

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

June 14, 2021

Members Present (in-person or remote): Ellen Weaver, Chair; Rep. Terry Alexander; April Allen (remote); Melanie Barton; Rep. Neal Collins; Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Sidney Locke (remote); Dr. Brian Newsome; Neil Robinson; Supt. Molly Spearman; Patti Tate (remote); and Dr. Scott Turner

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Matthew Ferguson; Dr. Valerie Harrison; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Dr. Matthew Lavery; and Dana Yow.

Guests Present: Dr. Lee D'Andrea, EOC Consultant; Diane Sigmon, EOC Consultant; Anne Pressley, SCDE; Dr. John Payne, Deputy Superintendent, SCDE; Georgia Mjarten, SC First Steps; Martha Strickland, SC First Steps; Derek Cromwell; SC First Steps

Ms. Weaver welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

The minutes of the April 12, 2021 EOC meeting were approved and seconded. Ms. Weaver asked Mr. Robinson to present the report of the Academic Standards and Assessments subcommittee meeting, which met on May 17. Mr. Robinson summarized the discussion on each of the three action items that came before the group as information.

Science SC College and Career Ready Academic Standards

At the subcommittee meeting, Dr. Rainey Knight provided an overview of the Cyclical Review of the 2021 SC College and Career Ready Science Standards. The EOC has authority for evaluating the content standards of all academic areas which are included in the accountability system. A national panel made up of five experts in science, curricular standards, and/or cognitive processes, were secured to review the standards and provide suggested revisions.

A state panel from across South Carolina also reviewed the standards. This panel was made up of parents, science teachers, teachers of exceptional education, teachers of English language learners, community members and representatives from business. The Cyclical Review of the Science standards was adopted by the EOC in December 2019 and forwarded on to the SC Dept. of Education.

The document the subcommittee evaluated and voted upon in April was the proposed Science Standards drafted by SC educators. These new standards reflect best practices from experts in the field of science and teaching and learning of science. The new science standards are also three-dimensional to include science and engineering practices (SEP); disciplinary core ideas (DCI); and crosscutting concepts (CC).

The ASA subcommittee recommendation is to approve the 2021 SC College and Career Ready Science Standards.

Ms. Hairfield commented on the strength of the new standards and stated that she believed that the teachers would appreciate the quality of these standards.

Supt. Spearman recognized Anne Pressley and her team on the work they did with these standards.

The EOC approved the standards as written.

Military-Connected Students Report

The ASA subcommittee received the 2021 Annual Report on the Educational Performance of Military-Connected Students. Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA requires the identification and collection of Military-Connected Student data. Data reported by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) regarding military-connected students are based on district entry of student information into the student information system.

Act 289 requests the EOC to develop an annual report on the educational performance of military-connected students that must at least address: attendance, academic performance in reading, math, science, and graduation rate.

There were over 18,000 military-connected students in SC public schools in school year 2019-20. Almost 70 percent of those students have at least one parent who is active duty. Of those students, approximately 80 percent of those students attended one of 10 school districts.

This year's report was limited in performance results due to COVID. EOC staff did look at the following data:

- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)
- End-of Course Examination Program (EOCEP)
- Advanced Placement (AP) Course Performance
- Career and Technology Education Certification/Credential Areas
- Graduation Rate
- Attendance

Overall, military-connected students tend to outperform their peers statewide.

The ASA subcommittee approved the Military-Connected Report for school year 2019-20, and recommends the full committee follow suit.

Ms. Barton stated she was interested especially in the attendance data. She wanted to know if there was data for attendance rates for the State. Dr. Andrews stated that we had not received statewide data for comparison from the SCDE.

The EOC approved the Military-Connected Report.

Parent Survey Report

Dr. Andrews provided the subcommittee in May with the annual Parent Survey Report. This year's report is brief since COVID prevented the Parent Survey from being distributed.

Section 59-28-190 of the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act requires the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to *"survey parents to determine if state and local efforts are effective in increasing parental involvement."*

For the first time, in the Spring of 2021, the parent survey will be administered using electronic devices, including smart phones. Parents may access the survey using a personal computer with

internet access or using their smart phone. With these changes, the survey will now be made available to parents of students at all grade levels.

