Accountability is shifting from a punitive reporting system to more of a learning process. This includes a 3-year review of the CIDT. It's about looking at multiple data points and context to better understand what's happening in a school.
  - The group stated a challenge that many people - even within the district - do not really understand school improvement.
- What's new and different from the School Quality Rating Policy?
  - Focus on inputs as well as outputs - which led to discussion about not seeing those inputs in the initial round of metrics. The group is looking for connections between resources, practices, and outcomes.
  - Lack of summative rating is the biggest change - which led to discussion about a risk of the perception that CPS is moving away from taking data seriously (i.e., an erroneous belief that there's no accountability). The district needs to acknowledge and explicitly state that summative data going away doesn't mean there will no longer be rich and easy-to-use data. Jeff noted that summative ratings weren't really telling people what they thought to begin with and this may be an important part of the messaging as well.
  - A greater focus on disaggregation - thinking about what policies best support populations of students.
- Important messaging about the new policy
  - Help families understand how this new framework can help them make choices. Parents want to know the right fit for their child, not just "the best" school.
  - Accountability can be effective without being punitive.
- We must think of the accountability policy as a system that gives everyone a role and supports all students. Jeff emphasized that CPS is trying to operationalize improvement science.

Several questions arose in this discussion:
1) Are we fully maximizing accountability in a way that changes how Chicago, not just CPS, works? This is about other public agencies and their impact on students and families.

2) How will the system overcome past incentives not to enroll certain students? The reason for the question is that there is currently an exciting opportunity to ensure no students are "lost between schools" if the district can be clear about the denominator in reporting.

Following the discussion, Jeff highlighted key design principles and then listed three critical questions:

1) What does a good school do, and why?
2) Is my school doing those things?
3) To the extent that my school might not be doing some of those things, what is the district doing to support growth in that area?

One participant noted the importance of the learning environment improving for educators as well as for students. Another A-TAG member pointed to the importance of a strong district role, and that the district should have "actual accountability". Jeff interpreted this as highlighting the district's role prominently in every metric proposal. He pointed to Pedro Martinez's comments at the February Board meeting, connecting the CIDT to the strategic plan, and emphasized that the strategic plan is grounded in the CIDT.

Last, Jeff provided some project updates, starting with the status of the validation groups supporting the cycle of CIDT implementation. Specifically, the Executive Committee has met two times. This group of district leaders is embracing the CIDT as a mechanism to approach improvement and change work that they've wanted to do anyway. The stakeholder committee has not yet been identified or convened.

Other key updates touched on wireframing work for CIDT reporting, development of the academic progress indicator, and engaging Bellwether to accelerate the subject matter expert (SME) metric development for the Balanced Assessment and High-Quality Curriculum indicators.

Orientation to the Metric Review Process

Augusta then reviewed the metric development process that SMEs completed. She emphasized a focus on change management and the human-centered design approach to work with SMEs. Human-centered design starts with clarification, then ideation, followed by development, and ends with implementation. It also places stakeholders at the core of the work. SMEs took up this charge as described below.

Augusta reminded the A-TAG that SMEs comprise not only district-level decision-makers but also those who are directly involved in the work of supporting schools in the pertinent topic areas. The key point made was that the people who are doing the work are not being excluded. This point was reinforced by the fact that SMEs felt additional stakeholder engagement was critical to their work, resulting in metric-specific focus groups.

Next, Augusta walked through the Chronic Absence proposal, first acknowledging that the review and validation process starts with outcome metrics and then highlighting the importance of understanding the proposal within the given context for the metric and for the policy as a whole. This balance of micro and macro views of each metric is intended to facilitate connection-making to practices and supports.

In response to a question about who has been consulted, August and Jeff described connections being made with several focus groups and noted how this is an adjustment to the originally planned process to front-load previously collected stakeholder feedback and engage stakeholders/focus groups later in the process. Jeff pointed out that it is within the scope of ATAG to recommend additional groups to consult.

