

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting February 13, 2017

Members Present: Neil Robinson (Chair); Danny Merck (Vice-Chair); April Allen; Cynthia Bennett; Anne Bull; Bob Couch; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; Rep. Joe Neal; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; John Stockwell; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

EOC Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Kevin Andrews; Hope Johnson-Jones; Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

The minutes of the January 17, 2017 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson then called upon fellow EOC member and Executive Director of the Spartanburg Academic Movement, Dr. John Stockwell, to discuss the assessment of kindergarten readiness. Dr. Stockwell provide an overview of the Spartanburg Academic Movement and the proof points that SAM uses to document the stages of learning including kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th grade mathematics proficiency, high school graduation, and post-secondary success. Dr. Stockwell focused his remarks on kindergarten readiness which includes the physical health and well-being, social competence, language and cognitive development, emotional maturity, and communication skills of the five-year-old. Because data do not exist at the state or local level, SAM has used the Early Development Instrument (EDI), an instrument used to measure children's ability to meet age appropriate developmental expectations. EDI takes a holistic snapshot of the kindergartener's readiness. The kindergarten teacher over a three to six month period observes the student's behavior and then completes a questionnaire on each student which takes approximately 15 minutes per child to complete. The data collected are then submitted to UCLA which then geo-maps the results. Spartanburg School District 7 piloted the EDI this past year with 34 teachers assessing 675 students over a two-day period. Next year, more areas of Spartanburg County will assess students. The data are then shared with community partners (churches, libraries, United Ways, local First Steps, etc.) to provide information on neighborhoods where students live that need to address specific, system changes to assist children birth to age 5 to become "ready to learn" upon entering kindergarten.

Mr. Robinson inquired about the cost of the assessment and about the reasons for choosing EDI. Dr. Stockwell responded that the EDI was selected because individual students are not assessed, but instead, teachers having professional expertise evaluate students. The cost is approximately \$50,000 per district, regardless of the number of children assessed. Mrs. Allen asked the amount of time it took to train teachers. Dr. Stockwell responded that the actual training in the EDI instrument took less than one hour. Rep. Neal noted that how we look at the birth to age 3 population is critical to the long-term academic success of the children. Dr. Stockwell concurred that more information is needed to learn about what is happening "upstream" in the system. Ms. Weaver asked if other communities have used the data to transform the early childhood system. Dr. Stockwell responded that Tulsa, Oklahoma and Houston, Texas have used the results of EDI to dramatically improve the delivery of resources and education to the early childhood community.

Then, Mr. Robinson recognized Elliot Smalley, Superintendent of the South Carolina Public Charter School District to discuss the present and future of the Public Charter School District. Mr. Smalley noted that enrollment in the Public Charter School district is now approximately 20,000 students in 35 schools with next year's enrollment to increase to 25,000 in 40 schools. There are currently 6 virtual charters serving 9,871 students and 29 brick and mortar schools with 11,789 students. The district office has 17 full-time equivalent positions. Academic achievement in the schools is mixed. Approximately 48% of the students met or exceed expectations on SC Ready. The overall graduation rate in the district is approximately 52% with brick and mortar schools having a graduation rate of 86% and virtual schools, 44%. Over the past year, the charters for three schools were revoked. The overall strategy of the district is to: (1) authorize great schools and hold schools accountable for results; (2) ensure access and equity for all students; (3) create the conditions for operators to thrive. One initiative of the district is to create South Carolina Opportunity Schools to help recruit and train leaders to lead charter schools.

Sen. Matthews expressed desire to see the charter schools expand to include more students in poverty and more students of color. Rep. Neal noted that he and Mr. Smalley had met to talk about how to assist African-American communities start charts. Dr. Couch asked how the site for the Green school was selected. Mr. Smalley responded that finding affordable sites is difficult and the decision to open another Green School in Lexington 5 was merely the availability and economics of the space. Mrs. Hairfield noted that leadership is a key component. Mr. Small concurred and stated that many of the charter school principals did not have prior experience running an autonomous school and the district is investing in communities and leaders.

Mr. Robinson then called for the Subcommittee reports.

Academic Standards and Assessment.

Dr. Merck noted that the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee met this morning to discuss the criteria used by the State Board of Education in selecting formative assessments. The Subcommittee recommended amending the criteria to include specific directives for K-2 formative assessments and to require public reporting of the data to the Department of Education. Rep. Loftis made a motion to amend the criteria to include public reporting of K-2 formative assessment results to the General Assembly and the Education Oversight Committee. Sen. Hembree seconded the motion and the motion carried. The EOC voted unanimously to adopt the revised criteria, which will then be discussed by the State Board of Education at its February 14 meeting.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms

Mr. Robinson then called upon Dr. Couch. Dr. Couch noted that there were two information items. First, Dr. Couch recognized Dr. Lee D'Andrea to provide a preliminary report on implementation of the Palmetto Digital Literacy Program, a program that the General Assembly funded in the current fiscal year and charged the EOC with evaluating its implementation. Conducting surveys and onsite visits, Dr. D'Andrea provided the following information.

