

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

April 9, 2018

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Bob Couch, Vice-Chair; April Allen; Anne Bull; Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Dr. Danny Merck; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

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, because the Senate goes into session at 2:00 p.m. to debate the Fiscal Year 2018-19 state budget, Senators Hembree, Matthews and Johnson will likely not be able to attend today's meeting.

The minutes of the February 12, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson introduced Tom Wilson, Superintendent of Anderson School District 5 to present an eLearning or virtual learning initiative for school make-up days. Mr. Robinson explained that a budget in the House version of the 2018-19 general appropriation bill creates a pilot program by which districts could use eLearning or online learning to make up days missed due to inclement weather. Under the House proviso, the EOC would be responsible for evaluating the pilot program. The budget as recommended by the Senate Finance Committee did not include a proviso related to this subject. Therefore, if the House proviso is adopted by the General Assembly, then the EOC and its staff want to be ready to implement the pilot program as soon as possible in the new school year.

Superintendent Wilson introduced several of his district staff in attendance. He explained how Anderson School District 5 had over a five-year period, beginning in school year 2013-14, expanded access to devices to all students in grades 1 through 12. For the 2018-19 school year, the district will assign Chromebooks to all students in grades 1 through 12 for learning during the school day, and students in grades 3 and above will be able to take the Chromebooks home each night. The district also invested in resources and staff to ensure that the devices are always in working order and nine staff who work with teachers to integrate technology into instruction. With the technology infrastructure in place and with classroom teachers trained, Anderson 5 consulted with districts in other states on how to use eLearning or virtual learning for school make-up days.

Anna Baldwin, Director of eLearning and Integration for Anderson 5, then provided additional information on how the eLearning pilot would work. In the event schools close due to inclement weather, student assignments would be posted in and accessible through several means: Google Classroom, the free learning management system adopted by the district; on Classroom app, accessible on a cell phone; and on the student's Chromebook. Even if students do not have internet access, they will be able to download the assignments from their Chromebooks or use the Google Classroom app. Teachers would be required to have virtual office hours to answer questions about the assignments. Students would have up to five days to complete the eLessons.

Rep. Felder asked for more information on the learning management system (LMS) being used in Anderson 5 and how the state should proceed with ensuring all districts have access to a LMS that gives comparable resources to all students across all districts. Superintendent Spearman commented that the Department of Education had been approached by the Beaufort County School District regarding a similar proposal. She expressed her belief that the State Board of Education should be given the responsibility for approving similar pilots. She also asked Mr. Wilson if Anderson 5 had used proceeds from a county sales tax to support the initiative.

Rep. Loftis asked for clarification about access to Chromebooks in the classroom and how teachers are trained in using online learning. Ms. Tate noted that all students in York School District 3 have an iPad in the elementary school and computers in middle and high school. Dr. Couch noted that technology equips students to benefit from personalized learning and to develop ownership of their learning. Dr. Merck asked for clarification about the possibility of other districts participating in the pilot. EOC staff noted that if the House proviso is adopted, then the EOC would have guidelines for the pilot to approve at its June meeting. Districts could then apply to participate in the pilot.

Mr. Robinson made a motion that, pursuant to Section 30-4-70 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, the committee go into Executive Session at the end of the meeting to discuss an appointment to a public body. Dr. Merck seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Robinson then recognized Dr. Lee D'Andrea, the independent consultant that the EOC hired to evaluate the impact of the Palmetto Digital Literacy Program. Both the House and Senate Finance Committee recommended another year of funding for the initiative, though the funding levels vary. D'Andrea reported on implementation of the initiative in the current school year:

- During the 2017-18 school year Learning.com is providing 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 throughout the school year.

- As of February 1, 2018, 37 of the 46 eligible school districts have enrolled and are in a variety of implementation stages.
- Interviews with participating districts reveal 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.
- Eleven districts completed post assessments for inclusion in the report.
- Time on task and practice capacity influence student results. Only one district demonstrated growth in creativity and innovation. The question raised in the report is did the students have time to practice the appropriate modules.

The three key findings were:

1. 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 among students K-8.
2. There continue to be significant unmet infrastructure needs in the provision of digital learning environments for students.
3. More extensive planning time and professional development are needed to develop digital learning environments within the schools and districts.

The three recommendations in the report were:

1. Continue to offer the Palmetto Digital Learning Project for Fiscal Year 2018-2019, 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.
2. 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.
3. Technology as a tool and as an area of study must be the focus of instructional technology integration for students.

Dr. D'Andrea concluded by discussing a draft framework for building the state's capacity to develop digital learning environments in all schools and districts. The framework included such elements as digital infrastructure, software and devices.

Mr. Robinson asked Dr. D'Andrea about the increased funding proposed for Fiscal Year 2018-19 and how the funds might be expended for the initiative. Ms. Hairfield echoed the report's findings that professional development in the integration of technology in instruction across content areas is critical. Rep. Loftis asked if Dr. D'Andrea could identify the areas of greatest need such as infrastructure, professional development or urgency. Several EOC members and staff from the Department of Education discussed the need

to integrate professional development training. Dr. D'Andrea clarified that the goal of the initiative is not merely to improve keyboarding skills of students for taking on-line assessments but to improve digital literacy, coding, innovation and creativity.

