

DRAFT MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality
Wednesday, November 16, 2016
10:00 a.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 the Standards of Quality: 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.

Dr. Cannaday, chairman of this committee, convened the meeting at 10:20am.

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

Ms. Atkinson made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2016 committee meeting. Mr. Gecker seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Megan Lisa Watkins spoke on behalf of the Legal Aid Justice Center's Just Children program in support of the revisions to the Standards of Quality and advocating for the General Assembly to fully fund those provisions.

Presentations

Dr. Cannaday presented information to the Board on the focus of the meeting, the Board's authority, and approaches for communication and advocacy of the 2016 Standards of Quality (SOQ) recommendations to the General Assembly.

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), presented the Board with a review of the approved recommendations to revise the SOQ.

The Board discussed the following points:

- Budgetary restraints and funding concerns were discussed.

- State reduction in aid most severely impacts the poorest communities, as those localities have the highest percentage of their budgets provided by the state. Localities that are more capable of contributing provide more local funds, in accordance with the composite index. Thus, a reduction in state funding most adversely affects those communities that receive a higher percentage of state aid.
- It is the duty of the Board to promulgate reasonable standards for education in Virginia; it is the duty of the General Assembly to provide a quality, free education. One Board member emphasized that the Board has fulfilled its duty in providing the SOQ recommendations, and the legislature must now fulfill its duty by funding those provisions.
- Board members discussed how best to present the SOQ revisions to the General Assembly. Concerns were raised over whether or not to prioritize certain measures, and if the Board's duty included anticipating budgetary limitations.
- One Board member suggested seeking private philanthropy in order to help fund public education.
- One Board member suggested conducting research in the field to determine which needs are the top priorities for local school divisions.
- Some of the SOQ recommendations exceed current average staffing ratios in the field. Board members discussed bringing those recommendations in line with current practice; however, others emphasized that the ratios are based on anticipated student and school needs.
- During their discussion of the SOQ recommendations, one Board member noted that the term "prevailing practice" should be replaced with the term "averages." Referring to staffing levels as prevailing practice implies that the current practice is acceptable, when it is just an aggregate of the data. It was also noted that averages mask highs and lows in the data.
- The Board asked for staff to compile the average staffing ratios for school divisions with high poverty, and school divisions that are not meeting accreditation standards.
- Board members discussed the constitutionally mandated duty to provide students with a quality education. The term "high quality" was also discussed, specifically focusing on how the phrase is used in the Virginia Constitution with regard to education.
- Overall, there was strong support in favor of moving forward with the recommendations.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.