

Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday, July 26, 2017
1:30 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building
101 North 14th Street, Richmond, Virginia

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the July 26, 2017 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Kim Adkins; Diane Atkinson; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James Dillard; Daniel Gecker; Anne Holton; Sal Romero, Jr.; and Dr. Jamelle Wilson. Dr. Steven Staples, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present. Elizabeth Lodal was absent.

Ms. Atkinson, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from the June 21, 2017 Committee Meeting

Ms. Adkins suggested amendments to the minutes from the June 21, 2017 committee meeting, reflecting Ms. Adkins late arrival to the meeting. Dr. Wilson made a motion to amend the minutes accordingly. Dr. Cannaday seconded the motion. Dr. Wilson then made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 21, 2017 committee meeting. Mr. Romero seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Jim Livingston, a math teacher from Prince William County and the president of the Virginia Education Association, spoke about the implementation of Virginia's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. Mr. Livingston encouraged the Board to seek comment from practitioners regarding the ESSA plan and spoke in favor of flexibility in the plan to allow for the correction of unintended consequences.

Sarah Gross, a Richmond City public school parent, spoke about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Richmond City school board and the Board. Ms. Gross spoke in favor of allowing Richmond's new superintendent to review the MOU, including the entire local school board in decisions and communications, identifying the stakeholders who were engaged in the development of the MOU, and mandated family engagement plans.

Kelly Harris-Braxton, executive director of the Virginia First Cities Coalition, spoke in favor of including teacher residency programs in the programs funded by the ESSA plan.

Presentation: Review of Division-Level Memorandum of Understanding for Richmond City Public Schools

Links to presentation materials:

[Requested Changes to Richmond City MOU and Proposed Revisions](#)

[Requested Changes to Richmond City MOU Not Addressed by VDOE Staff](#)

Beverly Rabil, Director of School Improvement for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement for VDOE, presented the Board with information on the division-level review and MOU for Richmond City public schools.

- A team of VDOE staff conducted the on-site, division-level review of Richmond City public schools in March 2017. This review focused on five categories: academic and student success, leadership and governance, operations and support services, human resource leadership, and community relations and communications. Those categories are noted as key priority areas in the MOU and were used to develop the essential actions in the corrective action plan.
- Ms. Loving-Ryder and Ms. Rabil presented staff recommendations for the MOU in response to public comment received after the Board's first review of the MOU and changes requested by Richmond City school board.

The Board discussed the following points:

- Board members discussed a provision in the MOU stating that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Board President will meet with the chair of the local school board at least twice per year to facilitate communication and regular updates. The Richmond school board requested that this language be amended such that the meetings twice per year would be between the State Superintendent, the Board President, and "any other interested Richmond school board members." One Board member noted that this provision may be useful in order to deter misinterpretation of information which can occur when not all school board members are present at a meeting.
- One Board member expressed concern that requiring two meetings per year with the State Superintendent and Board President may be challenging in terms of resource allocation, is not be replicable across multiple school divisions, and may not be necessary in order to disseminate the information required.
- One Board member suggested adding language explicitly stating that either party to the MOU could propose changes to the MOU. One Board member suggested adding language to state that no changes could be made to the MOU unless both parties agreed to the changes. Dr. Staples noted that the MOU is a statement of the Board's intent, not a collaborative contract, and restricting the Board's authority to make changes by requiring

the Richmond school board's approval may impact the Board's ability to address challenges through the MOU.

- Board members discussed whether or not VDOE should have oversight of planned uses and actual expenditures of local, state, and federal funds. The Richmond school board suggested changing language in the MOU such that VDOE has oversight of only "selected" funding. Ms. Loving-Ryder noted that there is a requirement for federal funds to be reviewed and approved by VDOE. Ms. Loving-Ryder also noted that each provision of the MOU has been added due to a finding in the division-level review related to that area.
- Board members discussed the provision in the MOU which states that, if the Richmond school board fails to have all of its schools fully accredited by 2025-2026, a VDOE-selected representative would meet with the Richmond school board in an ex-officio, nonvoting, member capacity. Board members discussed whether this VDOE-selected representative should be designated as a "member" of the local school board.
- Scott Barlow, a Richmond school board member, addressed the Board. Mr. Barlow spoke in favor of allowing the Richmond school board to oversee their own funding expenditures, allowing bilateral amendments to the MOU, and giving the Richmond school board discretion in selecting their superintendent. Mr. Barlow also stated that Richmond school board members were uncomfortable with the provision which would designate a VDOE-selected representative as a "member" of the local school board.
- Thomas Kranz, interim superintendent for Richmond public schools, addressed the Board. Mr. Kranz assured the Board that Richmond's corrective action plan would be developed with stakeholder comment and completed by November 1, 2017.

Presentation: An Overview of Growth Measures

Link to presentation: [An Overview of Growth Measures](#)

Ms. Loving-Ryder presented information to the Board on growth measures and progress tables in response to questions raised by Board members.

- Measuring both achievement and growth gives a more complete picture of student learning. Accordingly, the Board has added growth measures to both the state accreditation and the federal accountability plan under ESSA.
- The proposed method for measuring growth is through progress tables. When measuring growth through progress tables, student growth is determined by comparing the student's Standards of Learning (SOL) test score from the prior year to the student's SOL test score in the current year.

