

# **SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes of the Meeting December 12, 2016**

Members Present: Neil Robinson (Chair); Danny Merck (Vice-Chair); Cynthia Bennett; Anne Bull; Bob Couch; Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; Rep. Joe Neal; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; John Stockwell; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

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

Mr. Robinson welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

The minutes of the October 10, 2016 meeting were reviewed. Rep. Felder noted a typographical error on page 3 of the minutes as distributed. The minutes were amended and then approved.

Mr. Robinson called upon Mrs. Barton to provide a summary of the report of the Joint Computer Science and Technology Task Force. Mrs. Barton reviewed the findings and recommendations of the Task Force, noting that the recommendations with a fiscal impact statement are included in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 EIA budget report that will follow. Superintendent Spearman noted that the Board of Education would consider at its next meeting the addition of computer science as a teacher certification area. Mrs. Hairfield agreed that any standards in K-8 would require embedding the instruction in all coursework. Given the current teacher shortage, Sen. Matthews questioned how the state would find certified teachers to instruct students. Mr. Robinson responded that finding the teachers would require public and private partnerships and innovative approaches. Dr. Stockwell noted that gaming is sparking the interest of students in cyber security. Mrs. Hairfield noted that it will be important to training existing teachers in computer science, noting that many millennial teachers will likely want to teach computer science. Rep. Loftis asked if the South Carolina Department of Education was consulting with other states on approaches to train teachers in computer science. Superintendent Spearman responded that the Department is working on virtual modules for teachers and online courses.

Mr. Robinson called upon Dr. Knight to provide an overview of the Summer Reading Camp Partnership Report. The General Assembly allocated \$700,000 in Summer Reading Camp funds to community partnerships. The South Carolina Department of Education used a competitive grants process to award 14 school districts with grants. The community partners included the Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, county libraries, churches, etc. The goal of the grant is to provide instructional support to struggling readers as an extension of the summer reading camps. Dr. Knight focused on the findings and following recommendations:

1. Partnerships should be intentional in allotting time during the partnership to further assist struggling readers. The partnership staff, tutors and volunteers should be provided training with the basic understanding of the reading process

and how to respond to reading issues of students. Time for assisting struggling readers should be required in the partnership application process.

2. While the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) reported statewide reading growth in the summer reading camps as “minimal, moderate and exceptional,” it is recommended that SCDE report out the results of the reading progress in each district and a statewide average using grade equivalent measures. The summary reading data for all districts across the state should be calculated for comparison purposes against the partnership reading camp reading data.
3. SCDE should consider identifying grantees for reading partnership no later than February before implementation in the summer.
4. SCDE should continue to use a competitive grants process to make the awards.
5. SCDE should continue to require all adults who work with children to have a background check.
6. SCDE should continue to be coordinated through the Office of early Learning in SCDE to assist in the planning, staffing, professional development and technical assistance to sites with limited resources.
7. Student attendance continues to be one of the greatest impediments. Sites should continue to strategize ways to increase student attendance.
8. While grade equivalent reading growth was found at every grade level, i.e., from 0.28 to 0.5 months of growth, districts should consider opening the summer reading camps to students in the earlier grades where greater gains may be achieved with students exiting on grade level in reading.

Dr. Merck noted that with the mandatory start date law the summer reading camps are helping students by addressing the summer reading loss. Rep. Felder asked Dr. Merck how his district determines which students attend the summer reading camp. Dr. Merck responded that it is based on their diagnostic scores. Rep. Neal asked if the unique student identifiers are being used to track the performance of students who attended the camps in the subsequent school year.

Then, Mr. Robinson asked Mrs. Ward to give an update on the South Carolina Community Block Grants for Education Pilot Program. Ms. Ward noted that last year eight districts received \$2.0 million in community block grants. These funds have been used to provide 109 professional development activities for 350 teachers in 33 schools and 159 classrooms where over 2,770 four-year-old students are enrolled. Approximately 74 classrooms have been assessed to evaluate teacher-child interactions. In five of these eight districts, Head Start, County First Steps and local businesses have partnered.

