



Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition for All Youth

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presented by:

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Ms. Johnson: Good afternoon and welcome to the teleconference entitled “National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition for All Youth.” I’m Donna Johnson, a Research Fellow with the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition. We are pleased to have our director, Dr. David Johnson, present for us the national standards and quality indicators. Dr. Johnson is also director of the Institute on Community Integration and professor in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration, College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Johnson has also served as a consultant to several national, regional, and state organizations including NIDRR, National School-to-Work Office, Rehabilitation Services Administration, The National Alliance of Business, The Council of Exceptional Children, and several Congressional committees. Dr. Johnson has published numerous journal articles, book chapters, research monographs, technical reports, and products on topics concerning secondary education, special education, rehabilitation, transition, school-to-work, and others.

A draft of the national standards is available on the NCSET Web site at www.ncset.org in PDF and Word formats.

Dr. Johnson: This is a nice opportunity to talk to you about something that we’re very excited about. I’d also like to just acknowledge that Kelli Crane has had a very significant hand, along with Donna, and many other staff here and many partners across the country in bringing this set of issues forward. Kelli will not be speaking today, but she’s on the phone, so I just wanted to acknowledge that she is with us today.

We were just speaking with the operator and I was kind of taken aback, because we have over 95 lines that were kicked in here, which means that either this topic is very important or this is a free day for a lot of people. This is something we feel very strongly that is very important to the field and we feel very thankful to be in a position to talk to you about it today.

The Web site should have provided you with a draft document called National Standards for Secondary Edu-

cation and Transition for All Youth. The background on this is that we have, along with many of you, struggled with establishing dialogue at the state and local levels relative to “Who are the stakeholders who should be involved? How do you establish broad enough frameworks to begin to think about education as a process for all students?” We began to think about how all students will achieve, and achieve not only academic results but also postschool results.

There are many of you across the country that are familiar with these different types of standard-setting activities, different types of indicators that have been developed, and different ways to guide professional dialogue around “How do we create the best possible educational systems in this country that serve all youth?” Part of the dilemma has been that some of the systems that have been developed for that purpose and to benefit those explicit purposes have been taking apart a piece of the puzzle. For example, there are standards and indicators that have been developed to address specific areas of career development and preparation. There are specific standards that have been developed by the National Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals to guide leadership activities within schools—setting standards and quality indicators to drive those. We and many others, not just in special education, but also in general education and other broader fields in workforce development, have over the last couple of years recognized that we need to begin to think about how we can converge on a common set of shared indicators that attempt to think about the entirety of public education and beyond, to create a common set of standards from which we can begin to think about system-level improvements within state and local programming for young people.

The National Alliance on Secondary Education and Transition, NASET, not to be confused with NCSET, is a national voluntary coalition first brought together in November 2003. It is a national professional group where we engage people who are involved in national organizations who had memberships that we felt it would be important to influence in a way that focuses on

particular concerns of developing a common framework.

Some of the organizations are very familiar to you. They include people in general education, special education, career and technical education, youth development, workforce development, parent organizations, and advocacy organizations. Some of them include prestigious, large organizations with heavy policy agendas, such as the National Governors Association, National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and others that are specific to special education policy and practice like the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Those involved in workforce development include such as the Workforce Investment Board, the Council of State Directors of Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, and the Parent Teacher Association.

We have over 40 organizations identified on the NASET member list. These organizations have participated actively through a series of meetings that we have had the privilege of facilitating. We are not the director of this, we are merely a group that thought, along with these other organizations, that it would be timely for us to begin a dialogue. We applied some resources to help pull this together and to do some of the facilitation, to host conference calls, like this, and to put together products. The ideas and what you find represented here are within the shared perspective of those 40-45 organizations.

NASET was established for three primary purposes:

1. To build a consensus around and identify what you would need in order to achieve successful participation in high schools or secondary settings, employment, etc.;
2. To begin to prioritize and address significant issues of national scale that have an impact on the provision of effective secondary education and transition services and policies for all youth; and
3. To develop a set of research-based standards and indicators, such that there is documentation and a platform of active research that documents that these are relevant and important and that there are useful applications available that have been tested and are valid for implementation.

