

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

February 9, 2026

Members Present (in-person or remote): April Allen, Rep. Neal Collins, Dr. Brian Newsome, Barbara Hairfield, Melissa Pender, Dr. Patty Tate, Sen. Ross Turner, Melanie Barton, Tammy Achziger, Russell Baxley, Sidney Locke, and Dr. Abbey Duggins (for Superintendent Weaver).

Special Guests: Dr. Monica O. Carter, Principal and Dr. D'Leannette Rudolph from H.B. Rhame Elementary (Richland One) 2025 Elementary School Data Trailblazer Award recipient.

EOC Staff Present: Crystal Garcia, Gabrielle Fulton, Tenell Felder, Hope Johnson-Jones, Dr. Rainey Knight, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May and Dana Yow.

April Allen opened the meeting, welcomed members, and called for approval of the December 8, 2025, Full Committee minutes. Senator Ross Turner moved to approve, seconded by Representative Neal Collins. The motion passed.

Dr. Patty Tate presented the Academic Standards & Assessments (ASA) Subcommittee action item: CTE Data Project Report.

The ASA Subcommittee met on January 12, 2026, where members considered two action items and received three items for information. The meeting lasted over two hours and included extensive discussion.

The first action item was the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Data Project, required under Section 59-18-920 of the South Carolina Code, which directs the EOC, in collaboration with the State Board of Education and the School-to-Work Advisory Council, to develop a report card for CTE schools.

Bunnie Ward (TransformSC) presented the findings with project partners Ivy Coburn (SREB) and Brooke Culclasure (Riley Institute). The project—supported by the EOC, TransformSC, the SC Council on Competitiveness, the Riley Institute, SREB, and the SC Department of Education—focuses on developing a CTE data dashboard. The initial phase targets CTE centers and multi-district centers, with future expansion to comprehensive high schools.

Over nine months, the team gathered feedback from 122 CTE leaders, 30 CTE directors, and business and industry representatives. The goal is to improve understanding of CTE, strengthen participation and outcomes, and enhance education-to-workforce alignment.

Key recommendations include:

- Launching the dashboard with a limited set of trusted data elements
- Testing visualizations with stakeholders before public release
- Using clear language to modernize perceptions of CTE
- Providing tiered professional learning on data use
- Expanding the system over time as data quality improves

The ASA Subcommittee unanimously approved the CTE Data Project Report.

April Allen opened the floor up for questions and Melanie Barton then recommended that expenditure data be included in the CTE dashboard. She noted that while funding streams were referenced, expenditures were not. With the General Assembly considering changes to CTE equipment line funding, she emphasized the importance of showing how funds are spent, not just funding inputs and outputs. Ms. Barton stated that if funding is intended to drive students toward high-demand careers, expenditure data must be part of the data visualization.

Ms. Allen then moved to approve the report. The motion was approved unanimously by the members.

Next, Ms. Allen introduced Dr. Monica Owens Carter, Principal, and Dr. D'Leannette Rudolph of H.B. Rhame Elementary (Richland One), the 2025 Elementary School Data Trailblazer Award Winner. They presented, "From Numbers to Impact: Making Growth Predictable through Data Storytelling."

Dr. Carter shared that with a 58% student mobility rate, instructional consistency is critical. H.B. Rhame uses data as a transparent, shared language to align students, staff, and families around clear growth goals. The school implements visible goal setting, student data notebooks, leadership data dives, and regular data reviews in all meetings. Weekly PLCs analyze common formative assessments, adjust instruction, and create flexible student groupings.

Dr. Rudolph highlighted the school's structured four-week instructional cycles, MTSS "Marvelous Mondays," and subgroup data dashboards to monitor progress and guide interventions and

acceleration. Parents and students are engaged through clear communication and real-time data tools.

As a result, the school has shown measurable growth, including significant reductions in students scoring “Does Not Meet” and increases in students scoring “Meets and Exceeds.” The presenters emphasized that consistent data use has strengthened instructional alignment, student ownership, and overall school improvement.

