



**The  
Nelson A.  
Rockefeller  
Institute of  
Government**

*The Public Policy Institute of the  
State University of New York*

**Intergovernmental Approaches  
for Strengthening  
K-12 Accountability Systems**

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# Questions for this session

- ❖ Is there a need for one or more new intergovernmental mechanisms to strengthen K-12 accountability systems (or for existing intergovernmental efforts to be expanded)?
- ❖ If there is, what functions should these entities perform and how should they be structured? (Alternatively: How should existing efforts be modified?)

## Dynamics of policy innovation and leadership in our federal system

- ❖ States as laboratories of innovation
- ❖ Federal leadership may spur states to innovate: “A Nation at Risk” led states to pursue standards-based reform
- ❖ State policies may be replicated by other states or by the feds on a national scale: Texas’ accountability system morphed into NCLB

## How are states responding to NCLB?

- ❖ Some features that have constrained innovation: top-down testing mandates, surge in demand for testing, tight timelines, unrealistic 100% proficiency goal, sanctions
- ❖ Some have responded with bare-bones compliance or strategies to get out from under the law's requirements
- ❖ Some states are taking the lead in figuring out how to do accountability right

# Why collaborate?

- ❖ Many states lack resources to go it alone
- ❖ Be proactive rather than compliance-driven
- ❖ Learn from one another and make faster progress
- ❖ Share costs of hiring experts
- ❖ Share the political heat for tough decisions

# Problems and challenges

- ❖ Guidelines for examining validity of accountability systems are not yet well-established
- ❖ Shortage of expertise
- ❖ NCLB's perverse incentives & compliance mentality
- ❖ Lack of transparency & inefficiencies resulting from diversity of standards
- ❖ Not enough research on validity of accountability systems

## Collaborate to do what?

- ❖ Develop common core standards and test specifications
- ❖ Review state and district accountability systems
- ❖ Strengthen technical assistance
- ❖ Set research priorities, do longitudinal studies on effects of accountability programs and validity of test-based inferences, disseminate results

## State-led collaborations

- ❖ **Achieve's American Diploma Project**
- ❖ **New England Common Assessment Program**
- ❖ **CCSSO's State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards**
- ❖ **Collaborative projects funded by federal Enhanced Assessment Grants**
- ❖ **Education Commission of the States**
- ❖ **Southern Regional Education Board**

# Alternative institutional models

## ❖ Government-supported R&D

National Research Council

MDRC

New York's Education Finance Research Consortium

## ❖ Federal

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Consumer Product Safety Commission

National Inst. of Health/Inst. of Education Sciences

England's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

## Rockefeller Institute's work

- ❖ How does K-12 accountability work now?  
What are the roles of the federal government, states, and intergovernmental efforts?
- ❖ How are these existing institutions meeting accountability needs, and where might there be room for further development?
- ❖ What kinds of new collaborations might be useful?

## Questions for any proposed entity

- ❖ Balance of federal, state, and local interests?
- ❖ How funded and staffed?
- ❖ Access to information such as testing data?
- ❖ Enforcement authority?
- ❖ Role of private sector (test publishers, nonprofit associations, foundations)?

# Window of opportunity

- ❖ Room for more intergovernmental collaboration on R&D and technical assistance
- ❖ New president will have to deal with the war, the economy, and health care before education
- ❖ Next 12-18 months offer opportunity to develop institutional mechanisms with long-range perspective, great capacity, comprehensive scope, broad participation