

Meeting of the Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council

Friday, October 15, 2004

Present: Superintendents' Group: Roy Geiger, Jr., Donald Ford (for David Melton) H. D. Northern, Jr., Lynn E. Cross (for Milton R. Liverman), Eddie Graham, Michael E. Basham, Larry A. Massie, Edgar B. Hatrick, III, John H. Kidd, Alfred R. Butler, IV, executive director, and Andy Stamp, assistant executive director, VASS.

Department of Education: Jo Lynne DeMary, Patricia Wright, Anne Wescott, Shelley Loving-Ryder, Lan Neugent, Bethann Canada, Michelle Vucci, and Harry L. Smith.

Dr. DeMary welcomed the members of the council and introduced Ms. Maria Everette, executive director, Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council, who provided information about the FOIA. Dr. DeMary said Ms. Everette was invited to meet with the council as a result of a discussion she had with Dr. Hatrick. Ms. Everette gave a detailed report on the FOIA, and distributed printed material dealing with access to Public Records, E-Mail, Use Access and Retention, Access to Public Meetings, and the Virginia Freedom of Information Council.

Ms. Everette emphasized the importance of school division superintendents understanding the responsibilities they have for complying with the FOIA, and responded to a number of questions asked by members of the council. She said she would be pleased to meet with the superintendents' groups to provide information about the FOIA if requested.

Dr. DeMary thanked Ms. Everette for meeting with the council and for the helpful information she provided about the FOIA.

Superintendents' Issues

This item involved three topics: SOL assessment windows, the PRAXIS tests beginning teachers are required to pass, and e-rate commitments for funding for telecommunications services. The FCC has adopted federal budgeting guidelines in an attempt to avoid fraud, waste, and abuse, to reduce paperwork involved and improve the manner in which the e-rate program is administered. Lan Neugent said 30 percent of Virginia's school divisions have received letters of commitment for e-rate services. He suggested that superintendents who have concerns about the program and funding get in touch with Greg Weisiger at 804-692-0335 for assistance. There have been no instances of fraud, waste, or abuse in Virginia.

In response to the comment about a review of the PRAXIS assessment, Dr. DeMary said the Department of Education is reviewing the Advisory Board for Teacher Education and Licensure's (ABTEL) recommendation and this item will be presented to the Board of Education as soon as possible. The council was told that the Board of Education is aware of the high PRAXIS requirements and the resulting concerns by teachers and school administrators.

SOL Testing Window

The concern about testing windows for Standards of Learning tests was reflected in information presented by Ms. Shelley Loving-Ryder. The change proposed by the agency would establish several testing windows of two to three weeks, each with different test forms administered in each window. School divisions would choose only one of those windows for SOL tests for grades 3-8. School divisions would continue to have the flexibility to set their own windows for end-of-course tests.

Because most school divisions have set their testing windows for 2004-2005, any change in the testing window policy would not be effective until 2005-2006.

Mr. Kidd suggested the use of three individualized testing windows based on a school division's last day of school. Dr. DeMary said his suggestion would be considered, and she noted that the basic issue is how the state agency can accommodate local concerns. She said the superintendents' comments will be included in material to be presented to the board.

No Child Left Behind

Dr. Wright distributed a five-page report on proposed guidelines for sanctions or corrective actions for school divisions that receive Title I funding as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* requires states to establish an accountability system for schools, school divisions, and the state. As part of the accountability system, states must have sanctions and corrective actions for school divisions that do not make AYP for two consecutive years or more as defined in the Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook. Virginia's Accountability Workbook, approved by the U.S. Department of Education (USED), describes a single statewide accountability system and outlines the steps that Virginia will follow to implement this requirement of *NCLB*. The AYP accountability determinations for the 2004-2005 school year (based on 2003-2004 data) have resulted in the identification of certain school divisions in improvement status. School divisions that are in improvement status are subject to sanctions and/or corrective actions.

The *NCLB* legislation requires the state to prescribe and monitor sanctions for school divisions in improvement in accordance with federal law. *NCLB* describes these sanctions/corrective actions for school divisions receiving Title I funding. Section

1116(e)(3) of *NCLB* requires school divisions that do not make AYP for two consecutive years to develop a division improvement plan that addresses specific components, and it allows the state to impose corrective actions. The Board of Education must require a school division that does not make AYP in the same content area by the end of “Year 2 in improvement” status (i.e., four consecutive years of not making AYP in the same content area) to implement at least one of the corrective actions listed in the law.

While *NCLB* is silent regarding sanctions for school divisions not receiving Title I funding and while no school divisions in Virginia are in this situation, current guidance from USED suggests that states also must address sanctions for school divisions not receiving Title I funds.

Upon adoption by the board, the Department of Education will distribute the guidelines to school divisions and implement procedures for coordinating technical assistance and compliance monitoring as part of a single statewide system of support.

The proposed guidelines, she said, will go to the board this month.

Educational Information Management System (EIMS)

Bethann Canada presented this item to the council as an EIMS update. She reported on the EIMS components, project status, project goals for 2004-2005, and responsibilities of school divisions.

The school divisions’ responsibilities include identifying a project manager as the point of contact and coordinator, participation in training opportunities; providing demographic information on students, having the director of testing, the EIMS project manager, and the student information contact person work together, and other requirements.

A memorandum on pilot testing of the EIMS was distributed to school division superintendents on January 9, 2004. Participation by school divisions was encouraged. Superintendents were notified that a pilot project involving a sample of school divisions would be conducted from January to mid-May of 2004.

Revisions of Standards of Quality

Anne Wescott reviewed briefly revisions adopted in the Standards of Quality for public schools by the 2004 session of the Virginia General Assembly. A superintendent’s memo pointing out the revisions was sent by the Department of Education (Informational No. 204) on October 8. Ms. Wescott also reviewed, as the last item on the council’s agenda, items that are expected to be on the board’s agenda when it meets in October.