

Meeting of the State Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, January 11, 2002

Present: Superintendent's Group: Dorothea M. Shannon, Timothy R. Jenney, Harry M. Ward, Thomas H. DeBolt, Lowell T. Lemons, Ira R. Trollinger, Robert C. McCracken, Walter A. McFarlane, superintendent, Virginia Department of Correctional Education, Edward L. Kelly, Gwen Edwards (for Margaret V. Blackmon, who was delayed in attending the meeting), Alfred R. Butler, executive director, and Andy Stamp, assistant executive director, VASS.

Department of Education: Jo Lynne DeMary, M. Kenneth Magill, Anne Wescott, Charles W. Finley, Bethann Canada, Shelley Loving-Ryder, David A. Crossley, Cynthia Cave, and Harry L. Smith.

Dr. DeMary opened the meeting and announced that she had been asked by Governor Warner to continue in her position during the transition to the new administration. She also referred to the new federal education bill and said that Dr. Magill has been asked to head a steering committee in the Department of Education to study the 1,100-page document.

The state superintendent thanked Dr. Butler for the VASS meeting on December 18 to discuss concerns regarding the SASI software system for recording student information. Copies of a memo from VASS to Dr. DeMary listing recommendations developed at the December meeting were distributed to the superintendents. Dr. DeMary said the Department of Education does not have the personnel and resources to provide state leadership for the SASI system, but she emphasized the agency's commitment to improving communications with school divisions and NCS Pearson and to the management of student information.

Items on the agenda included the following:

February 8, 2002, Electronic Meeting Update – Lan Neugent distributed a status report on the schedule for the video-conference network meeting connecting the Department of Education and the superintendent's eight regional study groups. Mr. Neugent also provided technical information and the protocol for the meeting. Dr. DeMary noted that the meeting should provide an excellent opportunity for a convenient method for sharing information, and she said "Let's try it and see how it works."

Gates Grant Update – Earlier this year, superintendents were informed that Virginia had received a \$3.6 million technology leadership grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This grant known as VITAL (Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership) is being implemented. The grant focuses on providing effective leadership experiences and resources for superintendents and public school principals. Regional training is provided by specialists from the University of Virginia, The College of William and Mary, and the Department of Education Best Practice Centers.

Mr. Chris O’Neal, the project coordinator from UVA, reviewed the program and its objectives. He said pilot projects have been initiated and it is hoped that the project will be available to all school divisions within three years. A \$500 stipend is available for individuals who are participating in the project. In response to a question, Mr. O’Neal said that the possibility of granting degree credit for those involved in the project has been discussed. Mr. O’Neal volunteered to attend superintendents’ regional meetings to provide information about the program to all superintendents.

Dr. DeMary said she is excited about the project, and she expressed hope that superintendents will take advantage of this opportunity for professional development.

Budget Discussion – Dan Timberlake reviewed highlights of the state budget for public education proposed by former Governor Gilmore for the 2002-2004 biennium and a “caboose bill” for 2002 that reflects changes in state sales tax revenue, Virginia Retirement System employer contribution rates for instructional positions, lottery funds forecast, Literary Fund revenue, and the K-3 class size reduction program. Mr. Timberlake noted that the 2002-2004 budget proposals include a 2 percent recommended salary increase for SOQ instructional and support positions effective December 1, 2002. The proposed budget would reduce from \$10 to \$5 per pupil funds for Standards of Quality instructional materials in both years of the biennium and eliminate the Lottery Hold Harmless program and funding for school construction grants. State Literary Fund money would be used in lieu of general funds for VRS retirement in both years of the biennium. No funds would be available for Literary Fund loans in either year of the biennium; however, funds are provided to continue an interest rate subsidy program for each of the two years.

General Assembly Update – Anne Wescott provided information about the membership of the House Education Committee chaired by Delegate James H. Dillard and the Senate Committee on Education and Health chaired by Senator Warren E. Barry, and distributed a summary of legislation introduced in the General Assembly through Wednesday, January 9. Tracking summaries of legislation affecting public education will be provided twice each week by the Department of Education during the General Assembly session.

Mrs. Wescott also informed the council of items on the agenda for the meeting of the Board of Education on January 14.

ESEA Update – David Crossley, a policy analyst for the Department of Education, gave a report on highlights of “The No Child Left Behind Act” that was signed by President Bush on January 8. In response to a question, the superintendents were told that they would receive additional information about the legislation to help them in preparing their school budgets.

Prior to adjournment, Dr. DeMary distributed copies of a news release about a \$250,000 grant Virginia has received from the Wallace Reader’s Digest Funds to promote the development and retention of educational leaders committed to improving students’ achievement. Virginia is one of 15 states to receive grants from the Wallace Funds’ State Action for Leadership Project. The grant is intended to help states to respond to an anticipated shortage of educational leaders and strengthen the link between effective leadership and student achievement. The grant is being managed by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The next meeting of the council is scheduled for February 8, 2002.