Why do we do this? Why should we try this? Why did other organizations find this important? There are some very obvious dimensions to this. One is ***the current national policy focus on serving all students***. No Child Left Behind, which came into effect in 2002, emphasizes all students, including students with disabilities. We are all aware of and we are all participants in this process, particularly the ramifications as it relates to adequate yearly progress [AYP], the testing and assessment programs, and other applications of achieving access to the general

education curriculum through the IDEA Amendments of 1997. President Bush is ushering a high school agenda through the White House, so an emphasis here that we need to examine in relation to an emphasis on No Child Left Behind, focusing on high school students, for which all students are critically identified within the framework.

Second is ***awareness that schools cannot go it alone***. Interagency collaboration requires that all partners be present in order to develop comprehensive programs. I think we can begin to argue the fact that to create systems change we need to include all people who are part of the systems that are about to change, in a useful way, such that we can address the entirety of the educational system and its population.

Third is ***ensuring all youth full access to essential learning opportunities***. To do this we have to focus on all students' questions. In other words, we can't compartmentalize programs to say that there is a unique and discreet group of students who need this particular program or that particular program. The full array of options within high schools and beyond need to be available and accessible. I think we need to view it from that perspective and move forward.

Fourth are ***family expectations for their child's participation in the broadest possible array of the high school programs and beyond*** is also well documented. After years of parent education, parents are becoming familiar with what their expectations are for their children and those expectations are increasing.

We also have some particular observations from our own standpoint in working in the field. There are a variety of frameworks that are available from both state and local contexts, but some of them do not include the whole picture. The people we ran into would ask us to send them a framework that they would use for self-assessment, strategic planning, and evaluation. They wanted standards to use to benchmark their progress. We might send the Middle School Associations standards and benchmarks and they would reply saying it only addressed a certain part of what they were interested in thinking about. We would send another set and get a reply that asked for a document that addressed another piece. Those are some of the needs that have driven this.

The process that we used to develop the framework was to work with these organizations to cast them to the thinking, "What might be a useful, simple, basic way of organizing this entire process of generating standards and indicators?" It was broken down into five broad areas: schooling, career preparation, youth development, parent involvement, and connecting activities or inter-agency types of work. These served as an umbrella with-

in which we began to work and begin to pull together work groups convened in Washington, DC for almost a full year to begin to craft these and to do an iterative process of driving these indicators and standards toward some greater clarity and certainly shared importance and value and, ultimately, consensus, to what they are now.

They are listed as a draft product on the Web site. We are continuing to work with the NASET members to make sure that we have all of their additional commentary on these. We have seen this and are using this in various ways currently to support some of our own technical assistance with state and local programs. You should regard this as a fairly secure, intact, and nearing completion document, to be used for our purposes and yours.

The workgroups were composed of participants from the NASET membership itself. This is the body of 40-45 national organizations that were assembled. We also engaged several other stakeholders in the process including specific people with expert knowledge and various experience bases like university professors, advocates, policymakers, governmental positions, and regional and local representatives. They were all part of the process of trying to make sure that what we are doing is valid and representative to what has been assigned for the states, as well as local levels, in terms of what constitutes a comprehensive and effective base of standards to achieve positive results for all young people.

We had a meeting December 9 of this past year in Washington, DC where we started to look very quickly at the implementation levels of this as perceived by some of our NASET partners. A big question is "So what? To what end? What/how will other people use this?" I think we have had some very encouraging and very important developments.

Here at the National Center you will see how we viewed this national set of standards and indicators as the backbone of what we are doing in terms of structuring a plan with our other partners, to give you an idea on what their ideas are. Many will put this on their Web site and promote its application and use within a variety of settings across general education, special education, career and technical education, workforce development, parent organizations, and the like. To give you some examples:

- **La Raza**, a national Latino organization, has come forward with a commitment, within a certain set of new demonstration projects that will be established nationwide to use the framework as a guide to evaluation, planning, and reviewing of these new demonstration efforts.
- The **Council for Exceptional Children** has made an ongoing commitment to place the NASET stan-

dards and indicators within their current curriculum that deals with the lifework curriculum process.