Subcommittee Reports:

Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee: Mr. Robinson called upon Dr. Merck. Dr. Merck noted that the Subcommittee met on March 19, 2018 and brings forward to the full EOC one action item and one information item.

First, the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee recommended that the EOC adopt Report #2 from HumRRO regarding the independent evaluation of SC READY and end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1, English 1 and Biology 1 for their validity and reliability. As explained by Dr. Merck, the EOC is responsible by state law for approving all assessments used for accountability. Unlike in previous years, when the EOC reviewed PACT, PASS, etc., the EOC procured an outside, independent evaluator to review the assessments used for accountability beginning this fall. Dr. Merck summarized the findings and recommendations of Report #2:

SC READY assessments:

Findings:

- SC READY assessments in English language arts (ELA) and math in grades 3-8 generally adhere to sound testing practices as described in the Test Standards, and thereby support the validity of the test scores for their intended uses and purposes. There were no critical concerns identified based on the technical evaluation of SC READY, although areas exist for continued improvement.
- Overall, SC READY assessment system meets all 8 minimum legislative requirements prescribed in Section 59-18-325 of the code of laws.
- Policymakers, educators and the public can have confidence that the scores students obtain on the assessments accurately reflect the current achievement of state standards and provide meaningful guidance about the students' readiness for academic content of the next grade level.

Recommendations for Improving SC READY:

- The test should include target Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels in test blueprints to improve consistently between standards and test items. If the standard requires students to have a deeper knowledge of the standard, then the test items need to reflect the higher cognitive demands.
- The test maker (Data Recognition Corporation) needs to provide more detail on the population of students on which percentile ranks are based to ensure that the population is representative of South Carolina students.

- The state needs to create back-up test forms to mitigate concerns of item exposure and test compromise.
- If significant numbers of districts continue taking the paper/pencil tests, the testing company will need to conduct propensity score matching studies to confirm that scores on paper/pencil and online tests are comparable.
- Regarding the vertical scale, the state needs to consider either reviewing the vertical score or communicating better how to interpret the score over grades tested.

End-of-Course Assessments in Algebra 1, English 1 and Biology 1:

Findings:

- End-of-course assessments generally adhere to sound testing practices as described in the Test Standards, and thereby support the validity of the test scores for their intended uses and purposes. No critical concerns were identified based on the technical evaluation of the end-of-course assessments, although areas exist for continued improvement.

Recommendations for Improving End-of-Course Assessments

- The vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), needs to include depth of knowledge (DKO) levels in test blueprints to improve the test items to ensure that the cognitive demands of the test are reflected in the test items.
- The vendor needs to create back-up test forms to mitigate concerns of item exposure and testing compromise.

In summary, the Subcommittee recommended that the full EOC adopt Report #2 and ask the Department of Education to provide feedback on how the agency will address the recommendations for improving the assessments, but especially all High and Urgent Priority recommendations, and that the response include detailed responses. As soon as the Department responds to Report #2, the EOC can consider approval of the assessments. Mrs. Hairfield asked for clarification on the motion. Then the committee unanimously adopted the Subcommittee's recommendations.

The last item was an information item, an update on the social studies standards review process. Dr. Merck explained that EOC members had questions regarding the status of the social studies standards. EOC staff, working with Dr. David Mathis, at the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) created a timeline to inform members on when the EOC might review revisions to the social studies standards. When asked about why the development of the social studies assessment would not be completed and used for accountability purposes until school year 2021-22, eleven years after the current standards were adopted, the State Superintendent of Education responded that, for the new assessment to be done well, it will take additional time. Rep. Felder asked if South Carolina could consult with other states who have developed comparable assessments.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee: Dr. Couch presented an overview of the key differences between the House and Senate Finance Committee versions of the 2018-19 general appropriation bill, including, increases to the base student cost of the Education Finance Act (EFA), teacher salary increases, and school bus purchases/leases.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Dr. Rainey Knight to update the committee on the creation of an accountability working group. Dr. Knight noted that the goal of the working group will be to recommend to the EOC changes to the ESSA state plan for future school years to ensure that the accountability system adequately measures whether students are graduating with the knowledge, skills and characteristics of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. There will be thirteen individuals representing education, business, higher education and parents on the group that will meet at least four times between April and July. Dr. Terry Holliday, a consultant to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and former Commissioner of Education for Kentucky will assist the group.

Mr. Loftis asked for an update from Superintendent Spearman on implementation of the computer science initiative, particularly professional development between the Department and higher education in training teachers in coding. Superintendent Spearman responded that the Department is coordinating professional development using several coding frameworks including Ruby on Rails.

Mr. Robinson then moved that the EOC go into Executive Session.

The veil having been lifted Mr. Robinson announced that the EOC in Executive Session had discussed an appointment to a public body but no vote was taken. He announced that the EOC would submit to the Governor a recommendation for appointment to a public body.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.