Memorandum

To: SBOE chair Tom Raffio

SBOE members

Frank Edelblut

Heather Gage

Sandie MacDonald

Re:  **The department should revise the standards review plan and resubmit it to a future board meeting.**

Date: April 5, 2017

# Recommendation

This is not a plan ready for submission to the board. It is parts of a plan but what there is here is not responsive to the decision the board made at its March meeting. This appears to be a proposal to write standards from scratch rather than revise our existing standards. It has no timeline. There is no provision for initial feedback from educators and the public about what revisions might be needed. Page 8 has incorrect information about what standards will be reviewed now and when they were last reviewed. The Board decided to review ELA and math standards only. And the Board explicitly decided not to reopen the science standards it has just adopted.

The department should go back to the drawing board and present a responsive plan to a future SBOE meeting.

# Some of the most obvious issues

Here are the major issues I see in no particular order:

* **Strategic Leadership Team to advise SBOE**

The standards revision process is an SBOE process staffed by DOE. The Strategic Leadership Team will be selected by the Board and be seen as the Board’s advisors.

* **Business community participation on the Strategic Leadership Team**

The business community is an important New Hampshire education stakeholder concerned about critical workforce issue. There will be at least one representative of the business community on the Strategic Leadership Team, independent of the business role of any of the other members.

* **Insufficient detail about the Standards Revision Team**

The Standards Revision Team bullets on page 3 needs more detail. Are there separate subcommittees feeding into a parent authoring committee? What should be the composition of each committee?

* **Strategic Leadership Team and SBOE will review “aspirations and focus”**

On page 4, the first activity bullet for the Standards Revision Team is, “Determine the aspiration that grounds and focuses the academic standards and what they should deliver for every student;” It would be fine for an SRT to draft ideas for that, but it is the responsibility of the Strategic Leadership Team to advise the Board on any change to the “aspiration and focus” of the standards.

* **No mandate to change the components of the standards**

What does this mean: “Determine what components the academic standards should contain (review research)?” The basic framework of the standards to be reviewed is already established. The standards review is a revision of existing standards, not a project to write from scratch standards consisting of newly formulated components.

* **The board will review existing ELA and math standards for any needed revisions, not rewrite the standards**

This bullet has the same problem: “Complete a thorough review of other state standards that have been presented as notably well developed, recent reviews of state-led national standards, international standards and NAEP alignment studies (to name a few).” This is a misunderstanding of the Board’s standards review assignment. There has been no feedback from teachers, curriculum directors or superintendents that the standards need to be rewritten (or even reviewed, for that matter). As a result, there has been no desire expressed in discussion or in Board decisions to rewrite the standards.

The review starts with the current New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts and for Mathematics. Parents, students, teachers, school leaders, business leaders and others must have the opportunity to provide feedback on a standard-by-standard basis on what changes they would like to see and why. Then the Revision Teams can respond to the field by collating the feedback and deciding whether and how that feedback can be used in improving the standards in a way that fits our needs in New Hampshire.

* **Review not rewrite**

The next bullet has the same problem: “Complete an initial review of existing NH standards to identify concept/knowledge and skill gaps, grade-to-grade alignments and outdated content/concepts.”

* **Insufficient attention to gathering initial input from the public**

This bullet is fine: “Continuously review public feedback and make adjustments where believed necessary,” but the plan must include a detailed discussion of when and how that standard-by-standard feedback will be gathered.

* **Psychometric expertise required**

Some form of psychometric expertise or facilitation must be added to the Standards Revision Team.

* **Insufficient information about forums and web based feedback**

Page 5 mentions a listening tour but does not discuss timing. Our March board decision requires the forums – and a web site unmentioned in this draft plan – as an initial step and when a draft is complete.

* **Will need to revise the draft review process**

Pages 6 and 7 will need to be revised to reflect the rest of the needed changes.

* **There is no timeline in the plan**

The commissioner suggested he was looking at a timeline during the last meeting when he said the standards review process would be completed by June 2018. The Board should require a detailed timeline before the plan can be seriously considered.

* **Errors the listing of standards to be reviewed, when science was last reviewed, and timeline consistent with commissioner’s last report.**

Page 8 has three major errors that I see right off.

* + First, the plan seems to say that 6 different sets of standards, including the science standards adopted by the Board on November 3, 2016, will be reviewed at once in 2017. This is not the case. As per the Board’s decision at our last meeting, the Board is prepared to review the ELA and math standards only.
  + The table says that the standards will be reviewed in 2017 whereas the commissioner said that the last meeting that the department had a plan almost ready to propose to the board in which the review process would be completed in June of 2018.
  + The table says incorrectly that the science standards were reviewed in 2015. The last science standards were adopted some 9 years ago and the current science standards were adopted on November 3, 2016, 5 months ago. They are not up for review.