

# **SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes of the Meeting**

June 11, 2018

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Bob Couch, Vice-Chair; Rep. Terry Alexander; Anne Bull; Rep. Raye Felder; Senator Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Senator John Matthews; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; and Ellen Weaver.

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

Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting. While Dr. Merck was unable to attend today's meeting, Mr. Robinson notified the members that Dr. Merck's term on the EOC expires at the end of June. Mr. Robinson expressed his appreciation for the eight years that Dr. Merck had served on the EOC. His leadership, commitment to, and passion for improving education in this state were admired by his fellow members and staff. Mr. Robinson noted that the EOC will greatly miss Dr. Merck's leadership on the EOC where he served as Vice Chair and chairman of the Academic and Assessments Subcommittee.

Mr. Robinson also announced the addition of the newest member of the EOC, Rep. Terry Alexander. Rep. Alexander is serving as the designee of the Speaker of the House.

The minutes of the April 9, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Then, Mr. Robinson noted that the EOC is receiving two special reports today. The first was an analysis of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results from the fall 2017 administration. Mr. Robinson noted that for the first time in at least over a decade, all kindergarten students in South Carolina were assessed to determine what percentage of our students in the state, in counties and in districts were ready to learn upon entering kindergarten. The results have significant policy implications for the state's early childhood programs and for the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. He called upon Bunnie Ward of the EOC staff to provide an overview of the report.

Ms. Ward introduced Dr. Bill Brown from the University of South Carolina, a member of the full-day 4K evaluation team, who was in attendance. Researchers from the University of South Carolina compiled the data for the report. Ms. Ward provided an overview of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results across the state, highlighting the following:

- Statewide, about 36% of the children were at the KRA Demonstrating Readiness level. There were 33 districts that met or surpassed the overall state average for Demonstrating Readiness.
- Statewide, 31 percent of kindergarteners reached the Demonstrating Readiness level in mathematics, representing the domain with the lowest percent of students at the Demonstrating Readiness level.
- Statewide, 48 percent of kindergarteners were at the Demonstrating Readiness level in Physical Development and Well-Being, the domain with the highest percent of students at the Demonstrating Readiness level.
- Among White children, about 44 percent performed at the Demonstrating Readiness level, while 27 percent of African-American children and 22 percent of Hispanic children were at that level.
- Kindergartners who were identified as having attended a full-day 4K program in a district or private child care center that participated in the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) performed at similar levels across the KRA levels of readiness as those from non-CERDEP districts.
- Thirteen districts met or surpassed the state average on every KRA domain: Anderson 4, Charleston, Clarendon 1, Dillon 3, Dorchester 2, Fairfield, Georgetown, Greenwood 52, McCormick, Richland 2, SC Public Charter School District, York 2 and York 4.

Members, including Dr. Couch and Sen. Johnson, raised questions about some districts' KRA results where a significantly greater percentage of students demonstrated kindergarten readiness as compared to the percentage of third graders meeting state standards in English language arts and mathematics. Superintendent Spearman noted that, with the second year of implementation of the KRA, classroom teachers will receive additional training in how to assess students. Rep. Loftis asked about the scope of the evaluation and expressed concerns raised by school districts regarding the usefulness of the assessment for results for improving instruction and informing parents. Other legislative members, including Rep. Alexander and Sen. Johnson, reinforced the importance of the state using the results of the assessments to improve early learning opportunities for all children, but especially children in poverty and Hispanic and African-American children. Superintendent Spearman noted that, with the second year of implementation of the KRA, classroom teachers will receive additional training in how to assess students. Staff suggested that districts and community leaders, namely local First Steps County partnerships, should use the results to identify needs and services much like the Spartanburg Academic Movement is doing.

Sen. Matthews asked if schools or the state were tracking children from kindergarten through grade 3. Superintendent Spearman noted that some districts are monitoring students over time. Rep. Felder asked if the students who took the KRA in kindergarten would be assessed using another instrument during the fall of their first grade year to measure academic progress. Ms. Ward responded that students would not be assessed statewide until third grade; however, districts administer formative or diagnostic

assessments annually. The results of those assessments are not collected or reported statewide. Dr. Mathis, Deputy Superintendent of the Division of College and Career Readiness at the South Carolina Department of Education, noted that districts will receive professional learning opportunities on the Early Learning Standards as well.