Laura then provided an overview of the review process, pointing to breakout rooms and metric assignments, and walking briefly through the review tool so that groups would know where to capture discussion notes.

Metric Review, Part 1: Chronic Absence

The metric review process began with individual time for ATAG members to review the metric proposals and their notes to prepare for the group discussion. Next, the group separated into two breakout sessions, both focusing on Chronic Absence. When the full group reconvened, Center staff provided a summary of key takeaways from each group

Breakout Discussion Summaries

Group 1 Notes

This group felt strongly that the metrics needed to return to the theory of action. There were concerns that the metric design was too technical in a way that would not prove useful for those working to improve conditions and outcomes for students. To that end, the group recommended

using empirical evidence (district-level data) to inform thresholds and reporting. They also felt the work needed to be more explicitly connected to interventions and best practices. This connects back to this question that Jeff introduced earlier in the meeting: To the extent that my school might not be doing some of those things [regarding increasing engagement and decreasing chronic absence], what is the district doing to support growth in that area? [And what can schools do independently of the district?]

Finally, this group felt it was important to distinguish clearly between internal and public reporting, understanding that different users have different data needs. Specifically, they did not value extending the chronic absence measure beyond what is already defined by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Group 2 Notes

This group discussed the nature of the information provided, specifically suggesting more information at a smaller grain size, preferably provided in context. Their rationale was that the main priority should be providing rich information directly to decision-makers.

In terms of revisions to the reimagined metrics, the group appreciated the inclusion of an improvement component (the three-year average was discussed) in addition to status, as well as plans for disaggregation. They suggested reporting on a continuous spectrum (e.g., days absent). They suggested that context may include internal (within-district) comparisons.

Like Group 1, this group focused on the importance of reciprocity as foundational to the CIDT policy - and the underlying theory of action that informed the accountability redesign work. This group even said that reciprocity is a higher priority than outcome data. Given this, it is critical that the district attend to - and advertise - the practices that positively impact attendance and how they will be supported.

Full Group Discussion

The full group discussion started with Center staff summarizing key takeaways from each group. This led to further conversation, the overarching theme of which was a need to return to the theory of action not only for the CIDT as a whole but also for each metric within the policy. What is the goal of providing information about chronic absence publicly and directly to school and network leaders? How should this information impact decisions and behaviors?

Several ATAG members raised concern that the metrics default to a focus on outcomes. While they understand that current metrics may be outcomes-based, they recommended more explicit connections to improvement activities (practices and related district supports). Another member elaborated on practice, urging a focus on how to report information so that it can improve communities and communicate high-leverage practices.

The group also discussed the use of attendance data to make decisions about interventions, thinking about what data would be most useful. There was support for multi-year approaches, such as three-year running averages, and providing information at a smaller grain size, such as by bands of rates, because what resources are distributed, and where, may differ depending on bands/rates of attendance/chronic absence.

Finally, there was discussion about input data. School leaders in the group were attentive to mitigating the need for additional documentation requirements but also stated that current reasons for absence are insufficient to identify appropriate interventions.

Metric Review, Part 2: 1-year Dropout Rate and 4-year Cohort Graduation Rate

The metric review process began with individual time for ATAG members to review the metric proposals and their notes to prepare for the group discussion. Next, the group separated into two breakout sessions, one focusing on 1-year Dropout Rate and one focusing on 4-year Cohort Graduation Rate. When the full group reconvened, Center staff summarized key takeaways from each group.

Breakout Discussion Summaries

1-year Dropout Rate Notes

As with the chronic absence discussion, the group felt that the 1-year dropout metric proposal was over-attentive to making data more accurate at the expense of utility. They felt the proposal seemed more of a response to concerns about existing metrics rather than an authentic connection to improvement activities that can best increase student retention toward on-time graduation. In short, the proposed methodology is confusing and not connected to the practices and supports needed to decrease dropout rates. The group also wanted a more explicit connection to responsibilities defined at the district level. How will investments in reducing dropouts be supported and tracked? What strategies will be developed and communicated to school and network leaders?

