

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
School and Division Accountability Committee
October 26, 2011
3:45 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Opening Comments – Dr. McLaughlin, committee chair, convened the meeting with the following members present: Mrs. Sears, Mr. Foster, Dr. Cannaday, Mrs. Saslaw, Mrs. Castro, Mr. Krupicka, Mrs. Beamer, and Mr. Braunlich. Dr. Wright, superintendent of public instruction, was also present. Dr. McLaughlin made introductory remarks and discussed the purpose of the meeting.

Stakeholder Input: ESEA Flexibility Application – Representatives from the following organizations made comments about the federal proposal for flexibility.

Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) – The representative from VASS indicated that the organization supports Virginia moving forward with requesting flexibility. Three areas of concerns were noted:

- College and Career Readiness – VASS supports the work of the Board but expressed concern about labeling certain score ranges on Standards of Learning tests such as Algebra II as college and career-ready. VASS advocates for multiple measures in determining student achievement and success.
- Differentiated Accountability – VASS supports broader accountability and is concerned about federal annual measurable objectives. VASS supports the use of state standards related to accreditation as the basis for accountability at the federal level.
- Teacher/Principal Evaluation – VASS supports the use of uniform standards and the use of data in decision making. VASS expressed concern about student progress/student growth data becoming available to the press through the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. VASS commented that many teachers work hard even if the data does not reflect the work.

Mr. Krupicka asked about college and career readiness and how VASS defines remedial work. Dr. Cannaday inquired about how VASS would define career-ready.

Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) – The representative from VSBA discussed the Board’s recommended target of 40% for student growth as it relates to evaluating teachers. VSBA is concerned that it would be difficult to measure this target for teachers of non Standards of Learning (SOL) courses. There must also be appropriate training for evaluators. VSBA expressed the same concern as VASS related to growth data becoming available to the public. VASB also expressed concerns about the principal evaluation process.

Dr. Wright asked if it would be appropriate to broaden accountability to more than reading and mathematics. VSBA indicated that there are resource issues when multiple areas are evaluated.

VASS commented that multiple areas are evaluated at the state level and questioned how many state assessments are needed at the third grade level.

The Virginia Parent Teacher Association (PTA) – The PTA expressed concern that a college and career ready designation related to certain test score ranges could be misunderstood. The representative also indicated that different needs at each school have to be considered, as well as increased family involvement. The PTA expressed the same concern as VSBA about teacher and principal evaluation in the context of non SOL courses and concern about how student growth would be measured.

Mr. Krupicka asked if the PTA was aware of the data used by the Board in its decision making in determining how test score ranges relate to college and career readiness.

VASS commented on the need to have good teachers and on concerns about statutory limits on the school calendar, in terms of school openings. Mrs. Sears asked what data exists to support pre-Labor Day openings.

Update on the Memorandum of Understanding from Sussex County Public Schools – Department staff provided a report (attached) to the Board on the status of the Board’s memorandum of understanding as it relates to the improvement of student achievement at Chambliss Elementary and Sussex Central Middle schools. The division superintendent then provided a brief report regarding the work being done at both schools. For Chambliss, the school has a unique grade configuration and an alternative accreditation plan is being considered. The middle school continues to make progress but did undergo a grade re-configuration within the last couple of years. The school division utilizes two lead turnaround partners to assist the schools.

Mrs. Saslaw asked whether the division has an established pre-K program. The division superintendent responded that there is no pre-K program within the division but that the county has a Head Start program.

Update on the Memorandum of Understanding from Petersburg City Public Schools – Department staff provided a report (attached) to the Board on the status of the Board’s memorandum of understanding as it relates to the improvement of student achievement across the school division. The division superintendent and her staff provided to the Board an update of the progress of the division in implementing recommendations from an efficiency review that was conducted in 2006 (see attached presentation).

Mr. Braunlich inquired as to whether the division achieved the savings that was projected (\$34 million) in the review and also asked whether efficiencies were achieved. School division staff responded that some of the savings achieved were used to make salaries more competitive.

Dr. Wright commented that the division should continue to track the staffing level of the central office to ensure that it is reflective of the recommendations made in the efficiency review.

Mr. Sears asked some clarifying questions as to position reconfigurations at the central office.

The division superintendent then provided information about the use of a lead turnaround partner (see attached presentation) within the school division. The lead turnaround partner has been assisting with recruitment efforts, teacher professional growth, and the lead turnaround partner has been involved in the school division's teacher evaluation pilot. The division superintendent also discussed the use of data in decision making.

Mr. Foster asked about if there is an increase in parental involvement within the school division and what data might be available regarding any increases.

Mr. Krupicka inquired about the use of telephone calls to parents to improve involvement and he encouraged an emphasis on reaching those parents who may not be accessible.

Mrs. Sears asked how long the division will work with teachers who are having trouble with effectiveness. The division superintendent indicated that the division provides feedback to teachers and provides teacher coaching.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.