

Meeting of the Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, September 6, 2002

Present: Superintendents' Group: Dorothea M. Shannon, Jonathan L. Lewis, Harry M. Ward, Thomas H. DeBolt, Lowell T. Lemons, Frederick S. Morton, IV, Samuel S. Cook, Gwen E. Edwards; Stewart D. Roberson, president, VASS; John H. Kidd, President-elect, VASS; Edgar B. Hatrick, III, secretary-treasurer, VASS; Alfred R. Butler, IV, executive director, and Andy Stamp, assistant executive director, VASS; and Walter A. MacFarlane, superintendent, Virginia Department of Correctional Education.

Department of Education: Jo Lynne DeMary, M. Kenneth Magill, Patricia Wright, George Irby, Cynthia Cave, Lan Neugent, Anne Wescott, Dan Timberlake, Charles Finley, and Harry L. Smith.

Dr. DeMary welcomed the members of the council to the first meeting of the 2002-2003 school year. She expressed her deep regret for the deaths of several students in automobile accidents on the first day of school and the illness of Dr. Edward M. Kelley, superintendent of Prince William County public schools and past-president of VASS. Her concern about Dr. Kelley was shared by members of the council.

Dr. DeMary called attention to Governor Mark Warner's memorandum encouraging school divisions to have students commemorate September 11, 2001, and to her announcement of recent organization changes in the Department of Education. She said that the assistant superintendent for the Division of Career, Technical, and Adult Education "has been put on hold" because of budget restraints. She also called attention to the creation of a school improvement office to coordinate the Governor's PASS initiative. Dr. James Heywood is serving as acting director of that office and reports to Dr. DeMary.

Following Dr. DeMary's remarks, the council devoted its attention to the following agenda:

State Budget Shortfall – Dr. DeMary called attention to the estimated shortfall of \$1.5 billion in state revenue for the 2002-2004 biennium, and discussed Governor Mark Warner's request to state agencies to reduce their budgets by specified percentages in 2003 and 2004. She told the council members that when the Department of Education develops its revenue reduction plan, they will receive additional information. So far, she said, the Governor had not said anything to her about any cuts in state aid to school

divisions. She mentioned the difficulty of the agency to operate on a monthly budget schedule which is required for the first time. Standards of Quality payments, she said, will continue to be sent to school divisions twice each month.

Dan Timberlake pointed out that there is not much flexibility in the agency's budget, and he expressed hope that the Governor can solve the budget problems without reducing state aid to school divisions. He said it would help the department for superintendents to discuss budget issues in their regional meetings and give the agency their comments.

In response to Dr. DeMary's request for comments about future council meetings in light of the budget issues, the superintendents said they want the monthly sessions to continue but agreed to pay their own expenses.

The Academic Review Process and Locally Awarded Verified Credits and the Third Phase Review Process – Charles Finley, assistant superintendent for accountability, briefly reported on the Phase 3 academic review of schools accredited with warning. He said that a new kind of review form has been developed that includes a school self-study. A report will be issued on a monthly basis to help principals. Mr. Finley also said the review teams hope to visit schools earlier than they did this past year. School climate and culture and issues affecting instruction and the allocation of resources also will be included in the reviews.

Mr. Finley also called attention to action by the Board of Education in approving guidelines for local school boards to award verified credits for the Standard Diploma for students in classes in 2004-2006 in science and history and social science.

PASS Initiative – Dr. James Heywood, acting director of school improvement, distributed information about Governor Warner's Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS). He pointed out that 117 public schools are accredited with warning; the first team visits scheduled to 34 "PASS Priority Schools" are set for September 17. It was made clear that Adequate Yearly Progress required by federal No Child Left Behind legislation applies to all public schools; only Title I schools are affected by federal sanctions. Dr. Heywood identified the key issues of the PASS project, its components, what the project is and is not, and details of four intervention models to achieve objectives. He called attention to the importance of "business partners" in the Governor's initiative.

No Child Left Behind Act Update – Dr. Cynthia Cave, director of policy, noted that in July the Board of Education adopted guidelines for school choice required by the federal NCLB Act and is scheduled to approve a list of vendors to provide supplemental education services for schools that fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress required by the NCLB Act. She encouraged council members to provide the department (Compensatory

Programs) with the names of vendors that they may want included on the list. The board, she said, will review criteria to determine Adequate Yearly Progress when it meets in December, with a final decision to be made in January.

Dr. DeMary said the board is concerned about teaching reading to third graders and instructional methods used. Dr. Roberson expressed hope that the state can avoid “falling into a reading war” about methods for teaching reading. Dr. DeMary recalled that 35 percent of grade 3 children failed to pass the Standards of Learning reading tests.

Medicaid Discussion – Dr. Lissa Power-deFur, director of student services, introduced Mr. Patrick Finnerty, director, and members of the staff of the Department of Medical Assistance Services, (DMAS). Mr. Finnerty explained that the 2002-2004 state appropriation act requires DMAS to generate savings of \$43 million in 2003 and the same amount in 2004 through maximum use of federal funds for the Medicaid program for special education students.

He outlined DMAS initiatives for (a) special education billing to support claims from school divisions and (b) “administrative claiming” on behalf of all Medicaid students. He said if school divisions are billing for special education services, DMAS would like to increase their billing, and school divisions that are not billing for medical services, he said, are encouraged to do so. He encouraged all divisions to begin billing Medicaid for administrative expenses.

Mr. Finnerty thanked Dr. Power-deFur and her staff for the assistance they give to DMAS, and he emphasized that it is critical for Virginia to maximize federal revenue to meet the targets mandated by the Virginia General Assembly. He told the superintendents that their help is needed to solve the issue to which he referred.

SOL Revision Schedule and Textbook Adoption Schedule – Dr. Patricia Wright, assistant superintendent for instruction, reviewed the Board of Education’s textbook and instructional materials adoption process for history and social science as well as health and the criteria used for the evaluations. She also distributed the board’s schedule for reviewing Standards of Learning for history and social science, mathematics, science, English, computer technology, fine arts, foreign language, health, physical education, and driver education.

Technology Update – Lan Neugent, assistant superintendent for technology, informed the superintendents that school divisions have until September 30 to submit requests for VPSA bond reimbursement for computer technology. He also reported on schools receiving Stage 1 and Stage 2 certification, and asked that schools that have not received certification be encouraged to do so. He said load test software is available and the Department of Education plans to do a satellite broadcast in late September to show school personnel how to use it. The department, he said, is looking at the Proctor

Caching procedure for use in distributing SOL tests to schools. He also stated that the paper and pencil tests that measure the computer Standards of Learning may be eliminated because of the budget shortfall.

Before the meeting adjourned, Harry Ward informed the group that sixth-grade students in Mathews County will be featured on national television in October (date not set) for an environmental project on the Chesapeake Bay.