

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday; March 25, 2015
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the March 25, 2015 Committee on School and Division Accountability meeting: Diane Atkinson, Dr. Oktay Baysal; Christian Braunlich; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James Dillard; Darla Edwards; Elizabeth Vickrey Lodol; and Sal Romero, Jr. Dr. Steven Staples, the superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Mrs. Atkinson, chairman of the committee, convened the meeting and welcomed the Board members and guests.

Approval of Minutes from the February 25, 2015 Meeting

Because several questions were raised about the draft minutes, approval was delayed until the April 2015 committee meeting.

Public Comment

There was no one present who wished to provide public comment.

Introductory Comments

Mrs. Atkinson said today the committee will focus on revisions of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA) and the state report card. The committee is using these meetings to have presentations that will provide the Board members with background as they prepare to consider comprehensive revisions at the Board retreat in April to the state report card as well as the SOA, which includes the state's accountability system. Last month, the presentations focused primarily on the report card. This month they will focus primarily on the SOA. The Board members have already identified some areas where they will discuss revisions, such as multiple measures for accreditation, inclusion of growth in the accountability system, gradation of accreditation labels, a multiple-year accreditation design, graduation requirements, inclusion of competency for the standard credit, and report card components. There has also been some focus on learning about local assessments. Today, the committee will learn about how two of the school divisions use local assessments to measure growth.

Approaches to Measuring Growth in Local Assessment Systems

Mrs. Atkinson then introduced the presenters for this agenda item: Dr. H. Alan Seibert, division superintendent for Salem City Public Schools; Dr. James F. Lane, division

superintendent for Goochland County Public Schools; and Nadja Young, educational specialist for SAS.

Dr. Seibert introduced Angie Diemel, a Title I resource specialist, and Jennifer Dean, supervisor of instructional technology and assessment, who presented with him. Dr. Seibert said they began to look at assessment as the state Board revised the teacher evaluation process. When they looked at student growth measures, they thought there would be compensation implications. More importantly, they wanted to report to every parent how each child was progressing multiple times every year. Parents want to know how a child is learning and growing. Teachers want to celebrate not just a standardized test score, but how much children have progressed in their classroom. He said they knew the school division was traditionally high performing, but wanted to make sure that they were really growing all of their children.

Ms. Dean said they use multiple components to measure and see student growth, and she discussed the multiple components they are using. She said this has been the key to informing instruction. Ms. Diemel said she provides intervention and remediation for students coming from various backgrounds, including those coming from poverty. What the learning continuum allows her to do is give each child basically an individualized education plan. This tool can be used for remediation and for enrichment. Ms. Dean said they also look at students within reporting groups and this allows them to break this down into real time. Dr. Seibert said the students are also having a lot of fun with these assessments. Ms. Dean said they have also embarked on standards-based learning and standards-based grading and being able to show growth.

The following questions were raised by Board members:

- How much training went into teaching teachers how to use this? Training is ongoing.
- Did the division have to put resources into this? There is a resource issue.
- What is being used in the high school? It becomes more content specific.
- How much time and resources did they put in prior to launching? A meaningful implementation takes three years.
- Has there been an over-all improvement in family engagement? This opens up such a conversation because they can provide feedback to parents.
- How many times a year is the test given? The MAP test is given three times a year: September, January, and June. The grade book is real time.
- Who designs the tests? They are using different tests offered by different entities and there are also teacher-made assessments.
- Is goal-setting for all students? Yes, all students have progress goals.
- What is being done to address summer learning loss? They are in the beginning stages, but are trying to leverage technology for this. They did pilot a tool last summer, but have no data on that yet.
- Do teachers feel that testing is too often? This is become such a wonderful tool in determining how to remediate and offer enrichment. It really helps drive both.

A Board member commented that there are some things here that they may be able to use as part of the accountability system.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked Dr. Seibert and his group for the presentation.

Dr. James Lane and Dr. Steve Geyer, assistant superintendent for instruction for Goochland County Public Schools, presented on behalf of that school division. Dr. Lane said they started their work on balanced assessment about two years ago. It really started with the school division's mission statement to maximize the potential of every learner. You cannot maximize the potential of every learner if you are only looking at assessment at a point in time. Growth is about knowing where the students are and taking them to the maximum that they can become. When they first started talking about maximizing potential, they looked at where they were with minimum proficiency and state compliance and achievement.

