

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting
October 10, 2011

Members Present: Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Hairfield, Mr. Brown, Mr. Drew, Senator Fair, Senator Hayes, Dr. Merck, Rep. J. Roland Smith, Mr. Warner, Rep. Whitmire, Mr. Whittemore, and Superintendent Zais

I. Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting. He introduced the newest member of the EOC, Mr. Terry Brown, CEO of Edens & Avant and the business appointee of the Speaker of the House. The members of the EOC also introduced themselves to Mr. Brown.

II. Approval of the Minutes of August 8, 2011: The minutes of August 8, 2011 were approved as distributed.

III. Key Constituencies:

Josh Bell, Executive Director of Teach For America, Cynthia Wilson, Superintendent of Orangeburg 5, and Kwame Griffith, Executive Director of Teach For America-Atlanta addressed the EOC providing information on the status and goals of Teach For America in South Carolina. Mr. Bell detailed the recruitment, selection, training, and support of Teach For America members. There was also a detailed discussion of the transformational changes expected in students, schools and communities where Teach For America members exist. Mr. Robinson asked for information on any independent evaluations of the program. Mr. Bell and Mr. Griffith summarized the findings of a study done in Tennessee and North Carolina. A national study by Harvard University compared the competencies used by Teach For America in selecting candidates to the educational outcomes of students taught by Teach For America members. Regarding the future expansion of Teach For America, a comparison was made to the Mississippi Delta where over 520 Teach For America corps members currently are teaching due to an investment by the state of Mississippi in the program. By 2015 the vision is for South Carolina to have 265 corps members in the Pee Dee, Orangeburg County and Low Country. Cynthia Wilson discussed her personal experience with Teach For America first in Houston and now in Orangeburg 5. There were 76 teacher vacancies in Orangeburg 5 this year of which 11 were filled with Teach for America students. Ms. Wilson described how school districts pay the salaries and \$4,000 for each Teach for America student. When asked why she participated in the program, Ms. Wilson responded that the goal of Orangeburg 5 is to be in the top 5% of all districts in the state in five years. To make such dramatic improvements, she needs to do things differently which includes using the leadership skills, motivation, energy and excitement that the Teach For America students bring. Mr. Brown noted that in his company one of the most successful employees he has is a Teach for America alumnus. Mr. Brown stated that the business community should get behind efforts to expand the program in South Carolina.

Dr. Gerrita Postlewait, Chair of the State Board of Education and former superintendent of the Horry County School District, presented a new initiative adopted by the State Board of Education to create innovation zones. Dr. Postlewait described the board's proposal as a concept for a few districts in a few schools to experiment with new and innovative approaches to education and then to evaluate the results of the innovation to inform district and state policies and programs. Cornerstones of the proposal are the six principles of the Council of Chief State School Officers for . . . and student and parent partnerships where immediate feedback on the impact of the innovation on the learning environment would be provided. The focus on personalized learning coupled with financial flexibility is important. Dr. Postlewait then offered her personal reflections on how the proposal could be implemented. She noted that district and school budgeting never undergo a zero-based budgeting review. She proposed that districts must annually: define and understand the problems such as reading; determine actions to accomplish; determine research-based strategies and approaches to take; analyze data to determine if the actions were successful; and determine where the greatest breakthroughs are occurring, especially for children in poverty. Dr. Postlewait answered questions and offered to work with the EOC as well as other entities including the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, the State Superintendent, Jim Reynolds, the Riley Institute, and SC Future Minds.

IV. Subcommittee Reports

- A. Academic Standards and Assessments: There was no report from the subcommittee.
- B. EIA and Improvement Mechanisms: Mr. Drew reported on behalf of the subcommittee concerning the budget review process for Fiscal Year 2012-13. Mr. Drew informed members that the EIA-funded agencies and programs had submitted program reports which will be considered by the subcommittee this fall. He reminded the members that last year the full EOC completed a survey ranking the EIA programs in order of priority. This year a sample of educators including school board members, administrators and teachers will be asked to complete a similar survey. Senator Fair advised the EOC of the importance of flexibility in meeting the financial needs of students and schools.
- C. Public Awareness: Mrs. Hairfield reported on behalf of the subcommittee. She noted that finding a new Communications Director has not been successful. One factor influencing the process has been the uncertainty over the future of the EOC. Mrs. Hairfield explained that she had consulted with the staff and the staff with the chairman have contracted for public awareness assistance with a state vendor, the Clare Morris Agency for the following projects: (1) social media training to make the public aware of educational achievements and challenges; (2) a communications strategy to highlight National Education Week; (3) updates and revision of the formats used to disseminate the 2020 Vision and updates to the status of reaching the vision which will be released in December 2011; and (4) a review of the EOC

website to make the information on the website more accessible and informative to the public. Mrs. Hairfield noted that the Education Accountability Act requires the EOC to conduct an on-going public information campaign to apprise the public of the status of public schools and importance of high standards for academic performance. The cost of the outside assistance is approximately \$10,000 as compared to the cost of hiring a Communications Director which totals approximately \$77,000 for salary and fringe benefits.

V. Special Action Items:

A. Report per Proviso 1.97.

Mrs. Barton summarized the key components of the Education Finance Act (EFA) of 1977. In the current fiscal year the General Assembly appropriated \$1,165,568,108 to the EFA (of which \$56.2 million was in non-recurring funds) for a base student cost of \$1,880. The EOC in 2003 proposed changing the EFA weights to reflect current costs and research-based intervention strategies. For example, the EOC recommended a weight for non-English speaking students and for students in poverty. All "regular" students in grades K-12 would receive a 1.00. No changes were recommended to the weights for students with disabilities.

This past session the General Assembly authorized a proviso (temporary law) in the state budget that asked the EOC to determine what would have been the financial impact to the state and to school districts if the EOC weights had been implemented this fiscal year. The proviso restricts the analysis to the base student cost as funded of \$1,880, the same EFA mechanism used, the revised index of taxpaying ability as developed by the General Assembly and the most up-to-date student counts. The results of the analysis were: (1) the additional cost of the state would have been \$74,700,842; (2) all districts except two would have received additional funds. The only two districts that would not have received more funds would have been York 2, which would have received \$78,822 fewer State funds and York 4, \$566,634 fewer State funds. The largest net increases would have been to the Greenville County School District, \$5.9 million, Richland 1 of \$4.6 million and Horry County School District of \$3.3 million. The report concludes with two options of how the General Assembly could have allocated existing appropriations to phase in the EOC weights. These options fund the add-ons at 70% by the State or 100% by the state with the general education weights funded at a base student cost of \$2,080.

Mr. Drew moved that the report be adopted. Mrs. Hairfield seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously. The report will be submitted electronically to the chairmen of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee.

B. EOC Objectives for 2011-12

Mrs. Barton described how the EOC annually adopts objectives that define the scope of the committee's work, allocate resources, and guide budget and proviso recommendations. The changes proposed reflect the following: (1) movement and planning for the next cyclical review of the accountability system which is due in 2013 per the EAA; (2) continued focus on improving reading proficiency; and (3) theme from the EOC retreat that more engagement and communication with public and higher education practitioners is needed to solve education problems. Mr. Robinson recommended that the objectives be amended to include supporting and promoting the innovation policy as adopted by the State Board of Education. Mr. Whittemore moved the adoption of the objectives as amended. Mr. Drew seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Having no other business, the EOC adjourned.