

# **SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

## **Full Education Oversight Committee Meeting**

Minutes of the Meeting

February 13, 2023

**Members Present (in-person or remote):** Neil Robinson (Chair), Barbara Hairfield, Melanie Barton, Dr. Russell Booker, Rep. Neal Collins, Dr. Bob Couch, Sen. Dwight Loftis, Dr. Brian Newsome, Dr. Patti Tate, Sen. Ross Turner, and Supt. Ellen Weaver

**EOC Staff Present:** Dana Yow, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Riley Dixon, Hope Johnson-Jones, Dr. Jenny May, Dr. Rainey Knight, Dr. Amber Adgerson, and Gabrielle Fulton

**Guest(s) Present:** Patrick Kelly, Matthew Ferguson

Mr. Robinson called the meeting to order, welcoming Ms. Weaver to her first meeting in her new capacity as State Superintendent of Education. Mr. Robinson also welcomed Mr. Ferguson. Ms. Weaver thanked Mr. Robinson and stated that she looked forward to the partnership. All members voted in favor of meeting minutes from December 12, 2022. Mr. Robinson welcomed Patrick Kelly, joining the meeting in his role on the National Assessment Governing Board.

Mr. Kelly thanked Mr. Robinson and provided an overview of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is the only national achievement test of its kind in the United States. NAEP has been administered since 2001 in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math. Other topics and grade bands are tested as funding allows. Last year's testing represents the most recent "normal" school year since COVID-19. NAEP is administered on a sampling basis, unlike many other tests. No South Carolina teacher administers NAEP, rather it is administered by the federal government, which carries the cost in whole. NAEP data is reported nationally, at the state level, and for 26 trial urban districts (not in South Carolina). Because it is administered as a sample, there are no school reports. NAEP is considered the gold standard in terms of assessments of student achievement.

NAEP is unique in that it allows us to track change over time in a way that state assessments do not typically allow. NAEP also allows for state-by-state comparison. South Carolina scored a 216 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading, the same as in 2019, placing South Carolina at the national average, on par with Georgia and North Carolina. 31 states experienced statistically significant declines, while South Carolina was one of 7 states with no decline. South Carolina scored a 234 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, also on par with national averages. Forty states experienced statistically significant declines in scoring. In eighth grade reading, South Carolina declined to 1998 levels. In eighth grade math, South Carolina declined seven points since 2019, as did the national average. NAEP achievement is described at three different levels: Basic, proficient, and advanced.

Proficient is the standard, but NAEP proficiency does not indicate grade-level proficiency as NAEP does not align with South Carolina state standards.

Mr. Kelly noted that NAEP is particularly useful as a tool that allows researchers to compare states with each other, such as a recent study analyzing 2022 NAEP results from an economic standpoint. For more information, view the full presentation.

Mr. Robinson noted that in 2022, it appears that 4<sup>th</sup> grade is alright but that 8<sup>th</sup> grade is lagging, asking what the scores of these 8<sup>th</sup> graders were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Kelly noted that this cannot be compared as we don't know that students who took it in 4<sup>th</sup> also took it in 8<sup>th</sup>. Last year was also unique because of the three-year gap between testing versus the typical two year gap in testing. Mr. Newsome asked what issue may cause the decline between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade scores. Mr. Kelly noted that NAEP disaggregates by race, gender, and learning goal. Sadly, nothing stood out as a particular issue, rather, everything went down. Ms. Barton thanked Mr. Kelly and stated that the prior increase in 1998 aligns with the passage of EAA and that now perhaps we have lost our urgency to improve scores.

