DRAFT

Advisory Task Force
VSDBM-H Day Regional Program
Meeting Summary
April 23, 2007

Opening Remarks and Welcome: Dr. John McLaughlin

- Introduction of task force and guests

Task Force: David Young, Stacy Machowski, Claudine Wiggins, Bob Mitchell, Bob Pietrasanta (not present), Ralph Shellman, Pat Trice, Pat Russo, Milton Liverman

Guests: April, Stephanie, Felice, Homer

- Review of summary from last meeting

Prior to this meeting, we sent revised task force list, summary of the last meeting, and a detailed email. No comments were offered on the Summary.

- Review and adjustment of the agenda – no comments.

What are we hearing from our constituencies? -- Taskforce Members

- Parents

No comments.

- Staff

From community—some anger; some people thought Staunton and Hampton would close and there would be a new, centrally located school. John provided a review of the three-phase process: Task Force Recommendations, VDOE Planning; Implementation of Transition Plan. Phase I is for recommendations. Then the planning team will complete Phase II by August. Phase III is putting the plan into action. We need to have certain decisions on time so that funding can be appropriated in time for the transition.

- Special Education Directors

Some of parent groups want students to go back to their local community. This may be related to a Medicaid issue.

- Superintendents

Pat and Milton met with superintendents' group. They accept the decision to consolidate and want to ensure that the state follows up on its promise of financial support. Anecdote about parents of a special needs student. They were disappointed that there is not a centrally located consolidated school, but accept the reality, and want to ensure high quality services. They prefer that their child is served in the home district, but understand that it may be challenging. Parent and Schools accept the finality of what happening and want to move forward. Any changes and transition to new programs need assistance. Gap

analysis needs to be done.

- Others

Members recognize that Staunton is the consolidated school. Want this school to have a mission even if it is a day program to meet needs of students in the area.

VDOE: Karen noted that she has been on loan here; Felice will be the new full-time superintendent. She is currently director of instruction. The change will occur by the end of the week. Dr. Canaday will coordinate a cost-analysis of different options and will work with the Department of Planning and Budget to do this. Regarding the requested public comment period from last meeting it was determined by VDOE that not enough time was available to advertise. Also, we have received a lot of comment and the VDOE believes it does not need more at this time. Once a plan is announced then we may need to another public comment session.

Review of John's email (see attached)

John is trying to facilitate and not meddle. He was charged by Dr. Canaday with, "keeping eye on the students who need to be served." John reviewed legislation language and noted that attached Email has three parts and was meant as a way to help us structure thinking to complete the first task of the task force.

Part 1—The 23 Students estimated to be needed services in Region 2 as of June 2008

One of the recommendations should concern the 23 students and ensure that existing fair (legal) practices are followed. The recommendation should consider the program elements for these students and the list of services needed; and should reflect considerations from parents regarding transition and the program. One of the options for some of these students is a regional day program. School systems have changed and evolved and, thus, another option might be worked through school divisions.

Part 2—Program Options

The Legislative mandate is to give recommendations to VDOE about how a regional day program might play out. We could recommend that regional day program have certain essential elements. We need to provide options for who will run it (e.g. SECEP and New Horizons). There are 37 regional programs in the area. We can recommend a process: Request for proposal from potential operators of the day program that would detail proposed services and estimated cost of delivering the services. Options of potential operators include local school divisions; combination of local school divisions; existing regional programs; or a private entity. We need to communicate to VDOE about the options' upsides and downsides. Don't have to say where the program needs to be located. But this campus is preferred first choice of the task force members.

Part 3—Facility Use

The third part of the legislation relates to the second task of the task force, coming up with a list of facility educational uses in addition to the day program. We will work on this next meeting.

Comments: How does the historical piece fit in? Do we assume that whatever ends up here will be for students with sensory impairments? John noted that the historical significance of the facility is guiding principal for all our work. The concern for the day program is for students with sensory impairments primarily, but there could be other programs located here for other educational uses, particularly if such programs could interact with the regional day program.

Some members are trying to get a handle on what regional programs might be. Are we going to hear from regional superintendents and special education directors re: capabilities? John indicated that we would not be hearing from other regional programs, but that we should note in our recommendations that all should be considered and that prior history with local school divisions should be a consideration. We could say that one option is a regional program e.g., SECEP and New Horizons, as long as they agree to meet the recommended program characteristics. The VDOE will research this before deciding who would operate the program.

The task force will come up with a template of sorts to be used by VDOE. Then there will be a proposal process of some kind which must follow this template. We could view our mandate as creating an RFP that provides the performance parameters of the new program. Yes, generally.

One member said, “I want to explain to people I’m talking to. Are we saying that we are attempting to formulate recommendations for a program to exist here with the qualities we discussed, or at this point is there no identifiable location?” John commented that we can recommend this location.

There is an investment of Newport News and Hampton in this location. Some members were uncomfortable doing blanket recommendation. If there is going to be a regional program we want it to be here. We should be more prescriptive to who and what we are comfortable with.

John offered two points: 1) The Task Force can say it prefers that the regional program here and 2) It can specify qualifications, including an entity that has a designated history with existing school divisions.

Another member asked about the proposal review of process -- who would look at proposals? John commented that we can be silent on review process or can say want task force to be represented on review process. Members noted that somebody from task force should be involved in the review and should recommend review factors for evaluating the proposal.

