TO: RIDE Leadership Team
FROM: ESSA Committee of Practitioners
DATE: October 28, 2016
SUBJECT: Committee of Practitioners Input on the Necessary Features of the Accountability System

The following is a summary of the Committee of Practitioners' input from a meeting on September 21, 2016. As we build a new accountability system under ESSA, we are moving from a system of top down accountability to one of collective responsibility for support and continuous improvement. Committee members, drawing on input from constituents across Rhode Island, discussed and ranked the important features of this accountability system in practice. The notes here do not represent consensus but rather a high level overview of the most frequent comments. More information on the input activities can be found [here](#).

It should be very clear how a school can improve on its accountability index score and report card metrics.
An accountability system that uses a variety of measures (e.g., school climate, chronic absence, literacy and math achievement as measured by state assessments) in the school report card can more effectively help a school assess areas that are in need of growth and improvement. The report card can then provide diagnostic information for school leaders to discuss and plan around. It is important to balance these robust measures with a tighter accountability index that will help to classify schools as well as identify schools for support and improvement. The accountability index should be transparent, clear, and succinct to ensure that school leaders and staff, as well as community members, understand where they need to make improvements. Resources should be made available to help school community and broader community members understand the accountability system as a whole. Some members advocated for holistic support structures for schools involving visits and comprehensive analysis to support improvement, such as the SALT visits that were done in Rhode Island previously.

Report cards should be display demographic data that will assist in comparing schools with similar demographics.
The accountability index score allows for classification of high-performing schools and also identifies schools in need of improvement. It is not as essential for every community to know how a school ranks against all others in the state. Instead, school report cards should be used to present metrics that allow cross-comparison between schools with similar demographics and resources. This targeted comparison can: indicate areas in need of improvement within schools; identify schools that are performing well so that comparable schools may plan their growth needs effectively; and promote equity across schools.

Students showing improvement is more important than all students achieving above a certain threshold of proficiency.
Student progress over time is equally as critical, and perhaps more critical for certain analyses, than achievement. Further, student achievement on state assessments in Literacy and Math should not be the sole factor of the accountability index or school report cards. It is important to acknowledge growth and student progress on all measures. This is in keeping with a move towards incorporating multiple measures (qualitative and quantitative) in the accountability system.

Additional ideas that were brought up in the conversation include:
- Student test scores and students' school experience should be equally important for school accountability.
- System should contain data on student preparation for college and career.
- Report cards should highlight schools' strengths as well as where a school can improve.
- Report cards should be configured in a way that is easy to understand and access the information presented.
- The classification system should use non-judgmental words to describe schools.
- Year over year reliability is critical in the accountability index.
- The system should incorporate reasonable goals for improving the accountability index score.
- The system should include measures relating to community involvement and partnerships.

In Summary: To promote collective responsibility, the report card – rather than the accountability index score and school classification – should be considered the primary means of communicating school success to parents and the broader community. The accountability system as a whole should be **comprehensive** – using various metrics to indicate performance, achievement, and areas for growth; **accessible** – clear and easily understood by school leaders, staff, and community members; **equitable** – transparent and fair; and **responsive** to the needs of students and schools.