There being no additional questions, the report was accepted as information.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Ms. Barton to discuss the report on Aid to Districts Technology conducted pursuant to Proviso 1A.84 of the 2017-18 General Appropriation Act. Ms. Barton explained that the General Assembly appropriated \$12.0 million in EIA funds to school districts to improve external and internal technology infrastructure and to increase one-to-one computing initiatives in schools. By proviso the EOC is to report to the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee on how the districts expended the funds. The EOC staff surveyed all districts between March 20 and April 30 and asked school district business or finance staff to complete a survey documenting how the district projected to expend or carry forward funds appropriated in the current fiscal year. All districts responded to the survey.

School districts reported having \$22.0 million in funds for technology, which included state appropriations and \$10.4 million in funds carried forward from the prior fiscal year to the current. Of these available funds, districts will expend 81% in the current fiscal year and carry forward 19% into the subsequent fiscal year. Of the expenditures, 54% will be used to expand or develop 1:1 computing initiatives, 22% on improving internal connections; 2% on improving external connections and 22% on non-approved expenditures. These non-approved expenditures were reported by twelve districts that did not receive waivers from the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee to expend funds for expenditures that are not expressly authorized in the proviso or in the 2017-18 Funding Manual published by the South Carolina Department of Education. Sen. Johnson asked if there were any repercussions to these twelve districts, and Ms. Barton responded that she was aware of none. Rep. Loftis asked about the status of including 4K enrollment in the E-rate formula for reimbursement. Ms. Barton noted that 77 districts reported filing for E-rate reimbursements. Ms. Bull asked for an explanation of why some districts do not file for E-rate reimbursements. Ms. Barton responded that some districts with low poverty indices may not file for E-rate while others may have met their E-rate reimbursement levels.

There being no additional questions, the report was accepted as information and will be forwarded to the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee.

#### Subcommittee Reports:

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee: Due to Dr. Merck's absence, Mr. Robinson, who serves as Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee, provided the report which included two action items.

The first action item was approval of industry credentials for defining career ready students in the accountability system.

In the consolidated accountability system for South Carolina that was approved by the EOC last December and by the US Department of Education on May 3, 2018, a Career and Technology Education (CTE) completer who earns a national or state industry credential is deemed “career ready” for the purpose of measuring the percentage of college and career ready students in a high school. There are other metrics that define career ready including students who earn a Silver or better on a career readiness assessment, who earn a score of at least 31 on the ASVAB, or who complete a state-approved work-based learning program.

As explained by Mr. Robinson, industry credentials are vital to ensuring that students have the technical skills needed for available jobs in the state. At the time of the EOC’s approval of the metric, the EOC did not have a list of which credentials would be counted; however, the EOC insisted that the business community should make that determination.

Mr. Robinson commended the work of the Department of Education and business interests throughout the state. Since December, the SC Department of Education along with the Career and Technical Education educators from across the state, the SC Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Commerce, the EEDA Coordinating Council, and the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development have reviewed and vetted what is before the EOC today – a list of 130 assessment/certification/industry credentials which, if earned by a CTE completer, will be one metric in our state’s accountability system that defines a “career ready” high school graduate for purposes of the 2018 school report card. The credentials are by career cluster and include the certifying agency or industry along with a column that denotes examples of businesses that “support” the credential.

The subcommittee is also asking the EOC to approve an additional 34 credentials for use in the 2018-19 school year for the 2019 school report card. This list of 34 will be forwarded to the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development and the EEDA Coordinating Council for their consideration as well. Finally, it would be the recommendation of the Subcommittee that a formal review process be established by which credentials will be added and deleted from this list pending the workforce needs of our state. Career and Technical Education Centers and businesses must at least annually or biennially review the list and offer additions or changes.

Since these recommendations come as a subcommittee recommendation, Mr. Robinson opened the floor to questions and discussion. Rep. Felder noted how important this information is to parents who want to know what credentials will enable their children to become employable. Rep. Loftis commented that he was pleased to see certifications included that deal with construction, considering the great need that home builders in the state have. Superintendent Spearman noted the grass-roots efforts that went into developing the list.

Rep. Alexander asked about the definition of military-connected students. Mrs. Barton responded there is a federal definition for districts to receive impact aid, but military-connected students are primarily identified by their parents and guardians when they self-report their status in response to district requests to complete impact aid forms. Districts are incentivized to report military-connected students since they may receive federal impact aid funds.

