

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes
Summer Retreat
July 30 and 31, 2017
Madren Conference Center
Clemson University

Sunday, July 30, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Danny Merck, Vice-Chair; Anne Bull; Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; Dr. John Stockwell; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

Attending for State Superintendent of Education: Emily Heatwole

Other Legislators Present: Rep. Gary Clary

EOC Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Kevin Andrews; Rainey Knight; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed the members and guests to Clemson University. He asked the members and guests in attendance to introduce themselves. Rep. Clary, who represents the Clemson community at the General Assembly, extended a special welcome to the EOC members, noting the important education issues impacting the state.

The minutes of the June 12, 2017 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson called upon Ms. Barton to discuss the afternoon's strategic planning meeting. Ms. Barton noted that the General Assembly is considering what role or functions the EOC should have in education policy. She noted that at least one legislator asked this past session "why the EOC does not stay in its lane," a comment that led to the EOC enlisting the services of Dr. Peggy Torrey to engage the members, staff, and guests in attendance in strategic planning.

Dr. Torrey explained that strategic planning is designing a road map that answers four key questions for the EOC:

Where are we now?
Where do we want to go?
How will we get there?
How will we know if we got there?

The goal of the strategic planning system is to assist the EOC in establishing a vision, mission, focus area or primary goals, strategies, and objectives.

For the next ninety minutes, members engaged in discussing and answering various questions that focused on the: (1) strengths of the agency; (2) the challenges or barriers; (3) opportunities; (4) the degree to which the agency collaborates with various stakeholders; and (5) increasing statutory responsibilities of the agency. Members discussed the increasing responsibilities that the legislature has given the EOC and the continuing challenges related to collaboration and communication among the legislature, the public, the business community and K-12 education. Members discussed the possibility of amending the statutory responsibilities of the EOC to clarify the agency's mission.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. It was announced that the members would be attending a dinner at the home of Dr. Lee D'Andrea. Transportation would be provided from the Madren Conference Center, and anyone in attendance could attend the dinner.

Monday, July 31, 2017 at 8:30 a.m.

Members Present: Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Danny Merck, Vice-Chair; Anne Bull; Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. John Matthews; Dr. John Stockwell; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

Attending for State Superintendent of Education: Dr. Sheila Quinn

Other Legislators Present: Rep. Rita Allison and Rep. Neal Collins

EOC Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Kevin Andrews; Rainey Knight; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson opened the meeting by introducing special guests in attendance: Rita Allison, Chair of the House Education and Public Works Committee; Rep. Neal Collins, Chair of the Competency-Based Task Force and a member of the House Education and Public Works Committee; Cindy Crick, Chief of Staff for Congressman Trey Gowdy; Dr. Michelle Cook, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies at Clemson University; and Jennifer Hein, Director of Assessment and Accreditation at the College of Education at Clemson University.

The meeting began with a presentation by Dr. Peggy Torrey and Dana Yow concerning the report card focus groups meetings that were held on July 17, 18 and 19, 2017 in Beaufort, Columbia and Greenwood. Approximately thirty-three parents participated. The objective of the focus groups was to give parents information and two electronic samples of possible report card formats and ask them to find items or information that they valued and to garner feedback on the report card formats.

The results showed:

- Parents are interested in knowing information about their child's classroom (teacher/student ratios, teacher qualifications and teacher retention rates).
- Parents also want to know about extracurricular activities and the safety within their child's school.
- Parents also want information to be able to compare the performance of students at their child's school to the performance of other schools in South Carolina and in other states.
- Parents also are interested in principal retention rates and in test scores.

Consistent themes among the three meetings emerged. Parents are most concerned with: graduation rates and readiness; discipline and safety; teacher qualifications and retention; and test scores including comparisons with other schools and the nation.

Parents also gave feedback on the report card templates. They do not want acronyms or education jargon. Parents want graphs to be simple and easy to understand as well as icons across the landing page

As far as additional support, parents want to know:

- School goals and progress toward those goals;
- Information on facilities;
- Trend data to determine if their child's school is improving;
- A link to a "real person" who can answer questions about the report card; and
- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page.

The members discussed the results, and then took a ten-minute break at 9:50 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 10:00 a.m.

The final discussion centered on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Mr. Robinson introduced Dr. Monique Chism, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary & Secondary Education at the United States Department of Education. Dr. Chism discussed the objectives of the ESSA law and summarized the contents of the 17 state plans that were submitted in the spring of 2017. Regarding the law, Dr. Chism noted that the goal of the law is for all students to be taught and master college and career readiness standards. The law ensures that states establish accountability systems that focus and redirect sources to under-achieving schools. The law includes opportunities for states to be innovative. Dr. Chism highlighted three opportunities for innovation:

1. States may include indicators in the accountability system that ensure students receive a well-rounded education. States may include student performance on social studies and science assessments, student access to arts instruction, the safety and health of students, and student access to technology.
2. School districts may apply for grants to merge Title I, II and III funds into weighted student funding formulas.
3. States may use innovative measures to measure Student Success such as school quality, integration of the arts, etc.

In reflecting on the 17 ESSA state plans that have been submitted to the United States Department of Education, Dr. Chism made the following observations:

- The academic and graduation goals must be ambitious.
- The law requires that states measure progress toward English language proficiency.
- Academic achievement may only include student assessment results in English language arts and mathematics.
- The key indicators (academic achievement, academic progress, and graduation rate) must have greater weight than the non-academic indicators.
- States must identify what actions will be taken if at least 95 percent of students do not take summative assessments.
- The law requires that any indicator used must be valid, reliable, comparable and have statewide differentiation. For example, states that count Advanced Placement (AP) courses must demonstrate that all students have access to AP courses.

Ms. Weaver asked for additional information on the innovative grants program for which districts may apply. Dr. Stockwell asked about the status of the 17 state applications. Mrs. Hairfield asked if states were addressing civic competencies.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.