

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

February 12, 2018

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Bob Couch, Vice-Chair; Anne Bull; Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; and Dr. John Stockwell

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. He noted that the General Assembly had allocated funds to the EOC for the implementation of several pilot programs and that today's meeting would focus on the following: (1) information on two pilot programs implemented for the first time in school year 2017-18; (2) a preliminary report on the second-year implementation of the Palmetto Digital Literacy Project; and (3) an overview of the annual full-day 4K evaluation.

The minutes of the December 11, 2017 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson recognized Dr. Julian Reed, Professor of Health Sciences at Furman University and Founder and CEO of Walkabouts. The General Assembly allocated \$250,000 to pilot this initiative in 100 primary and elementary schools this school year. The initiative provides web-deployed lesson plans to assist teachers in integrating physical activity while teaching English language arts and mathematics standards to students in pre-K through grade 2. The initiative uses physical activity to improve concentration, cognition, memory, and academic performance of students. Dr. Reed noted that approximately 2,093 teachers in 36 districts and 100 schools in the state have participated in the program this school year. Based on the results of a teacher survey, developed by Iowa State and University of California at Irvine, teachers overwhelmingly believed that the program improved the behavior and cognitive ability of their students. Currently the program is being used in 16 other states. No professional development is required because the lesson plans are available online.

Mr. Robinson asked about the low cost per student of approximately \$6 per student. Dr. Reed noted that the initiative is a not-for-profit effort; therefore, costs are intentionally low. In addition, because no training or professional development is required and because the lesson plans are available online, costs are minimized. Mr. Robinson asked how the teachers were surveyed and what was the response rate. Dr. Reed noted that the surveys were sent online, and the response rate was 45 percent. Dr. Stockwell asked about the

recommended usage of the program. Dr. Reed responded that he recommends that a teacher use a Walkabout at least two or three times per week. Rep. Felder asked about access to the program after school and during the summer months. Dr. Reed responded that the average cost is approximately \$1,000 per school for a twelve-month license for every child. Therefore, students and their families have access to the program after school hours and during the summer months. Ms. Hairfield asked if the program was aligned with Action-Based Learning. Dr. Reed responded that unlike Action Based Learning, which includes kinesthetic teaching strategies, Walkabouts requires no equipment and training and is directly correlated with state standards. Dr. Stockwell asked if there was any data on the impact of the program on academic success. Dr. Reed responded that, to date, he does not have any data to calculate academic success of the program in South Carolina.

Mr. Robinson then introduced LaTasha Hadley, Program Director at the Waterford Institute. The General Assembly allocated \$300,000 to implement UPSTART, an in-home school-readiness program that serves preschool-age children with individualized reading, math and science curriculum with an emphasis on reading. Children use a software program designed for the child's skills and needs. The goal of the program is to increase kindergarten readiness skills of students. This year, the Waterford Institute has partnered with the Chesterfield and Marion County School Districts. Ms. Hadley noted that the program is currently serving a total of 150 children, 72 in Chesterfield and 78 in the Marion County School District. Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent of the Marion County School District, who was in attendance, was recognized by the Committee. According to Ms. Hadley, all children received Chromebooks, and 71 families received Internet access. UPSTART documents the average weekly reading usage for students participating in the program as well as mastery of skills in phonics, phonological awareness, comprehension and vocabulary and language concepts. Ms. Hadley provided data comparing similar pilot programs in Mississippi and Ohio. Finally, Ms. Hadley provided information on parental satisfaction with the program.