Mr. Kelly agreed and noted the importance of high-quality instruction and that only one in ten students got high dosage tutoring nationally. Dr. Newsome asked about how we can improve performance levels. Mr. Kelly noted that NAEP cannot provide help at the district level with this, but that this is where SC Ready provides useful information. Dr. Booker thanked Mr. Kelly and noted the progress made in elementary, stating there is an opportunity to keep focus on efforts at the elementary level while maintaining urgency at the middle and high school levels. Dr. Booker asked if any national strategies are being looked at. Mr. Kelly stated no, but that ESSER could be considered a response. However, when implementing real-time strategies, challenges have been faced as there is no comparable level of focused funding in the past. Mr. Kelly noted that Study.com provides helpful resources but that it will not move the needle like high-dose tutoring. Dr. Booker stated the importance of collaboration. Dr. Couch noted that in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, reading and math become more technical and that as you move from "routine reading" many students quickly encounter challenges with problem solving and critical thinking. Instructional processes must address technical reading. Sen. Loftis asked how we can speed process and posed applied learning as a possible solution. Mr. Kelly noted that applied learning provides rich instruction and that we do not often do a good job of assessing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Sen. Loftis asked about the impact of reading's decline on the economy. Mr. Kelly noted that this is something Dr. Hanushek (who conducted a January 23 study out of Stanford on NAEP results from an economic standpoint) has centered his work on. Sen. Loftis stated that often capable students lost out during Covid-19 due to the lack of teacher contact and noted that internships often provide an opportunity to instruct soft skills as well.

Ms. Hairfield thanked Mr. Kelly and highlighted that student ability is not dropping off, but performance is. Ms. Hairfield noted the impact that understaffing and teacher shortages have on performance and that sometimes non-certified teachers with little experience are filling roles that may need certified, experienced teachers to move the needle. Mr. Kelly noted that NAEP scores are enlightening but must be examined in context. Mr. Ferguson noted that even before COVID, we were not improving despite scoring at the national

average, other states just did worse. Rep. Collins noted that he is troubled with the issue of proficiency, as we are not properly educating parents about the urgency of improving proficiency. Mr. Kelly noted that parental engagement is very important and while it is not the only factor, it does contribute. However, we also need high quality instructors. It is important to show parents how to look at data in a cohesive way. Rep. Collins stated that often, during COVID-19, parents were responsible for teaching their child, however, we don't need to focus on COVID exclusively, rather we need to examine the whole education system. Mr. Kelly noted that while we do not have an answer of "What to do" regarding performance, we have many answers regarding what not to do. Mr. Robinson noted that these numbers do not correlate with individual student proficiency.

Next, Dr. Lavery provided a summary of the new accountability metrics. Dr. Lavery highlighted the importance of communications, particularly to educators who do the work on the ground to implement these changes. In order to communicate this information, Dr. Lavery visited schools and conferences across the state to present the new metrics. In the past twelve months, he has presented over 30 times, to multiple roles and multiple education levels. Responses to exit surveys were overwhelmingly positive, with over 97% stating they learned something and 97% stating that the presentations were useful. Videos are also being made for the EOC Youtube channel to expand the reach even further. Dr. Lavery noted the importance of stakeholder engagement and that all of the received feedback has drastically improved the work. Additionally, 82% of survey respondents noted willingness to collaborate with the EOC in the future. Next steps include assembling a stakeholder group to examine elements of the accountability system and inform continuous improvement.

Mr. Robinson thanked Dr. Lavery and stated his excitement. Ms. Yow stated that there are many educators who are excited to see the EOC and who return time and time again to the presentations. Ms. Hairfield noted that she was one of the viewers of the Youtube videos, which helped her understand these changes. Sen. Loftis noted that the EOC's steps towards communication are refreshing. Mr. Robinson thanked Dr. Lavery. Dr. Couch noted that he has heard positive comments from the upstate.

Next, Dr. Tate provided a summary of the January 23, 2023 ASA/PA subcommittee meeting. During this, the EOC welcomed Riley Dixon who joined EOC staff as a Data Engineer. Three items came before the subcommittee as informational items: a 4K and 5K Assessment Analysis, an update on stackable credentials, and an analysis of SC School Climate Survey Free Responses. For a full review of these items, view the January 23 meeting minutes.

Dr. Couch stated that the ad hoc nomination subcommittee met on January 30<sup>th</sup>, with a unanimous vote to nominate April Allen as chair and Brian Newsome as vice chair of the EOC. Mr. Robinson thanked Dr. Couch and stated his excitement for these nominations. All members voted in favor and Mr. Robinson welcomed and congratulated Ms. Allen and Dr. Newsome. Mr. Robinson thanked EOC staff. Ms. Yow thanked Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hairfield for their 18 and 16 years of service respectively. With that, the meeting adjourned.