

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes
Summer Retreat
July 31, 2016 and August 1, 2016
Moore Farms Botanical Garden
Education Center
Lake City, South Carolina

Sunday, July 31, 2016 at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; April Allen; Cynthia Bennett; Anne Bull; Bob Couch, Sen. Mike Fair; Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Wes Hayes; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; John Stockwell; and Ellen Weaver.

Other Legislators Present: Sen. Greg Hembree

EOC Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Kevin Andrews; Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed the members and guests to Lake City. He recognized the two newest members of the EOC in attendance. Governor Haley recently appointed Cynthia Bennett, the Associate Vice President of Education/Business Relations for the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, as her business appointee to the EOC. Rep. Rita Allison, chairwoman of the House Education and Public Works Committee, has appointed to the EOC, Dr. John Stockwell, the Executive Director of the Spartanburg Academic Movement. Dr. Stockwell serves as a business appointee.

The minutes of the June 13, 2016 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson advised the members of the tentative meeting schedule of the EOC for fiscal year 2016-17. The full EOC will meet with the State Board of Education on September 14, 2016 in Columbia. Additional information will be mailed to members.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Mrs. Barton to present an overview of the existing data regarding South Carolina's progress toward every student graduating from public high schools with the knowledge, skills and characteristics of the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. First, Mrs. Barton handed out information documenting the implementation of STEM Premier in 100 high schools and 10 career centers this fall. These schools and centers will receive dashboards that allow the schools to gather data that provides useful information about their students and programs being offered. Other high schools can still participate in the SC Future Makers initiative and encourage their students to create profiles on STEM premier at no cost.

Mrs. Barton then presented a PowerPoint presentation starting with an overview of the 2020 Vision that the EOC adopted in 2009 and the metrics that have been used over time to monitor student achievement. In 2015 40 percent of working-age adults in South Carolina had a postsecondary degree or industry credential, a national ranking of 42nd. Of concern is the fact that neighboring states, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina all had greater than 45 percent of the working-age

adults with a postsecondary degree or industry credential. The trend is also concerning since states in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) region have not seen any real change since 2008 in this percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree. While South Carolina and other SREB states have made progress in improving the high school on-time graduation rate, the gap between the on-time graduation rate and college readiness, as measured by ACT scores, is significant. A 2016 report by Education Trust found that almost half of high school graduates did not complete a college or career-ready course of study. The presentation concluded with information regarding NAEP scores on reading and mathematics, highlighting the achievement gaps between white students and black and Hispanic students.

State Superintendent Molly Spearman commented that reading achievement must improve in the state. She noted the work the Department of Education is doing in Florence 4 where a lack of leadership capacity at the district and school levels had impacted teaching and learning. Underperforming schools and districts had been given money without the tools and capacity to implement effective intervention plans. Rep. Felder concurred that leadership is a critical component to achievement. Ms. Hairfield also noted that sustained intervention is important. Because education is one of the loneliest professions in the world, novice teachers need mentors, a technique that has improved teaching and learning at Meeting Street Academy. She concluded by reiterating the importance of skills and characteristics, students need to know how to learn. Dr. Couch noted that with his experience in the Allendale School District that the culture also needs to change so that expectations for learning are raised.

Mr. Robinson then recognized Darla Moore. In addition to her successful career in business, Ms. Moore has focused her attention recently on revitalizing her home town of Lake City. The EOC asked Ms. Moore to provide her insight into how to improve education in rural South Carolina. Ms. Moore explained that improving rural South Carolina requires a three-pronged approach. First, there needs to be a functioning government to make rapid change. Second, education must be improved. She noted that her involvement in local school board elections and in finding district leaders. She noted that her staff was able to find effective, research-based programs to implement in the schools with support from her foundation. For example, she assisted Florence 3 in finding Teach For America corps members, in implementing Reading Partners, and in establishing a New Tech High School at Lake City High School. She is now looking at the expansion of summer programs to increase the amount of time on task students in poverty have an opportunity to receive. And, third, a community must reinvent its economy. Ms. Moore has focused on downtown Lake City, building a hotel and attracting several businesses and restaurants. The next step involves a partnership with Florence-Darlington Technical College to establish a middle college environment focused on hospitality and tourism and mechanical, electrical and design careers. Ms. Moore noted that K-12 education is the “black hole” in philanthropy. Many non-profits are electing not to invest in K-12 education. For many, it is a concern that initiatives are not scalable. Ms. Moore concluded with two issues that impede progress. First, poverty prevents students from having access to opportunities. And, second, higher education is not adequately preparing our teachers and leaders to work with students in poverty.

Rep. Loftis asked Ms. Moore to comment about the use of technology in education. Ms. Moore stated that we have not touched the technology that is available and we need to work harder in that arena because technology can be used to scale initiatives. Rep. Felder concurred with Ms. Moore that our teachers are not taught how to effectively teach children of poverty and therefore, we have to change our teacher preparation programs. Ms. Moore noted that pre-service teachers need to be in the classrooms sooner, especially in our most challenging schools.

Mr. Robinson thanked Ms. Moore for having the EOC retreat in Lake City and invited her to the dinner to follow at 6:00 p.m.