- The **National Association of State Directors of Special Education** will endorse this set of indicators. Some of these national organizations are in a position, being apolitical, to be able to officially endorse the standards. Many of these organizations are going through the process to endorse this set of standards, to promote their use and application among the State Directors of Special Education, and to find ways to incorporate this information in various outreach and information-sharing parts of their national organization.
- The **National Association of Workforce Development Professionals**, also represented in NASET, will endorse this on February 5th at their board meeting, but they're also in the process of revising their certification standards for workforce development professionals. And they have asked if the use of the NASET framework and particular sets of standards would help them to reflect - if it can embed some of these standards within their own certification standards for workforce professionals. There's no argument with us to that end.
- The **National School Boards Association** is very interested in not only posting this on their Web site, but having the opportunity to have presentations on this at the National School Boards Association, and not just national meetings, but also at their regional and state meetings. There is an opportunity for some outreach to local school board members. As a former school board member, I would love to have this in my hands to be able to help me understand what might be part of a high school program that I should be reflecting on or thinking about with those who are part of the district's overall administration.

I'm going to turn it over to Donna to talk a little bit about this. Many of you are aware that we are about to release information that will lead to our convening the National Leadership Summit in Washington, DC on June 14-15. As part of that, we're going to discuss how we will embed the standards into that process.

I also want to make sure that we have a good chunk of time to answer questions, because this is very new for many of you. It is an attempt to bring something forward very quickly to you.

Ms. Johnson: As David mentioned, we're planning on using the national standards as the backbone for the National Leadership Summit that is convening June 14-15 at the Capital Hilton. We are very pleased to report that this year we're able to support three team members

from each state. We anticipate that registration will open early next week. And you'll find that information on the NCSET Web site, again, at <http://www.ncset.org>.

The goal of the 2005 National Leadership Summit is to convene state-level teams and policymakers to examine the progress made in the implementation of strategic action plans developed at the 2003 Summit and to further build state/territory capacity to improve high school experiences that lead to successful postschool outcomes for all youth.

Participation in the 2005 National Leadership Summit is for state leadership teams and the State Directors of Special Education will be invited to send one state leadership team from their state or territory. You can find more information on our Web site.

We are planning on using the standards and indicators for the Leadership Summit in several ways. The first is in the self-assessment tool that will be conducted by each state team. We will encourage each state team to complete the self-assessment that will look at schooling, career preparatory activities, youth development and leadership, family involvement, and connecting activities. We are also including data collection and youth as part of the content sessions, due to participants' interest.

In conducting the self-assessment as a team, we'll ask everyone to review the national standards and quality indicators and then rank them. This will help each state team to focus on what they want to work on first and what their goals are to be completed at the Summit and the work thereafter.

The second way that we plan to use it is in framing the content sessions. We're aligning a series of content sessions with the national standards and indicators. We've put together 14 concurrent sessions that are around each of the five areas, plus data collection and use. To give you an example of the types of topics that we have confirmed for the concurrent session, Don Deshler and Peggy McCartle will be addressing adolescent literacy as part of our schooling framing area, and Diane Bassett and Eduardo Garcia will address how to align career preparation and state standards as part of our career preparation area.

The third way that we're planning on using the standards and indicators is in framing our teleconference schedule from January through June. On February 22 at 1:00 p.m. (CST) Dr. Martha Thurlow will present on Implications of No Child Left Behind on Standards and Assessment, part of our schooling framing area. We want people to have more in-depth opportunities for information from the teleconferences, because we have a wealth of information lined up for the Summit. We want to make sure that people are as prepared as possible.

We will open up questions from the audience now. We would like you to state your name and the state that you are calling from before your question.

Ms. Ryan: This is Laurel Ryan from Tennessee at the UT-Bowling Green Center, a center for developmental disabilities, and I was just on a statewide conference call this morning where I was told that the State Board of Education is opposed to the idea of creating two levels of graduation. This falls in with No Child Left Behind. I don't know if this is a better question for that, but I thought I'd throw it open and find out if other states are having this reaction that we can only do high-level/high-stakes assessments and there's nothing else for kids except a Certificate of Attendance, which doesn't really mean anything in the workforce for kids who cannot achieve high-stakes tests achievement.

Dr. Johnson: We've looked at past state reviews of what's going on in states relative to exit criteria standards, credentialing, diploma options, those types of things. I think for many there is a struggle going on centering on attempting to address all of what we need to address to prepare young people for the eventuality of leaving school. We know and we're all aware of this. There is nothing to be concerned about saying this, but No Child Left Behind brings forward a very important emphasis on academic achievement. It makes sure that the high school curriculum has a strong emphasis and a priority toward that and we understand this.

