

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

February 11, 2019

Members Present: Dr. Bob Couch, Vice-Chair; April Allen; Barbara Hairfield; Senator Greg Hembree; Senator Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Senator John Matthews; Brian Newsome; Neil Robinson; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; Dr. John Stockwell; Patti Tate; Dr. Scott Turner; and Ellen Weaver.

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Melanie Barton; Dr. Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Mr. Robinson introduced the newest member of the EOC, Dr. Brian Newsome, Governor McMaster's education appointee. Dr. Newsome is principal of Gray Collegiate Academy, a charter school district governed by the Erskine Charter Institute.

The minutes of the December 10, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

The next item on the agenda was election of a chairman and vice chairman. Pursuant to Section 59-6-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, the election of chairman and vice chairman of the EOC must occur every two years. No member can serve more than four consecutive years as chairman or vice chairman. And, the law stipulates that the chairman of the EOC must be a business representative and the vice chairman, a representative from the education community. Mr. Robinson noted that his term as chairman of the EOC concluded at the end of December 2018. Dr. Couch has served one two-year term as Vice Chair and is eligible to serve another two-year term.

Mr. Robinson reminded the EOC that in October a subcommittee composed of Mrs. Hairfield, Senator Johnson, and Rep. Loftis was formed to make nominations for these positions. Until the EOC knew who would be occupying the office of the Governor, the House chairs, and the Senate chairs, the election was delayed until this meeting. Mr. Robinson called upon Mrs. Hairfield, chair of the nominating committee, to make recommendations.

Mrs. Hairfield reported that the nominating committee recommended that Ms. Ellen Weaver serve a two-year term as chair and Dr. Bob Couch serve another two-year term as vice chair. There being no further nominations from the floor, nominations were closed. Ms. Weaver and Dr. Couch were unanimously elected chair and vice chair of the EOC.

Ms. Weaver then thanked Mr. Robinson for his leadership on the EOC and presented tokens of appreciation to him.

Ms. Weaver then assumed the chairmanship of the EOC.

The Committee received four special reports.

FY 2017-18 and FY 2018-19 State-Funded Full-day 4K Report

Ms. Weaver called upon Ms. Ward of the EOC to provide an overview of the full-day 4K report. Ms. Ward introduced Drs. Bill Brown and Fred Greer from the University of South Carolina who analyzed the assessment data. She also introduced Celia Gomez and Dr. Lyn Karoly from RAND Corporation who participated via conference call. Ms. Ward focused on the key findings and recommendations of the report.

As explained by Ms. Ward, the General Assembly has tasked the EOC with an annual study of the full-day 4K program, the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). The report focuses on three questions:

1. Is CERDEP expanding statewide? Are formal early childhood education programs serving more four-year-olds living in poverty?
2. Does CERDEP affect young children's learning and their readiness for kindergarten?
3. What are the costs of CERDEP's program components and what is the estimated per pupil cost of CERDEP?

Regarding expansion, the report found:

- Overall, 48 percent of low-income four-year olds in poverty participated in either Head Start or CERDEP.
- Additionally, if we consider the number of four-year-olds in poverty participating in a public 4K program that is not a part of CERDEP, about 70 percent of children are participating.
- 5,633 children who receive child care vouchers are not included in the above estimates because the data was not clear if the children receiving vouchers were also participating in another program, which may lead to a duplicative count. This is detailed in Appendix F, beginning on page 45.

Regarding CERDEP, overall enrollment is not increasing while the overall amount of carry forward has increased slightly.

Regarding CERDEP's effect on children's learning and readiness for kindergarten

- Districts may choose one of three assessments: IGDIs EL, PALS PreK and Teaching Strategies GOLD. On the nonpublic side, all nonpublic providers use GOLD. Table 33 (page 77) summarizes students' performance by assessment.
- Overall most 4K students met assessment benchmarks in the spring of 2018.
- CERDEP and non-CERDEP students scored similarly in all areas.
- Depending on the assessment there were differences among students with different ethnicities.

Ms. Ward then turned over the discussion to researchers from RAND who identified three questions that their analysis addressed:

1. Understanding the resources required to provide the CERDEP program in both private licensed centers and public schools
2. Estimating the per pupil costs of providing 6.5 hours of instruction for 180 days by setting, by certification degree of the teachers and by student enrollment levels; and

3. Estimating the cost to compare reimbursement rates.

The RAND Corporation gathered information from five school districts and five private providers and developed cost models. RAND found cost variations between public and private providers as well as differences between urban and rural settings.

