

DRAFT MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday, October 25, 2017
12:30 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 October 25, 2017 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Kim Adkins; Diane Atkinson; James Dillard; Daniel Gecker; Anne Holton; Elizabeth Lodal; Sal Romero, Jr.; Dr. Tamara K. Wallace; and Dr. Jamelle Wilson. Dr. Steven Staples, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Ms. Atkinson, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 12:30 p.m. Ms. Atkinson welcomed Dr. Wallace, who is attending her first Board meeting since her appointment.

Approval of the Minutes from the September 27, 2017 Committee Meeting

Ms. Atkinson offered a correction to the draft minutes from the September 27, 2017 committee meeting, noting that the minutes should reflect that the Board was considering three agenda items regarding accreditation status, rather than the accreditation status of three schools. Ms. Lodal made a motion to approve the minutes as revised. Dr. Wilson seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved as revised with Dr. Wallace abstaining.

Public Comment

Ms. Atkinson explained that there was only one individual signed up to speak during the public comment period and that individual had not arrived yet. Ms. Atkins tabled the public comment period until later in the meeting.

Presentation: Review of Appeals for a Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools NOT Meeting the Reconstitution Eligibility Rubric Criteria

Ms. Atkinson explained that this item is a continuation of the Board's work from the September meeting. Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School status may be requested by a local school board if a school has not reached accreditation for three consecutive years and fails to meet the state's standard for a fourth consecutive year, in lieu of being denied accreditation. Local school boards that seek this status also must agree to reconstitute the school through changes to leadership, staff governance or student population. A reconstituted school can retain this rating for up to three years if it is making acceptable progress.

Ms. Atkinson noted that staff has developed an eligibility rubric to evaluate requests for this rating. During this meeting, the Board will look at those schools that are appealing because they do not meet the eligibility criteria. The Board will be looking at 60 schools from over 33 school divisions in the agenda item tomorrow, but today will focus on 17 of those schools that showed little or no evidence of meeting the criteria.

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement (OSI), explained that the schools making appeal requests fall into three categories: schools entering their fourth year of not being accredited; schools that were rated Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for 2016-17; and schools Denied Accreditation for 2016-17.

Ms. Rabil began with Meherrin-Powellton Elementary in Brunswick County, noting that the data in the material does not support the request for appeal.

One Board member asked why Meherrin-Powellton Elementary (along with two other schools under review) does not meet the criteria. Ms. Rabil explained that staff asked schools to provide a rationale behind the data in its justification for the appeal. Meherrin-Powellton Elementary only provided an overview of the data, but not the rationale behind the data. Ms. Rabil also stated that the information regarding students with disabilities scores is inaccurate. Dr. Staples added that staff also looks at the school division's capacity to commit resources and expertise to a problem and whether or not VDOE has seen that leveraged. Dr. Staples explained that Brunswick is an under-resourced division in a rural, hard to staff geographical location. Their appeal does not include how the school division plans to alter its approach to improve in those challenged areas.

In response to a question by a Board member, Ms. Rabil explained that staff has not yet met with the division to develop a plan. Meherrin-Powellton Elementary had an academic review three years ago where they created a school-level plan. Staff reviewed the plan at that time, but staff does not work side-by-side with a school to implement the plan that the school creates and monitors itself. OSI recognizes the importance of intervening, but currently does not have the staff capacity.

Another Board member questioned why staff receives the plan but does not review it once submitted. Ms. Rabil explained that staff helps to develop the initial plan, but that VDOE does not have the capacity to review every school improvement plan. Ms. Rabil indicated that until this year, there was no attempt to standardize a school-level, school improvement plan. This is an issue that is being addressed through the creation of a school review template.

Another Board member asked if preparation of the improvement plans was a federal or state requirement. Ms. Rabil explained the federal plan is different from the state plan. Historically, state plans have been left to the school to determine the template, as informed by an academic review. If a school did not have an academic review, then it was a local plan.

Dr. Staples added that schools track through struggles, hit a failure point and then VDOE is able to intervene. When a school submits a plan, VDOE acts on the assumption that the school is implementing that plan. If by the fourth year there is continued failure, VDOE becomes more

directed in crafting the plan. Dr. Staples added that there are problems with this process, but it is being revised under the proposed Standards of Accreditation to allow for quicker intervention.

One Board member stressed that a school being denied accreditation has a significant impact, resulting in resegregation and other unintended consequences. The member also suggested that the Board consider a partnership with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to assist if the Board does not have the resources. A university could work directly with school divisions to help evaluate the plan.

