

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation**  
**Wednesday, October 14, 2020**  
**2:00 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Welcome and Opening Comments**

Pursuant to Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Board of Education (Board) convened in a virtual meeting of the Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) on October 14, 2020 at 2p.m. The meeting was open to the public via livestream on the [Virginia Department of Education \(VDOE\) YouTube webpage](#).

The following Board members were present for the meeting: Ms. Pamela Davis-Vaught, Dr. Francisco Durán, Mr. Daniel Gecker, Ms. Anne Holton, Dr. Tammy Mann, Dr. Keisha Pexton, and Dr. Jamelle Wilson. Dr. James Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Emily Webb, Director of Board relations for VDOE, were also present.

Dr. Wilson convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed Board members and staff on behalf of Dr. Pexton, committee chair, who was in attendance but not feeling well.

**Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Durán made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 16, 2020 meeting of the Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation. Ms. Davis-Vaught seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**VDOE Staff Presentation on Certain Unintended Consequences Related to the 2017 Standards of Accreditation ([link to powerpoint](#))**

The presentation on unintended consequences was presented to the committee by the following VDOE staff members:

- Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy
- Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment, Accountability, and ESEA Programs
- Julie Molique, Director of Accountability

Dr. Durán asked for more information on the SLIFE and SIFE work that is being done at VDOE and what possible solutions are being considered. Ms. Loving-Ryder stated that VDOE is currently developing a definition of SLIFE, which is the first step to identifying impacted students, collecting data from school divisions, and determining what supports are being used by school divisions.

Dr. Wilson asked staff to research how foreign exchange students are counted for the purposes of attendance and average daily membership (ADM), noting that this methodology is important for testing purposes.

Dr. Wilson asked how many school divisions in Virginia are currently using performance assessments for the writing score. Ms. Loving-Ryder stated that VDOE is in the process of collecting that information for this year. Dr. Wilson requested that information for the previous school year.

### **Panel Discussion with Stakeholder Associations on the Positive, Negative, and Unintended Consequences of the 2017 Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation**

The following individuals participated in the panel discussion:

- Ms. Jenna Alexander, Vice President for Advocacy, Virginia PTA
- Dr. James Fedderman, President, Virginia Education Association
- Mr. J.T. Kessler, Government Relations Specialist, Virginia School Board Association
- Dr. Laurie McCullough, Executive Director, Virginia Association for Supervisions and Curriculum Development
- Ms. Elizabeth Parker, Director of School Counseling, Henrico County Public Schools
- Dr. Alan Seibert, Co-Chair, Accreditation Task Force and Superintendent, Salem City Public Schools

Ms. Alexander expressed support for the holistic approach to accreditation and emphasized that no one single test or data point should be the determinant of student or school success. Ms. Alexander praised the use of growth in the accreditation model and noted that including growth has helped to eliminate disparities among subgroups. Ms. Alexander encouraged the Board to consider other equity measures, such as teacher diversity, school building maintenance, access to broadband, teacher ratios, teacher experience, and parental involvement; however, she also acknowledged that these measures are difficult to measure and fund. Ms. Alexander identified the use of chronic absenteeism as a negative consequence of the SOA.

Dr. Fedderman identified the use of growth factors and alternative assessments as positive outcomes of the 2017 SOA. Dr. Fedderman also emphasized the importance of college and career readiness and career and technical education. Dr. Fedderman identified alternative assessments and performance based assessments as areas in which the Board could do more, and also emphasized the importance of reducing standardized assessments. Dr. Fedderman expressed support for the inclusion of school climate, school engagement, and parent engagement in the SOA. Dr. Fedderman noted that the chronic absenteeism indicator has had unintended negative consequences, particularly on high poverty schools, as absences are often due to circumstances beyond the school's control.

Mr. Kessler expressed support for local flexibility through the locally awarded verified credit. Mr. Kessler stated that the chronic absenteeism and dropout rate indicators have had a negative impact on school divisions with high poverty, as the indicators do not take into account the economic factors that may contribute to students being absent or dropping out. This is particularly evident with SLIFE/SIFE students. Mr. Kessler also noted how English Learners are limited by standardized assessments.

Dr. McCullough expressed support for the emphasis on career and college readiness. She encouraged the Board to continue this work; however, she noted that students lack flexibility in schedule to pursue other interests, such as fine arts courses. Dr. McCullough noted a shift from school divisions perceiving accreditation as a punitive system to a system of continuous improvement. She also reiterated that including chronic absenteeism in accreditation has had unintended negative consequences. Dr. McCullough encouraged the Board to think differently about the next generation of accreditation in the following ways: how accreditation can be aligned to measure the most important aspects of education, how growth can be measured in ways other than standardized testing, and how to balance the burden of evaluating schools with the need for comprehensive accreditation measures.

Ms. Parker reiterated the statements of the other panelists regarding the negative consequences of using chronic absenteeism in accreditation. Ms. Parker expressed support for the focus on college and career readiness, specifically praising the inclusion of college and career readiness in elementary and middle schools, the addition of the academic career plan portfolio, and the renewed focus on the career investigations course. However, she also noted that there is a need for flexibility with seat time in order to focus more on college and career readiness. Ms. Parker expressed support for the reduction in the number of verified credits for each diploma, and encouraged the Board to further reduce the number of verified credits. Ms. Parker suggested that the Board consider adding growth measures for social-emotional learning. She identified the sequential elective requirement for the Advanced Studies diploma as an unintended negative consequence, as this new requirement from 2017 is limiting opportunities for higher-level coursework. Ms. Parker also requested that the Board provide guidance on how Computer Science can be used to fulfill graduation requirements.

