

**Virginia Board of Education
Committee on Evidence-Based Policymaking
Wednesday September 19, 2018
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building
101 North 14th Street, Richmond, Virginia**

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the September 19, 2018, meeting of the committee on evidence-based policymaking: Ms. Kim Adkins (chair); Dr. Jamelle Wilson, Dr. Tamara Wallace, Mrs. Elizabeth Lodal, Ms. Anne Holton, Dr. Keisha Pexton, Dr. Francisco Durán and Mr. Daniel Gecker. Dr. James F. Lane, superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Ms. Adkins, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 3:40 p.m. and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Approval of the Minutes from the July 26, 2018 Committee Meeting

Dr. Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 26, 2018, committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Wallace and carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Adkins opened the floor to public comment.

Ms. Donna Sayegh, constituent from Portsmouth, VA and candidate for Portsmouth City School Board, provided public comment on school equity.

Overview of Committee Progress to Date

Ms. Adkins provided a brief overview of the committee's progress to date. A copy of her presentation is available on the committee's website at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_standing/evidence-based-policy/index.shtml.

The Board of Education approved the formation of the special committee with the initial charge to review research and evidence-based practices, specifically focusing on the priorities highlighted in the Board's *Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023*.

The committee agreed to focus on teacher quality and development and students' access to high-quality teachers.

The committee reached consensus on the definition of equity, which is for students to receive the resources they need to be successful.

The committee employed the Education Trust's framework for access to strong teachers to advance their charge. The framework says that state leaders must:

- Be transparent;
- Set clear improvement expectations;
- Target resources;
- Develop networks; and
- Break down silos.

The committee will utilize the Board's five levers of action for their recommendations, which include to:

- Issue guidance;
- Amend or create regulations;
- Request changes to the *Code of Virginia*;
- Request funding from the General Assembly; and
- Convene conferences, training, and alliances.

At the June meeting, the committee received presentations on teacher retention, mentorship and induction by committee member Diane Atkinson and Fairfax County Public School's School Improvement Model, Project Momentum, by Executive Director Mark Greenfelder.

The committee's next steps for consideration include to:

- Develop an equity framework (not a plan) for school divisions to use as guide to highlight best practices;
- Start the process of drafting advocacy-related policies;
- Develop strategies for the Board to be more engaged in educating legislators on the changing demographics of many schools divisions;
- Share research on the importance of teacher recruitment, retention, and distribution and best practices in these areas; and
- Review and revise the Standards of Quality, through the SOQ committee, for additional target resources and other advocacy-related policies.

School Equity: A Student's Perspective Panel

Ms. Adkins welcomed members of *Girls for a Change* and provided a brief introduction of the organization. *Girls for a Change* is a nonprofit, youth development organization located in Chesterfield County, Virginia. Their goal is to prepare black girls for the world and prepare the world for black girls. The organization hosts summer camps, leadership academies and girl action teams. Under the guidance of two female coaches, the action team consists of girls from various schools throughout the Richmond area. Recently, *Girls for a Change* held a panel discussion in downtown Richmond to share their experiences as black girls in the public school system and provided solutions for change. The members of *Girls for a Change* that addressed the committee were:

- Joi Coleman, 16, attends Maggie L. Walker Governor's School

- Azaria Lewis, 16, attends Meadowbrook High School
- Solange Oliver, 15, attends Meadowbrook High School
- Nadia Fraser, 9, attends Beulah Elementary School
- Saba Jana Worku, 11, attends Richmond Prep Academy
- Sha'Dajah Cromwell, 16, attends John Marshall High School

Ms. Angela Patton, CEO of *Girls for a Change*, and Dr. Vanessa Stout, *Girls for a Change* coach, also attended.

Ms. Adkins opened the discussion by asking the girls what led them to become a member of *Girls for a Change* and what was their biggest takeaway from the experience.

The girls talked about the many reasons for joining *Girls for Change* such as:

- Being a voice for change in their community;
- Being confident and willing to teach others;
- Enhancing their skills and knowledge;
- Learning to not be afraid to stand up for yourself; and
- Joining the Action Team as a way to create solutions for their community and policymakers.

The girls were asked to discuss the challenges they undertook and solutions they developed with their Action Team. Some of the challenges and solutions included:

- Trauma at home, which affects their ability to concentrate in school. Their solution was to regularly meet with their school psychologist and provide trauma informed care training to more teachers;
- Accessibility and transportation to school activities;
- Dress code, culture clothing, incorporated of more African-American culture and literature into the curriculum;
- Implicit-bias throughout the school system. A possible solution was for teachers to receive training on implicit bias and/or host an assembly for the entire school to discuss implicit bias with students.
- Bullying in school and on social media.

Dr. Pexton commended the girls on their impressive public speaking skills and solutions, all while being a student and showing empathy for their teachers. Dr. Pexton asked the panelists that if a program like *Girls for a Change* did not exist, what other resources did they believe would be available to them.

They responded that there is one after-school program called “Sister Circle” that discusses fun topics and helps with homework but that there are not many programs that do the same thing as *Girls for a Change*.

Ms. Adkins asked the panelists to describe what it is like to have an incredible classroom experience with an ideal/high-quality teacher.

The panelists were very open in their responses. One panelist said that their teacher was able to address problems in the classroom without referring students to the principal’s office. Another panelist said that their teacher encouraged students to talk about their problems and helped them find solutions. Another said that their teacher taught outside the box and encouraged project-based learning versus focusing solely on testing.

