

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality (SOQ)
October 21, 2015
4:30 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr., Committee Chair, called the meeting to order with the following Board members present: Ms. Diane T. Atkinson, Mr. James H. Dillard, II, Ms. Darla Edwards, Ms. Joan Wodiska, Ms. Elizabeth V. Lodal and Mr. Sal Romero, Jr. Dr. Stephen R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Dr. Cannaday reviewed the meeting's purpose to discuss the Board's priorities in reviewing the *Standards of Quality (SOQ)* as required by the *Code of Virginia*, and stated that this review is an opportunity to communicate priority messages about policy and funding to the General Assembly.

Brief on Previous SOQ Recommendations by the Board of Education

Dr. Cynthia Cave, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, stated that in 2016 the Board will formally review the SOQ, and submit its recommendations for changes to the General Assembly. She stated that the SOQ form a minimum foundation of public education requirements which school divisions must comply with, and listed the ten standards.

Dr. Cave presented the recommendations for changes in staffing requirements in the SOQ, made by the Board from its most recent review of the SOQ in 2012 to the General Assembly for action in 2013. She also reviewed whether or not any legislative action had taken place regarding the recommendations, which follow.

- One Reading Specialist for every 1,000 students in grades K-12
- One Mathematics Specialist for every 1,000 students in grades K-8
- One data coordinator for every 1,000 students in grades K-12
- One full-time assistant principal for every 400 students in grades K-12
- One full-time principal in every elementary school
- Include a caseload limit for a Speech-language pathologist of 60 students in the SOQ
- Include state costs for the standard for pupil-teacher ratios for blind and visually impaired students in the SOQ

She stated that the only action the General Assembly had taken regarding the above items was to appropriate funds in FY 2014 for pupil-teacher ratios for blind and visually impaired students; however, this action only appropriated funds, and did not modify the SOQ.

Discussion ensued regarding what the existing staffing standards were for these outstanding items, and Dr. Cave stated that all of the existing staffing requirements in Standard 2 of the SOQ will be sent to the Board following the meeting. She also explained that current staffing requirements for the items that the General Assembly did not act upon were as follows:

- Reading specialists are not required; however, reading intervention funds may be used to fund such positions;
- Mathematics specialists are not required; however, Algebra Readiness funds may be used to fund such positions;
- Data coordinators are not required. The SOQ mandates two full-time equivalent positions per 1,000 students in grades K-12: a technology support and a technology resource instructor position;
- Half-time assistant principals are required in elementary schools at 600 students; full-time assistant principals are required in elementary schools at one per 900 students, and in middle and high schools at one per 600 students;
- Half-time principals are required in elementary schools up to 299 students; full-time principals are required in all middle and high schools, and in elementary schools at 300 students; and
- Maximum speech-language pathologist caseloads are not currently specified in the SOQ; however, the appropriation act does provide a maximum caseload of 68 students.

Dr. Cannaday suggested postponing further discussion of staffing standards until the Board receives information on the existing requirements.

Brief on Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) Report: Efficiency and Effectiveness of K-12 Spending

Dr. Cave provided a brief overview of the JLARC report, and Dr. Cannaday requested Board members engage in a discussion about what priorities should be communicated with the executive branch.

Mr. Dillard observed that the JLARC report states that state and local spending on K-12 education has been trending downward; however, the report fails to recognize that the reason for decreased spending is that funds have been cut, not because of improved efficiencies.

Ms. Atkinson expressed concern that the current funding model does not address challenges created by changing demographics that have created a need for more intense services for students.

Ms. Wodiska stated that the JLARC report failed to detail best practices for efficiency or burdensome state mandates that should be eliminated. She identified her priorities as: increasing support through the state funding formula; improving teacher pay and professional development; incentivizing innovation; shifting away from a punitive accreditation system to a rewards-based system; and improving access to nutrition.

Next, Dr. Cannaday suggested the Board communicate its concerns with the report and provide direction. He summarized the Board's concerns were that the report did not address:

- Challenges created by high expectations and limited capacity;
- Changing demographics and how they impact resources available to school divisions;
- Limited resources to attract and support highly qualified teachers and leaders; and
- Providing new staff with mentoring and professional development opportunities.

He stated that the report did not contain adequate recommendations that were tied to data and findings, and had hoped that the document could have served as a resource to inform the Board's upcoming review of the Standards of Quality and Standards of Accreditation. Dr. Cannaday offered to assist staff in drafting a response for the executive branch.

Concluding Remarks & Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:03.

DRAFT