

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality (SOQ)
June 27, 2012
3:00 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Billy Cannaday, Chair, called the meeting to order with the following Board members present: Mr. Foster, Mrs. Atkinson, Ms. Mack, Mr. Braunlich, and Mrs. Sears. Dr. McLaughlin participated by telephone in accordance with the provisions § 2.2-3708.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. Dr. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Dr. Cannaday provided welcoming remarks and discussed the Board's constitutional and statutory authority to review the SOQ, major provisions of the SOQ, and a framework for review using guiding questions approved by the Board.

The purpose of this meeting was to hear from stakeholders. Dr. Cannaday also referenced the July committee meeting where comments will be received from stakeholders as well.

Presentations to the Committee and Discussion

Virginia Education Association (VEA) - Dr. Kitty Boitnott, President, provided written remarks to the committee. Dr. Boitnott addressed issues related to funding adequacy, equity of the standards, attracting and retained high quality teaching personnel, and staffing ratio adequacy.

Virginia PTA – Ms. Anne Carson, President, provided written remarks. Ms. Carson commented on whether the SOQ was providing an adequate minimum foundation for quality and asked that pupil to teacher ratios be examined.

Virginia State Reading Association (VSRA) – Troilan Seward, Legislative Liaison, and Valerie Robnolt, President, provided written comments and a Powerpoint presentation. Dr. Seward commented on the need for reading specialists in every elementary school, an initiative which the Board has recommended in prior years. She also commented on the recent actions of the Governor and the General Assembly in 2012 to provide additional funding for the Early Reading Intervention Initiative (EIRI), but commented that, even with this increase, there continues to be a need for reading specialists. Dr. Robnolt discussed the importance of reading specialists in schoolwide programs, the use of reading specialists to support the EIRI, and the role of reading specialists in providing professional development to teachers.

A question was asked of the presenters about the difference between a reading specialist and a reading/literacy coach and the licensure/endorsement requirements and the roles of those positions. Dr. Seward indicated that the reading specialist has specialized training. Coaches were added to schools using federal Reading First grant monies that are no longer available. Coaches do not have defined training and should be working under a reading specialist, which is identified as a highly-qualified position. Dr. Robnolt commented that reading specialists have

taken on the role of coaching teachers, which has made the position very demanding. Credentialing does make a difference and the positions funded with Reading First monies were credentialed positions. A comment was made that a reading specialist should be working with students in the EIRI program. Dr. Robnolt commented that coaches should have the same credentials as reading specialists.

A comment was also made about the important contribution that a reading specialist can make to a school and how academic performance can be improved. Another question was asked about whether any of the Reading First positions remain in schools even though the federal funding is no longer available. Dr. Robnolt answered that the positions were shifted from the school to the division central office. A comment was made that credentialing needs to be addressed and understood.

A question was asked about whether there is a need for both a reading specialist and a coach. Dr. Robnolt answered that the reading specialist is the position most needed and typically, specialists take on a leadership role and coach teachers. Dr. Seward indicated that it would be helpful if teacher preparation programs addressed more requirements for reading. Another question was asked about the current requirements for reading in teacher preparation programs. Dr. Robnolt responded that schools of education offer six credit hours in reading for licensure and that there has been tension because the requirements related to mathematics are three hours.

Virginia Municipal League (VML) and Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) – Mary Jo Fields, representing VML, and Larry Land, representing VACO, provided written remarks. Ms. Fields spoke on behalf of both organizations. Ms. Fields cited concerns that the costs of the SOQ do not reflect actual practice and that the share of funding provided by local governments is too great, creating problems with inequities for poorer school divisions. Ms. Fields commented that local governments will fund more in order for schools to provide a sound education and to be fully accredited. She also cited that not only do local governments pay operating costs but capital costs are paid as well. Ms. Fields cited charts in her handouts regarding the share of funding provided by local government that includes capital costs. She also indicated that the drop in real estate values has provided challenges regarding local resources. In her written comments, Ms. Fields addressed two of the guiding questions being considered by the Board. She also cited concerns about the costs provided by the state for support personnel. Ms. Fields asked that the Board be outspoken advocates for public funding and she asked that the Board address aligning the SOQ to reflect the requirements of the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning.

A question was asked about the large share of funding provided by local governments and what response has been received when this issue has been addressed to the General Assembly. Ms. Fields responded that there has been no action taken by the General Assembly as there is the perception that the funding is aspirational and local choice. Ms. Fields further commented that the funding was not aspirational but was needed in order for schools to be fully accredited. Ms. Fields commented that the General Assembly has not funded all the recommendations brought forward by the Board and that the recommendations brought forward by the Board reflect current practice.

Another question was asked about whether local governments had adopted revenue sharing approaches and how many localities might be using this approach. Ms. Fields responded that she did not have these data but that a number of local governments have taken this approach. She also indicated that this approach may be taken in order to prevent disagreements about issues such as funding new programs or providing for salary increases. She commented that the revenue sharing approach enables schools boards to have more control and can ease tensions in a local governing body. She also commented that funding formulas worked well when there was no recession.

A comment was made that revenue sharing may be an alternative for wealthier localities. Ms. Fields indicated that, typically, it is difficult to determine how much revenue each locality may provide to schools because of demographic differences.

Public Comment and Discussion

Virginia First Cities Coalition (VFC) - James Regimbal, representing VFC, provided written remarks. He also commented that revenue sharing by local governments is the result of the economic downturn. Mr. Regimbal also commented that use of data-driven standards show the General Assembly that funding at the local level is not aspirational.

In his comments, Mr. Regimbal addressed each of the guiding questions before the Board. He commented that VFC supports moving at-risk programs into the SOQ and increased funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Mr. Regimbal also indicated that VFC supports initiatives related to early reading and reading specialists. VFC also supports resources for teacher quality and increased remediation. Mr. Regimbal expressed concern that funding for support costs in the SOQ is not adequate and recommended that it be examined as it has an impact on schools with greater numbers of low-income students. He also commented that additional flexibility is needed for school divisions in order to support low-income students.

A question was asked about whether these issues have been addressed to the General Assembly. Mr. Regimbal responded that it is difficult for the General Assembly to raise taxes in Virginia and this contributes to the reasons that funding for support personnel in the SOQ has been cut. A question was asked about the impact of tax credit bills and Ms. Fields, on behalf of VML/VACO, responded that these organizations do not support tax credit bills that take funding away from the general fund. Clarification was also provided that all recommendations brought before the Board address funding needs and considerations.

Several comments were made about the SOQ as a foundation program for education and the fact that it is a minimum foundation program. College and career readiness now needs to be addressed and there needs to be an examination of what the foundation was in the past and what it should be now. There needs to be a review that is more than just an incremental approach and the review needs to address school division resources and accrediting standards. There was a comment that a foundation program is built upon a set of expectations and there needs to be a link to this program with both the SOQ and the accrediting standards. There also needs to be an understanding of local restrictions for resource allocation.

There was also a comment that there needs to be a holistic view of the foundation program to determine funding.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.