

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
Minutes of the Meeting  
April 11, 2011

Members Present: Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Hairfield, Mr. Drew, Senator Fair, Senator Hayes, Mr. Martin, Dr. Merck, Mr. Stowe, Mrs. Taylor, Mr. Warner, Mr. Whittemore, and Superintendent Zais.

- I. Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting.
- II. Approval of the Minutes of February 14, 2011: The minutes of February 14, 2011 were approved as distributed.
- III. Special Remarks: Vision for SC Schools: Superintendent Zais addressed the EOC outlining his vision and priorities for SC schools. Dr. Zais emphasized the importance of students acquiring the skills, knowledge and attitudes to be successful and pointed out that our skills most often focus on knowledge, failing to address skills and attitudes. He recommends placing the student and their parents first in making decisions to improve the educational system. For the system to be successful, he recommends increasing choice among schools and programs, ensuring that each student has an excellent teacher in a school led by an excellent principal and precluding that any student is forced to attend a failing school. He suggests that the focus on funding should be aligned with the concept, "given the funding available how do we maximize student learning?" By attending to accountability, incentives and competition we can achieve the benefits he proposes. Dr. Zais affirmed the EOC focus on reading. Among other ideas he recommended:
  - Aligning the curriculum more with the world of work;
  - Changing teacher compensation from a credentials base to a performance base;
  - Structuring the system so that average people can achieve outstanding results;
  - Supporting teachers in classroom discipline; and
  - Expanding the authority of superintendents and principals to hire and fire teachers.

Mr. Warner asked Dr. Zais about changes in governance. Dr. Zais expressed concern about the pool from which board candidates are drawn. Dr. Merck asked if Dr. Zais supported TAP. Dr. Zais indicated that TAP is a partial solution. He plans on having a performance pay model ready for teacher, principal and superintendent input in the fall and, with adjustments, presentation to the General Assembly in December. Dr. Merck asked about year round education. Dr. Zais cited personal experience with a 45-15 schedule (i.e., 9 weeks of instruction, 3 weeks of intersession break) and concerns over summer learning losses. Mr. Warner asked what was the most important action the EOC could take to support Dr. Zais's vision. Dr. Zais asked the EOC to support the charter school bill before the Senate.

IV. Subcommittee Reports

A. Academic Standards and Assessments: Mr. Stowe indicated there was no report from the subcommittee.

B. EIA and Improvement Mechanisms: Mr. Drew reported on behalf of the subcommittee. (1) Information: FY12 Budget: Mr. Drew informed members of the adoption of EOC recommendations regarding allocating as many funds as possible to teacher salaries and the adoption of the reading systemic initiative proviso. He outlined other provisions adopted by the House of Representatives including increasing the base student cost, reallocating technical assistance funds and meeting the federal IDEA requirements. Dr. Merck asked about the base student cost in the House-passed bill. Senator Hayes indicated that the base student cost may be slightly different in the Senate in order to accommodate changes in the index of taxpaying ability; (2) Information: Funding Model 2010 Revision: At Mr. Drew's request Mrs. Barton explained the annual revisions to the funding model including inflationary adjustments and comparisons to current fund allocations. She drew members' attention to the increasing number of SC students who are English language learners and to cost-effectiveness studies by the Center for American Progress and the Texas Department of Public Instruction. Members asked questions about the level of funding spent on debt service (e.g., capital projects, bonds). Senator Hayes thanked Melanie Barton and the EOC staff for their work on the school finance legislation. Mr. Warner asked why if we are spending \$250,000 per classroom, we could not dedicate \$125,000 to teacher salaries as the recently showcased Equity Project school. (3) Action: Teacher Loan Report: At Mr. Drew's request Mrs. Barton reviewed the annual Teacher Loan Report documenting continued success of the program. There has been a considerable reduction in applicants generally this year (likely related to the reduction in teacher jobs) and particularly in the number of African-American graduates. Members asked about the proportion of the current teaching force who had participated in the teacher loan program. Mr. Robinson asked how the loan program opportunity is communicated to potential participants. The EOC approved the report and its recommendations.

C. Public Awareness: Mrs. Hairfield reported on behalf of the subcommittee. (1) Information: 2010 ratings: Mrs. Hairfield reviewed the discussion points (previously distributed) noting the changes related to adjustments in the ratings of 155 high schools and four districts. (2) Information: EOC Communications Plan: Mrs. Hairfield distributed a listing of activities completed as components of the EOC Public Awareness responsibilities and reviewed them for the members.

V. Key Constituency: SC Minds at Work

On behalf of the SC Chamber of Commerce, Chairman Jim Reynolds and Chernoff Newman Executive Lee Bussell presented information on the SCMinds@Work initiative. Mr. Reynolds pointed out a number of areas in which SC is highly ranked and the success of the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) in building SC's

workforce. They reported on national studies of SC performance and the perception of SC performance. In these studies, SC often was perceived as a low to moderate performer; however, with information those surveyed improved their perception of SC considerably. The SC Chamber of Commerce has a national campaign to provide information leading to more positive perceptions of SC.

Senator Fair commented on the success of articulation agreements and the dual credit programs promoted through the EEDA. Mr. Martin indicated that serving on the EEDA coordinating council was a highlight of the work he does. He shared a project in Greenville schools in which students are managing virtual enterprises. Mr. Drew pointed out the success of the charter schools associated with Greenville Technical College. Mr. Warner affirmed the need to celebrate progress but cautioned that we must be vigilant in how far we have to go. Senator Hayes thanked the SC Chamber of Commerce for its leadership with the EOC, the EEDA and now on the SCMinds@Work project.

VI. New Business

- A. Senator Fair asked that the EOC hear from teachers who wish adjustments in the ratings based upon the student demographic factors. Mr. Robinson indicated this might fit best in the retreat agenda;
- B. Mr. Warner asked about value added measures in teacher compensation. He also thanked Dr. Anderson for the response to his questions regarding barriers to higher achievement;
- C. Senator Hayes addressed EOC members explaining the Rule 24 decisions regarding the EOC suspension proviso. He indicated that clear communications need to be directed to the (not-yet-appointed) members of the budget conference committee.

Having no other business, the EOC adjourned.