The group did discuss technical issues with the data, noting the instability of the metric and concerns about mitigating instability and guarding against misinterpretation based on noise. They felt utility could be improved by addressing unverified transfers - seen as the primary cause of uncertainty in the data. This connects back to district responsibilities, specifically the need for CPS to provide clear codes and follow-up support for data reporting through Aspen.

But again, the discussion focused on data fidelity, which alone will not improve student outcomes. The district must also articulate its support, including potential collaboration with external entities/agencies. Some felt that this metric would be most useful for district leaders deciding where to deploy supports, but agreed that the metric should continue to be publicly reported with the aggregations mentioned above.

4-year Cohort Graduation Rate Notes

The group was concerned about the confusion that would result from having a different state and district graduation rate methodology. The group could not discern a justifiable rationale for this and felt it was important to continue to use the traditional graduation rate, but with additional disaggregation, as described below.

The discussion focused on the need to attend to what data are most important for school and district leaders to understand and address the needs of students who are not on track to graduate on time. The group understood the need for graduation rate data and valued public reporting of graduation rate disaggregated in a traditional manner, but it recommended a greater focus on on-track measures like credit accumulation in high school, disaggregated by traditional student groups but also by students who "naturally" matriculated into a high school compared to those who transfer in.

The rationale for this recommendation is that information about graduation rate is largely unactionable; a school cannot intervene in time to support on-time graduation using this data. They require data that helps them understand where support is needed to get students on track to graduate. Further, the group felt more comfortable with the inference that improvements (or not) in the rate of students on track to graduation compared to a starting point can be a reflection of the work of the school.

Returning to the graduation metric, the group discussed ways for the metric to be simplified. They recommended different ways of disaggregating the traditional graduation rate, specifically focusing on a graduation rate for students who matriculated into the school at the beginning of

ninth grade versus those who entered the school during or after their ninth-grade year. They also discussed providing information to school leaders about graduation rates for students who transferred to another school so that school leaders can understand the extent to which the school is successfully counseling students toward a better "fit" school for transfer.

The group identified this theme in their feedback: a discrete focus on graduation rate is too limited and doesn't align with the overarching theory of action and system goal - to improve conditions and outcomes for students. Graduation data alone cannot help students; the data must be triangulated across metrics (especially connecting with on-track) and must connect to practices and supports more explicitly.

Ultimately, the group prioritized a focus on providing data that will help school leaders answer these questions:

- Are students making positive progress toward graduation each year?
- What resources exist and are being directed to schools to make them more successful in graduating students on time?
- Are there specific students or groups of students at risk of not graduating on time? (Are there groups that the school seems to better serve or not?)

Full Group Discussion

Again, the full group discussion started with Center staff summarizing key takeaways from each group. This led to further conversation, affirming the small group recommendations:

- The district should be able to answer questions about where to deploy supports to ensure that students have what they need to graduate (ideally on time). As such, there should be greater focus on on-track information (e.g., credits earned) over graduation rate, which is more for public consumption.
- The district and schools should be working to maintain stable enrollment and educational experiences for students. Focusing on graduation rate or one-year dropout rate is insufficient to understand how to improve these conditions. The district and school leaders should focus on mobility - with appropriate aggregations.
- All of this work necessitates connections with external agencies and organizations in the city.
- It also necessitates clear and strong guidance from the district for how network and school leadership can best support students before or at the point of dropping out.

Wrap-Up

In closing, Laura Pinsonneault shared action items to take place following the meeting, namely developing this meeting summary and reviewing and summarizing all individual, small group, and full group ATAG metric feedback for CPS.

ATAG members were asked to complete a meeting evaluation.

ACTION ITEMS

1. **Center staff** to create a meeting summary
2. **Center staff** to review and summarize individual, small group, and full group ATAG metric feedback for CPS use
3. **ATAG members** to complete meeting evaluation
4. **ATAG members** to access (as needed) meeting materials from the ATAG landing page