

## Public Policy Update – Fall, 2015

*Ben Milster, Executive Board Public Policy*

Here we go again. Due to the passage of LD 1276 this past legislative session, we are once again looking for a suitable instrument for the Maine High School Assessment. Since this process was such a colossal debacle the last time around when we were saddled with the SAT for a number of years, I certainly wanted to try and keep abreast of the selection process for the new assessment. I knew that a task force had been established for the purpose of selecting a new test, and on August 12, emailed the following to Nancy Godfrey at the DOE:

*Nancy: The Maine Counseling Association, as well as the Maine School Counselor Association, is very interested in the selection process for the new State assessment. I have looked at your website, and would like to know if there is a schedule for upcoming meetings of the task force, and if they are open to the public.*

*I would appreciate any information that you can share with me.*

*Thanks,*

*Ben Milster ,*

*Public Policy Chair, Executive Board*

By August 25, I had not heard back from Nancy, so I sent a second request. That same day, I received an email from Rachelle Tome, who is the acting Deputy Commissioner. Rachelle thanked me for sharing my interest, and informed me that the task force was formed early this past summer, and that they were in the final stages developing an RFP (Request for Proposal) to post soon. Rachelle also referred me to the task force website. Rachelle did not answer my request for a schedule of meetings, nor did she respond to my inquiry as to whether or not any meetings would be public.

On August 26, I emailed Rachelle the following:

*Rachelle - So you are having no meetings that are open to the public regarding the decision making process for the new assessment?*

*Ben Milster*

Receiving no response, I sent the same email again on September 12.

On September 14, I received the following email from Debra Plowman, Director of Policies and Programs:

*The task force required in LD 1276 to develop the new MEA met this summer and subsequently had 3 formal opportunities to weigh in on what the next MEA should look like. Some members reached out to their colleagues for their comments as well. Those comments and responses were posted on the DOE website. The website was used by many interested parties to share their comments as well. Further, a member of the task force shared the questions with members of the Maine Principal's Association and we received comments from 184 participants.*

*The RFP has been written and has been advertised as of last week. After the deadline for responses has come, we have a team of both educators and DOE members who will score the proposals.*

*The Maine DOE website is updated regarding this process on a regular basis and you can check in at <http://www.maine.gov/doe/assessment/math-ela/task-force/index.shtm> to track the progress.*

On the same day, I responded with the following:

*Debra - Thank you for your response. I have visited the Task Force site previously and again today, and can see the questions and member roster, as well as the commentary section. I cannot see, however, where the comments are posted. I have missed things before on websites, and may certainly be doing so again. Any direction would be appreciated.*

As of this writing (September 22), I have not heard back from Debra Plowman. So, I still do not know if and when any meetings of this task force will be held to review the RFP responses, nor if they will be open to the public. I also took another look at the website, and could not see where comments and responses were posted. If anyone who reads this and can find them, please let me know – As stated previously, I have missed things on websites before.

And, on a final note, during the College Board update at UMF yesterday, we learned that they have submitted a response to the DOE's RFP for consideration – The new, improved, revised, super duper, better than ever SAT. Stay tuned.