Another benefit of moving to electronic presentation is that content changes can be made more easily. Some content changes were already proposed and implemented.

Dr. Andrews did point out some questions and concerns about the survey changes, specifically the concern that parents taking the same survey each year for multiple children may lead to fatigue. Staff is continuing to monitor revisions.

The ASA subcommittee approved the Parent Survey Report for school year 2019-20, and Ms. Weaver said that was wonderful that we were finally moving to electronic distribution.

Rep. Alexander asked what we are looking for with the Parent Survey. Mr. Robinson stated that we are looking for any number of things but what happens after the survey goes out is what is most important.

Ms. Barton said as a parent on an SIC, she asked for the survey each year. It is the responsibility of the SIC to look at it. Dr. Turner said the Parent Survey results are looked at in principal evaluations.

Rep. Alexander said it was difficult to find out how many pages the survey was. Ms. Felder said that he wasn't sure which of the appendixes was the actual survey. Appendix C is the translation to an online version.

The committee adopted the Parent Survey report.

Ms. Weaver called upon Dr. Couch to present the report of the EIA subcommittee which also met on May 17.

EIA Program Update

Dr. Couch reviewed the details outlined at subcommittee for the EIA programs. Dr. Rainey Knight provided an update for the subcommittee on the status of the state budget and the EOC's EIA budget recommendations. Much of the state budget remains in flux. Staff is continuing to monitor the process and will provide an update once the budget is finalized.

Dr. Knight had discussed the EIA application process during summer/fall 2021. New this year, EOC staff will provide training webinars for EIA program participants during the summer focused on EIA application completion and the development of SMART goals for the EIA programs.

At subcommittee Mr. Ferguson also presented plans to institute an in-depth review and evaluation cycle for EIA programs. Staff categorized current EIA programs into the following groups: improving teacher quality; increasing school readiness and ensuring early learning success; supporting struggling students; emphasizing learning in content areas; improving connections across education levels and with world of work; measuring and evaluating success; and miscellaneous programs.

EOC staff plans to begin the EIA evaluation reviews during fall 2021 with the programs categorized as improving teacher quality. The results of the evaluation will be presented to the EIA subcommittee for their consideration. The plan is for other EIA program areas to be considered for evaluation and review in subsequent years.

Teacher Loan Program Report for FY 2019-20

The EIA subcommittee received the Teacher Loan Program Report for Fiscal Year 2019-20, as required by the Teacher Quality Act of 2000. The report provided information about implementation of the Teacher Loan Program, how the Teacher Loan program measures against goals set by an advisory group, and information about South Carolina's teacher workforce that supports the need for the SC Teacher Loan Program.

Key Findings related to implementation of the Teacher Loan Program Report included the following:

1. TLP applicants and recipients decreased slightly in 2019-20.
2. There was an increase of 3.6 percent in TLP administrative costs in 19-20 from 18-19.
3. Historically, applicants to the TLP have been predominantly white (79%) and/or female (80%), consistent with trends observed in national and South Carolina teacher workforce profiles.

Key Findings related to the Advisory Group Goals for the Teacher Loan Program included the following:

4. The percentage of African American TLP applicants (18%) mirrors the percentage of African Americans in the South Carolina teaching force.
5. But the percentage of African American TLP recipients did not mirror the percentage of African Americans in the South Carolina teaching force (15%).
6. The number of TLP recipients at historically African American institutions decreased to only 4 in 2019-20.
7. TLP male applicant representation closely mirrors the percent of males in the South Carolina educator workforce, but TLP male recipients was below that observed in the South Carolina educator workforce.

Key Findings related to the South Carolina Educator Force included the following:

8. The number of SC students who graduated with a bachelor's degree and teacher certification eligibility declined from the previous year. Only 24 percent of new hires are recent graduates of an in-state teacher preparation program.
9. About 700 certified positions were still vacant at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. This is a 26% increase compared to 2019-20, even though school districts reported fewer teacher departures overall.

The EIA subcommittee recommendation is to adopt the Teacher Loan Report for Fiscal Year 2019-20.

Once Dr. Couch concluded his update, Ms. Weaver followed up on a previous question about whether the Teacher Loan Program could access the revolving loan program. Ray Jones said that this was addressed this year so no denials should occur due to lack of funding.