Board members congratulated Dr. Carter and Dr. Rudolph and commended their leadership and student-focused approach. Members noted that their work demonstrates how strong leadership and a clear focus on outcomes drive results. They praised the school’s intentional parent engagement, particularly one-on-one meetings to review student data and discuss how academics and behavior impact performance. Members acknowledged the importance of re-engaging highly mobile students in a positive way and creating a fresh start for them.

Board members also highlighted the value of involving students in goal setting and teaching them to understand and interpret their own data, calling it a powerful practice at all levels. Dr. Carter explained that town hall meetings are shaped by student voice, leadership, and character development. Student feedback is collected three times a year, with two informal surveys reviewed by the leadership team and shared with teachers and students. The results are discussed directly with students to identify improvements and reinforce shared ownership of the school. By the time students complete the EOC survey, they are familiar with the process and understand how their feedback drives change.

Ms. Barton, on behalf of Governor McMaster, presented a letter of congratulations, commending the school’s work in setting goals and measuring progress. She echoed the Governor’s sentiment that “you can’t manage what you don’t measure” and thanked them for their dedication, especially to the children they serve.

Dr. Tate presented the second ASA Subcommittee action item: Inclusion of the Seal of Biliteracy in the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Indicator.

The item was brought forward following a recommendation from the Accountability Advisory Committee as part of its cyclical review process. To earn the Seal of Biliteracy, a junior or senior must earn at least a 3.0 GPA in ELA graduation requirements (or, for multilingual learners, a minimum composite score of 4.4 on ACCESS 2.0) and demonstrate at least intermediate-mid proficiency on a state-approved, nationally recognized assessment in a language other than

English. Requests to include the Seal in the CCR indicator have been received since fall 2023. This proposal represents the first cyclical review recommendation presented to the EOC for action (Recommendation 8). The Seal aligns with the Profile of the Graduate by supporting world-class knowledge, communication skills, and global perspective. Staff recommended adding attainment of the South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy as an additional criterion for demonstrating college readiness within the CCR indicator. Members asked follow-up questions regarding the potential impact on report cards and ratings. The EOC is continuing to work with the South Carolina Department of Education to gather data to address those questions.

Ms. Barton expressed concern that no analysis had been provided regarding the potential impact on schools, including how many districts currently award the Seal of Biliteracy. She stated she was hesitant to adopt the measure without understanding its effect. Staff noted that similar follow-up questions were raised in the subcommittee and that the requested data is not yet available. Additional information has also been requested from the Education Commission of the States regarding national impacts on college-going rates, as well as data specific to South Carolina. Members were advised that this information would be provided prior to taking action. It was recommended that action be deferred until the requested data is available.

A motion to postpone action was made and approved unanimously by the committee.

Dr. Tate presented the ASA information item on the Multilingual Learners' Progress (MLP) Indicator, led by Dr. Matthew Lavery. Dr. Lavery explained that the current MLP indicator measures the percentage of multilingual learners on track to reach English proficiency within five years. However, a recent federal review of amendments to the state's consolidated plan required changes to the calculation. The MLP must now be calculated at the school level rather than the report card level and may include only students tested in the current accountability year. As a result, the student population included in the indicator changed significantly, making 2023 results not comparable to 2024. Proposed improvements include setting annual growth targets based on students' most recent proficiency level, grounding targets and cut scores in South Carolina data and research, and simplifying record-keeping to improve accuracy. Dr. Lavery shared that a revised model is under development in consultation with WIDA experts. The model would use annual targets based on the most recent assessment and maintain a five-year path to proficiency without requiring five years of data. Next steps include running impact simulations with historical data and recalibrating cut scores.

The report was received as information and will be brought before the ASA Subcommittee in March.