Given the \$20 million carry forward in the program, Dr. Turner asked if policymakers are considering expanding access to full-day 4K to districts currently not participating in the program but who might participate in the program. He also inquired about the reasons given by districts for not expanding programs or participating in the program. Superintendent Spearman noted that she is concerned about carry forward in the program. She noted that the General Assembly granted flexibility to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the Office of First Steps to provide extended day and extended year services. She hopes that additional flexibility will be granted. She called upon Dr. David Mathis, Deputy Superintendent for College and Career Readiness at SCDE to address the barriers. Dr. Mathis stated that districts had been surveyed and reported to the Department three barriers: licensure requirements by the Department of Social Services; qualifications for substitute teachers in full-day 4K; and space limitations.

Senator Hembree asked if the state needed to do more marketing to engage parents and ensure students are enrolled. Senator Matthews concurred that parents are the key requirements. Rep. Loftis asked if the Superintendent had ideas for how to engage parents and would efforts like those in Memphis, Tennessee be an option. Dr. Turner inquired if parent educators could be paid for with full-day 4K monies.

An Evaluation of Algebra Nation in South Carolina, 2017-2018

The second report was an independent evaluation of *Algebra Nation*, a program that provides a printed workbook as well as online video, practice tools and professional development for teachers of Algebra 1. Dr. Ed Dickey, key researcher, used end-of-course assessment results from the Algebra 1 examination survey of teachers using *Algebra Nation*, and classroom observations. Dr. Dickey pointed out the overall findings of the report were: (1) in general, test scores were not impacted; (2) scores for classes where teachers made active use of the tool saw consistent test scores when the state's mean score declined; (3) teachers found the resources very valuable; and (4) classroom observations indicated high quality instruction by teachers who used *Algebra Nation*. The limitations of the evaluation centered on the inability to compare individual student test scores with actual *Algebra Nation* usage. Dr. Dickey also cautioned that the first year of implementation is not ideal for drawing conclusions since some districts did not have full implementation of the product until the second semester. Dr. Dickey also noted that for teachers using *Algebra Nation* materials actively and with fidelity, middle school Algebra 1 and black students experienced increased scores.

Dr. Dickey concluded the report with several recommendations:

- Continue to provide *Algebra Nation* to South Carolina school districts to improve teacher instruction, to impact test scores, and to improve instruction based on test score results;
- Evaluate the impact of *Algebra Nation* during the 2018-2019 school year;
- Encourage use of the Test Yourself! Practice Tool;
- Improve school and district technology access;

- Collaborate with the South Carolina Leaders in Mathematics Education to provide flexibility and consistency with *Algebra Nation* curriculum sequencing;
- Provide on-going support to help teachers implement the videos and other instructional resources;
- Expand the already ample but still requested support materials to help students' practice for end-of-course testing;
- Emphasize the differentiation of instruction and the use of different teaching methods as part of professional development; and
- Include resources as part of video instruction as well as within the online support materials that address mathematical modeling.

Rep. Loftis concurred that modeling or application of Algebra 1 skills and concepts is important to student mastery of the content. Sen. Matthews asked for clarification on the program's overall impact on student achievement. Dr. Stockwell asked what Dr. Dickey's hypothesis going forward would be.

eLearning Pilot Districts Project, Initial Report to the EOC

Dr. Lee D'Andrea introduced representatives from the five school districts who participated in the eLearning pilot program and who were present at the meeting. She then provided an overview of the first six months of the pilot program. Dr. D'Andrea noted that implementation began with identification of four foundational elements: (1) types of devices distributed to students and available for use at home by grade level; (2) learning management systems (LMS) that districts must have which included Google classroom, Canvas, Schoology, Blackboard, etc.); (3) level of systemic instructional-technology integration; and (4) monthly meetings of the five districts to learn from and share information about implementation. She noted that staff from SCDE, SCETV, and the State Library assisted in providing information and support to the districts.

All pilot districts implemented mock practice eLearning days. These practice days identified needed professional development, issues with communication and technical issues. For the actual eLearning days, the districts received positive feedback and media coverage, found greater student-engagement, and increased quality of instruction in the entire system.

The initial findings were:

- eLearning is a viable option for instruction on days when inclement weather or other natural disasters prevent school attendance; even make-up days can be eLearning days.
- eLearning had positive responses from teachers, parents, administrators and, in general, communities. Students also provided positive feedback.
- eLearning requires a foundation on which to build – a device distribution, a well-integrated Learning Management System, and much communication and willingness to continue to fine-tune the initiative.
- eLearning, implemented with fidelity, actually improves the whole instructional process. Teaching and learning are more interactive and engaging.