Another Board member asked about the role of the local school boards for those schools that are struggling, noting that school boards need to be held accountable for providing the resources and for reaching out to VDOE if there are issues. Ms. Rabil added that some school boards reach out to the agency, and efforts are made to provide support and assistance upon request.

One Board member asked if VDOE staff has reached out to the schools that do not meet the justification for reconstitution since the September Board meeting. Ms. Rabil replied that staff had not, but that VDOE had provided extensive training for schools through webinars prior to September. During that time, staff provided feedback via phone to many superintendents.

Another Board member inquired whether Meherrin-Powellton Elementary School would have received a different response if the justification had been written better. Dr. Staples indicated it might have changed the designation, but other factors such as a lack of resources would still be an issue.

Dr. Staples responded to a Board member's inquiry about the continuous improvement actions that are a part of the proposed accreditation system, indicating that once implemented, more VDOE staff will be involved under the new model.

A Board member asked what will happen to the "Denied Accreditation" status in the proposed system. Dr. Staples responded that in the first year of the new system, full accreditation status will be determined based on both existing criteria and the new criteria, and whichever criteria will benefit the school the most, if it is eligible for full accreditation, will be used to assign an accreditation rating.

In response to a Board member's request, Ms. Rabil provided an overview of the resources that are available to schools that are denied accreditation, explaining that once a school receives "Denied Accreditation" status, the school becomes a top priority with greater access to staff and assistance.

Ms. Rabil reported that Totaro Elementary in Brunswick County is also seeking Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School status, and that the data does not support the request for appeal.

Ms. Rabil reported that the data does not support the request for reconstituted status for

James Monroe Elementary in the City of Norfolk. The school was granted reconstituted status in 2015-16, and in 2016-17, the school did not meet the criteria for full accreditation and was denied accreditation.

One Board member recommended consideration of the Meherrin-Powellton Elementary request, noting that while the school may not have met the criteria, it is meeting benchmarks in some areas and improving in others, despite being in one of the most economically challenged areas of the state. The member noted that the data for the other two schools do not support the requests for reconstitution.

Another Board member expressed concern that granting accreditation status to schools that have not earned it masks the problems and that it will be harmful to these schools to award accreditation to a school if it is failing, and may result in the General Assembly not providing additional resources. The member opposed approving any request if the school did not meet the criteria.

One member asked the Board to consider whether denying accreditation hurts the ability of schools to attract qualified teachers, noting that it is difficult to attract teachers to a system that has been labeled a failure.

Based on the Board's discussion, Dr. Staples concluded that Meherrin-Powellton Elementary would be moved from the accreditation denied category and the other schools would be voted on in block at the Board's meeting on Thursday.

Another Board member emphasized the importance of considering data and celebrating success. Meherrin-Powellton Elementary, though not accredited, has consistently scored high in history, social science, and mathematics.

Presentation: Measuring School Climate in Virginia

Link to presentation: [Measuring School Climate in Virginia](#)

Jo Ann Burkholder, Director, Office of Student Services (OSS), explained that if there are good school conditions, both teachers and students want to come to school. She gave an overview of the project using evaluation data from the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS). Schools that have been involved in the VTSS have indicated that they have improved school conditions, increased academic time and decreased time spent on addressing discipline issues. The data show that when the VTSS is used, an average of 460 minutes of discipline is saved per year. When converted to a dollar amount, \$299 per teacher per year is saved. When looking at principals that implement this system, an average of 920 minutes is saved in addressing discipline, which converts to \$751 per year when based on the average principal's salary.

Ms. Burkholder stated that VTSS is a holistic framework. Currently there are 51 school divisions participating, and there are more school divisions interested in participating in VTSS. Recently, OSS received a federal grant and hopes to increase the number of participating schools to 65 by the end of 2018.

Dr. Luke Miller, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia (UVA), provided an update on the survey work that has been completed and on the research partnership grant between UVA and VDOE. Dr. Miller explained that UVA piloted a new climate survey, allowing the university to expand on the study conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to measure school climate as part of school safety, including:

- (1) Adding new scales to the survey to get a more accurate feel for school climate in the schools.
- (2) Adding a new participation group. The DCJS study included grades 6-12. UVA added the fourth and fifth grades to the study, as well as teachers from preschool to third grade to receive feedback from teachers and staff.
- (3) Requiring all students to be surveyed as opposed to the DCJS approach of taking a census or randomly selecting 25 students.

Dr. Miller provided an update on the survey results and participation levels. Parents were included in the survey; however, their response rate was low. Although the information would be very valuable, Dr. Miller reported that they will not be going forward with the parent survey because the resources needed to reach more parents are not available.