Dr. Tate presented the ASA information item on the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) Parental Satisfaction Survey, 2025–26, led by Dr. Jenny May. Dr. May reported that, pursuant to state law (Section 59-8-110), the EOC must annually report learning gains, graduation rates, academic performance, and parent satisfaction survey results to the General Assembly by December 31. The survey was administered on November 3, 2025, to parents of all 8,980 participating students and remained open for two weeks. A satisfactory response rate was achieved, and results were submitted to the General Assembly on December 27. Overall satisfaction with the ESTF program was very high. The program received a Net Promoter Score of 90, which is considered world-class. Parents cited financial relief from the \$7,500 scholarship, flexibility of allowable uses, improvements in student learning and well-being, and strong customer service as key strengths.

Survey feedback also generated several policy considerations, including:

- Ensuring private school participation practices align with legislative intent, particularly regarding tuition discounts for employees' children and required ESTF participation.
- Clarifying whether ESTF and ECEC funds may be braided or better coordinated to reduce administrative burden on families.
- Addressing confusion regarding the use of ESTF funds for homeschool curriculum, as direct home instruction is prohibited in statute.
- Reviewing vendor practices, including pricing concerns within the marketplace, and strengthening participation agreements if necessary.
- Considering whether 4K tuition should be an allowable use of funds or whether eligibility thresholds should be adjusted to better align with ESTF income criteria.

The report was received as information.

Representative Collins asked whether demographic information on voucher recipients was included in the survey results and requested more detailed data on how funds were used, including specific categories such as out-of-district public school fees rather than broad groupings like tuition or tutoring.

Dr. May explained that the survey was designed to meet the statutory requirement to measure parent satisfaction and was modeled after other states' surveys. She noted significant improvement from last year's Net Promoter Score of -20 to this year's 90, reflecting program improvements.

In response to concerns about tuition increases, fraud, and allowable uses, Dr. May stated that oversight mechanisms are in place through ClassWallet, though some parent comments suggested ambiguity—particularly regarding homeschooling and technology purchases. While most families reported using funds for tuition and direct student needs, some responses indicated potential confusion about allowable uses. She noted that clearer guidance and possible additional oversight may be warranted.

Meka Childs, Director of Education Choice and Family Engagement, addressed member questions. Ms. Childs explained that the department conducts annual program reviews and maintains demographic data which is included in the annual report. She emphasized that strong oversight measures are in place through ClassWallet, where all purchases must be approved within the system. If a student is found ineligible—such as through homeschooling enrollment verification—the student is removed from the program following a review process. Regarding homeschooling, Ms. Childs clarified that students formally registered as homeschoolers are not eligible to receive funds. Any confusion in survey responses may reflect differences in how parents use the term “homeschooling.” Safeguards are in place to prevent ineligible use of funds.

Representative Collins requested more detailed expenditure reporting, including a breakdown of spending categories (e.g., tuition, district transfer fees, textbooks, computers) and expressed that such detail should be included in the annual report, particularly given the scale of program funding. Ms. Childs indicated that more detailed transaction analyses could be conducted. Ms. Allen asked about evaluating academic outcomes for scholarship recipients compared to traditional public school students. Ms. Childs explained that disruptions following the Supreme Court ruling affected 2024–25 data collection, requiring direct collection from families. For 2025–26, the department will collect testing data directly from public schools through the student information system and from participating independent schools as required. Additional testing site options, including SC READY participation, have been expanded to ensure compliance with assessment requirements.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that reporting and data systems continue to be refined.

Dr. Tate presented the final ASA information item: Requests for New Industry Certifications (CCR), led by Ivy Coburn, Division Director, Education Workforce, SREB and Dr. Herb Bocchino from the SCDE Office of Career Readiness.

The presenters updated the EOC on the tiered certification application and approval process, highlighted newly developed resources, and outlined proposed changes to the approved tier certification list as part of the transition to the tiered framework.

