

## **SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

### Minutes of the Meeting

October 14, 2019

Members Present: Ellen Weaver, Chair; Rep. Terry Alexander; Dr. Bob Couch; Barbara Hairfield; Rep. Raye Felder; Senator Greg Hembree; Senator Kevin Johnson; Senator John Matthews; Dr. Brian Newsome; Patti Tate; State Superintendent Molly Spearman; Dr. John Stockwell; and Dr. Scott Turner.

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Dr. Valerie Harrison; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; and Dana Yow.

Ms. Weaver welcomed members and guests to the meeting. She turned the meeting over to Dr. Knight, who introduced Dr. Valerie Harrison. Dr. Harrison has joined the EOC staff, part-time, as Director of Special Projects.

The minutes of the August 26, 2019 meeting were approved as distributed.

Dr. Leigh D'Amico was welcomed to the podium. Dr. D'Amico presented the findings of the Community Block Grant evaluations, 2017-2018. In 2017-18, seven grants were awarded. Funding ranged from \$97,250 to \$206,857. A total of 3,867 children were impacted in 65 schools. She discussed some of the initiatives in funded districts. Each funded district saw a higher level of readiness in kindergarten.

Future recommendations include studying cohorts of 4K and 5K children to better understand and enhance impacts of district-implemented strategies as well as scale successful initiatives and ideas. Sen. Matthews asked if children in non-funded districts were being studied, stating that this would help to truly evaluate the program's effectiveness. Dr. D'Amico stated that they are working with districts this year to try and isolate the children to better study whether these strategies are bringing about these improvements. They are also working to see if they can get data from non-participating districts, since they would have to agree to share this information.

Sen. Hembree questioned why KRA results couldn't just be pulled for students participating. Dr. D'Amico said some districts can do this more quickly than others; for others, it is a challenge. The 45-day testing window can present problems as well.

Rep. Felder asked why we are now getting results from 2017-18. Dr. D'Amico stated that some of the funded districts have used the money into the 2018-19 school year so the results are based on last school year.

Dr. Turner asked Dr. D'Amico to speak to the quality of the KRA. She said that she is not equipped to talk about the psychometrics of the test although she is aware there are concerns from educators about the test.

Dr. Stockwell asked what the perceived value of the KRA is. Dr. Knight stated it is a reflection on the community and how well-prepared children are as they enter kindergarten. Dr. Stockwell

went on to say that the KRA is not used in Spartanburg county; it is a hinderance that consumes instructional time. Teachers widely resent it because of its lack of utility.

Ms. Spearman said the SCDE has been investigating and listening to teachers. She stated that teachers aren't getting info they need from KRA. The assessment takes up a lot of their time. She said they would like to work with the legislature on a joint resolution that would allow the assessment to be done more uniformly at the beginning of school. Changes had been made to the KRA but that information had not made its way to the classroom level; the SCDE is working on improving communication. Teachers have complained that the official results don't arrive until January or February. Ms. Spearman stated that we need to decide whether we want to stay with this assessment, and this is a decision we all need to make together. Ms. Spearman stated that individual student reports were available to teachers immediately after the assessment data is entered into the system. She further stated that better communication and training needs to be delivered to districts. This is a challenge.

Rep. Alexander asked if we had looked at the assessment to see the impact it has on a 4 or 5-year old. He wondered if the assessment was too much for children at this age.

Dr. Mathis, at the request of Ms. Spearman, spoke at the podium. He said that kindergarten teachers all use some sort of instrument to determine readiness. The question is if we want a universal assessment. If we do want a common assessment, we need to come to some sort of common ground. Teachers see the results as an indictment on them, when it is not. There is subjectivity in the delivery of the test, which can alter the results. Teachers also don't like that the KRA is put on the report card.

Sen. Hembree asked about the individual reports for the student. Although the print out for parents arrives later, the teacher has the data early in the process, and can use it in planning. Sen. Hembree said he saw the purpose of KRA as establishing a baseline. We need to have some idea where students are when they come into a school. Teachers have not been trained on this assessment. They like other assessments better because they have been trained on them. We need some sort of uniformity.

Dr. Mathis said the SCDE is putting together a study committee for KRA. Results and recommendations will come out in December. Dr. Stockwell stated he hopes that they come up with alternatives to the KRA. He hopes we can help impact readiness by giving the community advice on how to help children.

Rep. Felder questioned how many children were being served by the Community Block Grant funding.

Ms. Weaver called upon Dr. Knight to provide an update on the release of the School Report Cards on October 1. Dr. Knight congratulated schools in their improvements. She stated the percentage of elementary, middle, and high schools who were meeting the Profile of the SC Graduate, based on the release. She also made certain that members were aware that the college and career ready data was based only on graduates, not non-graduates.

Ms. Hairfield asked for clarification, stating how she doesn't see how so many schools are meeting the Profile of the SC Graduate, especially since we know they are struggling so much academically. The numbers are wonderful, but we must seek truth in reporting.

Dr. Knight stated that some of the data need to be talked about; the upcoming cyclical review would provide such an opportunity. Dr. Knight noted the impressive work that schools had done with the English Learners (EL) populations. This indicator is a good example of schools working toward growth toward proficiency, which is something we should look at for all children. The gains these children are making, Dr. Knight stated, may very well correlate with other learning.

