

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

December 10, 2018

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

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

Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Mr. Robinson asked Mrs. Barton to pass out information to the members regarding the November 29 release of the school and district report cards. In addition, Mrs. Barton provided a summary of the twelve regional workshops for principals and district/school personnel. The summary identified questions and concerns raised by principals regarding the new joint accountability system.

The minutes of the October 8, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson then introduced two successful businessmen, Ben Navarro of Charleston and George Johnson of Spartanburg, who have created the Meeting Street Academy model. The model is based on providing at-risk students: extra time with students beginning their schooling as early as age three or four; family partnerships with families expected to collaborate with teachers and volunteer in school; holistic education including extended day and year-round calendar, medical and dental screening, healthy meals and exercise; and exceptional teachers supported by coaching, embedded professional development and rewards for excellence.

Mr. Navarro described for the Committee the success of the 1,200 students attending Meeting Street schools as compared to students in other schools in the state and in the Charleston County School District, focusing on the achievement gap closures made by students attending Meeting Street schools. Mr. Navarro noted that South Carolina is failing to produce college-ready students across the board and is significantly underserving its African-American students. While education spending has nearly tripled nationally in the past 45 years, there has been little impact on academic performance as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and confidence in public schools is at an all-time low.

Mr. Johnson commented on the culture of excellence at Meeting Street Schools, emphasizing the role of teachers and school leaders. There are two teachers per

classroom, an experienced teacher who is coaching a novice teacher. For the 41 hires made last year, Meeting Street Schools received over 1,900 applications. Regarding leadership, Mr. Johnson noted that there is an operational leader in the school and an instructional leader, focusing the energy and attention of the individuals on specific tasks. Behavioral issues are not an issue because of the core values emphasized and the strong parental involvement. Mr. Navarro noted that the cost of the model is \$599 more per pupil than the existing funding level for elementary schools in the district but the results are significant.

Mr. Robinson expressed his appreciation for the presentation and then opened the meeting for questions. Rep. Felder asked about the pay scale used. Mr. Navarro responded that teachers are paid for the extended school year and receive pay for performance. Rep. Alexander asked about the issue of access versus achievement. Mr. Navarro responded that Meeting Street Schools actively recruit and assist parents in getting access to their schools as well as to academic magnets in the district. Rep. Alexander asked if there were any data on how existing Title I schools spend their revenues. Superintendent Spearman noted that the legislation authorizing districts to have a school of choice has been interpreted by the Attorney General to mean that districts cannot have more than one school of choice, a policy that the General Assembly may want to address in legislation.

Rep. Loftis asked about the process for creating new Meeting Street Schools. Mrs. Weaver asked for clarification about the \$599 per pupil cost of the Meeting Street Model and how those funds are expended. Dr. Turner echoed the position that the quality of teachers and leaders in a school or district have the largest impact on student outcomes. Superintendent Spearman added that leaders also include members of local school district boards. Mr. Navarro concluded by empathizing that protecting the status quo is unacceptable insanity.

Subcommittee Reports:

Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee: Mr. Robinson noted that the only action item from the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee is an item related to the draft social studies standards. Mr. Robinson explained that in December of 2016 the EOC completed its cyclical review of the social studies standards. The Committee adopted a report with recommendations for amending the standards. In June of 2017 the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) assembled a writing team to begin the task of writing new social studies standards. In December of 2017 SCDE posted draft standards and conducted a public comment period. There was significant feedback contained and the Department again revised the standards.

Mr. Robinson explained that the proposed social studies standards were given first reading by the State Board of Education on November 13, 2018. Mr. Robinson recognized Dr. Knight, who reviewed the draft standards against the 2016 recommendations of the EOC and compared them with social studies standards in other states.

After reviewing and considering the draft standards, the Subcommittee recommended to the full EOC the following:

1. Approval of the high school social studies standards as written.
2. Approval of the grades 4-8 standards as written contingent upon the Department creation a progression of the four social studies skills (history, economics, geography and civics) across these grade levels as was developed for K-2. The progression should be developed prior to implementation of the standards. The progression should clearly articulate for teachers the social studies skills that students should develop competencies in at each grade level and across grade levels. The progression could be accomplished in multiple ways: included in the grade-level standards; addressed in an appendix to the standards document; or included in the supporting document. To be consistent with the current English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards, the progression should be included in the standards document. While the progression is being developed, SCDE can develop professional learning opportunities for grades 4-8 and the assessments for grades 5 and 7.
3. For grades K-3, the Subcommittee recommends that the standards not be approved as drafted and instead the Subcommittee provides the following suggestions for improving the standards:

While the focus of the key concepts of the four social studies skills is appropriate and essential to prepare students for the higher cognitive demands in grades 4 and beyond, the essential content, alignment and rigor of the standards need to be improved and the foundations of democracy more clearly articulated in the standards. The EOC would recommend that the standards for K-3 be revised to create a strong foundation in the four social studies skills accordingly:

- a. Increase the cognitive demands as proposed in other state standards in Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, Maryland and Wisconsin.
- b. The K-2 standards should include more information on foundations of democratic principles including symbols, events, people and practices associated with United States government; skills and attitudes of being a responsible citizen; and rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups. K-2 standards should also be reviewed to eliminate redundancies in standards across grades. Some of the standards that focus on instructional practices rather than on skills and knowledge should be revised. An example is Standard 2.E.3 – “create a simple budget and articulate the priorities using economic terms such as expenses, income, and savings.”