The Office of Career Readiness reviewed 25 applications and is requesting EOC approval for 15 new certifications and four tier reassignments. The Subcommittee will consider these requests in March, with full EOC action anticipated in April.

Next, Tenell Felder presented the 2026 EOC Annual Report. She noted the report is organized into three sections: Reporting Facts, Measuring Change, and Promoting Progress, consistent with prior years. Members were encouraged to submit edits before the report is finalized and sent to the General Assembly. The report includes updates to the education data dashboards, summaries of required reports (with key findings, recommendations, and legislative directives), highlights from the School Report Card release, EIA budget recommendations, Data Trailblazer Awards, presentations to the General Assembly, and updates on the cyclical review of the accountability system and social studies standards.

The item was presented for information.

Ms. Felder then presented an update on the Be Present S.C. Campaign, a public awareness initiative developed in response to the committee's concern about chronic absenteeism. The campaign officially launched in July 2025 with 31 schools and has since expanded to 79 schools (49 elementary, 16 middle, and 14 high schools), primarily in Greenville, the Midlands, and Charleston areas.

The campaign aims to:

1. Increase awareness of the connection between attendance and academic achievement;
2. Provide resources to support schools and families; and
3. Build student buy-in.

Participating schools receive digital and print materials, including posters, attendance trackers, parent fact sheets, pledge certificates, and "Be Present" ambassador resources such as "We Missed You" notes. Schools have incorporated the materials into attendance conferences,

assemblies, and student pledge activities. Ms. Felder noted strong engagement from partner schools and positive feedback, with growing participation and student involvement in the campaign.

Gabrielle Fulton presented the Be Present S.C. Dashboard, launched in September alongside the campaign website and student pledge. The dashboard has received over 7,000 views, making it the EOC's highest-performing dashboard to date. With more than 6,700 student pledge responses, schools are actively monitoring participation and engaging in friendly competition. The dashboard includes resources, district-level chronic absenteeism data, myth-versus-fact information, and interactive tools that illustrate how absences impact academic performance. It also features a live map of participating schools and a leaderboard highlighting top pledge participation. Ms. Fulton noted strong engagement and continued growth in both school participation and student pledges.

Ms. Felder encouraged members to review and share the Be Present S.C. dashboard. She also announced a new partnership with local libraries, launched in January, to display campaign materials and distribute resources. Five additional libraries have recently joined, and some are offering incentives for students who sign the Be Present pledge. This partnership expands outreach to families and communities. Ms. Felder also highlighted recent media coverage of the campaign, including a positive editorial recognizing the state's efforts to address chronic absenteeism.

The item was presented for information.

Dana Yow commended Ms. Felder, Ms. Fulton, and staff for their leadership in launching and expanding the Be Present S.C. campaign. She noted strong interest from principals, including at SCASA, and emphasized that attendance continues to be a significant concern among school leaders. Ms. Yow highlighted the "Ambassador" card initiative as a simple yet impactful strategy, giving students a tangible reminder that they are missed and valued when absent. She praised staff for turning the committee's idea into meaningful action in schools.

Next, Ms. Yow provided the Executive Director's update. She reported that the EIA budget recommendations were presented to the House Ways and Means Public Education Subcommittee in mid-January and will be presented to the Senate on February 11. She also updated members on the Teacher Loan Program annual report. Following discussion by the EOC, she attended a January 23 meeting of the Teacher Loan Advisory Committee, which is actively addressing the recommendations. Efforts underway include moving the application process

online, establishing data-sharing agreements among the EOC, Student Loan Corporation, and CHE, and reorganizing the advisory committee to strengthen its authority and meeting frequency. The group is also exploring expanded marketing efforts, including outreach to career changers. Ms. Yow further noted that a September 2025 audit conducted at the request of the Office of the State Auditor had not previously been shared with the EOC due to a miscommunication. Copies have now been provided to members and to House and Senate finance committees.

After the update the meeting was adjourned.