

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ G. _____

Date: April 20-21, 2005

Topic: Informational Briefing by Kia Brown on "SchoolMatters," a Web-Based National Education Data Service

Presenters: Ms. Kia Brown, Virginia Liaison for Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services
Ms. Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications

Telephone Number: (804) 225-2403

E-Mail Address: Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov

Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by

State or federal law or regulation

Board of Education regulation

Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting

Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action

date _____

Background Information:

In response to an expressed need by the education community for an impartial, transparent analysis of the nation's educational data, Standard & Poor's (S&P) created a business unit, School Evaluation Services, and developed its unique Return on Resources framework to synthesize student performance, financial information, and community and school demographics to help explain school and school district performance holistically.

With funding from The Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, S&P, in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Achieve Inc., and the CELT Corporation, developed an analytical data tool available to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico through an interactive web site known as SchoolMatters.

Summary of Major Elements:

Since its public launch on March 29, 2005, the Virginia Department of Education's homepage has provided a link connecting to www.SchoolMatters.com. This new online resource was designed to assist educators, policymakers, parents, and the public in using data to see how schools are performing and to provide user-friendly tools to analyze the data based on specified indicators.

Utilizing data from a number of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the DOE, SchoolMatters will offer school-, division-, and state-level data such as:

- Student proficiency on statewide reading and math tests, broken down by student subgroups and grades;
- Financial data including per pupil expenditures and revenue sources;
- Student and community demographics, including income levels, property values, educational attainment levels, and population information;
- School environment information like class size and teacher-to-pupil ratios;
- Academic indicators including student retention, promotion, and dropout rates; and
- Additional academic assessment data.

In addition, SchoolMatters includes comparison tools and easy-to-use sorting capabilities for in-depth data analysis to assist decision makers in determining ways to improve a school or school division's performance, while providing data in a format to more easily compare schools with similar demographics. Drop-down menus and pop-ups will offer additional information, such as definitions of terms and explanations of formulas.

Superintendent's Recommendation: N/A

Impact on Resources: N/A

Timetable for Further Review/Action: N/A