He said Goochland has always been really high performing. They first discussed how they could start measuring individual growth and then how did they know that the students were engaged. Once they know that the students are engaged, how do they know that they are performing. They use three primary benchmarks to measure the success of their schools: growth and achievement, school climate, and social and emotional measures of the students. They created a committee on growth that was led by Dr. Geyer. They wanted to identify the best growth measures for the school division and they wanted an assessment profile that was more balanced to completely capture all of the student learning taking place. They tasked the committee with four things. First, they wanted to get rid of all of the benchmarks that were taking up time and get back to teaching in the classroom. They wanted more efficient assessments. They wanted to introduce performance assessments and wanted to see a net gain in instructional time. This led to the balanced assessment project.

The following questions were raised by Board members:

- What kind of resources went into professional development for teachers and administrators? When the product was purchased, the training costs were embedded in the purchase and the company trains staff. The training is a priority and is ongoing.
- For an average fifth-grade student, how many assessments do they end up taking over the course of the year? They are tested three times a year.
- Are benchmark assessments still being provided? No.
- How do you capture what you did as a leader to set the stage for the school board, faculty and community buy-in? He made sure he had great people in every position.
- How did you create this culture? When you work with families and teachers on a daily basis, most are willing to try if you show them it is going to be of value to their child in school. In Goochland, most of the teachers are also parents in the schools, and they want to see the data on their own children. Dr. Geyer said the strategic plan also drove every decision from instruction to budgetary decisions.

- How much time did it take to get to implementation? It took about two years because they were really changing how teachers thought about assessment.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked them for the presentation.

Nadja Young also presented on this topic. She acknowledged Courtney Pugh and Patrick Cushing who were with her from SAS. She spoke to the Board about ways growth measures can be used in accreditation, accountability systems, and instructional improvement, which is the overall goal for looking at student growth. She noted that there is a distinction between achievement and growth. She said achievement does not tell the whole story, but growth gives the other side of the measure. Both are extremely important to look at together. She also discussed how a teacher could use data for performance improvement and how it could be used for teacher placement.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked all of the participants for their presentations.

Revisions to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA)*

Dr. Cynthia Cave, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, was the presenter for this topic. She provided an overview of the 2013 proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) and actions by the 2015 General Assembly that impacted the SOA.

The 2013 proposed amendments to the SOA were approved by the Board on October 24, 2013. However, because the Board wanted to consider other issues, the proposed regulations were withdrawn so the Board could come back for a more comprehensive review. Dr. Cave reviewed a comprehensive list of revisions, beginning with the definitions. Some of the revisions were made due to changes in the *Code of Virginia*. She also discussed 2015 actions by the General Assembly, including new requirements for the school report card, flexibility in accrediting schools, repeal of the A-F school grading system, competency-based instruction for career and technical education students, diploma seals, the *Applied Studies* diploma, graduation requirements, and expedited retakes of certain Standards of Learning tests.

Overview of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Reauthorization Bills*

Veronica Tate, director of the Office of Program Administration and Accountability, provided an overview of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)* reauthorization bills, including an overview of the current law, the 2015 Senate bill (*Every Child Ready for College or Career Act*), and the 2015 House bill (*Student Success Act*) with a focus on provisions that may impact the accountability system. This law was scheduled for re-authorization in 2007. However, Congress has yet to move forward with a bill for signature.

There are two bills now being considered in the House and the Senate.

The Senate bill has yet to make it to committee for mark-up. The House bill was marked up and sent to the House floor. At that time, some amendments were approved, but no further action has been taken. Ms. Tate also discussed four specific areas as related to this law: standards and assessment, accountability, school interventions or improvement, and teacher requirements and evaluation. Neither bill mandates a teacher evaluation system. Both bills eliminate the *highly qualified teacher* requirements.

Overview of Staff Recommendations for Revisions to the SOA

Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for student assessment and school improvement, provided an overview of staff recommendations for revisions to the SOA. The document included proposed changes suggested by staff and issues for potential Board discussion. Some of the issues raised here were addressed in the 2013 SOA proposal and discussed by Dr. Cave earlier.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mrs. Atkinson stated that the SOL Innovation Committee is studying some of the same issues raised today. Other issues will be addressed at the April meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.