- c. The grade 3 standards are titled *South Carolina and World Geography*; however, the content is overwhelming world geography. The recommendation would be that the grade 3 standards be revised around the four social studies skills (history, economic, geography and civics & government) with an emphasis on South Carolina. Teachers could be given flexibility to teach these skills using examples from the past or present in South Carolina. For example, students could learn competencies in civics & government by learning about the relationship between state, federal and local governments. They could learn geography by learning the key landforms in South Carolina. Skills in economics could be learned by looking at the local, state or national current businesses in South Carolina (agricultural, high tech manufacturing, etc.) Teachers could then ask students to analyze and compare the economic, political, geographic or historical differences within South Carolina, between South Carolina and other states or even between South Carolina and other countries.
4. The EOC should recommend that SCDE develop a strong supporting document for teachers while also providing high quality professional learning opportunities. These standards focus less on rote memorization and more on critical thinking. As was the case with the Fordham Institute’s review of our English language arts (ELA) standards, such supporting documents are crucial to assist teachers and improve learning. Furthermore, fewer school districts have dedicated social studies coordinators to provide technical assistance and support to classroom teachers. While SCDE will provide professional learning opportunities to teachers, a very small percentage of teachers will be able to participate in the training. A strong supporting document would ensure that all teachers have access to the information. A strong supporting document would include information on the progression of skills as well as guidance on such issues as the following. Several indicators ask students to be able to “analyze multiple perspectives of economic, political and social developments.” Giving teachers optional examples of what constitutes multiple perspectives without specific examples of names would be most beneficial to teachers.
5. The EOC should recommend that in the future, especially during the upcoming revision to the South Carolina science standards, that SCDE consider hiring a consultant to assist the standards writing teams with guidance on writing the standards with common language across grade levels. Having consistency across grade levels is crucial to teachers who may move from one year to the next across grade levels.

Since the recommendation comes to the full EOC by the subcommittee, Mr. Robinson reminded the members that the recommendations do not need a second. Mr. Robinson opened up the floor to questions. Mrs. Hairfield noted that the social studies standards are the key to ensuring that students graduate civic ready. While she would have preferred a stronger emphasis on civic readiness in the standards, she supported the subcommittee recommendations. Sen. Matthews asked how the teaching of African-American history had been handled in the standards. Superintendent Spearman asked Dr. David Mathis, Deputy Superintendent for College and Career Readiness at SCDE, to address Sen. Matthews' question. Dr. Mathis explained that the supporting documents that will be produced will give teachers guidance on how to teach African-American history. Dr. Turner moved to approve the subcommittee recommendation. Sen. Hembree seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee: Dr. Couch explained that pursuant to Section 59-6-10, the EOC is required to "review and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act programs and funding" and to "make programmatic and funding recommendations to the General Assembly. All EIA-funded programs submitted program and budget reports to the EOC. Using these reports along with public hearings on October 29, the Subcommittee is recommending the following budget and proviso recommendations:

First, the EIA penny sales tax is projected to generate \$853 million in FY2019-20, which is a \$16.2 million increase above the current EIA budget. In the current fiscal year, the EIA budget is projected to have a shortfall of \$8.4 million. Of the \$16.2 million in available new money, approximately \$15,404,235 will be needed to support the operation of the public charter schools authorized through the SC Public Charter School District and the Erskine Charter Institute for increased student enrollment and new schools. There simply is not enough money for an increase in the per pupil funding levels. The second item is a \$417,544 increase for special schools for teacher salary increases. Finally, a total of \$2,450,000 is needed just to annualize funding for industry certifications. Of this amount, the Subcommittee only had an additional \$420,221 in EIA funds. The balance will have to come from recurring or non-recurring General Funds.

The Subcommittee also included several recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for addressing two critical issues: (1) ensuring students graduate with world-class knowledge, skills, and characteristics to be college and/or career ready; and (2) the recruiting and retaining of teachers. The Subcommittee recommended either general fund or any additional EIA revenues to be used for the following:

Computer Science - \$1,050,000 which includes \$750,000 to SC Department of Education for professional development and \$300,000 in non-recurring funds for partnerships among USC, The Citadel and Lexington 1 to establish a statewide regional network to support teachers.

Arts Curricula – increase of \$250,000

Two provisos related to adding Cambridge International exams to allow for reimbursable assessment expenses

Among the recommendations for increasing the pipeline into teaching and retaining more teachers during the first 5 years, the Subcommittee recommended consideration of:

- Increasing the starting salary from \$32,000 to \$35,000 costs an additional \$59.0 million;
- Funding Pro Team, teacher Cadet and Teaching Fellows at the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement at \$1.0 million;
- Funding partnerships between institutions of higher education and school districts is projected to cost: \$627,869 and expanded each year for the next two years;
- Increasing the number of Teaching Fellows from 200 to 225 at \$600,000; and
- Creating a STEM Teacher Fellows Program at an initial \$250,000.

Rep. Alexander asked for clarification about the increase for the Teaching Fellows program. Sen. Hembree inquired about the number of new charter schools to be opened in school year 2019-20. Sen. Matthews asked about the cost of increasing the starting teacher salary. Sen. Matthews also asked if the state is allowing underperforming charters to expand. Superintendent Spearman replied that seven of the thirteen high schools on the list for Comprehensive Support and Intervention (CSI) are charter schools who have low graduation rates. Rep. Loftis asked how long schools are on the CSI list. Superintendent Spearman confirmed that it is for three years.

The Committee then approved unanimously the budget and proviso recommendations.

Finally, Mr. Robinson called upon Dr. Knight and Dr. Ed Dickey who provided an overview of Algebra Nation to address the following questions: (1) what is Algebra Nation; (2) how has it been implemented in South Carolina; and (3) what is the scope of the evaluation being conducted. The results of the evaluation will be provided to the EOC in January of 2019.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.