Ms. Holton asked the panelists what they have learned from each other’s experiences by attending a wide variety of schools; are there any similarities or differences? The girls discussed differences in attending traditional public school versus a magnet school or private school. The availability of school resources was a focus on their comments along with school safety. They stated that most of their traditional public schools have metal detectors and security guards, while the private schools and magnet schools do not have those same security measures and students are allowed more freedom campus. The girls expressed feeling safe and more secure at their schools with security guards and cameras, but stated that they do feel restricted not being able to go outside during lunch and breaks.

Dr. Lane congratulated the panelists of their accomplishments and stated he has spent time at Meadowbrook High School and Beulah Elementary in Chesterfield, both of which have wonderful teachers. Dr. Lane inquired to the panelists about a time when a teacher brought cultural relevance to their classroom or school, how it felt and what advice can be given to teachers to help bring those types of experiences to the classroom.

A panelist responded that a great teacher takes time to explain information beyond the textbook and encourages learning beyond the textbook.

Mrs. Lodal asked the panelists about their experiences with diversity or racism and its importance.

The panelists responded that diversity amongst teachers is very important. They believe that more teachers of different cultures are needed in their schools.

Ms. Adkins thanked the panelists for sharing their experiences and insight into educational equity. She also asked *Girls for a Change* to review the committee’s draft recommendations once they were developed for feedback. The panelists happily accepted the invitation to review the recommendations.

Facilitated Discussion of Priority levers from ERS Work Session and Committee Recommendations

Leah Walker, community and minority affairs liaison, presented on equity opportunities in Virginia.

Ms. Walker gave a brief report on key questions to consider when discussing equity and the *Virginia is for ALL Learners* initiative underway at VDOE.

Ms. Walker provided an overview of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) briefing entitled *Equity in Education: Key Questions to Consider* and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) report entitled *States Leading for Equity with Promising Practices Advancing the Equity Commitments*.

Ms. Walker explained the Board's role and levers for advancing equity which include advocacy, regulations and guidance, and engagement. The advocacy bucket includes working with the Virginia General Assembly and the executive branch along with other education organizations. The regulations and guidance bucket includes developing or amending regulations and guidance. The engagement bucket includes convening meetings, hosting public hearings, utilizing the bully pulpit and highlighting best practices.

Based on the discussion from the July work session with Education Resource Strategies, Ms. Walker organized the Board's priority levers into the three buckets, noting that some levers may fall into more than one bucket.

Advocacy

- Report on demographics, funding, teacher experience and teacher salaries at the building level;
- Ensure equity through the curriculum with Open Education Resources (OER)/ support high-quality instruction through Open Education Resources (OER);
- Focus new funding based on “need package”;
- Perform a Cost of Living analysis;

Regulatory

- Differentiate the Standards of Quality, allow for more flexibility in categorical funding, and create a LCI vs. local capacity vs. local effort report;
- Support tiered support systems for school improvement;
- Increase class size through a “master teacher-apprentice teacher” model;
- Focus new funding based on “need package”;
- Build flexibility into the Standards of Quality;
- Take a closer look at ESSA Equity Resource Reviews;

- Look at flexibility options for local school divisions, i.e. – class size;
- Support additional funding for high-quality teachers and leaders in high-needs schools and connect with increased contractual responsibilities.
- Look further at at-risk funding; consider expanding;
- Renew focus on early childhood education;
- Address teacher salaries;
- Support additional funding for high-quality teachers and leaders in high-needs schools and connect with increased contractual responsibilities.

Engagement

- Report on demographics, funding, teacher experience and teacher salaries at the building level;
- Ensure equity through the curriculum with Open Education Resources (OER)/ support high-quality instruction through Open Education Resources (OER);
- Renew focus on early childhood education;
- Develop/Disseminate a “Profile of a Virginia Educator;”
- Offer state support to connect professional learning in all schools.

To conclude her presentation, Ms. Walker provided an overview of the Virginia is for ALL Learners initiative, which includes:

- Implementation of Accreditation Reforms - Underway
- Hosting an EdEquityVA Webinar Series – coming Fall 2018
- Developing a Statewide Equity Dashboard – Spring 2019
- Hosting an Education Equity Summer Institute – Summer 2019
- Developing a Resource and Professional Development Repository – 2019

Dr. Lane thanked Ms. Walker for her presentation. Ms. Adkins stated that she was surprised to hear the department’s plans for the coming year. She asked Dr. Lane to provide more guidance to her and the committee in order to move forward without overlapping with the department’s current efforts.

Mrs. Lodal offered that she believe the presentation was an extension of the Board’s work and feels positive about the direction of the committee and the department.

Dr. Wilson suggested a next step for the committee would be to review all presentations and documents to develop recommendations and strategies for equity.

Ms. Walker explained that the presentation was intended to highlight concrete examples of the department’s work to advance equity in a state context.

Ms. Holton thanked Ms. Walker for her presentation and the hard work of the committee. She offered that many good ideas have been generated by the committee and the next phase is to develop recommendations.

Ms. Adkins offered that she will follow-up with Mr. Gecker, Dr. Lane and Ms. Webb to begin outlining recommendations on paper.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. Adkins asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Wilson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Lodal. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.