

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

April 11, 2022

Members Present (in-person or remote): Rep. Terry Alexander; Melanie Barton; Bob Couch (remote); Rep. Raye Felder (remote); Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Sen. Dwight Loftis; Dr. Brian Newsome; Dr. Patti Tate; Dr. Scott Turner; and Ellen Weaver

EOC Staff Present: Matthew Ferguson, Gabrielle Fulton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Dr. Jenny May; and Dana Yow

Guest(s) Present: Dr. David Mathis, SCDE; Zach Brunk, SAS; Dr. Melody Schopp, SAS; Jim Stritzinger, Director of SC Broadband Office; and Nadja Young, SAS

In absence of Mr. Robinson, Ms. Hairfield led the meeting. As the first order of business, the committee approved the minutes from the prior meeting on February 14, 2022.

Next, Ms. Hairfield introduced Dr. Tate, who presented on the Academic Standards & Assessments and Public Awareness Joint Meeting, which met on March 21, 2022. Discussion Items: 1) Dr. Carroza presented on Wake County implementation of year-round schooling and lessons learned. 2) Dr. Hovanetz presented on outcomes of national accountability and described how federal accountability helped narrow achievement gaps and in the era of ESSA, progress has slowed. Action Items: 1) Dr. Lavery presented on the current growth model for school accountability and introduced a new value-added growth model. 2) Student success measures for school accountability. The On-Track measures provide actionable data for improving student success and it is recommended to report on and phase in On-Track measurements. Finally, Ms. Yow presented on a five-year student success measure. Dr. Tate made a motion to adopt all Subcommittee recommendations.

Ms. Hairfield suggested asking if there were questions or comments with each item.

Dr. Turner asked for an explanation of the value-added growth model. Mr. Ferguson stated that the model looks at historically observed data and how far students are from meeting standards. Under the current model, average growth never changes outcomes in student proficiency, and in some cases, students even fall back. Therefore, a value-added model is proposed that shows how far students have to go to achieve proficiency.

Dr. Turner stated his concern over equity. Mr. Ferguson stated that currently, 50% of schools will have average or above growth and 50% will have lower. Now, if all schools show improvement, they are all able to score higher. Dr. Turner asked if SC READY gets harder as you go up in grade level. Mr. Ferguson stated that South Carolina's cut scores are right in the middle of other states. Dr. Turner asked if anyone had run a simulation and points had been established. Mr. Ferguson stated that we are not currently rating schools on this measure and have requested another year of data in order to evaluate; therefore, it is recommended to phase in implementation based on that first year of data collection.

Ms. Hairfield, referring to recommendation 7, asked if the added value model would replace the current model. Mr. Ferguson stated that yes, it would, but that we need more data to determine scoring before making that replacement.

Dr. Turner asked if we know what other states use this method. Mr. Ferguson stated that none use this specific model, but that others do use a growth to proficiency model, such as Ohio.

Rep. Felder asked to clarify that at this point, it is not the stance of the EOC to recommend changes to the school year calendar. Mr. Ferguson confirmed this, stating that the presentation at subcommittee was for information only.

Returning to the discussion surrounding the added-value model, Dr. Mathis stated that the new model would compare students to themselves, not to others. Ms. Barton stated that this model would allow for more flexibility, which Mr. Ferguson affirmed.

Sen. Loftis commented that these materials appear to be written by educators for educators and he hopes they can be made more family friendly before Report Cards are released. Sen. Loftis asked how the model evaluates students who are not high academic performers. Sen. Loftis stated that a middle school teacher highlighted this to him and that perhaps there could be an emphasis on career readiness for those students. Mr. Ferguson stated that there is certainly improvement to be made, but this growth model doesn't consider that; it just considers their growth year to year. Sen. Loftis stated that some students drop through the cracks.

Ms. Weaver asked if once we establish criteria for proficiency, we will be able to tell if we're competitive against other states. Mr. Ferguson stated that this model is not addressing cut scores, but that South Carolina's cut scores are competitive. This model only addresses the SC READY assessment.

