

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

December 15, 2020

Members Present (in-person or remote): Ellen Weaver, Chair; Rep. Terry Alexander; April Allen; Rep. Neal Collins; Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield (remote); Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Sidney Locke; Dr. Brian Newsome; Neil Robinson; Jamie Shuster (remote); Patti Tate; and Dr. Scott Turner

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Matthew Ferguson; Dr. Valerie Harrison; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; and Dana Yow.

Guests Present: Ms. Angel Malone, CTE Director, SCDE; and Ms. Katie Nigles, Director of Governmental Affairs, SCDE (remote)

Ms. Weaver welcomed members and guests to the meeting. She welcomed new EOC members, Sidney Locke and Jamie Shuster, both in attendance at the meeting. Ms. Weaver also thanked Sen. John Matthews for his many years of service to the EOC; Sen. Matthews has retired from the Senate.

The minutes of the October 12, 2020 EOC meeting were approved and seconded. Ms. Weaver asked Mr. Robinson to present the report of the Academic Standards and Assessments/Public Awareness joint meeting, which met on November 16. Mr. Robinson summarized the discussion on each of the items that came before the group as information.

Career Ready Certifications

Ms. Angel H. Malone, Director of Career and Technology Education, South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), provided an update on the recommended Industry Recognized Credentials for the 2020-2021 academic year. She also shared that SCDE is currently moving toward the implementation of a stackable credential system during the 21-22 academic year; work on the stackable system was delayed because of COVID related demands on staff, completion of this work is anticipated by March 2021 with presentation for approval to the EOC in April 2021.

Academic Recovery Camp Data Summary

Dr. Andrews provided an update on student data from Academic Recovery Camps. Dr. Andrews explained: 1) the assessments administered for 2020 Academic Recovery Camps were not state assessments and varied by district; 2) results had to be entered into to the state database by districts; 3) post-test scores were higher for students participating in Academic Recovery Camp but remained below grade level expectation. Since NWEA does not have summer norms, caution should be exercised when making inferences about summer results.

ACT/SAT Performance Summary, 2020 Graduate Cohort

In South Carolina, 66% of seniors indicated aspirations to postsecondary education in 2020, yet the data suggest many are not prepared.

Dr. Kevin Andrews provided general information about SC 2020 Graduate Cohort Advanced Placement (AP) results. In 2020, 49,727 AP exams were taken by 30,443 students. Of the exams taken, 62% scored at 3, 4, or 5 – all passing scores. Most AP test takers (66.5%) in 2020 were White, with Black and Hispanic student participation totaling 20 percent when put together.

Dr. Andrews explained commonalities between the ACT and SAT. Both assessments are self-selected assessments that make predictions about college academic success.

Of those SC students who graduated from high school in 2020, 64% of the graduating class took the SAT. South Carolina public school students' overall mean score was 1019 compared with the national public school mean of 1030.

Of those SC students who graduated from high school in 2020, approximately 76% of the graduating class took the ACT. The average composite score for SC's 2020 Class of public-school students was 18.1 (out of 36 points). SC's performance declined in 2020 and ranks near the bottom among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

There is reason for concern when looking at the racial and ethnic performance of SC's 2020 Graduating Class. Only 5% of Black/African American students met College Readiness Benchmarks in Math; only 2% of Black/African American students met College Readiness Benchmarks in all four content areas on the ACT: English, Math Reading, Science.

It was stated that this is not simply a high school problem, but a system wide issue. College preparedness begins in elementary school and continues in high school.

Cyclical Review of SC College and Career Ready Standards English Language Arts Standards (ELA)

Dr. Knight presented the Cyclical Review of SC College and Career Ready Standards English Language Arts Standards (ELA) for approval. Per EOC statutory responsibility, the review is conducted at least every seven years. The last English language arts cyclical review was completed in 2014. Mr. Robinson recognized Dr. Knight to discuss an overview of the standard review.

Dr. Knight provided an overview of the recommendations from both the national and state review panels. Citing a need to align with other recommendations being forwarded to the SCDE, Ms. Weaver made a motion amending recommendation #7 in the report with the following language: "Ensure the standards and support documents reflect and provide multiple resources from varied perspectives as well as instructional strategies to address the learning needs of diverse students." The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. Mr. Robinson then called for a vote on the amended report.

Dr. Turner asked a question about recommendation two which deals with reducing the number of standards; he wanted to know what led to that decision. Dr. Knight discussed the redundancy of the current standards and the rationale for the recommendation, citing that the text of the standards and indicators within "Reading for Informational Text" and "Reading for Literary Text" are almost identical. Dr. Turner asked if we know about the discussion regarding pacing and being able to cover all the standards. This was one way to allow teachers to have flexibility and reduce the number of standards.

Dr. Turner asked if all standards are created equally? Dr. Knight stated her opinion was no. Dr. Turner followed up, asking how would a teacher know that? Dr. Knight stated that the SCDE is working to publish power standards. She has had discussions with the SCDE, and they are calling them priority standards; they will give teachers direction and guidance.

Ms. Barton stated that we (within the Governor's Office) have heard from lots of teachers who have looked at the reading scores. Teachers said they never understood the rigor of the standards because there are no examples of texts. She said we must do something to help the teachers in that regard.

Ms. Barton also asked about the timeline on the math standards. Dr. Knight said that math is up next, so she expects that to come before the EOC next spring. Dr. Knight stressed that the standards are for teachers so they will understand the rigor of what is expected of students.