There being no further discussion, the committee voted unanimously to accept the Subcommittee's three recommendations.

Mr. Robinson then explained the next action item, Guidelines for eLearning for School Make-up Days. Because the General Assembly is still working on the state budget for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The two bodies – the House and Senate – have two very different approaches to the issue of how to use eLearning days for school make-up days. Under one proviso, 1A.86., the EOC would be responsible for implementing a pilot program that includes online or virtual instruction. The Senate authorizes the Department to approve districts wanting to use alternative methods, including online or virtual instruction, up to three days of school make up time. If the House version of the budget passes, then the EOC wanted to be ready to approve districts to participate in an eLearning pilot. To this end, the subcommittee is recommending approval of guidelines to be used for districts participating in the pilot. These guidelines were developed with input from Anderson School District 5, the district that presented at the last EOC meeting about their technology capabilities and this initiative, and with consideration of the guidelines used by the state of Indiana.

The Subcommittee recommends that the full EOC approve guidelines to identify up to five school districts, with Anderson 5 being one of the districts selected, for inclusion in a pilot program to use eLearning for school make-up days.

Mr. Robinson asked for questions or discussion about the action item. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee: Dr. Couch noted that the Subcommittee met on May 21, 2018 and is recommending that the EOC approve three annual reports that are required by state law.

The first was the annual report on the performance of military-connected students required by the South Carolina Military Family Quality of Life Enhancement Act. Annually the EOC is required to provide a comprehensive annual report concerning the performance of military connected children. The report must address, at a minimum, the attendance, academic performance and graduation rates of military-connected students.

Dr. Couch highlighted the following findings from the report:

- As a state, South Carolina continues to underreport the number of military-connected students, but the difference in numbers reported at the state and

national level is closing. Over the past two years, there has been a 23% increase in the number of military-connected students reported in PowerSchool.

- Districts report that there were 14,070 military-connected students enrolled in public schools in 2016-17, approximately 90% of the students attend one eleven school districts.
- Military-connected students continue to outperform their peers on state-administered standardized tests as measured by their performance during the 2016-17 school year. For example, on SC READY, in English language arts, 57.7% of third grade military-connected students scored “Meets or Exceeds Expectations,” compared to 42.1% of their peers who scored “Meets” or Exceeds Expectations.” In math, 70.8% of military-connected students scored “Meets or Exceeds Expectations” and 52.5% of their peers scored “Meets or Exceeds Expectations,” representing an 18.3% difference. The most significant variation is in the eighth grade Science test. While 49.5% of the state’s eighth graders scored “Meets or Exceeds Expectations” in science, almost 62% of military-connected students scored “Meets or Exceeds Expectations,” representing a 12.4 increase above the state average.
- The high school graduation rate for military-connected students, including students whose parents were in the National Guard and US Reserves, was 94.1% as compared to the state on-time graduation rate of 84.46%.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee’s recommendations.

The second report was the annual report on the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program as required by state law and as funded with EIA revenues of \$5.1 million. The report documented the administration of the program in Fiscal Year 2016-17. Dr. Couch noted the following findings from the report. Since Fiscal Year 2014-15, the teacher shortage issue has increased:

- The number of graduates from SC teacher education programs has declined by 20%;
- The number of teachers leaving teaching and not returning has increased by 18%; and
- The number of teachers not returning after five or fewer years of service has increased by 43%.

Regarding the Teacher Loan Program in 2016-17, Dr. Couch noted the following statistics:

- 1,401 individuals applied to the SC Teacher Loan Program, an increase of only 5 applications from the prior year;
- 1,166 individuals received a loan; 204 were denied primarily due to the failure of the applicant to meet the academic grade point criteria.

- The percentage of male applicants decreased by almost 1%. There was a 4.7% decrease in African American applicants from 2015-16 to 2016-17, the most significant annual drop in African American applicants. In 2016-17, 14% were minorities, compared to 18% in 2012-13.
- Overwhelmingly, applicants and recipients of the Teacher Loan Program were white females who were Teacher Cadets and were enrolled as undergraduates. In 2016-17, 79.5% were female and 83.5 % were White.
- There were 7,960 former Teacher Loan recipients employed in public schools in 2016-17.