Right, wrong, indifferent, I'm going to just say that what the framework tries to do is bring back into focus those critical areas that deal with career preparation, workforce development, parent engagement, and the importance of interagency collaboration. Whether that goes on in Tennessee or in Minnesota, the dialogue has to be what is important to the participants in the stakeholder process. We have to be able to better align how students learn and achieve academically within the other domains than just schooling. You can't start to look at this as a discreet thing called academic preparation. Academic preparation occurs through a variety of experiences, life experiences, functional experiences, functional training, as well as other things. We need to have the people sitting at the table to begin to have the dialogue such that it's recognized and understood that other experiences could also help the students learn how to read, do mathematics, to be able to understand science applications, history, and the like. The framework simply attempts to do that. Tennessee, along with all the other states and territories, are struggling and grappling with all these issues currently, so believe me, you are not alone.

Ms. Palmer: I am Bronwyn Palmer, in Little Rock.

Are the standards already approved? Are they still in draft form?

Dr. Johnson: They are approved. It's a national voluntary organization that was formed. They're coming together only for the purpose of doing what they feel is important in a voluntary capacity to create and to pass on a set of standards and indicators that they feel represents their understanding of all of this. There is their official endorsement and collective agreement that are out there now for public use and consumption. I think if you're looking at trying to ground them in "Where did these come from and are they official?" I think you certainly can understand that they represent a consensus of 40-45 national organizations, which is good enough for me.

Ms. Redman: This is Susan Redman with the Florida Department of Health Children's Medical Services, a Title V agency for children and youth with special health care needs. I am excited to see Youth Development and Youth Leadership under 3.1 in the standards and indicators including physical and emotional health. I think it's been a long and hard road to get health conversations to the table with this subject. Perhaps you would want to adjust the title of this, National Standards for Secondary Education and Comprehensive Transition or All-Life Transition, because I think there is a narrow focus when people have brought up this subject.

Dr. Johnson: Agreed. We did have organizations that certainly addressed these issues as very important. Healthy & Ready to Work was very important on the work-group level and made many important contributions on this. We've tried to make sure that this was representative of the interests that were there.

Ms. Johnson: I'd also like to add that at the National Summit, we will be have a concurrent session on mental health needs of youth and also a concurrent session that addresses health care issues.

Ms. Redman: You might want to think about adding health literacy to help all youth and young adults understand how to approach the health care system; what's involved with that; how to be successful; understanding insurance; and all those things that all of us, as adults, have had to slog through over the years.

Ms. Lane: This is Ann Marie Lane from Maryland. Ms. Johnson mentioned that NCSET will sponsor three members to the state teams to come to Washington. If the states are willing to pay for additional members, can other members attend?

Dr. Johnson: Yes, as an incentive to encourage state participation we will sponsor three of the team members. We have an expectation that that you will take the three, use it wisely, and then identify some others and bring

them. State teams will generally be five to nine people.

Mr. Nurse: This is Tom Nurse from Florida. I was part of some of the processes on family involvement standards. I wanted to thank everybody for that becoming such an important portion of the standards. I know this was an early part of the development and all of the other standards have had a longer history. The more we can involve and value families, the more significant the outcomes will improve.

Ms. Hurt: This is Mary Hurt from Region 18 Education Service Center in Midland, Texas. I wanted to congratulate everyone who's been working on this. The standards look excellent. Would the dissemination of the national standards only be through teleconferencing and the National Summit? Will it be up to the different organizations that have been part of the development? How do you anticipate other avenues of disseminating the standards?

Dr. Johnson: First, we will make it available and very public on the Web site; second, we will attempt a series of presentations to familiarize people with it and have an opportunity for discussion. There is a lot more work to be done than just putting it on the Web site. The issue is still how do you get it into application? This is where we're working in concert with several organizations including the National Association of Secondary School Principals, La Raza, and others to try to figure out how can we embed the framework into some of the ongoing work of those associations. That would mean tying it into national conferences, working with individual groups, setting up a subgroup to establish dialogue, and others. There will be different ways that show up. We're trying to keep the momentum going and you'll see it in different waves for different uses from different organizations. Our goal is to make it very accessible to you.

Ms. Johnson: We will also develop specific tools. What you see as a set of standards and indicators will be transformed immediately with our partners with their consensus and approval into a self-assessment process. Whether you're in Tennessee, Florida, or Minnesota, the stakeholders that represent these five domains can start to ask one another about how well and to what extent is the state relationship to these standards, what gaps can be identified, and what priorities can be set relative to improving the overall system for all students? Then we will align all of this into a research database so that you will have access to information about what works, what is valid, what has been tested, and how can we improve so we can create links to these standards with good and useful information that is research-based.