Dr. Miller explained that there were four domains of school climate that when present contribute to a healthy school climate. Those areas are: nurturing student engagement; developing caring relationships; fostering safety; and reaching towards high expectations.

Dr. Miller explained the process for the next wave of surveys scheduled for Spring 2018. Survey responses will be gathered within weeks of receiving the results rather than waiting until the end of the school year. He explained actions that will be taken to increase survey responses.

One Board member asked if statistical data was part of the survey results. Dr. Miller responded that to date, statistical data is not included. He is also looking at the perceptions of how school climate relates to student progress and performance in grades four through twelve and how it can be moderated through teacher quality. Ms. Burkholder explained that other data is being considered as well. Dr. Miller indicated that schools are interested in knowing how all of the factors fit together.

Another Board member asked if there is a plan for this survey to go statewide. Dr. Miller confirmed that all schools will be asked to complete the survey. The member noted that this information will be helpful, especially to address the teacher shortage issue, and suggested that the teacher associations be included in the advisory council.

In response to a question from a Board member, Dr. Miller explained that there are two separate age-appropriate surveys administered in elementary and secondary schools.

One Board member asked if there was a differentiation between in-school and out of school suspension in the survey. Ms. Burkholder responded that there is. Dr. Miller added that teachers are also asked how they feel about their school suspension policies.

In response to a question from a Board member, Ms. Burkholder explained that the pilot survey program is funded by a two-year grant that is supporting the development of the survey and its first year of administration, and that the ongoing cost to administer the survey should not require significant resources.

One Board member asked if any schools have opted not to participate because the information would become public. Dr. Staples responded that one of the obstacles that DOE staff has discovered is concern about what happens to the data. As an example, one superintendent reported that data from their division's locally-developed survey was presented negatively in the press.

Another Board member asked how this survey differs from those surveys being used in other states. Dr. Miller responded that the topics covered in the survey are very similar; however Virginia is leading the way in measuring school climate. Ms. Burkholder added that the U.S. Department of Education developed a model survey for schools, and many of Virginia's survey questions came from that model.

Presentation: Update on Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines

Link to presentation: [Update on Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments](#)

Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement, provided background on the Alternative Assessment Guidelines, reminding the Board that the guidelines are required by HB 930 (2014), which reduced the number of state mandated tests in grades three through eight. The legislation required the local school board to certify that the content of these subjects were being taught and that alternative assessments based on Board guidelines had been administered.

The Board's guidelines for the 2014-15 school year encouraged the use of performance assessments, but did not require them. The Board wanted to provide local school divisions flexibility as to how these alternative assessments would be provided. There was concern about the coverage of Standards of Learning within the local assessments. There was also concern about whether these assessments would be used for accountability, and they ultimately were not considered for accountability. School divisions were required to certify to VDOE that the content in the eliminated tests had been taught. The guidelines state that the certification will be part of the Standard of Quality data collection that each superintendent must sign off on each year.

Ms. Loving-Rider explained that the guidelines also called for desk reviews of division documents related to the implementation of local alternative assessments. These reviews took place in the summer of 2015 and were reported to the Board in March of 2016.

In September 2016, the Board updated the guidelines to: clarify the school division's responsibility in moving towards the use of performance assessments; include a framework for

implementation; require school divisions to develop plans for performance assessments; and continue the desk reviews.

Dr. Steve Constantino, Chief Academic Officer and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, provided an update on the current implementation of the guidelines. As a result of all of the regional grant work that had been done, it was found that there were schools in almost every region that were doing excellent work with regard to performance assessments. Staff and personnel from those schools were asked to join the agency's "Think Tank" that was established as a guidance committee to help to determine the direction and needs of educators. The Think Tank helped to create the Quality Criterion Tool for Performance Assessments to be used by school divisions. The draft is out for review and staff intends to finalize it by November. Through webinars, VDOE staff has shared information with school divisions about the type of support they will receive as a result of a Hewlett Foundation grant.

The grant will be used to facilitate professional development from Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) along with VDOE. SCALE has been assisting VDOE with revising the desk audits from an internal review process to an external peer review process. Dr. Constantino stated that the desk reviews have revealed that a third of the school divisions are ahead of VDOE; a third believes they are ready to implement performance assessments; and a third needs more support.

Dr. Constantino provided an overview of the next steps to be taken, which include delivering an implementation survey; distributing the Quality Criterion Tools; collecting sample assessments; creating sample assessment maps; providing differentiated professional learning opportunities; and communicating locations and dates for 2018 professional development events.