A final report will be issued in April. The pilot districts recommend that the General Assembly continue the pilot in the subsequent fiscal year and increase the number of districts participating

by five to ten districts. Districts currently participating in the pilot have offered to serve as mentors to new districts and work on publishing an implementation guide by the end of next year.

Supporting School Improvement in South Carolina's Lowest Performing Schools

There being no additional questions, Ms. Weaver then recognized Dr. Latoya Dixon, Director of the Office of School Transformation at SCDE who presented an overview of the *Supporting School Improvement in South Carolina's Lowest Performing Schools*. Dr. Dixon provided information on: the number of schools served by the Office of School Transformation and funds appropriated to the Office. Dr. Dixon also documented the percentage of low-performing schools that demonstrated an increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. Dr. Dixon also noted increases in teacher satisfaction with professional development offered at the priority schools between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Dr. Dixon concluded by providing the goals of the Office which are to improve: (1) the instructional leadership capacity of principals; (2) the pedagogical practices of teachers; and (3) student outcomes. The strategies to achieve the goals focus on:

- Targeted and differentiated support;
- Standards-based instruction;
- High-yield learning strategies;
- Progress monitoring; and
- Observation, coaching and feedback.

Sen. Hembree asked Dr. Dixon how the Office of School Transformation could expand its efforts to more schools. Dr. Dixon responded that having capacity and funding are the critical barriers to expanded services.

Subcommittee Reports:

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee

Ms. Weaver called upon Mr. Robinson to give the report for the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee. Mr. Robinson reminded the members that there are ten indicators on the school report cards. Of these 10 indicators, seven receive individual ratings and points that roll up into an overall school rating. Under state law, the EOC is responsible for approving the ratings for the indicators and for approving the ratings for schools.

Mr. Robinson informed the EOC that the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee met on January 28, 2019 and discussed changes proposed by the South Carolina Department of Education to accountability. At the meeting, district superintendents also submitted a written proposal. Mr. Robinson provided an overview of the changes in state and federal accountability since passage of the original Education Accountability Act (EAA) in 1998.

Mr. Robinson remarked that going forward he would suggest that the staff of the EOC and SCDE create protocols and agreed upon procedures for considering changes to the accountability system. Such protocols and agreed upon procedures are used during the cyclical review process for standards. For example, as is the process for standards review, the EOC convenes national

experts as well as state experts who represent educators, parents, the business community, special education and others.

Ms. Weaver recognized Mrs. Allen. Mrs. Allen, the Speaker of the House's business appointee to the EOC, read a letter from the Speaker to the EOC urging the Committee to not consider changes to the accountability system that could lower expectations.

Ms. Weaver then opened the floor to discussion. Superintendent Spearman reiterated her support for amending the existing accountability system, requesting that the Committee approve the Subcommittee's recommendations. Mr. Robinson suggested that the EOC delay action until a formal, public process is conducted pursuant to Section 59-18-900 and until pending legislation before the General Assembly is considered. Sen. Hembree expressed his appreciation to the Superintendent for her support of students and educators but agreed that the Committee should delay any changes to the report cards. He pointed out that the existing accountability system had just been fully implemented in November 2018 with the release of the school report cards and that the legislature is considering proposals to reduce summative assessments.

Ms. Allen moved to table the Subcommittee report. The motion was seconded. The motion to table was approved by a vote of 8 to 4.

Mr. Robinson moved that the EOC not approve any additional changes to the indicators or overall ratings of schools for the 2018-19 school year, and that the EOC and SCDE staff collaborate to design a formal process for reviewing any and all changes to the accountability system for school year 2019-20 that will engage stakeholders and national experts in the process. Rep. Loftis seconded the motion.

Mrs. Hairfield requested that workshops or educational opportunities be established to explain the existing accountability system and proposals for amending the system so that the public and educators understand the system. Dr. Turner noted that the accountability system is too complicated and is an exercise in futility for principals and superintendents; he expressed his concern that the system would become one that no one cares about, similar to NCLB. Rep. Loftis noted that business involvement in setting up metrics for the accountability system are important as well as terminology that the general public understands. Superintendent Spearman expressed her disappointment with the Committee's decision. Mr. Robinson's motion passed by a voice vote.

Ms. Weaver asked for a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of receiving legal advice. The EOC moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of receiving legal advice. The motion was seconded and passed.

At 3:37 p.m. the veil having been lifted, Ms. Weaver announced that the EOC can report to the public that no motions or actions were taken in Executive Session. Instead the EOC received legal advice.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.