Rep. Alexander asked if we are looking at data before or after COVID. How do we manage all of this in the wake of COVID? Mr. Ferguson stated that the data we use for this is matched data pre- and during COVID, which is why we have held off on providing point recommendations. If we look at actual achievement (rather than the current model), schools all declined.

Rep. Alexander asked if this added-value model is used to determine how far away we are from proficiency. Mr. Ferguson said yes, and the added-value model lets teachers, parents, and students know. Rep. Alexander asked if we've grown through COVID. Mr. Ferguson said no; some maybe did above average but there is not a move towards proficiency. The current growth model only shows if they are better than other schools.

Dr. Turner indicated he would like to understand more about the growth calculation from Dr. Lavery especially since 90% of the rating is based on one assessment. Dr. Turner also commented that there may be unintended consequences and that we know principals shouldn't group students. Mr. Ferguson said that this would be a flaw in school-level implementation. Some schools could be grouping students, but in the current growth model, we're not addressing growth or even looking at those students. Dr. Turner said that we don't want to lose integrity of the system.

Ms. Tate stated that based on the discussion, the intent is to move more kids with more rigor. Ms. Weaver stated that we don't want to surprise anyone and that we want to see what this looks like. She asked to confirm that this wouldn't change accountability yet, which Mr. Ferguson confirmed. Mr. Ferguson stated that the recommendation merely shows that we are interested in the added-value model and that it would be reported to schools prior to having it factored into their score.

Dr. Turner clarified that the recommendation is to look at it, get feedback, and then consider scoring methods again at a future meeting. Mr. Ferguson stated yes, the current recommendation does not yet include scoring methodology because we want another year of data post-COVID.

Dr. Newsome asked there was any metric for students who stay high achieving, stating that what he hears is that this model will ignore upper-level kids. Mr. Ferguson said that the new model expects all students to make at least one year of growth.

Rep. Alexander asked what the data concludes. Mr. Ferguson stated that if we continue growth like we've seen it, we will not do better. There is a decrease in achievement, and it is not the same across subgroups. Rep. Alexander asked if we were trying to get back to normal. Mr. Ferguson said no, we need to do much better than normal, not just try to reach mediocrity.

Ms. Barton stated that this is about urgency, especially now that we have the funds -- we need the urgency to do it. Dr. Mathis asked if each student has a growth target. Mr. Ferguson said yes. Ms. Weaver stated that this would help create a personal proficiency plan.

Dr. Turner asked that if a student exceeds and exceeds next year, they would get zero points? Mr. Ferguson said no, they would get points and also have a higher target.

Sen. Loftis asked if there was data setting an expectation of how a normal child should grow in a year. Mr. Ferguson said yes -- that is what Dr. Lavery looked at in creating the added-value model. Sen. Loftis said that a six-year-old today is different than a six-year-old years ago and that we have to adapt to these changes. Mr. Ferguson stated that in the current model, we do not have a view into the "black box" of how well students are actually doing.

Ms. Hairfield asked to clarify the recommendation for specifically the proposed growth model. Mr. Ferguson said that to Ms. Hairfield's point, we would show how it would impact so we aren't catching schools by surprise. Ms. Hairfield asked if there were questions on the others. Mr. Ferguson reminded the committee that a motion is on the table to approve the subcommittee recommendations. Dr. Tate reaffirmed the motion on the table to adopt the subcommittee recommendations, Ms. Weaver seconded it. All voted in favor.

Ms. Hairfield then introduced Dr. Schopp, Ms. Young and Mr. Brunk from SAS. Dr. Schopp and Ms. Young reminded members of the 4K dashboard they created as a proof of concept to show the power of dashboarding education data. They then turned over the presentation to Mr. Brunk, who showed the financial dashboard SAS built for NC.

Mr. Brunk stated SAS built a combination of interactive and static dashboards with the intent of transparency. For example, rather than just showing teacher salary, the dashboard highlights what the average package plan could be alongside an interactive map. It is possible to show spending per student and where those funds are coming from. You can see funding sources, student teacher and classroom sizes. After concluding the presentation, they opened the floor to questions.

