

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Education Committee May 18, 2023
Rough Draft

[RECORDER MALFUNCTION]

MURMAN: Hello.

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Hello. This is Chad Buckendahl.

MURMAN: Hi, Dr. Buckendahl. You have been reappointed to the-- let me look here-- the Technical Advisory Committee on Statewide Assessments here in Nebraska. Appreciate you serving-- willing to serve again on that committee. I guess we will take your information now, if that will work.

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Sure. Thank you. Senator Murman and members of the committee, my name's Chad Buckendahl. I am a psychometrician with a group called ACS Ventures, LLC. It's a small business. My background: experiencewise, I started with the Gallup Polls back in 1990 and moved from there to the university and worked for a research institute within the educational psychology department at Nebraska called the Buros Institute of Mental Measurement. It's a group that essentially exists as almost a Consumer Reports for testing. And so my background and experience is around providing consultation for evaluation, development, validation and fairness associated with tests and testing programs. As it relates to kind of specifically this particular appointment, my role in working with the Department of Education in Nebraska serving on a technical advisory committee, I do serve as one of the external members. I've been out of state working nationally and internationally for the last 20, 25 years and have a range of experiences in order to help the Nebraska Department of Education ensure that the assessment and accountability system for students, schools and districts in Nebraska are consistent with the joint standards for educational and psychological testing, which are the industry standards for testing, as well as any of the requirements promulgated by Nebraska's Legislature or the U.S. Department of Education, particularly as it relates to the federal peer review guidance, which is expectations at the federal level for assessment programs and connected-- actually built on the standards for educational and psychological testing. I've been involved with testing in education, anywhere from pre-K into adult education, a lot of licensure and certification testing for various professions predominantly within the U.S., but also do a reasonable amount of work in Canada, a little bit in the U.K., and then we've done some work with teacher certification in Australia as well. And so Senator Murman, my CV kind of documents some of the, the background and

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research that I've done over the years. And I appreciate, again, the opportunity to be considered, and I would again like the opportunity to continue to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee. Happy to respond to any questions from the committee.

MURMAN: Well, thank you very much. We'll open it up now to see if we have any questions for you. Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Murman. Thank you, Doctor, for being here today. I-- this probably-- I don't know if this is an appropriate question for you or not, but do you have an opinion on whether we should be testing children when they first come in the fall and then again in the spring? Or do you think that the one test at the end of the year is sufficient?

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Senator Linehan and Senator Murman-- thank you for the question, Senator Linehan. It's a wonderful question. And from an educational standpoint, I think there is some value in providing some measurement in the fall and the spring. The, the measurement in the fall would, in my opinion, be predominantly for formative purposes to guide instruction to permit teachers in the classroom to get some information to be able to, you know, in a way, customize or, or guide instruction for teachers throughout the year-- you know, for, for working with students throughout the year. The spring assessment is largely for summative purposes to determine whether or not students have then achieved the, the academic content standards that Nebraska has adopted. So I think the fall administration is largely for educators' purposes and the spring assessment is largely for kind of policy and accountability purposes.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

MURMAN: Any other questions? Senator Albrecht.

ALBRECHT: Thank you, Doctor, for being with us on the phone. Were you involved with the health standards at all?

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Senator Albrecht, Senator Murman. No, I was not. I was not involved with the health standards. I'm not aware-- I-- we're-- the Technical Advisory Committee for the state largely focuses on the English and language arts assessment, the mathematics assessment, the science assessment, and these are for students who take the general assessment as well as the alternate assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities, as well as English

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language acquisition assessments, the ELL student assessment, and then the accountability systems that are kind of built around that. So I'm not familiar with the health standards, ma'am.

ALBRECHT: OK. Thank you.

MURMAN: Any other questions? Senator Walz.

WALZ: Thank you, Chairman Murman. Good-- I was going to say good morning, but good afternoon. This is Senator Walz. First of all, I, I want to say, as a past educator, educator, that I do appreciate your answer to Senator Linehan's question. I think that you are very correct. It is a tool that the teacher can use to I guess figure out how to change instruction or how to instruct your students throughout the year so that you can see progress. So I appreciate, I appreciate that answer. My question is, if, if you could make any changes to the Technical, Technical-- help me--

LINEHAN: Advisory Committee.

WALZ: --Advisory Committee on Statewide Assessment, if any, what would they be?

