

Meeting of the Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, September 7, 2001

Present: Superintendents' Group – Dorothea Shannon, Harry Ward, Thomas DeBolt, Lowell Lemons, Ira Trollinger, Robert McCracken, Margaret Blackmon, Edward Kelly, Stewart Roberson, John Kidd, Alfred R. Butler, executive director, and Andy Stamp, assistant executive director, VASS, and Walter A. McFarlane, superintendent, Virginia Department of Correctional Education.

Department of Education – Jo Lynne DeMary, Kenneth Magill, Shelley Loving-Ryder, Lan Neugent, Charles Finley, Patricia Wright, Patty Pitts, Anne Wescott, Cynthia Cave, Wallace Harris, senior deputy director, Virginia Retirement System, and Harry Smith.

Dr. DeMary welcomed the members of the advisory council to the first meeting of the 2001-2002 school year. She announced the appointment of Ms. Shelley Loving-Ryder to succeed Ms. Cameron Harris, who retired as assistant superintendent for testing and accountability.

Dr. DeMary congratulated Dr. McFarlane for the honor that he received recently as superintendent of the Virginia Department of Correctional Education. Dr. McFarlane was named one of the “Best in the Business” for 2001 by the American Correctional Association.

Dr. Butler and Mr. Ward referred to a letter sent to Kirk T. Schroder, president of the Board of Education, by the Northumberland County School Board, regarding students who retake the Standards of Learning tests. Dr. DeMary said that department staff and the Board of Education will address this matter.

Following those comments, the meeting was devoted to the following agenda:

History and Social Science Standards and Assessments Update

Dr. Wright provided a detailed explanation, using an electronic visual aid, about the common content of old and new Standards of Learning for history and social science. She noted that the Board of Education directed the Department of Education to develop for school divisions “a crosswalk document” that identifies common content of the 1995 and 2001 SOL for history and social science.

Dr. Wright also noted that the board authorized a “crosswalk document” reflecting the common content in the 1999 Teacher Resource Guide and the 2001 curriculum framework for history and social science. The documents the board requested were developed by the Divisions of Instruction and Assessment and Reporting in the Department of Education. She pointed out that the underlined content in the 2001 Curriculum Framework is considered to be “common content.” She emphasized that efforts will be made to ensure that only the underlined material will be reflected in the SOL assessments in history and social science during the 2001-2002 school year.

Each school division will receive two printed copies of the revised SOL, one printed copy of the Curriculum Framework, and two CD-ROMs. Also, the department plans to send each school one printed copy of the revised SOL, one printed copy of the common content documents, and one CD-ROM that includes the history and social science SOL, the Curriculum Framework, and the crosswalk documents. Schools are encouraged to use the current school year to align curriculum and prepare for full implementation of the revised standards within two years.

SOL Scores Release/Accreditation Timeline

Ms. Loving-Ryder provided an update on the SOL test scores. She said the statewide scores will be released during the week of September 10 and the passing rates for individual schools should be available within several weeks. The department will send an e-mail note to superintendents the day before the test scores are released. She explained that remediation recovery and substitute test results are new this year. Mr. Finley reported that school accreditation ratings should be available in late October.

SOL Technology Initiative

Mr. Neugent distributed information about the Department of education’s SOL Technology Initiative and Architectural Guidelines for school divisions that are preparing to participate in the initiative. He said 14 school divisions have submitted readiness checklists.

Mr. Neugent stated that the department will provide software that schools can use to simulate an actual testing situation probably by early winter. He emphasized the importance of all concerned working together to see how the system works and to begin thinking about the structure for online SOL testing in high schools. Dr. DeMary pointed out that Virginia is the pioneer in this testing project, and other states are waiting to see how successful it is in the commonwealth.

Mr. Neugent told the superintendents that funds spent for filtering devices are reimbursable. He reminded them that September 30 of this year is the last year for reimbursement for Goals 2000 funds. He also said the department hopes to have a system developed to enable superintendents to have two-way video communications for their regional and state meetings.

Employment of Retired Teachers

Mrs. Wescott noted that a considerable amount of time had been spent on developing the policy for employing retired teachers and public school administrators that was made possible by legislation enacted by the 2001 session of the Virginia General Assembly. She said she believes the procedure developed is “as simple as we could make it to help school divisions employ teachers this year.”

Dr. Cave explained how the teacher shortage areas were defined and listed the top 10 needs by subject areas. She provided details about the procedure adopted for employing qualified teachers in accordance with the legislation. Mr. Wallace Harris explained Virginia Retirement System requirements regarding the new legislation and he said a 12-months’ break in a teacher’s service would satisfy the VRS and JLARC. Dr. Cave said the Department of Education needs to know the number of teachers who retire under provisions of the new law, and she said a form was developed to provide this information. Mrs. Pitts told the council that a memo has been sent to superintendents regarding the implementation of the legislation and to instruct personnel how to access the Excel worksheet to submit information electronically about the employment of teachers and administrators.

Second Phase of the Academic Review Process

Mr. Finley reported that the department has developed procedures for the second year review that will continue to look at the degree to which school improvement plans have been implemented. He could not estimate how much time will be needed to complete the review. He said the agency has “a pool of reviewers available and training is scheduled for October. The reviews, he explained, probably will begin in November and be completed by January of 2002.

Expanding the Visiting International Faculty Program (VIF)

Mrs. Pitts said the VIF is expanding this program and is working in eight states to enlarge the supply of public school teachers. Twenty-nine Virginia school divisions are participating in this program. Dr. DeMary said she has no problem expanding the program to teaching areas with critical shortages, with the exception of special education, if school divisions can use the teachers. She asked if such action would be helpful. The superintendents said they favor expanding the program that they believe is beneficial.

September 26, 2001, Board of Education Agenda

Dr. Roberts reviewed a tentative draft of the agenda for the board meeting on September 26. Dr. DeMary said the board is developing its agenda for the next four months and hopes to complete action on regulations dealing with a number of items ranging from proprietary schools and procedures for revising the Standards of Quality to remedial programs and students' transcripts.

Prior to adjournment of the meeting, Dr. DeMary announced that Governor Gilmore had announced the appointment of Mrs. Diane Atkinson to the Board of Education to fill the unexpired term of Mrs. Jennifer Byler, who died in a boating accident. Mrs. Atkinson has extensive experience in public education and she recently served as a special advisor to the state superintendent. She joined the Department of Education in 1985 as an educational consultant and used her legal and educational background in the area of special education. She left the department to work briefly with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. She rejoined the state agency in 1988.