

DRAFT MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday, November 16, 2016
1:00 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the November 16, 2016 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Diane Atkinson; Dr. Oktay Baysal; Wesley J. Bellamy; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; Daniel A. Gecker; Elizabeth Lodal ; Joan Wodiska; and Sal Romero, Jr. Dr. Steven Staples, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present. James Dillard was absent.

Ms. Atkinson, chairman of this committee, convened the meeting at 1:05pm.

Approval of the Minutes from the October 26, 2016 Committee Meeting

Mr. Bellamy made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2016 committee meeting. Dr. Baysal seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Atkinson opened the floor to public comment. No individuals requested to address the committee.

Presentations

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), presented the proposed amendments to the *Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, Parts I-VII, pending second review by the Board.

The Board discussed the following points:

- One of the proposed amendments would require middle school students to take a career exploration class. Several Board members requested more information regarding how this class would be implemented, including the number of credit hours, the grade level in which a student would participate in the course, and whether or not the course would be required for all students.
- One Board member voiced concern that the revisions to locally awarded verified credits could result in students graduating from high school who have never passed a Standards

of Learning (SOL) assessment. The validity and reliability of locally awarded verified credits were discussed.

- Legislation has increased the number of lockdown drills that schools are required to conduct. Schools are also required to conduct fire drills. One Board member noted concern that the number of required drills may be burdensome or disruptive.
- Computer science and fine arts requirements were discussed. Ensuring high school graduates are well-rounded is a priority. Several Board members noted the importance of technology education and the need for all students to be knowledgeable with computer technology.
- School divisions with higher poverty generally have more difficulty satisfying the requirement of having highly qualified teachers. Exacerbating difficulties for schools challenged with poverty should be considered.
- One Board member noted that existing language in the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) which permits waiver of verified credit for certain students entering Virginia public schools in 11th or 12th should be reviewed in concert with the federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Dr. Lynn Sodat, Director of Program Administration and Accountability for VDOE, and Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement for VDOE, presented highlights and implementation updates for ESSA, including targeted support and improvement, comprehensive support and improvement, and report card requirements.

[Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015: Update](#)

The Board discussed the following points:

- One Board member asked about English Learners (ELs) and how this reporting group will factor into school identification for targeted support and improvement and comprehensive support and improvement.
 - Ms. Loving-Ryder noted that, under the current law, ELs are exempt from testing in reading/language arts for the first year. Under ESSA, ELs may be tested in the first year, but the first-year scores are not counted. Schools then count growth for those students for the next year; and, test scores are counted in the third year and beyond. This provides more flexibility for ELs to gain proficiency in English before their scores would count.
- As currently drafted, ESSA requires reporting of “teaching equity” data. This data includes:
 - the rates at which low-income students in Title I schools are taught by ineffective teachers, out-of-field teachers, and inexperienced teachers; and

- the rates at which non-low-income students in non-Title I schools are taught by the same three groups.
- The Board discussed disproportionality. The data currently collected in Virginia on teacher quality reflects that schools with high poverty levels have less qualified and experienced teachers, and fewer teachers teaching in their fields. Teacher mobility is higher in poorer areas and unfilled positions are also more numerous. One Board member stated that, although Virginia is doing better than many other states, an objective standard, rather than a relative standard, should be used when assessing these concerns.

Dr. Cynthia Cave presented concepts for a new proposed accreditation system which would be incorporated into amendments to the *Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, Part VIII, to the Board.

Concept 1: Defining School Quality. Dr. Cave explained that this concept compares the current accreditation system based on endpoints with a matrix system based on multiple measures and levels of performance.

By consensus, the Board agreed that the overall purpose and approach to measuring school quality should be through a process which is based on multiple measures and drives continuous improvement.

- One Board member suggested having multiple levels of accreditation, including levels that go beyond full accreditation, to encourage schools to continuously keep striving to improve.
- One Board member commented that the original purpose of accreditation ratings was to demonstrate accountability of the public school system. However, these ratings systems may have the unintended consequence of augmenting income segregation in schools, due to parent selection.
- The different gradations of current accreditation ratings are used to show growth and improvement. However, these distinctions may imply that fully accredited schools no longer need to strive for improvement, which is not the intent.
- One Board member suggested that, if accreditation is to be thought of as an ongoing process, the current accreditation labels should be eliminated, and the multiple measures could speak for themselves.

Concept 2: School Quality Measures. Dr. Cave explained that this concept discusses several potential measures to be used in the matrix, as well as the criteria that should be used by the Board when selecting school quality measures.

The Board discussed the proposed criteria and whether or not an indicator provides an accurate picture of school quality.

- The Board noted several measures that may be used for accreditation including teacher effectiveness, chronic absenteeism, teacher absenteeism, school learning environment, family engagement, school nutrition, and leadership. Some of these indicators would be measured by data collected through self-reporting methods, such as surveys. The validity and reliability of self-reported data was also discussed.
- One Board member noted that there are numerous ways to hold schools accountable, including the Standards of Quality, ESSA, the School Quality Profile (SQP), and accreditation. The SQP can be used to signal the growing importance of an indicator, before adding the indicator to the measures used for accreditation. Accreditation measures are a smaller subset of the data collected for the SQP, but reflect the Board's highest priorities.

Concept 3: Performance Levels. Dr. Cave explained that this concept illustrates how schools would be grouped into four performance levels indicating their performance for each school quality measure from demonstrating best practice to needing state intervention.

The Board discussed the four proposed levels of the matrix.

- One Board member suggested that the Level 4 indication should be changed from "Intervention should occur" to "Intervention will occur."

Concept 4: Benchmarks. Dr. Cave explained that this concept would establish benchmarks used to group schools into each of the four performance levels. A procedure for selecting appropriate benchmarks is discussed.

The Board discussed the benchmarks and how benchmarks would be chosen.

- One Board member noted that the establishment of benchmarks for accreditation should be uniform and based on numbers and data. Board members also suggested some technical edits to the wording of certain benchmarks.

Concept 5: Actions. Dr. Cave explained that this concept describes the types of actions a school would be required to take based on the school's performance level for a given school quality measure.

The Board agreed that more detail is needed to explain what interventions would occur at the various levels.

- One Board member suggested a tangible reward for schools that attain certain amount of scores in Level 1 and Level 2, such as being evaluated less frequently.

Concept 6: System Transition. Dr. Cave explained that this concept proposes providing time and a transitional period to shift from the existing accreditation system to a matrix-based system.

The Board discussed how to transition into the new system.

- One Board member noted that, although there is strong and consistent support in local school divisions for these changes to accreditation, there may be anxiety in implementation of the unknown.
- Transitioning is an opportunity to prove that this new system is focused on continuous improvement, not punitive measures. Language encouraging improvement, rather than creating anxiety about punishment, should be used.
- Gathering data on these multiple measures will take several years. When the system of accreditation was previously changed, implementation took eight years. The Board discussed a need for some type of system to be in place during the interim of the transitioning phase.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.