Dr. Knight noted that the Student Survey continues to be problematic; she is not certain that the tool measures student engagement. The survey itself is widely available online, which can bring about questions of reliability and validity. Sen. Hembree said the results seemed high, particularly for middle schools. He questioned how to make this measure accurate and reflective of true student engagement.

For the College and Career Ready indicator, Dr. Knight stressed the need to work further in the area of credentials. If the accountability system were to incentivize high skill, high demand credentials, children would benefit.

Dr. Turner stated he thought it sent the wrong message for members to question the current accountability system, since the EOC has backed it. He said schools have worked hard and should be commended for this effort. Dr. Newsome echoed Dr. Turner's comments, stating that the good work that goes on in schools is not often reflected in Report Cards. He said that schools who receive a rating of Excellent are often guilty of not telling the story of what they are doing to improve and excel.

Ms. Weaver stated that the report card must accurately measure what we are asking of schools and the press coverage she has seen so far has been uniformly positive. Ms. Hairfield stated that the mixed messages can be disconcerting to the public; the clarity if not there. Dr. Knight stated that we would like to add measures to the report card that are not test-based, but they come with all sorts of challenges.

In terms of growth, Dr. Knight asked Dr. Andrews to discuss the changes related to the Student Progress indicator. Dr. Andrews discussed updates to the indicator methodology, since the vendors have changed.

Dr. Knight then addressed the current status of the Prepared for Success Indicator, given the proviso that removes social studies testing from elementary and middle schools this school year. She said that the SCDE must have revisions to the U.S. Dept of Education by December 1 which means that they need to have any suggested revisions online for public feedback on November 1. From feedback she has obtained, there are those that want consistency, those who feel science is important and should be counted, and others who don't want science alone to hold that much weighting in the 100 point system. Dr. Payne says that the SCDE is trying to find a fair work-around for 20 middle schools who will not have a tested grade in Science this year.

Dr. Knight stated that the Cyclical Review would allow other stakeholders to provide input on student success measures that best exemplified what is outlined in the Profile of the SC Graduate.

Dr. Stockwell requested a regression analysis overlaying socioeconomic status and racial demographics on the academic achievement charts. Dr. Knight stated that staff had done these analyses, but we needed to put them in presentation form.

Ms. Hairfield asked members to look at the issue brief in the back of the packet. She stated we did the best we could with the current system, but we needed to look closely at what defines student success.

Rep. Felder asked if schools could still give the Social Studies test even if there was not a mandate. Dr. Payne stated that the schools could not give the state test this year. The SCDE is not providing it, and the money has been allocated elsewhere. Further, ESSA only allows schools to use measures that impact all students. What we do for one, we must do for everyone.

Ms. Hairfield presented the report of the ASA and Public Awareness subcommittees. The EOC has been given a directive from the SC Legislature to conduct a cyclical review of the accountability system beginning in 2020. (Section 59-18-910). The first cyclical review was completed in April 2014.

The EOC must work with the State Board of Education and a broad-based group of stakeholders, selected by the EOC, to conduct a comprehensive look at the current accountability system and provide a report to the General Assembly to recommend actions which will improve the system and accelerate improvements in student and school performance.

The cyclical review must include recommendations of a process for determining if students are graduating with the world-class skills and life and career characteristics of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate to be successful in postsecondary education and in careers. The accountability system needs to reflect evidence that students have developed these skills and characteristics.

The law outlines the make-up of stakeholders. The stakeholders must include the State Superintendent of Education and the Governor, or the Governor's designee. The other stakeholders include, but are not limited to, parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators.

Last month, the Public Awareness Subcommittee and the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee, meeting jointly, approved the timeline proposed for the cyclical review. Throughout the fall and winter, EOC staff will work to obtain input from stakeholder groups. They are working jointly with the SC Dept. of Education as a partner in this review. EOC and SCDE staff are meeting jointly with the Center for Assessment on assisting with the process. The Center for Assessment is already working on similar reviews in other states. Ms. Hairfield noted that Drs. Payne and Mathis were present from the SCDE.

Last week, Dr. Knight and Ms. Yow presented the plan alongside SCDE staff to the State Board of Education. They asked the Chair of the State Board of Education for one nomination for the Cyclical Review Evaluation committee, which we anticipate will meet in early 2020. We anticipate that group will be composed of 25-30 individuals and that they will meet 2-3 times. Similarly, the EOC is asked to provide one nomination. It is important that this group is composed of individuals who represent business, community, educators and parents. It is expected that the EOC will receive the recommendations from the Cyclical Review in April 2020 and that if approved, those can be submitted in the SCDE's ESSA Plan in May and to the General Assembly.

The approval of the cyclical review proposal and timeline came before the EOC as a recommendation from the subcommittees. The motion carried and was approved.

Ms. Weaver then reported on the Executive Director search. She passed out a proposed job description. She stated the current plan would allow potential candidates to come before the EOC in February or March 2020. She announced the composition of the search committee and suggested that this group could begin meeting in December.

Dr. Turner asked about the timeline of the cyclical review. Ms. Weaver said that both processes would run concurrently.

Ms. Weaver stated she would entertain a motion to proceed with "Option 2" in the memo she passed out, directing Dr. Knight to post the Board's recommended job description and salary range; and to further create an executive Search Committee as outlined by the Chair, in order to facilitate the executive search process and bring a recommendation back to the full Board. The motion was made, seconded, and carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.