

Meeting of the Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, November 1, 2002

Present: Superintendents' Group: Dorothea M. Shannon, Jonathan L. Lewis, Thomas H. DeBolt, Lowell T. Lemons, Frederick S. Morton, IV, Gwen E. Edwards, Oliver McBride (for Samuel S. Cook), Dale E. Sander (for Harry Ward); Stewart D. Roberson, president, VASS; and Alfred R. Butler, IV, executive director, VASS.

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

Budget Cuts:

Several hours of the meeting were devoted to discussing the \$5.3 million reductions proposed by Governor Mark Warner in K-12 discretionary funds for school divisions as part of his effort to balance the state budget. Dr. DeMary asked the superintendents for their comments concerning where they think the reductions should be made. She said when she is asked for input concerning budget cuts for public education she will be guided by the superintendents' comments.

Superintendents' Issues

Dr. Shannon asked about the requirement in the federal No Child Left Behind Act that parents must be informed when a regular classroom teacher is out of school for six weeks. She was informed that the NCLB Act says that parents must be notified when a teacher is away for more than four weeks and a substitute is employed. In response to a question, she was informed that this requirement applies to all teachers, not just those who work with Title I programs.

Dr. DeMary was asked if the state will grant an exception for the 180-day requirement to divisions that closed schools during the recent sniper attacks. Dr. DeMary said she will be glad to talk with individual superintendents about this issue.

Dr. Magill reported that George McVey, president of the Virginia Council for Private Education, asked that information be shared with his organization when it is necessary to close public schools for safety reasons such as the sniper attacks.

### No Child Left Behind Update

Dr. Cave, director of policy analysis, reported that the Board of Education will consider several NCLB issues during the next few months. The board has scheduled special videoconference meetings on December 4, for the first review of criteria to meet the NCLB's Annual Yearly Progress requirements for school divisions. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Mr. Irby, director of compensatory programs, noted that the Board of Education has approved a list of providers of supplemental educational services, and he thanked the superintendents for their assistance in connection with the NCLB legislation. Dr. DeMary urged superintendents to keep informed on Title I schools, and she emphasized the importance of tracking progress on Title I programs.

### Special Education Issue

Douglas Cox, assistant superintendent for special education and student services, and Paul J. Raskopf, special education services, reported on the disproportionate representation based on race for students with disabilities. The council members were informed that the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, directs states to determine whether or not there are significant differences in identifying children with disabilities based on race.

To meet this requirement, the Department of Education analyzed data collected from the 2000 Special Education Child Count, and the results will be sent to superintendents. Mr. Raskopf said this is the first step in the process that involves state and local review and analysis of data to determine whether or not there is a problem in black students' representation in the mental retardation category.

Dr. DeMary asked the superintendents to read the draft memo distributed by Mr. Raskopf to be sure it does not create additional concerns. According to the memo, 29 percent of the special education students are black compared with 27 percent of the general population. Of 132 school divisions, 32 have a disproportionate number of black students, and 90 divisions have an over-representation of black students classified as mentally retarded. Also, the data show that in 72 school divisions, black students spend more time in special education programs than white students.

Dr. DeMary emphasized the department's need for feedback, and superintendents were urged to call Dr. Magill and give him their comments about the data.

### SOL Technology Initiative Update

Lan Neugent, assistant superintendent for technology, reported that NCS Pearson has completed the revised edition of the Load Test Software, which is available to school divisions. The software is for use by technology staff members in school divisions to test

network performance in conditions similar to those they will experience during online SOL testing.

Training to use the software will be provided for school divisions in a televised broadcast on local PBS stations at 2 p.m. on November 5. A local test training session also is scheduled as a pre-conference session at the Technology Leadership Conference in Roanoke on December 3.

Mr. Neugent said 107 school divisions are certified for Stage 1 of High School Readiness Certification and 27 divisions have Stage 2 certification. Thirty-one divisions have conducted online testing.

#### Visiting International Faculty Program

Ms. Terri Strange-Boston, regional director, Mid-Atlantic States, reported on the Visiting Teacher Faculty Program. She explained the program's standards and said the VIF wants to bring the best educators to schools in the United States. She reported that the program has provided 150 teachers for public schools in Virginia. She emphasized the fact that teachers in the program must meet state licensing requirements, and she said the VIF initiative provides a valuable pool of available teachers. Dr. Magill suggested that she should be invited to attend regional superintendents' meetings.

Dr. Magill also urged school divisions to be more involved in the Teacher of the Year program and asked for suggestions for achieving this objective.

Just before the meeting adjourned, Mr. Timberlake said he had received information that a settlement has been approved in a nationwide class-action suit filed against the manufacturer (Beazer East, Inc.) of a roofing product used on some buildings between 1980 and 1989. The deadline for filing claims is December 13, 2002. Information should be given to Ms. Elizabeth Schuster, appointed notice administrator, at the U.S. District Court toll free 1-877-428-7374.

The next meeting of the council is scheduled for Friday, December 6, at 9 a.m. in the Department of Education conference room in the James Monroe Building.