

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting
August 13, 2012

Members Present: Mr. Robinson; Mr. Drew; Senator Fair; Senator Hayes; Mrs. Hairfield; Mr. Martin; Rep. Neal; Rep. Patrick; Mrs. Perry; Mrs. Taylor; Mr. Warner; and Mr. Whittemore. Mr. Jay W. Ragley attended for Dr. Zais.

Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Mission of the EOC

Mr. Robinson introduced Jon Peirce, Senior Fellow at the Institute of Public Service and Policy Research at the University of South Carolina, to engage the members in a conversation about the roles and responsibilities of the Education Oversight Committee. The discussion began with an overview of the legislatively mandated functions of the EOC and included several issues related to the current and future mission of the EOC: (1) the review and monitoring of accountability; (2) engagement of business, education and policymakers in open, non-political dialogue; and (3) recommending policies and programs to policymakers that would transform public education delivery system. Members voiced consensus that accountability should not happen in a vacuum but should be collaboration with the focus being on preparing students for careers and citizenship. The members concluded that as the EOC was created with specific functions that will be decided by the General Assembly and Governor. The members expressed a desire to continue the discussion at a later time.

Update on Development of New Assessments

Mr. Robinson introduced Elizabeth Jones, Director of the Office of Assessment at the South Carolina Department of Education. Ms. Jones provided an overview of South Carolina's involvement in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. South Carolina became one of 21 governing states in Smarter Balanced in June of 2012. The Consortium is developing assessments that will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 and operational in school year 2014-15. The Consortium will develop formative tools, interim assessments and summative assessments. Formative assessments are projected to cost between seven and nine dollars. The summative assessments, which will be computer-adaptive, will be administered during a twelve-week window of testing at the end of the year. The summative assessments are intended to be used for accountability purposes, measuring student achievement and growth. The summative assessment is intended to measure student the knowledge and skills to be college and career ready.

Mr. Warner asked about critical thinking and other skills and dispositions like team-building. Ms. Jones responded that performance tasks are being designed for the summative task that will hopefully provide measures of such skills. Senator Fair asked for more explanation on computer adaptive tests in general. This summer item development began with pilot testing of items being done in February and March of 2013. Field testing will begin in early 2014. Questions were also raised about the costs of technology and bandwidth available in the districts. Ms. Jones responded that a survey is being conducted with information to be provided this fall on the costs of going to computer-delivery of assessments.

At noon the Committee broke for lunch and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

Update on ESEA Waiver

Ms. Charmeka Bosket, Deputy Superintendent of the Office of School Effectiveness and Dr. Nancy Busbee, Deputy Superintendent for the Division of Accountability at the South Carolina Department of Education presented an update on the ESEA waiver that was approved by the U.S. Department of Education on July 19, 2012. Dr. Busbee provided an overview of the A to F letter grades assigned to schools and school districts. Ms. Bosket focused on the teacher evaluation system to be tested in 22 SIG schools in the current school year. Mr. Neal and Ms. Taylor asked for clarification about the evaluation system and how the system will be used after the Beta-testing.

Cyclical Review of Accountability System

Mrs. Barton reminded the EOC members that pursuant to Section 59-18-910, the EOC is required beginning 2013 to undertake a review of the entire accountability system. Mr. Drew suggested that the EOC set up a plan for how the accountability system will be reviewed. Ms. Barton asked for names of individuals who should participate in the broad-based stakeholder group. Sen. Hayes reaffirmed the importance of getting input from the field, especially from parents, teachers and school board members. Mr. Warner reiterated his belief that the entire public education delivery system has to be transformed including the governance of public education. Mr. Neal agreed that bold steps, a paradigm shift is needed. Ms. Perry reiterated the importance of educators sharing what initiatives are working in their schools. Sen. Fair suggested that the EOC include brain scientist Desmond Kelly from Greenville Memorial Hospital on the review.

South Carolina Reading Achievement Systemic Initiative

Dr. Baron Holmes gave an overview of progress being made in states where systemic reading initiatives have been implemented. Using the report from the South Carolina Reading Achievement Systemic Initiative and other data available from Alabama and Florida, Dr. Holmes talked about a framework for developing systemic policy changes that would improve reading/literacy in South Carolina. The chairman appointed Barbara Hairfield to lead a group who will work with Dr. Holmes on recommending policies to improve reading/literacy in South Carolina using existing research and evidence from other states.

Participation on Other Governing Bodies

Mr. Drew updated the EOC on the work of the Charter School Advisory Committee. Mr. Drew reported that there are 57 charter schools. There were 15 applications made this year of which two were withdrawn and 8 met the requirements of the law. Mr. Drew noted that he questions whether the Advisory Committee is actually needed any longer. Mr. Warner updated the members on the Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. The School is focusing on helping children in poverty receive the same benefits of the school through an expanded outreach program.

EOC Roles and Responsibilities

Mr. Robinson asked the staff to take the information discussed at the retreat and come back to the full EOC in October with draft objectives for 2012-13.

Approval of the Minutes of June 11, 2012: The minutes of June 11, 2012 were approved as distributed.

Having no other business, the EOC adjourned.