Ms. Felder said that the percentage of dollars spent on administration went up significantly in 2019-20. Mr. Jones said that it went up that year when the Student Loan Corp. staff was reduced.

That year was the first year of the conversion of the loan to FirstMark Services, so that was the cost associated with that conversion. There was a flat fee associated with converting files to the FirstMark Services system. Sen. Hembree asked if that percentage should drop down next year. Mr. Jones said it would go down. Rep. Alexander asked about whether the other HBCUs were part of the program. Mr. Jones said that all HBCUs are part of the program; there may only be small numbers of borrowers from HBCUs. Dr. Turner asked if all academic criteria for the program are weighted equally. Mr. Jones said that they are all kick-outs; if you don't meet it on one criterion, you can qualify in a different area. Dr. Turner asked about Career Changers loans. Anyone seeking initial certification can enter a forgivable program.

The EOC approved the Teacher Loan report.

SCDE Presentation

At the conclusion of subcommittee reports, Ms. Weaver turned over the agenda to Supt. Spearman to provide an update. Ms. Spearman stated that for the reading summer camps, approx. 33,000 were invited to participate in some type of Summer Reading camp at their schools. They will be there at a minimum of 96 hours for those students attending. Districts have been working on their Academic Recovery Plans, which came in last week. Each were evaluated using five different indicators. Fifteen plans were sent back to districts; many needed to develop measurable outcomes. All the plans will be posted to the website. It was evident they used the Rally tool. Summer school and additional instructional days are often used. They are using the resources the State has purchased. Curriculum audits have been completed in the Palmetto Literacy schools (215). If they are not using the best materials, the SCDE is purchasing appropriate materials. As of June 9, some districts are completing state testing, so they don't have the final numbers yet. Ms. Spearman also updated the committee on school board consolidation. Eleven school districts are in the process of consolidating. Hampton 1 and 2 will become Hampton Schools July 1, 2021. Clarendon 1 and 3 will be Clarendon 4 on July 1, 2021. On July 1, 2022, Clarendon 2 will join, and they will all become Clarendon Consolidated. Bamberg 1 and 2 as well as Barnwell 19 and 29 consolidate effective July 1, 2022. Also, Florence 4 and Florence 1 will be consolidated by July 1, 2022. That is foundational progress and long overdue, according to Ms. Spearman.

Sen. Hembree says that it is nice to see the hard work bear fruit. The ESSER III money can be used for construction of facilities. The money is going directly to the school districts; there is nothing stopping them from using the money. There is a gigantic amount of money flowing to the districts so this an opportunity to take care of the facility needs.

Rep. Alexander thanked Supt. Spearman for consolidation. He said that we are consolidating poor districts; he wants to make sure we don't create bigger poor school districts. We need to think about how we are financing schools and districts across the state. Supt. Spearman said that the situation with the index of taxpaying ability in rural areas is an area that needs to be fixed. Counties must take care of their own within the counties. There is still significant work to do, with old structures in place that don't serve us today.

Dr. John Payne was then asked to explain the three different pots of ESSER funds, especially the ESSER III funds. He presented a PowerPoint to the committee.

During the presentation, Supt. Spearman talked about the focus on learning loss and what they are doing with districts. They are working with the SC Afterschool Alliance and the SC Arts Commission on handling some funds and showing outcomes with some of the federal funds.

Sen. Johnson asked if he could get a copy of Dr. Payne's presentation; EOC staff will send to all members.

Ms. Barton asked how we will know what worked and how well it worked. There is a disconnect between what State wants and what school districts want. Dr. Payne said that the SCDE will be facilitating a conversation with districts next month. He said we must be attentive to hiring people and buying a bunch of stuff. They will hire additional staff at SCDE to monitor and make changes, an "MTSS system for school districts."

Ms. Weaver asked if we would be coding students who receive different interventions. Dr. Payne said that is something that they are discussing internally now.

Rep. Alexander asked for the allowable uses of money. Dr. Payne said he would send it. We need to look at 3rd grade piece; this is an area that we really need to focus on. Supt. Spearman talked about some of the challenges like local control. Some of the curriculum that districts are using doesn't match with what the needs of the children are.