There is a strong preference for this school being the site; strong preference for history and quality of program. Further, somebody in Region 2 with proven track record should be selected by VDOE to administer the program. Of course any action needs to respect parents' wishes. There are existing state policies and practices to follow for how this goes.

Recommendations Work

Before 9 PM, recommendations for 23 students and regional program, and begin Task 2, campus use/additional programs. John will craft something for review at the next meeting. For Task 2, John will craft something also. Last time drafted 16 items. Members reviewed these suggesting additions, corrections, and modifications. Some changes are:

We will combine categories -- not change words. Some suggested a consolidation of everything related with staff and student services.

Transportation is a big piece -- could put under support service or infrastructure. This program might have a training and technical assistance component. Similar to structured PD. TA could also be related to the resource center.

How does our list differ from what is offered here at the school now? Some on task force don't think it does. What is our ideal program? Some of the expertise is already here. Return to historical quality of the school.

Some of the deficiencies here are related to deficient infrastructure. Need to include sufficient resource stream for infrastructure. Part of the appropriation is targeted toward future use of Hampton facility. VDOE will have an assessment conducted for facilities here.

Guiding principles—maintaining and sustaining support programs. Also, having state of the art programs and services is a critical concern. What will it take to get us from where we are to where we want to be? Helpful for us to come up with statement in recommendations re: sufficient funding to support program. Stronger statement would say aim for the best.

There is a specific date in legislation. One concern -- suppose general assembly does not fund this proposal? The June 8 date would have to be extended. Don't want to be caught having to scramble to get something together at the last minute. Decision is up to legislature. Calls to legislators, VDOE? As a group we are not going to influence political process except to provide our recommendations.

Next Steps

John passed out another handout adapted from Bob P. RE Task 3 and possible additional programs. John asked members to think about Task 3 for next meeting. What other

programs might be brought on campus to use the existing facilities that might meet continuing needs of school divisions and support and extend programs that would be located on the campus?

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday May 14, 11 AM to 1 PM, Stryker Hall unless otherwise notified.

John's E-mail sent to members prior to 4-23-07 meeting:

Good day! Trust that you are enjoying this wonderful weather!

I'm attaching a revised copy of the summary of our last meeting in which we've done some minor edits.

Friends, I'd like to say a few things as we prepare for our meeting Monday evening. First, when I accepted this assignment from Dr. Canaday, I promised to hold firm on one thing -- keep your eyes on those children! To that end, I've been steering your work toward those students currently enrolled at VSDBM-H whose parents chose to have them remain in Region 2 and the programs that will need to be available to ensure that they receive appropriate services. I remain steadfast in my belief that this is a primary outcome for our group. I'd like to have you think about how to best frame a recommendation around this challenge. I think that the recommendation might have 3 components: 1) the use of a fair process to determine student needs and the best place to deliver those needs (e.g., the legal process we use in Virginia for all students with disabilities), 2) the characteristics of a solid program for students like those currently enrolled (our work from last week), and 3) things to consider from the perspective of parents as the change takes place (see slides on parent interviews). We cannot say -- indeed should not say -- what the specific programs should like because we have insufficient data.

Second, the legislation says in Part 2: "The Department of Education shall assist with the coordination with appropriate local entities for the transition of services to a regional day program in the Hampton Roads area by no later than June 30, 2008." We need to give the VDOE Planning Team some recommendations here and I need you to think about what those recommendations might be. I think we know what the essential components of such a program might be -- our work from last meeting. We do not know the students, because the regional program will more than likely serve additional students with sensory impairments *given the existing and emerging needs of students in Region 2.* We do not have needs data per se, but part of our recommendation might be that the VDOE Planning Team considers doing such a needs assessment before finalizing the plans for the regional day program in Hampton Rhodes. I think one of the things the VDOE Planning team would need is some idea of the options for administering the regional day program. It will not be the VDOE. Rather, it will be some entity in Region 2. We've talked about a few options here - a local school division, a combination of more than one school division, a not-for-profit existing regional educational program, or a private entity. We cannot recommend a specific option because we have insufficient information. But we can say for each of these -- and there may be more - what we see as the up side or downside. Please think about these prior to our meeting.

As I noted above we cannot suggest a specific arrangement, but we could suggest a process that the planning team might use to get a better grasp on each before making a decision. For example we could suggest that the VDOE send out a request for proposals to establish a regional day program for students with sensory impairments that conform to the essential elements we suggest as well as the considerations for the process as noted

by parents (see above).

If we complete the considerations in the first two of my comments above (what to do with existing students and what to do RE formulation of regional day program), I think we will have addressed Task 1. While the VDOE might look at a number of facilities to house the regional day program, I think we could recommend that the first consideration be the current school. The first step the VDOE might take - and we could suggest - is a gap analysis; given what programs need to be in place, what would it take to bring the current facility up to capacity to deliver those programs? Such an analysis might be expected in the request for proposals identified above.

Now, for Task 2, we need to come up with a list of other educational programs that people in Region 2 recommend. Our Superintendents and Special Education Directors on our Task Force are key informants with respect to this list of possibilities. We look for there leadership here. Again, we cannot have a specific set of programs, just some ideas that will have to be investigated further using needs assessments and gap analyses - things we cannot do, but cab recommend that the VDOE do.

OK, I trust I have not taken too much lead here. My aim was to clarify, not meddle. Look forward to seeing you Monday evening!

PS -- please find attached revised Summary from last meeting!