

VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation
Thursday, August 27, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting

Welcome and Opening Comments

Pursuant to Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Board of Education convened in a virtual meeting on August 27, 2020 at 10 a.m. The meeting was open to the public via livestream on the [Virginia Department of Education \(VDOE\) YouTube webpage](#).

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the meeting: Ms. Pamela Davis-Vaught, Dr. Francisco Durán, 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

Ms. Alyssa Rafa and Mr. Ben Erwin joined as presenters from the Education Commission of the States. Mr. Joel Moore and Ms. Lauren Sisneros, also from the Education Commission of the States, joined as listeners.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Durán made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 22, 2020 meeting of the Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Wilson and carried unanimously.

Dr. Pexton, chair, welcomed committee members, staff and guest to the meeting.

Dr. Pexton opened the meeting with a recap on the committee's mission and what conversations prefaced the presentations scheduled for the meeting. Dr. Pexton reiterated that the work group's focus should be accreditation and the positive, negative, and unintended consequences of the current accreditation indicators.

Overview of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, State Accreditation Data Review, and School Quality Actions and Technical Assistance

Ms. Holly Coy, assistant superintendent, department of policy, equity and communications and Dr. Leslie Sale, director, office of policy, presented an overview of Parts I through VII of the Standards of Accreditation.

- Ms. Coy provided the context for the larger presentation and an overview of Standards of Accreditation.

- Dr. Sale discussed the substance of each of the parts and highlighted changes and revisions that were central to the 2017 update.

Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna, director of research, presented the data trends related to the Standards of Accreditation revisions that were finalized in 2017. In the first years of implementation, the data has showed the following:

- Using a combined rate, which allows students meeting achievement expectations as well as students showing growth and progress to be counted towards accreditation, did not overinflate school quality by including achievement and growth;
- The distribution of school performance has increased, with fewer schools in lower performing quartile;
- Chronic absenteeism rates have declined for all groups with the exception of English Learners;
- Graduation and completion rates have held relatively steady for many reporting groups, but an increase in students with disabilities; numbers for Hispanic and English Learner students continue to decline;
- Dropout rates have decreased for most reporting groups with the exception of Hispanic and English Learners.

Dr. Piver-Renna also discussed the rate of school improvement based on movement between level indicators.

Dr. Aurelia Ortiz, director of school quality, presented on school quality and technical assistance for divisions and schools. Concurrent with the changes to the SOA, the Office of School Quality shifted their approach in providing technical assistance from a compliance driven model to a model of coaching. Ongoing work for the office includes professional development, capacity building, and building communication networks.

Dr. Linda Reviea, school quality consultant, provided some specific examples of some of the support offerings and added that the support work is organized by Superintendent's Regions. Additionally, COVID-19 has allowed the Office of School Quality to pilot support models with more customized approaches to assistance. While still early in implementation, the Office of School Quality is able to effectively operationalize the data that is available and will continue to adjust based on effects on student outcomes.

Dr. Pexton opened the discussion for Q&A related to the first presentation. There were no questions regarding the overview of the SOA parts, but there were several questions on the state accreditation data review.

Dr. Wilson expressed interest in learning more about achievement among the individual student groups as it would inform discussion on the accreditation system and connect back to one of the purposes of the SOA being to "foster public confidence." This would need to be a dedicated presentation.

Dr. Wilson also asked presenters whether there were specific figures for the number of schools in the the outlier for English and math achievement as well as a breakdown of schools with levels two and three in multiple indicators. Dr. Piver-Renna will follow up with more detail. Dr. Wilson also inquired about how these numbers relate to the deployment of resources to schools that continue to struggle.

Dr. Pexton stated she would be interested in learning which schools have not shown progress as an extension of the data provided in the presentation.

Dr. Durán inquired whether the dropout rate trends for English Learners is a true reflection of progress as it also captures students with limited or interrupted formal education who make progress during their enrollment but are considered “dropout” when they do not graduate. Dr. Piver-Renna noted the definition of dropout and indicated there may be ongoing conversation about the way we want to capture these students. Dr. Durán wants the committee to consider looking at how these students apply to the rate and this may be a negative unintended consequence.

Ms. Davis-Vaught expressed her concerns about students with limited or interrupted formal education as well as economically disadvantaged and how to capture the stories behind these student groups to provide support.

Dr. Pexton offered a suggestion about hearing from associations around the Commonwealth for some of the anecdotal feedback that complements feedback from the data.

Dr. Lane asked the Board to remain really thoughtful about how to approach English Learners and dropout rates, making sure accreditation ratings do not mask true issue areas and students not receiving adequate support. He continued on the importance of not overemphasizing results and improvement but keeping focus on the student experience and identifying the need for support.

Dr. Durán clarified that his concern was more about the types of actions and services that the system incentivizes.

Overview of School Accountability Systems Across the Country

Alyssa Rafa, Policy Analyst and Ben Erwin, Policy Researcher, both from Education Commission of the States (ECS) presented an overview of school accountability systems across the country.

Ms. Rafa and Mr. Erwin began by introducing ECS as an organization and continued by giving an overview of the purpose of accountability systems, how these systems can incorporate accreditation, and the national variability of these types of systems. Ms. Rafa noted that one of

the components of designing accountability systems is the balance of trade-offs and highlighted some of the specific areas that can require a discussion of tradeoff.

Mr. Erwin centered his portion of the presentation on state accountability around different state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan and focused on some of the different school quality and student success indicators included in state plans. Examples included college and career readiness, discipline, school climate, and chronic absenteeism, among others.

Ms. Rafa concluded the presentation on the types of rating systems used across states including dashboard models, indexes, descriptive, and summative, among others.

Dr. Durán asked if there was anything that would advise Virginia on as they embark on this endeavor. Ms. Rafa suggested looking at trade-offs, unintended consequences, and shifting course when the data indicates a need.

Dr. Pexton asked about school discipline as an indicator and asked for the presenters to provide any additional context. Mr. Erwin provided an example of how school discipline is calculated in West Virginia. Ms. Rafa clarified that it is normally used as a part of the school climate indicator. Dr. Pexton asked whether these discipline indicators have shown a disproportionate impact for black students. Ms. Rafa noted national trends confirm the disproportionate effects of school discipline practice but did not have detail on how this is influencing accreditation indicators.

Dr. Pexton asked about chronic absenteeism and what are some of the conversations happening around this indicator in this remote environment. Ms. Rafa replied that this is still unknown giving the evolving instructional models and they are seeking more information.

Dr. Lane offered that VDOE has provided guidance on attendance and offering task-based attendance tracking options as an alternative to more conventional time-based metrics.

Dr. Pexton revisited the committee's work plan and provided an update on the group's progress. VDOE's internal SOA work group will also be bringing potential action items to the Board work group.

Dr. Wilson confirmed that she would like to see the comparison between the state and federal accountability charts as well as revisiting why the Board made some of the decisions it did and the logic behind the decision-making process.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Dr. Pexton thanked the committee and staff for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:04 p.m.