Rep. Collins asked about the learning loss of children and the funds going to districts versus the State. He asked what we think is the best use of these funds. Dr. Payne said high dosage tutoring and wellness strategies work -- really looking at quality programs to get learning caught up or accelerated. Ms. Spearman said that districts are hiring additional people to help with the high dosage tutoring, people who are equipped with the strategies to help students. Finding personnel is a challenge since we already have a teacher shortage. We are working with other states to work with college students and students in pre-service programs to get more people to work with students. Finding people is a huge challenge right now.

Ms. Hairfield stated that the most important thing is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. Can any of the money be used to help teachers get further training? Dr. Payne said yes, there is an opportunity for professional development, and they are encouraging districts to use the funds for this purpose. There are many vendors out there already, but there needs to be proof that it works. Some districts are giving retention bonuses to their teachers. Ms. Hairfield said that teachers aren't often incentivized enough to go to professional development.

Dr. Newsome asked if we had looked at other states and how they are using the money, specifically NC, GA, and Mississippi. Some of the other states are getting together to talk about opportunities and how they are handling all the monies. At the end of the day, we want to make sure we are good stewards of taxpayer monies. There are weekly discussions with CCSSO. A number of states are contacting us about how we moved so quickly on our private school monies.

Sen. Hembree thanked Dr. Payne for his presentation. He asked if the hardware and software were well in place. Dr. Payne stated that that is the SCDE's assumption. He thinks most of those purchases were made last Spring. There were some issues with delivery. Dr. Hembree asked about new office the SCDE was standing up to manage this funding. Will the work be contracted out? Dr. Payne said the office is going to be stood up in-house, until 2024 – a temporary grant position. They have also contracted with outside firms to assist with facility design. The concern is having enough people to do this. This is a tremendous undertaking. Ms. Spearman said they are hiring 40 people total for that office. Sen. Hembree stated that gives him comfort. Districts

have until August 24 to submit their plans. Districts will have the ability to amend plans as well. Sen. Hembree asked about money being available for mental health counselors and social emotional issues. Ms. Spearman said that something that has become a problem is that insurance companies need to upgrade the location from where services must be provided -- for federal employees and some other state insurance providers. It is an issue when services are provided inside a school. This is a low-hanging fruit that needs to be fixed. Sen. Hembree also asked about the teacher training and leadership training – can districts use money for sponsoring scholarships for students to go into education? Dr. Payne said yes, they money could be used as an incentive to cover a practicum or come in and work to help students. This would help us increase the pipeline.

Districts must use this additional funding for projects that are reasonable, allowable, and necessary (linked or caused by the pandemic.) This level of new funding has created an emergency industry. There will be an army of smart people coming in to sell to districts. He is afraid that some of this money is going to be wasted. He is also worried that when this money ends, there will be a turn to the General Assembly to tell them they are underfunding education. We can't get accustomed to this level of funding because it is unsustainable.

Dr. Couch said there are a lot of good programs out there, where teachers must be trained by a provider. There must be whole school reform when you come in with this type of money. He is also concerned that he hasn't heard anything about career and technical. As we move forward, what is the plan of the districts to engage students holistically. Ms. Spearman said she agreed with this. She stated they are working with Dr. Hardee and the Technical College system. There are things they plan on doing to expand CTE in the State.

Ms. Weaver thanked Ms. Spearman and Dr. Payne for their work. She was enthused by the back-to-the-basics approach.

KRA Report

Following discussion, Dr. Lavery was called upon to present the KRA Report to the EOC. He presented the results to the committee. Ms. Spearman thanked Dr. Lavery for his report. She asked what was different about the administration of the test and asked if that would impact the results. He said it did affect the results, but we can't really say how. This is part of why the vendor was adamant about not comparing the scores from year to year. She also was happy about changing the date of the administration of the KRA. It was not indicated when the test was administered although some were given closer to the beginning of school, during LEAP days. We have given permission to schools to administer the KRA before school starts. Ms. Barton was pleased the report showed the positive impact of 4K programs. Rep. Felder thanked him for the report. She wanted to know if there was a consideration of getting a formal KRA result returned by testing vendor sooner than January. Ms. Spearman said that she would relay that information to the SCDE staff.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Ferguson reminded the members about the EOC Retreat plans and encouraged members to make their reservations.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.