That is the heavier piece to work on and to get go-

ing. The issue is that this set of standards and indicators is being used in certain state and local pilot situations where we're working with interagency groups to review these, to set as a self-assessment.

Mr. Richards: This is Curtis Richards. I'm with the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. Several of us were very instrumental in helping work through this. I just want to reiterate a couple of things that you've said for the folks who are concerned about the push between academic and testing and vocational, and those who are concerned about things around what we are calling connecting activities, the set of things that youth have to get access to while they're in school in order to succeed postschool that often fall through the cracks. I really believe that as you study these indicators, you will find that they're very powerful tools for your boards of education at the state and local level and for policymakers to be able to sort out who is supposed to be doing what pieces. This is a very exciting step forward for the entire field of transition.

Dr. Johnson: I want to acknowledge the Institute for Educational Leadership and your role in this, too, Curtis, as being very helpful and instrumental in bringing this forward through many conversations. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ryan: This is Laurel in Tennessee, again. I'm taking this back to my coalition on education and going to start self-assessment so that we can start a dialogue. Our State Board of Education has just shut down on anything beyond academic, but we're going to try and use this. I appreciate it very much and I appreciate this conference call.

Dr. Johnson: I'd appreciate it, as others of you find helpful and useful ways to apply the framework that you e-mail us and let us know. Use our general e-mail address, ncset@umn.edu, or especially to Donna and I, just to let us know what's going on from your perspective, how it might be useful, ways in which you find it could have a different application, or look at some of the standards and indicators. This thing may always say "Draft"—hopefully the standards and indicators will remain constant for a period of time, but it will be reviewed. It will be reviewed in practice. In other words, it will be used in different ways that for purposes of improving it, as well. We are very delighted with the impact.

This has helped to bring clarity as a national technical assistance center, in terms of building a clear focus with states over a common conversation which correlates with the general education, special education, workforce development, and all of the other boundaries simultaneously. It gets us into the picture of workforce devel-

opment's role and allows us to establish that dialogue. I think it's been very helpful for us and that is why the National Leadership Summit will be constructed around this and why we are working with other partners in the national alliance to look for productive and useful ways to see how those organizations would choose to use this and then report that as we can.

Ms. Lee: This is Freda Lee in North Carolina. When will you be putting the agenda for the June Summit on your Web site?

Ms. Johnson: In the next few days. A letter is also going out next week to your state director.

Ms. Tolliver: This is Evelyn Tolliver from Los Angeles. Is this Summit going to be open to only state directors? Or are you going to allow other groups to attend this Summit?

Dr. Johnson: The process is that we will be serving explicitly leadership teams that are formed at the state level who are primary contacts for us, and given the nature of our funding base, at the Office of Special Education Programs, is to communicate this through and to the State Directors of Special Education.

Ms. Lee: Is there an expectation that it would be the same team that participated last year?

Dr. Johnson: We would like to believe that the continuity that you have established in North Carolina has remained intact and important to bring in people who are common to this process from the past. We do understand that teams change compositions. People are added on for reasons that are important to broaden the conversation and to prioritize around a certain set of issues. We hope that your team you started with is intact but understand that there will be changes.

Ms. Johnson: This is Melodie Johnson from RSA. I just wanted to let people know that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has planned to have a national transition conference the same week as the Summit, June 16-17 in Washington, DC at the Capital Hilton, the same hotel as the Summit. The idea is to complement the work that's being done at a national level on transition. RSA's focus will be more centered around vocational rehabilitation work and services towards students with disabilities that are leaving the schools and going into the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Dr. Johnson: The letters that are forthcoming this week to the State Directors of Special Education will include a Save the Date RSA flier talking very specifically about the RSA event, which is a complimentary opportunity for further information and strategies. For those of you who are not participating in state teams and have an interest in this, we will continue to have updates

regarding the national standards here on our Web site. I thank you for being on the call and we appreciate your time. Thank you.

Ms. Johnson: I want to remind everyone of our next teleconference, again, with Dr. Martha Thurlow, on February 22, 1:00 Central Time. Please watch our Web site (<http://www.ncset.org/>) for information on upcoming teleconferences. We appreciate everyone's participation.

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