

**SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**  
**Full Committee Meeting**  
Minutes of the Oct. 14, 2024 Meeting

**Members Present (in-person or remote):** April Allen, Rep. Terry Alexander, Melanie Barton, Rep. Neal Collins, Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Bill Hager, Barbara Hairfield, Sen. Kevin Johnson, Sen. Dwight Loftis, Jeri McCumbee, Dr. Brian Newsome, Melissa Pender

**EOC Staff Present:** Amina Asghar, Tenell Felder, Gabrielle Fulton, Hope Johnson-Jones, Dr. Rainey Knight, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May, Dana Yow

**Guest(s) Present:** Dr. Matthew Ferguson, SCDE

EOC Chair April Allen opened the meeting and welcomed the new EOC Data Engineer Amina Asghar.

Next, Allen asked for a motion to approve the June 10 full committee meeting minutes. After the minutes were approved, Allen introduced the 2024 Elementary School Data Trailblazer award winner as the first agenda item.

The 2024 Data Trailblazer award recognized a South Carolina public elementary, middle and high school that exemplarily used data to improve student outcomes, help families and caregivers interpret their students' grades and assessment scores, and establish and maintain a culture of a school-wide data-informed decision making.

Thirteen elementary schools submitted Data Trailblazers applications for which Joanne-Woodson Elementary was selected as winner.

Joanna-Woodson Elementary School Principal Arneice Renwick was called forward to present how Joanna-Woodson Elementary used data to positively impact student achievement.

Principal Renwick thanked the committee for giving her the opportunity to present. She noted that when she began as principal, the school had a lot of data that was not being utilized.

She emphasized the importance of analyzing data from the following Data Sources:

- Teacher Assessments
- Attendance Rates
- Fountas and Pinnell
- Dreambox
- KRA
- MAP Fluency/MAP
- SC READY
- Linkit Benchmarks
- Teachers, parent and student surveys

Principal Renwick then highlighted key data findings, the first of which was attendance rate. Attendance rate data indicated that students who missed many days were not academically performing as well as their peers. Renwick reported that after interventions were put into place, Joanna-Woodson Elementary did not have any students on its' truancy list.

Renwick reviewed MAP and SC READY score data to help determine areas of weakness for students. She also pointed out that data indicated African American students, students of poverty and students with a disability were not performing as well as their peers – leading herself and teachers to discuss strategies to assist those populations.

Next, Renwick showed how Joanna-Woodson Elementary utilizes professional learning groups to help keep track of student progress using school interventionists to help students with reading and math.

Renwick also discussed utilizing parent/student conferences to discuss specific data points and areas of growth, as well as Parent Nights.

Following her presentation, questions were accepted.

Senator Kevin Johnson thanked Principal Renwick for her presentation and asked if she could provide any insight into why African American students and students in poverty are not performing as well as their counterparts and what innovations they are using for improvement.

Renwick replied that parents of these students were more likely not to graduate from high school while others have jobs that require them to work most of the time, leaving little time for school involvement. She also noted her observation that often African American students are not as motivated as their peers. She noted that African American students tend to do better when their teachers are also African American or when their teacher in general takes interest in them. She noted that growth has been seen at her school with students in poverty.

Senator Johnson then commented that from his observation, parental involvement is often lacking in those demographics. He noted that students tend to perform better academically when their parents are involved in school.

Next, Representative Terry Alexander asked what Joanna-Woodson's student/teacher ratio was.

Renwick responded they typically have smaller classroom sizes with about 1 or 2 teachers to 20 students.

Senator Dwight Loftis then asked if Renwick noticed students responded well to hands-on learning, to which Renwick replied that they did. She then referred to the school's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program as being a method to provide students with more engaged learning.

Following questions, EOC member Melanie Barton presented Principal Renwick with a congratulatory letter on behalf of Governor Henry McMaster.

Following this, Allen called forward EOC Executive Director Dana Yow and EOC Deputy Director Dr. Matthew Lavery to present the Information Item of the 2024 School Report Card Release, noting that EOC staff did attempt to have the report card release on Oct. 10 so that the committee could hear a full report.

Yow shared that the report card release would take place at Pine Crest Elementary in Greenwood 50 with the SC Department of Education. She noted that South Carolina has seen a steady improvement in ELA performance yet student performance in math is stagnant.

Yow also addressed chronic absenteeism and thanked Barton for bringing the issue to the committee. She reiterated that rising chronic absenteeism rates was a national issue and that COVID negatively impacted both student and teacher attendance. She informed the committee that EOC staff would be conducting a focus group study on chronic absenteeism.

Yow then called forward Dr. Lavery to share his analysis of how chronic absenteeism impacted student outcomes during the 2022-23 school year.

Dr. Lavery defined chronic absenteeism using the federal definition – being absent, excused or unexcused, for 10% or more of the days that the student is enrolled. He then shared the following data:

- 23% of students in South Carolina were chronically absent in the 2022-23 school year.
  - Of this percentage, 15% of elementary students were chronically absent
  - 21% of middle school students were chronically absent
  - 24% of high school students were chronically absent

He noted that from those figures, one in five students missed more than 10% of the days they were enrolled at school. Dr. Lavery also noted a trend showing that chronic absenteeism rates increase by grade level.

Dr. Lavery then presented data on how chronic absenteeism rates impacted student achievement.

- 60% of students who are not chronically absent met or exceeded SC READY ELA, while only 40% of students who are chronically absent did.
- Less than half of chronically absent students met or exceeded SC READY Math
- Only 16% of middle school students who are chronically absent met or exceeded SC READY Math
- Only 8% of middle school students who were extremely chronically absent met or exceeded SC READY Math.

Dr. Lavery also presented data showing that students who are chronically absent who transfer to other schools also show low student achievement rates, as do pupils in poverty.

Senator Kevin Johnson asked about the racial demographics of chronically absent students to which Dr. Lavery responded that he could set up the data to do that specific analysis.

Next, Representative Neal Collins discussed state law regarding chronic absenteeism and stated that family court attorneys, judges and school district employees should hear the data Dr. Lavery presented to understand its' impact.

Ms. Yow also informed the committee that EOC staff looked at how chronic absenteeism has impacted every state across socioeconomic status.

EOC member Melissa Pender, Coosa Elementary Principal, stated that she has had to place many of her students on attendance contracts last year which includes speaking with parents. She also noted that many parents did not understand how teachers are negatively impacted by student absences.

Following this discussion, Barbara Hairfield gave the report for the Academic Standards and Assessments subcommittee. She stated that the subcommittee met on Sept. 16 and had two

information items from EOC staff regarding the Cyclical Review of the Accountability System Update and the EOC Strategic Plan update, as well as an action item on the Cut Score Concordance of College Readiness Exams.

There was then a motion to adopt the recommendations presented by EOC staff on the Cut Score Concordance. Motion passed.

After the motion passed, EIA subcommittee chair Dr. Bob Couch gave the September 16<sup>th</sup> EIA subcommittee report. Dr. Couch stated that after hearing the EOC's strategic plan, the subcommittee discussed implementing a process to handle new EIA funding requests. He then called forward EOC Director of Strategic Innovation Dr. Rainey Knight to discuss upcoming EIA budget requests for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Dr. Knight informed the committee that EIA budget hearings would take place on Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. and to inform her if there was a specific program they would like to hear from.

Following this, Chair Allen called an executive session to discuss a legal matter.

After the executive session, the meeting returned to open session to announce no action was taken. The meeting was then adjourned.