Dr. Couch noted that the South Carolina Teacher Loan Advisory Committee has proposed changes to the Teacher Loan Program that would require statutory changes. The Subcommittee discussed the changes and was concerned that opening the accelerated loan forgiveness to all teachers might exacerbate the teacher shortage in rural school districts.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

The final action item, Results of the 2017 Parent Survey, were discussed. Dr. Couch focused on the results of questions related to bullying, a topic that received much debate in the General Assembly last session. Regarding parents' perceptions of bullying,

- 71.3% of parents believed that their child's teachers or school staff prevented or stopped bullying at school, which means at least one in 4 parents believed that their child has been bullied.
- 63.1% of parents believed that their child's school had an anti-bullying program to prevent or deal with bullying, which means one in three parents do not believe that their child's school has an anti-bullying program.
- When bullying occurred, parents most frequently reported that it occurred in the classroom (12.3%). The second most frequent location for bullying was on the school bus (9.3%), which is consistent with results from the prior year's parent survey.

Dr. Couch also noted the following:

- The number of parent surveys completed and returned totaled 55,844, a slight increase over the prior year. This number reflected an overall response rate of between 30 and 35% of all eligible parents surveyed.
- Responses typically overrepresented the perceptions of parents who had children in elementary schools and underrepresented the perceptions of parents who had children in high school.

- Respondents typically obtained higher educational achievements and had greater median household incomes than the general population of South Carolina
- As in prior years, the “typical” parent responding to the survey was a white female having attended or graduated from college and having a household income of greater than \$35,000.
- With respect to the ethnicity of children in the public schools of South Carolina in 2016-17, parents whose children were African American were underrepresented by 5.4%, and parents whose children were Hispanic were underrepresented by 1.4% in the respondents, while parents whose children were white were overrepresented by 6.5%.
- Parents were asked for the first time about their child’s Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). Overall, 81.7% of parents indicated that they were satisfied with the IGP process.
- Between 74% and 87% of parents were satisfied with the learning environment, home and school relations, and physical environment of their child’s school.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee’s recommendations.

#### SC Department of Education Response to HumRRO Report #2

Mr. Robinson then explained an action item that was added to the agenda regarding approval of the state assessment program. State law requires the EOC to review the state assessment program for “alignment with state standards, level of difficulty and validity, and for the ability to differentiate levels of achievement, and to make recommendations for needed changes, if any.” Further, new and revised assessments that are to be used as accountability measures must be adopted upon the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

When new College and Career Ready Standards for ELA and math were approved in 2015, the state assessment system had to change. Currently, the accountability system includes SC READY for grades 3 through 8 in ELA and math; Algebra 1 end-of-course assessment; English 1 end-of-course assessment; and Biology 1 end-of-course assessment. The EOC rather than reviewing the assessments, procured the services of an independent evaluation of these assessments. The vendor selected to perform the evaluation was HumRRO, the Human Resources Research Organization. HumRRO has issued two reports that have previously been approved by the EOC that have focused on the validity and reliability of the tests, namely, to answer the following questions:

- Do the tests meet industry requirements?
- Do the tests meet the minimum legal requirements of SC law?
- How could the tests be improved?

The South Carolina Department of Education was then asked to review the recommendations of HumRRO for improving the tests and to respond how the

Department and the testing vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) will address the recommendations. Mr. Robinson noted that in the EOC packet are the Department's responses. Based on the very detailed responses and assurances by the Department, Mr. Robinson suggested that the EOC approve these assessments for accountability. The evaluations have been conducted, and will assist the Department in getting US Department of Education approval of these assessments. Rep. Loftis moved to approve the assessments; Sen. Johnson seconded the motion.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

Finally, Mr. Robinson announced to the EOC the upcoming meeting schedule. While in the past the EOC held a summer retreat as a time of planning, this year the Committee is going to have a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, August 6 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 433 of the Blatt Building. The next day, August 7, the EOC will host at the USC Alumni Center a statewide reading conference, which is tentatively entitled: "Solving the Reading/Language/Literacy Problem: Specific Suggestions for Diverse Stakeholder Groups." The EOC will have three national reading/literacy experts in attendance who represent the diversity of our students and their needs. The EOC will invite legislators/policy makers including school board members, teachers, district and school administrators, etc. to the conference. Mr. Robinson then called upon Ms. Barton to provide information to members on hotel accommodations.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.