For the current fiscal year, \$1.0 million was appropriated for the program. There were requests totaling \$34 million. Six districts (Lexington 4, York 1, Richland 1, Florence 1, Lancaster, and Spartanburg 7) received grants. The Florence 1 grant actually provided

services to several districts in the Pee Dee region including Florence 2, Florence 4, Dillon 3, Dillon 4 and Marion School Districts.

Subcommittee Reports:

On behalf of the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee, Dr. Merck presented the findings of the cyclical review of the social studies academic standards. Rep. Neal questioned whether African American history was adequately addressed in the standards. Mrs. Barton noted that one of the recommendations of the review panel was to show greater diversity with the inclusion of women, African Americans, and Hispanics to include the challenges and changes over time. Superintendent Spearman also noted that writing panel would take into consideration such concerns. The EOC unanimously approved the cyclical review of the 2011 social studies standards report.

Dr. Couch then presented the Fiscal Year 2017-18 EIA budget and proviso recommendations. As Dr. Couch noted, the recommendations focus on supporting innovation that will support student achievement and instruction. The Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee further recommended the establishment of an innovation fund that would develop and implement a competitive grants process for reviewing, awarding and monitoring innovative education strategies similar to Georgia. In South Carolina, through the South Carolina Community Block Grants for Education Program, 37 local school districts requested almost \$7 million in funds during fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-17. During FY 2015-16, \$2 million was allocated by proviso, and eight districts were awarded. During FY 2016-17, \$1 million was allocated, and awards are pending. The program could be modeled after a similar initiative in Georgia which recently awarded planning, implementation and scaling grants in the following priority areas:

- Applied learning with a focus on K-12 STEM education,
- Birth to age eight language and literacy development,
- Development and replication of blended learning school models, and
- Teacher and leader development for high-need schools.

The EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee offered additional modifications and additions: (1) augment the teacher and leader development priority with innovative practices that also address teacher recruitment and retention and (2) strategies that develop students' soft skills in measurable ways.

The EOC unanimously approved the EIA budget and proviso recommendations.

Finally, Mrs. Hairfield detailed for the EOC the public awareness activities and stakeholder engagement strategies that have been undertaken since July. On November 15, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) announced the winners of the "Read Your Way to the Big Game" Contest, a statewide reading contest held this Fall for students in SC public primary, elementary, and middle schools. This was the second year of the contest, a partnership between EOC and the athletic depts. of USC and Clemson.

Student winners of the contest won tickets to the Palmetto Bowl, which was held on November 26. The student winners this year were from Greenwood (7<sup>th</sup> grader) and Gaffney (3<sup>rd</sup> grader). The students and their families attended the game and enjoyed pre-game field access. Two schools – Baron DeKalb Elementary in Kershaw County

School District and Hendersonville Elementary in Colleton County School District, were awarded \$2,000 for their school libraries. They joined 31 other schools which had over 70 percent of their students participating. Seven participating teachers won \$500 each. This year, the EOC received 64,937 entries. Since students had to read 6 books to enter, that is almost 390,000 books read! Those entries came from 628 schools across the state. This program has been recognized with awards from the SC Chapter of the School Public Relations Association as well as the American Library Association.

The EOC also recently debuted a math partnership with the University of SC Athletic Dept. and USC Men's Basketball Coach Frank Martin (a former high school math teacher) on November 28. "Martin's Math Club," is designed to help young people learn that math is fun and relevant in their daily lives. The inaugural "Martin's Math Club" contest will run from November 28, 2016-February 24, 2017. The contest provides the opportunity for teachers and students in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade to win two tickets to a University of SC Men's Basketball team home game. With assistance from SC math educators, the EOC published 18 standards-based lessons for K-8<sup>th</sup> grade that incorporate math and basketball. Each teacher that incorporates at least one of two available lessons into their teaching has the chance to win two tickets to a USC home basketball game and each student who receives a lesson will be eligible to win two tickets to a home basketball game. Winners will be recognized at each game and may have the chance to meet Coach Martin. Neil Robinson and Coach Martin announced the partnership at a press conference on November 28. The online tools for the contest are included with grade-specific tools designed for parents to help their kids at home with math content. These tools were also developed with the assistance of math educators statewide. Everything can be found online at [www.helpwithmathsc.org](http://www.helpwithmathsc.org).

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.