

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality (SOQ)
September 26, 2012
4:30 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, Mrs. Beamer, Mr. Krupicka, Mrs. Sears and Dr. McLaughlin. Dr. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Dr. Cannaday thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to continue the review of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) by reviewing a brief summary of the comments that had been received to date and discussing draft recommendations for revisions to the SOQ.

Public Comment

Dr. William Haver, a professor of mathematics at Virginia Commonwealth University, represented the Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition. He said he was there to reiterate the recommendation made in the Coalition's letter to the Board regarding one math specialist per 1,000 students. He stated that there are now enough teachers who have received the necessary endorsement to staff the schools. He commented that school divisions are pleased with the flexibility language they have been given to use Algebra Readiness Funds and other funds to have math specialists in the schools. He also indicated that very successful workshops have been held for principals on how to work with mathematics specialists and improve their mathematics offerings and student achievement. He said the Coalition has identified the use of mathematics specialists as the best tool for improving student achievement in K-12 mathematics.

Review of Public Comment on the SOQ

Mrs. Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications, presented a summary of the public comments received to date on the SOQ. Mrs. Wescott noted that the public comment period started some time ago and will continue through mid-November with four public hearings across the state in October. She explained that thus far, over 1,200 comments have been received, most of which from a petition initiated by the Alliance for Virginia's Students and from several organizations that spoke at previous committee meetings. All of the signatories to the petition agreed with the recommendations made by the Alliance and over 700 of the 1,200 signatories added other individual comments. She stated that the comments have primarily been about funding, class size and student/teacher ratios, staffing, flexibility, assessment, instruction, student services, and mandates. She indicated that this is just a preliminary report and that at the conclusion of the public comment period, a summary of all of the comments received will be provided to the board.

Review of Recommendations for Revisions to the SOQ

Mrs. Westcott indicated that because of the volume of comments and the short timeline to complete the review, staff had boiled the comments down to three proposals. Dr. Wright explained that the proposals were the major recommendations that were gleaned from the comments and that staff were not in a position at this time to make a specific recommendation to the Board for adoption, but that she believed that the Board needed something to offer to the public to guide commenters on the areas of interest for receiving feedback in the public hearings. The three proposals for the Board were to:

- Reaffirm support of its staffing recommendations from prior years that have not yet been adopted or funded by the General Assembly. These recommendations include principals, assistant principals, speech-language pathologists, reading specialists, mathematics specialists, data coordinators and students who are blind or vision impaired.
- Request that the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) conduct a study of the SOQ to assist in determining whether SOQ funding is realistic in relation to current educational needs and practices. JLARC's last study was completed in 2002 and proved to be very helpful to the Board in formulating recommendations that were sent to the General Assembly in 2004, many of which were passed and funded. A study would provide a lot of technical information that would be helpful to the Board. The study would be completed in 2013 which would give more time for public comment and would give staff more time to review and consolidate the comments for the Board's consideration. It would also ensure that the study is completed to coincide with the budget process.
- Propose legislation to shift the review of the SOQ from even to odd-numbered years to be aligned more effectively with the legislative budget process. In this way the recommendations would coincide with the long session of the General Assembly when the budget is formulated.

Discussion

Dr. Cannaday thanked Mrs. Westcott and asked Board members to consider the following for more in depth discussion at the next day's meeting: 1) soliciting more feedback around the comments that have already been received and the degree to which they are representative of a broad constituency; 2) the issue of a JLARC study; and 3) what history has told us relative to the sequencing of policy recommendations versus staffing recommendations and whether the staff wants to make that recommendation so that the process is more aligned with how the General Assembly works and how it might benefit school divisions.

Mr. Foster stated that he would like to go to the public hearings with something more focused and concrete that could guide the public comment at the hearings. Mr. Foster stated that he believed that the second recommendation required a sharper focus and that the Board would need to send more guidance to JLARC regarding the study.

Dr. Cannaday agreed that the Board needs some focus for the comments. He indicated that as the Board begins to have conversation with the public, it must consider how to thoughtfully pose

what are the pressing issues that really should be given priority attention and, at a policy level, what are some of the recommendations the Board might want to include in its request to JLARC if a study is requested. In other words, what are the answers that a study could provide that would enable the Board to make better recommendations regarding potential changes to the SOQ.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.