Ms. Hairfield made a comment about college readiness, stating it is evident that we are not reaching large portions of SC's population. She believes we must better understand the diversity of our students. That needs to be addressed in the standards and support documents.

Rep. Alexander stated that we need to look at the diversity of instruction in terms of developing the content. He suggested that perhaps the developers of the content are not as diverse and inclusive as it could be.

Dr. Knight reminded members they will see the standards again to approve. The Cyclical Review of SC College and Career Ready Standards English Language Arts Standards (ELA) were approved unanimously.

EIA Report

Dr. Couch then called upon Dr. Knight to summarize the EIA recommendations for FY2021-22. She stressed that the funding of charter schools needs to be looked at quite urgently.

Rep. Alexander asked if charter school recommendations require action by the Gen. Assembly to go into effect. Dr. Knight said the recommendations were required to be acted on by the legislature. He supports charters but doesn't agree with taking money or resources away from other schools.

Following a question by Dr. Turner, Dr. Knight reminded the EOC that the recommendations, once approved, will be forwarded to the General Assembly for consideration.

Sen. Hembree asked for clarification on charter school funding and what happens with the local money. We have two funding sources now. If you have a district charter, the local per pupil share goes to the charter school. If you have a charter through a public charter district, the local per pupil share stays with the local district while EIA funding is used in lieu of the local per pupil share. The current system incentivizes districts to offload the charter schools to the state.

Sen. Johnson said he would agree with a windfall when we fully fund education.

Dr. Turner asked about how to keep charters financially and academically accountable? Dr. Newsome clarified that information about authorizer shopping is not accurate; schools were leaving districts because of lack of leadership

Rep. Alexander stated that he and Rep. Felder are working on recommendations on charter schools.

Rep. Felder stated that one of the issues with holding charters accountable is inconsistency with the report card. Since we haven't had three years with consistent report cards and now, we have missed a year of testing and have no ratings, it is difficult to hold charter schools accountable because the law requires three years of data. Taking the money with the child is truly not that simple. Property values are in line with location.

Ms. Weaver reminded members that charters don't receive brick and mortar and transportation monies.

Ms. Barton stated that the discussion has been sparked. The charter school enrollment is up 30 percent, but we don't have state monies right now to handle the growth. The dilemma is how do you fund charters right now? We must figure this all out.

Dr. Newsome stated we need to talk about accountability for all kids. We can't forget about accountability in this process. Charters are not being funded correctly and we must figure out how to fix it.

Rep. Alexander stated we have to figure out how to fund the whole education system. All of education, not just charters. We need to look at it holistically – not just the charter piece.

Sen. Hembree wants a follow up on the success of the National Clearinghouse in other states. Dr. Turner said that it was really initiated by the Spartanburg Academic Movement. It gives information as children go through the higher education system. It is a truer picture of student readiness than what we get currently. The National Clearinghouse would allow us to get state, district, and school level data on college readiness. According to Ms. Barton, SC is one of the few states that does not access National Clearinghouse data.

Dr. Turner said he has comments on the teacher pay band recommendation. He doesn't feel comfortable with it with what educators are facing right now. How are we recruiting teachers to rural areas of this state – we need to look at this? He can't imagine how districts with no tax base are recruiting. We must step up and supplement the salary schedule to the rural districts.

Mr. Ferguson provided a list of proviso amendments that staff proposes sending to the Gen. Assembly. The list was approved as presented.

Rep. Alexander stated he wants to know about carry forward funds to charter schools.

Ms. Hairfield stated she likes the focus areas of the EIA recommendations. Teachers are in a different environment. Retention is becoming a very large problem in all the districts. Teachers don't feel like they can teach in dual modalities. She suggested adding questions to the working conditions survey that deal with the new environment of teaching due to COVID.

Ms. Weaver stated that she feels strongly about recommendation #9, dealing with academic recovery camps. Ms. Hairfield said it would be nice to see recovery camps for teachers too.

Rep. Alexander asked about the Academic Recovery Camp money. Ms. Nilges stated that the SCDE was only allowed to reimburse those districts who were face-to-face over the summer. The SCDE reallocated funding to go directly to districts to continue one-on-one instruction.

Coming as a subcommittee report, the EOC unanimously approved the EIA budget recommendations.

Chair and Vice Chair Elections

Mr. Robinson brought forward the nominations of Chair and Vice-Chair from the Selection Committee. Ms. Weaver is brought forward to serve a second term as Chair. Ms. Hairfield will serve as Vice-Chair. Mr. Robinson stated that Ms. Weaver has exceeded all expectations he had as Chair. The recommendations of the Selection Committee were unanimously approved.

Career Ready Industry Credentials

Ms. Malone presented the career ready industry credentials and certifications for 2020 to the EOC. The stackable credentials will be ready for review in April 2021.

Ms. Barton stated she had spent a lot of time looking through these. She said there should be a way to compare these credentials to the workforce needs.

Mr. Robinson stated that there is a subcommittee looking at the issues Ms. Barton referenced. Artificial intelligence and cybersecurity are sectors that need to be represented in career centers and comprehensive high schools.

A motion was made to accept the credentials list. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Accountability Cyclical Review Update

Ms. Yow provided the committee with an update on the Cyclical Review of the Accountability System. The final framework is close to being finalized and will be forwarded to members of the committee when completed.

The committee approved the following motion: The EOC staff proposes that that the final framework be sent to all members of the EOC and State Board of Education upon receipt. A Working Group, composed of EOC and State Board of Education members, will provide details and timelines before sending on to the SC General Assembly.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.