

Meeting of the Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, March 8, 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, Margaret V. Blackmon, Walter A. McFarlane, superintendent, Virginia Department of Correctional Education, Edward L. Kelly, Stewart D. Roberson, and Alfred R. Butler and Andy Stamp, executive director and assistant executive director, respectively, of VASS.

Department of Education – Jo Lynne DeMary, M. Kenneth Magill, Charles W. Finley, Lan Neugent, Anne Wescott, Daniel Timberlake, and Harry L. Smith.

Dr. DeMary introduced Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, Virginia's new Secretary of Education. Dr. Wheelan emphasized the importance of informing parents and students about career opportunities and of the need for public-private partnerships to promote career and technical education. The secretary congratulated Dr. DeMary for the assistance provided her office during the recent session of the Virginia General Assembly. She also expressed her support for students in colleges and universities volunteering to help students in public schools.

The council meeting included the following agenda:

General Assembly Update

Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and planning, distributed a report on bills and resolutions affecting public education and public school personnel that were considered by the 2002 Virginia General Assembly. The report is available on the DOE Web site.

Ms. Wescott provided details of more than a dozen bills that were passed by the legislature and responded to superintendents' questions. Of special interest, she said, were public education bills authorizing the Board of Education to adopt guidelines for awarding students verified units of credit for graduation from high school.

Other legislation sent to Governor Warner included a bill requiring all school divisions to consider applications for charter schools, a bill to prohibit smoking in the interior of any public elementary, intermediate, or secondary school, and a bill to require school boards to notify within two weeks of approval of the school budget by the

appropriating body, but no later than June 1, teachers who may be subject to a reduction in force. The Governor has until April 17 to sign, veto, or amend bills passed by the General Assembly.

SOL Technology Initiative Update

Lan Neugent, assistant superintendent for technology, reported on the status of the study being conducted by the Department of Education comparing students' paper-and-pencil SOL tests and an online version of the tests. He noted that the funds for the project are still in the state budget for 2002-2004. Each high school participating in the project would receive \$26,000, based on the state composite index.

Mr. Neugent said he had met with a representative of Weidenhammer Systems Corporation, a subcontractor for the NCS group working to customize Department of Education reports. He said that Ms. Barb Feiman, the Weidenhammer representative, is working with the four user groups of school divisions to get the input needed for the project. The Department of Education will offer scholarships that may amount to \$200 per school division for a regional training program.

Mr. Neugent also told the council that the department has contracted with Jack Donald, who developed the original data disaggregator, to work with new data.

Budget Discussion

Dan Timberlake, assistant superintendent for finance, provided information about the state budget for the 2002-2004 biennium and its impact on public education. At the time he met with the council, the House and Senate money committees had just completed their conference report to be presented to the General Assembly. He said a superintendent's memo will be sent by Friday, March 15, giving details of final action on the budget. He noted that funds were included as a "down payment" toward salary increases for teachers in the second year of the biennium, but that a specific rate of increase was not yet established. Funds for the dropout prevention program were reduced; \$27.5 million was included for school construction for each year of the biennium; funding was eliminated for the Governor's Best Practice Centers. Mr. Timberlake reported that lottery revenue is projected to increase by about \$9 million per year. Information regarding changes in SOQ funding was presented and discussed as well as changes affecting other state-funded programs.

Superintendent's Comments

Dr. DeMary called attention to the General Assembly's interest in emphasizing the importance of the Standards of Quality and the number of bills that were passed that dealt with the SOQ. She noted that funds for teacher training and Standards of Learning materials were folded into the SOQ. She suggested that superintendents may want to have representatives attend meetings of the Board of Education's SOQ committee.

The Board of Education is developing its annual report on the needs and condition of public education, as required by the Standards of Quality. The SOQ committee of the board is trying to schedule its meetings as closely as possible to meetings of the board. Public hearings on the project will be held in mid-April and mid-May. Superintendents were encouraged to let the Department of Education have their comments regarding the SOQ. The department has developed examples of courses of study needed to satisfy requirements for standard and verified units of credit. Information will be sent to superintendents, principals, and guidance counselors after receipt by the board.

ESEA Update

Dr. DeMary said the Department of Education is reviewing its accountability requirements to see what else needs to be done to satisfy provisions of the recent federal No Child Left Behind Act. She said the department will send the USDOE a consolidated application for several programs required by the act. School divisions could follow the same procedure. Dr. DeMary said accountability requirements in the new act are much more specific than those in Virginia. She said if an application is filed by May 28, funds should be available by July 1. She also pointed out that the reauthorized ESEA provides more local flexibility for how the federal funds are used by school divisions.