Mr. Robinson asked if the students in the UPSTART pilot also attended full-day 4K and how, with the per child cost of the program at approximately \$2,000, the program could be scaled. Dr. Claudia Miner, Vice President of Development for Waterford, explained that if families have a computer, then the per child cost can be reduced to \$1,000 per child. Furthermore, with scaling, the cost per child is less. Sen. Matthews asked about the long-term impact of the program on student achievement, especially of tracking students over time. Dr. Miner stated that she can provide assessment results from last year from the Marion County School District and more longitudinal data from other states. Mrs. Bull asked who is responsible for replacing broken Chromebooks. Dr. Miner responded that Waterford is handling repairs and to date, this issue has not been a significant problem.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Dr. Lee D'Andrea, who is an independent consultant for the EOC, to give a preliminary overview of the second year of implementation of the Palmetto Digital Literacy Program. The legislature allocated \$1.3 million to this initiative in both the prior and current fiscal years. Mr. Robinson noted that the EOC is absorbing the cost of the independent evaluation of the initiative.

Dr. D'Andrea explained that Learning.com is providing the following services during the 2017-18 school year: K-8 EasyTech and Inquiry digital literacy curriculum (including Foundations of Coding and EasyCode lessons); 5th grade 21st Century Skills student digital literacy skills inventory; Wayfind teacher digital literacy skills inventory; and teacher training and support. As of February 1, 2018, 37 of 46 districts eligible to participate in the program have enrolled and are in a variety of implementation stages. As of December 31, 2017, there are 24,503 unique student accounts on Learning.com. Interviews conducted Dr. D'Andrea revealed that the number one reason for districts enrolling, again this year is the keyboarding application. Districts are concerned that students have this skill for on-line testing.

Three districts provided pre-assessment of 5th graders for this school year as well as interim assessment results. Additional pre- and post-assessment results will be included in the final report. These initial results document that, in these three districts, between 19 and 33 percent of 5th graders initially met proficiency for: communication and collaboration; creativity and innovation; critical thinking, problem solving and decision making; digital citizenship; research and information fluency; and technology operations and concepts. By the end of the first semester of the program, these percentages had increased from 22 to 45 percent of students meeting proficiency across these skills.

Dr. D'Andrea then summarized the initial findings of the current year's report.

- As documented in the 2017 report, there is a continuing demonstrated and articulated need for instructional materials in the areas of keyboarding, digital literacy and internet safety, inquiry learning through technology integration and coding exists in schools serving students K-8.
- There continue to be significant unmet infrastructure needs in the provision of digital learning environments for students.
- More extensive planning time and professional development are needed to develop digital learning environments within the schools and districts.

Dr. D'Andrea offered her preliminary recommendations:

- Continue to offer the Palmetto Digital Learning Project for FY2018-2019, collecting data on student achievement to make informed decisions about the effectiveness of the software on student learning in the areas of keyboarding and digital learning.
- Given that the examination of this software has revealed the wide variety of hardware distribution models and technology plans, guidance and support from the state should be provided for districts.
- Technology as a tool and as an area of study must be the focus of instructional technology integration for students.

Mr. Robinson asked if the state had calculated the cost of improving the internal infrastructure of schools. Superintendent Spearman responded that the South Carolina Department of Education had reviewed the districts in the Abbeville lawsuit to determine the technology needs associated with online testing. Superintendent Spearman said that the Department will be preparing a technology vision for the K-12 Technology Committee to review soon. She stated that agency staff had met with others from North Carolina to learn from their experiences. Sen. Matthews stated that districts need guidance and guidelines from the state to understand what technology improvements should be made. Superintendent Spearman responded that the Department has responsibility for developing such guidance but to date, the agency has not had the staff to complete the work. Rep. Loftis asked if the Department would support his efforts to include 4K enrollment for purposes of E-Rate funding, which could have a \$3.6 million positive impact for South Carolina. Sen. Hembree asked if school districts were receptive to receiving such guidance or were they resisting the assistance. Superintendent Spearman responded that they were very receptive.