Rep. Alexander stated that he noticed that they mentioned PowerSchool and asked how that connected. Mr. Brunk stated that in North Carolina, PowerSchool was one of the source data systems. Rep. Alexander asked if this data was sourced from various schools. Mr. Brunk stated yes, it can pull from many systems and connect with varying data sources.

Rep. Alexander asked where the data was stored and who is responsible for it. Mr. Brunk stated that in North Carolina, SAS has a data hosting facility, so they are hosting the data on behalf of the state. However, there is flexibility and many options for storage and SAS is never the owner of the data. There is also the ability to put it on state servers.

Ms. Barton asked if the data could be customized. Mr. Brunk confirmed this. Ms. Weaver asked if this was publicly released. Mr. Brunk confirmed this. Ms. Weaver asked what the feedback was. Mr. Brunk said that part of the process went into creating a document of definitions and formulas and that the transparency aspect of that was huge. Parents in North Carolina use this to determine where to live, realtors often use it, etc. SAS stated that combining the dashboards (financial and outcomes) would be a surefire way to make people look at all of the data.

With no further questions, Ms. Hairfield introduced Mr. Stritzinger, Director of the SC Broadband Office. Mr. Stritzinger thanked the committee for having him and stated that though he would attempt to be brief in this presentation, he would be happy to follow up with committee members one on one.

Mr. Stritzinger began with a brief history of electric grids before highlighting the importance of digital infrastructure as a platform for education. Mr. Stritzinger presented a map of places with fiber technology and pointed out that many areas with no internet access are not that way because of financial barriers tied to high poverty, rather it is due to technological issues tied to rurality. However, Mr. Stritzinger noted, as investments are made, you can see outcomes in the future. Approximately 42,000 K12 students do not have internet at home. At <https://www.scdigitaldrive.org/>, users can see many maps with further information.

The Broadband Office is currently partnering with the Department of Education for Starlink. Department of Ed is funding 20 homes as a pilot, while the Broadband Office sends out installers, as Starlink is often DIY, but requires the installer to go on the roof. The intended use of Starlink is to reach rural communities via Elon Musk's satellites. With that Mr. Stritzinger concluded his presentation and reiterated that he would be happy to meet one on one with any members. Ms. Hairfield thanked Mr. Stritzinger and asked if members had any questions.

Sen. Johnson asked if all of this was working together with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), etc. Mr. Stritzinger said yes; there is a historic investment in multiple realms. Rep. Alexander noted that in Florence, the county is paying and asked if this was the same in other places. Mr. Stritzinger said yes, each county received different emergency rescue funds. Therefore, the Broadband Office works with counties to the extent that it is desired. Additionally, they work in partnership with federal funding in order to not waste state funds. Rep. Alexander asked how much more funds are needed. Mr. Stritzinger stated that to fund the entire state, approximately \$634 million would be needed.

Sen. Loftis asked if private carriers are contributing anything. Mr. Stritzinger said yes, typically, funds are matched dollar for dollar. Rep. Alexander asked what role electric coops play in this. Mr. Stritzinger stated that some are really diving headfirst into supplying this. Ms. Hairfield asked if there were any other questions. With none, she thanked Mr. Stritzinger and introduced Ms. Yow for the annual report.

Ms. Yow thanked the committee and acknowledged the work of the EOC. Ms. Yow provided a brief history and summary of the annual report (which can be found in the full committee packet) and offered to provide more printed copies for any members who would like more. Ms. Hairfield thanked Ms. Yow.

Mr. Ferguson then provided an executive director update. The Accountability Manual will be released in June so that districts have it before the start of the year. Additionally, we are working to provide every high school across the state with information on the success of graduates through data secured from the National Student Clearinghouse. So far there has been a positive response and if members are in touch with any interested schools, they are encouraged to sign up.

Sen. Loftis asked to close with a comment about a recent tour of a university with an engineering specialty. Sen. Loftis noted the importance of Project Lead the Way which provides work experience and has a positive impact on students. Often, students who completed Project Lead the Way were already exposed to much more than their peers who had not. There are many internships available, and industries are looking at that work experience.

Ms. Hairfield thanked Sen. Loftis and with that, the meeting adjourned.