The only action item on the EOC agenda is the approval of criteria to identify underperforming schools and districts based on student assessment and graduation results from the 2015-16 school year. Mr. Robinson explained the recommendations of the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee. With passage of the federal legislation, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the new federal accountability system will not be operational until school year 2017-18. However, in the meantime, the state will release to the public in the fall of 2016 and 2017 transitional report cards that must identify “potentially underperforming schools and districts” to ensure that technical assistance support and interventions are provided. The criteria for identifying elementary and middle schools will be assessment results in English language arts and mathematics on the SC Ready assessment. The criteria for high schools will include graduation rates, ACT college benchmarks results, and WorkKeys results. For districts, the criteria include graduation rates and student assessment results from SC Ready, ACT and WorkKeys. After members asked clarifying questions, the subcommittee report was unanimously approved.

The EOC adjourned at 6:00 p.m. to have dinner at the facility.

Monday, August 1, 2016 at 9:00 a.m.

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; April Allen; Cynthia Bennett; Anne Bull; Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Wes Hayes; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; Rep. Joe Neal; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; John Stockwell; and Ellen Weaver.

Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Kevin Andrews; Rainey Knight; Lisa Nichols; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Other Legislators Present: Sen. Greg Hembree

Mr. Robinson opened the meeting by introducing Graceanne Cole, Vice President of Research for MarketSearch Corporation to provide the results of a statewide survey on accountability and expectations. The statewide survey was given during April and May 2016. The focus groups for the survey were general population, educators, businesspeople, and parents of school-aged children. Each survey looked at perceptions of education and how groups viewed the school and district report cards. In general, the public tends to see the report cards as effective tools to improve education. Educators, however, were somewhat more likely to view them as labels that are divisive. Priorities for the report cards vary somewhat by audience, but all want to see evidence of achievement and performing at grade level (especially on reading). Regarding the format for grading schools (by descriptors or letter grades), the study found mixed reactions from various audiences. Educators and parents identified a general preference for descriptors (Excellent, Average, At Risk, etc.) while the General Population audience and business leaders preferred giving schools letter grades (A-F).

When it comes to goals and expectations of students and schools, the study findings indicated that, for many, expectations tended to be higher than actual performance, but that the goals under consideration seem unrealistic or unattainable. Educators were somewhat more positive about current school performance but significantly more skeptical regarding attainment of projected goals.

Overall, the survey findings identified reasonable levels of engagement among all audience; support for measurement and reporting of performance, and support for setting reasonable goals that may ultimately enhance SC's public education system and the quality of education within the state.

Sen. Matthews asked if citizens from underperforming schools and districts were represented in the sample. Mrs. Cole explained that while the sample size for parents and educators was not controlled, a diverse area of the state was represented in each surveyed group. Larger school districts tended to have higher presentation, however. Rep. Neal asked questions about what could explain the differences in expectations between the groups. Mrs. Cole said that while educators had a higher familiarity with issues like personalized learning and the achievement gap, their perceptions about the report card and expectations may present the personal familiarity educators have with the subject matter being surveyed.

Then, Mr. Robinson introduced Dr. Lee D'Andrea, former superintendent of Anderson 4 and Pickens County and chair of the EOC's High School Task Force, to lead the EOC members into a discussion of the accountability system. Dr. D'Andrea used a "system approach" to evaluate the current and future needs of our state's accountability system. Working in groups the EOC members focused on: (1) ensuring that students entering the public schools be closely monitored to ensure that they are reading proficiently by the third grade; (2) new quality data collections that provide meaningful information to teachers, students and parents on the student's pathway for college and career readiness, as measured by knowledge, skills and characteristics; and (3) communicating to educators, parents, and the public on measures of college and career readiness. Specifically, EOC members discussed:

1. South Carolina must have a baseline assessment of the whole child (literacy, numeracy and some family background information) when students enter the system in full-day 4K or five-year-old kindergarten. This requires a new database system to collect the data.
2. South Carolina should assess students at the conclusion of each grade through 2nd grade for literacy and numeracy. This documentation of growth (formative) is powerful information for parents and can be used to demonstrate school success or accountability in moving students toward the Read to Succeed goal. This also requires a new database system to collect the data
3. South Carolina should assess students in grades 3-8 in the four core subject areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. However, the assessments should not be merely multiple choice assessments of content. For example, the social studies assessment should contain a strand on citizenship, work ethics, service to country, etc., which is consistent with the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Again, a new database system to collect the data. It also requires an intensive communication plan.
4. South Carolina, working with institutions of higher education, must establish scores on the ACT, SAT, or ACCUPLACER to determine college readiness. Regarding career readiness, South Carolina must establish a WorkKeys National Certification level as well as an ASVAB and/or Career Completer Sequence and industry certification to be deemed "career-ready." Again, a new database system is needed to collect the data. It also requires an intensive communication plan.

Superintendent Spearman noted that additional assessments will not be readily embraced by the public. Rep. Neal noted that students in poverty are in need of opportunities through the K-12 public education system that students of higher socioeconomic status already have. Dr. Stockwell noted that a critical metric is the number of remedial courses our high school graduates have to take in two-year colleges before earning college credit.

Mr. Robinson concluded by thanking the members for their participation in the retreat. In September the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee will begin working on recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the key components of the accountability system.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at noon.