Finally, Mr. Robinson called upon EOC staff member Bunnie Ward to give an overview of the annual full-day 4K evaluation. The EOC is allocated \$300,000 to annually evaluate the program. Ms. Ward recognized Dr. Bill Brown and Dr. Fred Greer, professors at the University of South Carolina who analyzed the results from the 4K and 5K assessments as well as Dr. David Mathias from the South Carolina Department of Education and Martha Strickland from the Office of First Steps to School Readiness who were in the audience and who oversee the programs. Ms. Ward noted that the number of at-risk four-year-old children served in full-day publicly-funded programs is forecasted to remain the same or decrease slightly in school year 2017-18 due to attrition. Approximately 54 to 56 percent of at-risk four-year-olds are served statewide in the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP), Head Start and ABC Voucher program. Student enrollment in CERDEP in public schools is up about 2.6% while student enrollment in private providers is up 13.6%. Expansion of the program in 2017-18 to extend the school day or extend the school year or both with carry forward funds was implemented in the private providers during the summer of 2017; however, expansion in the public schools is still under development.

Regarding 4K assessment results, by the spring of 2017, most prekindergarten children met the reading readiness target scores as distributed by the South Carolina Department of Education for IGDIs-EL, GOLD and PALS PreK. Finally, regarding the DRA 2, which was implemented for the last time in 2016-17 to all entering kindergarten students, overall fewer kindergartners “Met” DRA 2 benchmarks in the fall of 2016 than in the fall of 2015; however, these differences may or may not be statistically significant. The one area that saw the greatest decline was Metalanguage-Print Concepts II, which measure the ability of students to understand that letters make up words, and words sentences in printed text.

Subcommittee Reports: There was only one subcommittee report on the agenda. Mr. Robinson called upon Ms. Hairfield to give the report for the Public Awareness Subcommittee. Ms. Hairfield reported that the Public Awareness Subcommittee reviewed district and school report card mock-ups at its January 22, 2018 meeting and made recommendations to: (1) engage district and school personnel in the design; (2) identify metrics or data to be reported on the report cards that document how schools and districts are ensuring students graduate having the world-class skills and characteristics of the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*; and (3) expand data reported under the Preparing for Success indicator. Based upon the subcommittee meeting, staff of the EOC and the South Carolina Department of Education met and determined that the Department of Education would be responsible for engaging district and school personnel in the design. Regarding identification of data to be reported on the report card, Mr. Robinson announced that he will create a working group of educators and business officials to identify those metrics for inclusion in the 2018-19 district and school report card. Dr. Knight of the EOC staff will led the effort.

On the action item, the EOC annual report to the General Assembly as required by Section 59-6-10, Ms. Hairfield asked Dana Yow to explain the new format for the March 1 report. Ms. Yow went over a printed copy of the report, which will be provided electronically to the SC General Assembly by March 1. She explained the effort to make the report more concise. She also summarized the reports which are organized under the acronym AIM, which stands for *Accountability, Innovation, and Motivation*. Ms. Yow asked that revisions to the report be communicated to her in the next couple of weeks so that the report can be delivered to members of the legislature.

Rep. Loftis talked about who in the SCDE looks at federal grant opportunities. Supt. Spearman said she would check to see who the person at the SCDE is that handles this and get back with Rep. Loftis. She also said they were meeting later in the day with the folks at the College of Charleston about computer science. Ms. Spearman then provided a brief update to the committee about revisions being made to the ESSA Accountability Plan. She said the United States Department of Education (USDE) requested that minor revisions be made to the ESSA Plan. Those revisions have been made and sent to the USDE by Feb. 15. She said that USDE officials said that SC’s plan was in the category of “best written plans.” She also told the EOC that there was a procurement for SC’s career ready test. She said the award was given to WIN, not WorkKeys. The SCDE did

not have staff on the procurement review; it was all done through MMO. WIN uses the same categories that WorkKeys does. The new test does measure soft skills. Mr. Robinson said he was unsure how the change in the career ready assessment will be received by business and industry. He said there needs to be some compatibility with the new test. Ms. Spearman said that business and industry officials were members of the review panel.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.