- The SOL tests for reading and mathematics in grades three through eight are currently reported in four performance levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. To facilitate measurement of growth, each of these levels is divided in half to create two sublevels: Low Below Basic, High Below Basic, Low Basic, High Basic, Low Proficient, High Proficient, Low Advanced, and High Advanced.
- Progress tables are used to recognize efforts of schools in supporting students who continue to fail the SOL tests, but demonstrate progress by advancing through the levels below passing. Student progress is measured by whether a student who failed the reading and/or mathematics SOL test the previous year has moved at least one sublevel based on the current year's SOL test score.
- For state accreditation and federal accountability under ESSA, the progress tables are used to calculate a combined rate for mathematics and reading. The combined rate for mathematics integrates achievement and growth. The combined rate for reading integrates achievement, growth, and progress for English Learner (EL) students towards gaining proficiency in reading.
- A student would be counted in the numerator of the reading or mathematics combined rate if: (1) the student passes the assessment (including recovery); (2) the student does not pass the assessment, but demonstrates growth using the progress tables; or (3) for the reading assessment only, if the student does not pass the assessment or demonstrate growth, but is an EL and demonstrates progress as measured by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment.
- The Board has expressed interest in evaluating other measures for growth. One potential measure would be the use of a vertical scale for SOL assessments. Currently, each SOL test has its own individual scale, from zero to 600. A vertical scale would be a single scale which spans across SOL tests administered in multiple grade levels.
- Creating a vertical scale would require SOL tests from multiple grade levels to be linked together. In 2016, a study was conducted to link the content of the reading tests for grades three through eight and the mathematics test for grade three through Algebra I, such that a vertical scale could be created. Although the results of the study were promising, reevaluation is necessary due to recent changes to the mathematics SOL.
- The use of a vertical scale combined with computer adaptive testing allows for customized selection of test items for students which supports more precise measurement of student achievement and growth. This method would also allow for off-grade level testing which would fulfill the requirement under ESSA to provide information regarding a student's proficiency in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight.
- Regarding implementation, a vertical scale for mathematics could be available for the 2018-2019 school year. A vertical scale for reading could be available for implementation in either 2018-2019 or 2019-2020.

- The presentation also addressed challenges in the use of commercially available growth assessments. In order to use a commercially available growth assessment, staff would need to determine how such an assessment aligns to the SOL and how much growth on each assessment would be sufficient for inclusion in accountability ratings. Staff would also need to develop and maintain a secure system to collect scores. Using scores from different tests in accountability calculations could present challenges. If commercial growth assessments were used for ESSA, approval by USED of each assessment would be necessary. Using a commercial growth assessment would also mean additional testing for students and would require accommodations for students with disabilities.

The Board discussed the following points:

- One Board member asked how special education students who do not take SOL tests are included in the growth measures. Ms. Loving-Ryder stated that such students take the Virginia Alternate Assessment, and the progress tables would apply to that assessment in the same way as the SOL tests.
- The General Assembly has funded a pilot to examine statistical growth measures. Contracts were awarded to two vendors that use SOL test data to predict where a student will achieve based on previous scores. Growth is then determined based on whether the student met the predicted expectation, fell below it, or was above it. The Board requested more information about these studies.

Presentation: Review of the Consolidated State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

Link to presentation: [ESSA - Review of Proposed Changes to Virginia's Federal Programs Application](#)

Dr. Lynn Sodot, Director of the Office of Program Administration and Accountability for VDOE, and Ms. Loving-Ryder presented information to the Board on the ESSA state plan for Virginia. The presentation focused on substantive updates to the content proposed in the current plan.

- The United States Department of Education (USED) has provided preliminary determination letters to several states that submitted plans at the earliest submission date. Dr. Sodot presented recommended changes to the ESSA plan made in response to these determinations from USED and in response to suggestions made by the Board.
- Language was added regarding the progress tables. This proposed language states that Virginia is considering other growth measures for elementary and middle schools, and if a measure other than progress tables is selected, an amendment to the plan will be submitted.

- The exit criteria were changed for schools identified for additional targeted support and improvement for not meeting the federal graduation indicator (FGI). The proposed language states that, in order to exit targeted support and improvement identification, high schools not meeting the FGI must either meet the interim measure of progress or must increase the FGI by 2.5 percent for two consecutive years in the subgroup or subgroups for which the school was identified. Previously, the increase necessary for FGI was ten percent. This proposed change would align with the proposed state accreditation system.
- Regarding the disproportionate rates of access to educators, instead of simply referencing data from Virginia’s Equity Plan, the proposed change includes the actual data. This change is in response to how USED has responded to other states’ submitted ESSA plans.
- Proposed changes addressing the migrant education program included adding details about services for preschool students and out-of-school youth identified as migrant, how students will be classified as dropouts for the purpose of the program, and updated measurable objectives to reflect information received from Virginia’s migrant education program coordinators.
- Additional details were also added to the sections on programs for students identified as gifted, student support and academic enrichment grants, and the MicKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The Board discussed the following points:

- Board members discussed growth measures and whether it would be possible to omit references to progress tables in the plan, as the Board intends to replace progress tables as the measure of growth. Dr. Sodat stated that USED provided comment on other states’ growth measures and rejected some for being too vague. Additionally, both New Mexico and Delaware alluded to a “growth measure in progress” and received a response from USED that any changes to their measure will require a plan amendment. Dr. Sodat explained that the language proposed by staff, stating that an amendment will be provided if a measure other than the progress tables is selected to measure growth, is intended to acknowledge this information from USED.
- The Board reached consensus that progress tables should remain in the ESSA plan for the 2017-18 school year, language should be added to permit another Board-approved measure to be used in the future, and language referencing plan amendments be omitted so as to avoid having to submit an amendment unless USED requests that an amendment be made.
- Board members discussed allocation of Title II funding. Dr. Sodat stated that ESSA includes provisions for a new, optional state set-aside of up to three percent. There has been some stakeholder support for taking the optional state set-aside and using Title II funds to support teacher residency programs. However, Dr. Sodat noted that staff does not recommend taking the optional state set-aside, at least not for the first year. There

has been a reduction in Title II funding as well as a change in the hold harmless provision, which means that some school divisions will be seeing a significant reduction in funding.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.