Dr. Seibert expressed support for the five C's and praised the 2017 SOA as moving away from a punitive system and towards a system of continuous improvement. Dr. Seibert encouraged the Board to reduce the number of graduation requirements in order to provide students with more flexibility. Dr. Seibert emphasized the complexity of the SOA as a negative consequence. He encouraged the Board to begin the next modification of the SOA with a clean slate, rather than trying to include everything that has been accumulated over time.

Dr. Wilson asked the panelists to identify policies or practices that have changed as a result of the 2017 SOA revisions:

- Dr. Fedderman listed the protection of planning time, reduction in testing, instructional practices around subgroups, and a transition from standardized testing to performance-based assessments.
- Dr. McCullough noted that the ability to utilize performance-based assessment has led to beneficial professional development for teachers that has changed instruction.
- Mr. Kessler added that some divisions have begun using community and family engagement surveys, and some divisions have added equity officers.
- Dr. Seibert reiterated the comments of the other panelists and added that he has seen a renewed focus on career and technical education, including collaboration with the Department of Labor and community businesses. Dr. Seibert also emphasized a need to focus on equity.
- Ms. Parker noted that many school divisions have added school counselors and school based mental health professionals to assist with college and career based initiatives and to reduce student counselor ratios.

Dr. Wilson asked panelists what school divisions are currently doing to emphasize equity and support students affected by poverty, English Learner students, and other subgroups:

- Dr. Seibert noted that rural divisions face significant challenges with providing internet access to their students, which is an important equity issue.
- Dr. Fedderman added that there has been an increase in focus on instruction for subgroups. He also encouraged the Board to adopt the recommendations needed for clarity brought by VDOE staff.
- Ms. Alexander added that there was been an increase in differentiated instruction to meet individual student needs. Ms. Alexander also agreed that the SOA is overly complex, and added that, in general, parents are unable to understand school accreditation. Therefore, schools must provide meaningful communication about assessments and accreditation, particularly for parents of children in subgroups, including Spanish translation.
- Dr. McCullough suggested individualized growth measures that would track the progress of students year-to-year. She also noted that some teachers and principals have adopted new strategies for student outreach due to the pandemic that may be valuable once students are back in the classroom.

Dr. Durán asked panelists what solutions they would suggest for addressing the negative unintended consequences associated with the chronic absenteeism and dropout rate indicators:

- Dr. Seibert suggested including school climate instead of chronic absenteeism. He also suggested that schools could report their attendance records without using that data as an accreditation indicator. Dr. Seibert noted that the General Assembly has declined to

strengthen the compulsory attendance laws, which limits the ability of school divisions to act on chronically absent students.

- Dr. McCullough added that this issue is related to competency based learning. She suggested that some students might be best served in a different way, such as independent learning, which could include counting attendance in a different way.

Ms. Davis-Vaught asked the panelists how assessments for subgroups could look different in the future:

- Dr. Seibert suggested that students could be assessed multiple times throughout the year, using the student's testing identifier number, rather than having one assessment at the end of the year. However, he cautioned against adding more to the already complex SOA model, and encouraged the Board to start with a new system.
  - Ms. Loving-Ryder noted VDOE staff are currently working on a more robust measure for growth, but have been impeded by the waiver of testing in the spring of 2020.

Ms. Holton noted that it may be too early to implement a new accreditation system, as the 2017 SOA is still newly implemented, particularly considering the disruption of the COVID pandemic.

Ms. Holton asked panelists for their thoughts on amending the existing accreditation model or beginning with a new system:

- Dr. Fedderman emphasized that the model should be child-driven. COVID has demonstrated that there is an opportunity to move children along more quickly who do not need as much seat time in order to master the curriculum.
- Dr. McCullough suggested that rethinking the accreditation model does not necessitate discarding all elements of the current system. She suggested that the definition of a "good school" is changing, and the SOA should be revised with what constitutes a "good school" in mind. Dr. McCullough also encouraged the Board to revisit the recommendations of the SOL Innovation Committee, which are pertinent to the current discussion.
- Mr. Kessler reiterated the other panelists' comments and emphasized individualized education.
- Dr. Seibert expressed support for resolving the issues identified by VDOE staff as needing clarification. He also encouraged Board members to think about individualized education.
- Ms. Alexander suggested alternative types of assessments and student-selected methods of instruction, which would provide students more autonomy in their education.
- Ms. Parker noted that students are currently mandated to follow the graduation requirements in place when they enter the ninth grade. Ms. Parker encouraged the Board, if amending the graduation requirements, to permit students to choose to follow either the old or the new graduation requirements during the transition.

Dr. Durán expressed his support for reexamining the chronic absenteeism indicator, supporting the work of VDOE staff regarding SLIFE/SIFE students, and looking into the recommendations of the SOL Innovation Committee.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

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