Graduation Index and Cohort Tracking System

In 1997, the Louisiana Legislature passed a law giving BESE the authority to develop an accountability system by which every public school in Louisiana would be graded. Because of the passing of this law, all public school educators were introduced to School Performance Scores (SPS). SPS are now based on student achievement on state standardized tests and additional measures of student success, such as credit accumulation, completion of rigorous courses and graduation rates. The first SPS were awarded in 1999 and have now been replaced with a letter-grade system, which is easier for the general public to understand. The formula for calculating a school’s letter grade has been modified and adjusted throughout the years to meet the requirements of Federal Acts such as No Child Left Behind. Currently, high schools are awarded letter grades based on student achievement on the ACT (25%) and End-of-Course tests (25%), the graduation index (25%) and the graduate cohort rate (25%).

Graduation Index can roughly be defined as a school’s ability to graduate students and how well the students were prepared for post-secondary education. The following information comes from the Louisiana Department of Education’s website.

Schools earn points for each student who earns a high school diploma, but also score a 3 or above. Schools earn the most points for students who earn a diploma, but also score 3
or above on an Advanced Placement exam or 4 or above on an International Baccalaureate exam (Diploma ++). Schools earn additional points for students who earn a diploma and take an Advanced Placement test and score below 3, take an International Baccalaureate exam and score below 4, earn credit through dual enrollment, or earn industry-based certification approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Diploma +).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Index</th>
<th>Points Per Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma ++</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma +</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Year Graduate</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-out</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A graduation cohort is formed when a group of students enter the 9th grade. Any student who enrolls in a high school up to October 1st of their junior year becomes part of that cohort. A high school earns 25% of its SPS, or grade, based on the ratio of students that graduate in four years to the number of students that entered the cohort four years earlier.

It is each school’s responsibility to keep detailed records of all areas in which it can earn or lose points. This can be a daunting task for large public high schools, but it is of immense significance since each year, high school administrators and registrars are required to verify cohort rosters to check for accuracy. Every point earned and correctly awarded helps raise the
school’s performance score and thus the letter grade. Despite its vast significance, there is no data tracking system in place to ease the process and maximize the accuracy of roster verification.

**Proposed Solution**

We propose to create five databases in which all components of the graduation index will be tracked. One database will contain student information, including the student’s name, school ID, entry date, exit/withdrawal date, reason for exit or withdrawal and the type of diploma the student is pursuing. The second database will organize course information, including the course number, course name, whether or not an Industry-Based Certification, Dual Enrollment or AP exams pertain to the course and all teachers who teach that course. The three remaining databases will be specific to the components which earn a school bonus points: IBCs, Dual Enrollment and AP exams, each of which will include a course roster of all students enrolled in those types of courses.

Using this system, a school registrar can easily upload the student information as a new cohort enters the school. As students enroll and withdraw throughout the year, this can be easily be recorded which will allow queries to be created for the purposes of efficient roster verifications. An electronic form will be created and emailed to the teachers who teach such courses at the end of each school year to track all IBCs earned and dual enrollment credit awarded to their students. This will help mainstream the reporting process that is currently inconsistent, making data consolidation time consuming and more prone to error. Once all data has been entered, queries will be created, allowing a user to search for all students who meet any
of the criteria, thus earning the school additional points, such as those who have taken an AP exam at any point during their high school career and earned a score of 3 or better.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Each Group Member**

Traci and Chrystal identified the problem, solution and all other research. They will also create the Access program and upload the existing data as well as design the look of the forms. Adela will be the group leader and will make sure all documentation is submitted and deadlines are met. Natasha and Karen summarized this project in this Feasibility Study. They will also create the PowerPoint presentation.

**Meeting Date  Reason for Meeting**

3/13/2014  Discuss the project and continue designing tables
3/27/2014  Turn in Feasibility Study
3/27/2014  Project requirements to be turned in
5/1/2014  Prototype Presentations
5/1/2014  Project Design Presentation and Reports turned in
5/1/2014  Presentations
5/1/2014  Turn in project (entire dossier)