One Board member indicated that they have been approached by constituents concerning the use of the performance-based assessments to earn verified credits, and asked how the Board will determine the quality of the performance assessments. Dr. Constantino acknowledged that is a valid concern, and staff is working towards continually improving the quality of the assessments.

Another member asked if VDOE staff worked with schools directly or at the division level regarding these assessments. Dr. Constantino responded that staff worked at both levels.

Dr. Wilson also asked for more information on an "assessment map." Dr. Constantino explained that the map demonstrates that there are at least four kinds of performance assessments and at least four different ways to implement performance assessments. The map will serve as a guidance document of best practices.

Presentation: Review of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA) (Final Stage)

Link to presentation: [Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation Proposed by the Virginia Board of Education](#)

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications, provided a review of the proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) that will be presented to the Board for first review, and reviewed the public comments that have been received.

Dr. Cave reviewed the major changes included in the proposed revisions, including implementation of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, expanded career exposure and exploration, and a reduction in the number of verified credits required for graduation. The changes also implement a revised accreditation system that includes multiple measures of school quality, an emphasis on continuous improvement, building on school strengths, and a more strategic approach to align staff assistance and resources to schools not meeting standards.

Dr. Cave provided a summary of the public comments received on the SOAs. Recent comments have requested flexibility for schools to include recess in the definition of “instructional hours.” Other comments have requested that a fine arts standard credit be required for graduation, and not be a shared requirement with career and technical education.

Dr. Cave reported that staff made edits to permit students’ cell phones and other communication devices to be in the classroom during testing, as long as the students do not have access to them. The regulation originally was drafted to require the devices be kept in a separate room during testing, and some parents have stated concerns that in an emergency situation they would be unable to communicate during testing. Dr. Cave reported that staff made several other technical changes.

Dr. Cave provided the Board with the timeline for the adoption of the SOA. It is expected that the regulations will be approved in January 2018 following the executive branch review process, and will be effective for the 2018-19 school year.

One member suggested that the term “Informing technical assistance” as applied to the proposed accreditation system is confusing.

One Board member indicated support for the parents’ requesting recess to be added to the definition of “instructional day.”

Another member asked if there is a difference between student progress and student growth, and suggested that a definition be added. Dr. Cave explained that “student progress” is used in a generic sense, but “student growth” usually refers to individual academic gains by students. Dr. Staples further explained that “growth” refers to individual students and “progress” refers to groups of students, but he acknowledged that the terms have been comingled. He indicated that staff will review the language and suggest appropriate edits.

Another member warned that there may be unintended consequences if “recess” is included in the definition of instructional day, noting that recess may no longer be unstructured play, but instead educators could see recess as fair time to teach more.

One member had concerns about the dropout rate, noting that there are some students who began school at ages 16 to 18, have no desire to be in school, and are present only because it is

required. Meanwhile, other students only remain in school in order to learn English to get a job. This results in many of these students dropping out, and schools are penalized. Dr. Cave stated that staff is aware of this and there may be opportunities for schools to request consideration of an alternative accreditation plan under extenuating circumstances. She indicated that staff will continue to look at this issue.

Another Board member indicated support for addressing the lack of recess, and asked staff to provide information about what the current SOA says about recess. They also requested staff to work with the trade industry when developing career exploration experiences. The member also suggested changing the requirement that the academic and career plan be complete by the end of the seventh grade so that it instead would be required to be complete by the end of the fall in the eighth grade, to provide flexibility for divisions to provide the career investigations course or an alternative.

One Board member noted that they had received comments from citizens concerned that a school with all of its indicators at Level Three would not be denied accreditation and additional concerns about performance based assessments used for verified credits.

One member noted that regardless of the changes, the Board already knows certain schools will struggle, and inquired what resources will be available to assist these schools. Dr. Staples responded that the proposed system will permit schools to seek other schools with similar demographics for insight on how to improve, and not to rely solely on VDOE's technical assistance.

One member noted that the proposed change to clarify that teachers supervising homebound instruction must be licensed should further require these teachers be licensed in the appropriate subject area.

Another member noted lack of agreement with the use of the phrase "informed and successful private life" in the regulations and requested that "private" be deleted. The member also questioned how the regulations address fine arts as part of the requirements for graduation.

Presentation: Update from the Governor's Teacher Shortages Summit

Ms. Holly Coy, Deputy Secretary of Education provided a brief update on the Governor's Teacher Shortage Summit. This summit brought together representatives from several entities to discuss strategies and policies to address teacher shortage issues. Information presented at the summit shows that the shortage exists across the state, but is different in different parts of the state. Former Secretary of Education Jim Dyke, representing the business community, indicated that the business community is aware of the shortage and supports addressing the issue.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:58 p.m.