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Senator Walz, Senator Murman. Thank you for the question, Senator Walz. Yeah. In terms of the Technical Advisory Committee, I think we actually have a really good mix. So it's a-- right now, the committee is made up of three external individuals: myself, Christy Hovanetz from the Center for Excellence in Education and then Jeff Nellhaus, who is a former leader of the Massachusetts Assessment Program as well as having worked for a number of years with other programs. And then we have two representatives from Nebraska: Josh Fields from Seward, Linda Poole from Papillion-LaVista as an educator and then from Millard as a board member. And the, the different sorts of roles that individuals play-- myself, I'm more of a-- probably a technical expert and less of a policy expert than my colleagues, Christy or Jeff. But also having representatives from the field as administrators, as teachers, as board members, policymakers, that's really valuable because as people who are not as directly involved in education activities in Nebraska, having representatives from the field I think has been invaluable for me to be able to-- even though I'm from Nebraska and, and still have friends and colleagues that are in the school systems as leaders, I'm not as day-to-day familiar with some of their challenges and experiences. And so having Linda and Josh on the Advisory Committee has been really useful. I

think maybe if I, if I had to have a wish list, I do think from a, from a Technical Advisory Committee standpoint-- and I do serve on technical advisory committees in Indiana, Mississippi, Nevada, and then also for a licensing board in Canada as-- I guess as well as the U.K., that I do think that having representatives to ensure that the diversity of population of, of both students and teachers are represented to ensure that they have a voice. And so right now, I would say I don't know that any of us on the committee, because it's a relatively small committee, has expertise in special populations: so special education, gifted education, English language learners. And so we are often relying on staff from the department with that expertise or, you know, reaching out to other folks in the field to try to gather more of that information. So I think additional sort of representation, if in the future the committee could be expanded-- in many states, those advisory committees will have oftentimes 8 to 10 people. So Nebraska's is a little small by comparison, but, you know, we're also a smaller state, so I understand that.

WALZ: Thank you. I very much appreciate that answer and appreciate the work that you've done. Thank you.

MURMAN: Senat-- or, Dr. Buckendahl, it sounds like you have experience with testing in other states. The amount of testing that's done in Nebraska, is that similar to other states? Or do you think that we should test more or less in Nebraska relative to the other states?

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Senator Murman, thanks for the question. This is one of those things where-- I'll give my personal opinion and then compare-- so in comparison to other states, Nebraska is actually quite comparable. And the reason it's comparable in terms of state-- in terms of assessment at the state level, it really-- it goes back to Washington, D.C. and the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which was actually adopted in early 2000-- yeah, 2002. And so really, for the last 21 years, under that federal model, there has been an expectation of assessing students in English, language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight and once in high school, as well as providing alternate assessments in ELA and mathematics, three through eight, once in high school. And then science, and then science is what most states adopt for an additional assessment, which are typically given once in elementary, once in middle, and then once in high school. And that's generally the model that the, the nation is currently using. They're using different variations or styles of assessment. I will say-- this is where I shift to kind of my personal opinion. I do generally like the way that science is assessed as more

of, hey, here's one indicator in elementary, here's one indicator in middle school, one indicator in high school. From a summative standpoint, I think if there were an opportunity in the future, if, you know, federal guidelines were to permit, I would, I would personally probably relax the spring summative testing at all grades to just look at benchmark grade levels but then try to shift some of that focus on more formative or interim assessments that provide greater value in the classroom so that teachers are getting more real-time information to influence instruction more so than the information that comes late in the year has to go through the various quality control measures to ensure that the scores are valid, and then that information doesn't really have direct effect in the classroom for that particular academic year. And so kind of the, the teacher, where the students-- for the grade or course that the student's going into, that's where they would need that information to perhaps try to establish some sort of baseline. I don't know to what extent that, that happens or if once the student's kind of out of your classroom, you know, you're prepping for the next year as opposed to that incoming teacher looking at the students from the prior grade as a kind of a fall baseline.

MURMAN: Thank you very much. Any other questions for Dr. Buckendahl? Yes, Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Murman. Do any other states test social studies, history, civics?

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Senator Linehan, thank you for the question. And yes, there are states that do test social studies. I was just in Mississippi a couple weeks ago and there is a high school social studies test that is largely around, I think, history and American government. And so, yes, they're a state that does that. I believe Indiana does as well. There, there are a handful of ones that do that. Those assessments-- in Mississippi, I think that-- I believe that the social studies assessment is part of their high school graduation eligibility requirement. Other states like North Carolina have done that in the past as well. Other states that are using social studies, it is not part of their accountability system, but it is part of something that the state provides as a common assessment tool to kind of round out the, you know, the Carnegie Unit courses for English, language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

LINEHAN: OK. Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

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MURMAN: Thank you. Any other questions? If not, we really appreciate you being on the phone with us. And I anticipate we may have an answer on your approval later today. And if not, soon. So, thank you very much for being with us.

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Thank you, Senator. And thank you, Senators. I appreciate the opportunity.

MURMAN: Great. Have a great day.

CHAD BUCKENDAHL: Thanks. You, too. Bye-bye.

MURMAN: I have a motion to close the hearing.

LINEHAN: So moved.