The preliminary findings include:

- As of February 1, 34 of 46 districts have enrolled and are in a variety of implementation stages.
- As of January 17, there are 12,168 unique student accounts on Learning.com.
- Overall district/teacher satisfaction surveys indicate a 4.59 out of 5.0 rating.

- A demonstrated and articulated need for instructional materials in the areas of keyboarding, digital literacy and internet safety, inquiry learning through technology integration and coding exists in schools among students K-8.
- There are significant unmet infrastructure needs in the provision of digital learning environments for students.
- More extensive planning time and professional development are needed as digital learning environments are created within the schools and districts.

The initial recommendations are to:

- Continue the implementation of the Palmetto Digital Learning Project for FY2017-2018
- Given that the examination of this software has revealed the wide variety of hardware distribution models and technology plans, some guidance (models) from the state should be provided for districts.
- Technology resources must be the focus of instructional support for students. The world of our students and their future is inclusive of technology tools, software, devices.

Mr. Loftis asked Superintendent Spearman if the Department was looking at other resources to assist schools with digital literacy and computer science. Superintendent Spearman responded that the Department is providing resources, links and information to districts to advise them on all available resources.

Then, Dr. Couch called upon Ms. Ward to present the findings and recommendations from the annual evaluation of the full-day 4K program. Ms. Ward discussed the following findings and recommendations:

Findings:

- The General Assembly has directed the EOC to report annually on CDEP (state-funded full-day 4K) solely. This directive does not address 4K programs for approximately 44% of 4K students (11,530) who are enrolled in a non-CDEP funded 4K program. These non-CDEP programs may be either half-day or full-day and funded by EIA or local district revenues.
- Over the past three years, there has been a modest gain in enrollment (1,037).
- As noted in the 2016 EOC report on CDEP, there was a discrepancy in the actual enrollment numbers during the 2015-16 school year because SCDE did not provide student enrollment information for the school year. In the 2016 report, EOC estimated student enrollment numbers based on CDEP payments to districts. In December 2016, SCDE provided the EOC programmatic enrollment data that did not match the district payment amounts. EOC estimates SCDE overpaid districts between \$5.1 and \$6.3 million in FY2015-16.
- In FY 2015-16, there was \$12.9 million in carry forward funds. In FY 2016-17, the carry forward amount is estimated to be \$9.8 million.
- Providers had choice of three early literacy assessments (My IGDIS, GOLD, PALS PreK), and the assessments are administered by teachers in the fall and spring.
- By spring of 2016, vast majority of children made progress on the three assessments.
- During the 2015-16 school year, DRA assessment data indicates most 5K students were meeting both the fall and spring benchmarks (as noted in a memo from SCDE to districts). The lowest score for the fall was Print Concepts, where 76% of the districts met the fall reading readiness target. In the spring the lowest score was Rhyming Words, where 91% of

the district met the spring reading readiness target. The percentage of districts meeting the targets for the other tasks was above these scores.

Recommendations

- To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the state's progress in serving all four-year-old children, both SCDE and school districts should identify and report additional information about services and programs that students participated in as four-year-olds, including Head Start, type of publically-funded 4K, enrollment and type of private child care, or informal home care.
 - Since 44% percent of students participated in a 4K assessment in non-CDEP classrooms, student, program, and financial data regarding all public 4K programs should be collected.
- A formal process should be established that will verify CDEP enrollment at the district level and update financial payments accordingly. To comply with current law, the process should ensure student, program and financial data is timely, consistent and accurate.
- Due to ongoing, large carry forward amounts and districts' declination of CDEP expansion, outreach and marketing of CDEP should be enhanced to:
 - Encourage CDEP expansion;
 - Increase family awareness and understanding of early education and enrollment opportunities in CDEP and other 4K programs; and
 - Enrich the quality of CDEP with ongoing professional development.

Ms. Ward also noted there was legislative interest in expanding CDEP to districts that were not currently participating in CDEP. The EOC supports CDEP expansion to new districts due to concentrated areas of poverty with eligible young children who were not enrolled in a formal 4K program.

Superintendent Spearman addressed the issue of CDEP overpayments. She stated SCDE was currently investigating the issue and would establish a district reporting protocol to ensure CDEP enrollment data was reported and verified multiple times during the school year.

Public Awareness

Ms. Hairfield guided the EOC through the draft March 1 report to the General Assembly that highlights the key initiatives and work of the agency over the past year. She noted that the document focuses on the extensive engagement of stakeholders in the work of the EOC, focusing on the accountability recommendations and the high school task force. The EOC also has reached out to students and teachers through promotion of the Read Your Way to the Big Game and Martin's Math Club. Ms. Hairfield asked that any amendments to the report be forwarded to the EOC staff for inclusion in the March 1 report.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.