

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

December 13, 2021

Members Present (in-person or remote): Ellen Weaver; Dr. Bob Couch; Neil Robinson; Barbara Hairfield; Melanie Barton; Dr. Brian Newsome; Dr. Scott Turner; Rep. Neal Collins (remote); Sidney Locke; Rep. Terry Alexander; Jamie Shuster (remote); Rep. Raye Felder (remote), Dr. Patti Tate (remote); Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Kevin Johnson

EOC Staff Present: Matthew Ferguson; Gabrielle Fulton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Dr. Matthew Lavery; Dr. Jenny May; and Dana Yow

Chair Ellen Weaver called the meeting to order. As the first order of business, members voted on the approval of minutes from the last full committee meeting, held October 11, 2021. Members unanimously approved the minutes as written.

Next, Neil Robinson presented a report on the ASA subcommittee meeting held November 15, 2021. At this meeting, Dr. Lavery presented on a review of SCPASS Science, conducted by teachers. Dr. May presented a review of an accountability option of a non-diploma track for select Special Education students; the ASA subcommittee recommended to add this as an indicator for Career Readiness. Dr. Lavery presented on a factor analysis, with the subcommittee recommending the use of factors from the school climate surveys given to students and teachers, including the teacher voice in accountability for the first time. Mr. Ferguson presented the Prepared For Success Indicator at High School: US History EOCEP. Because field testing was affected by COVID, it was the subcommittee's recommendation to collect and record the results but waive inclusion in accountability for SY21-22.

After Mr. Robinson's report, Dr. Rainey Knight presented a review of SC Mathematics standards. Dr. Knight provided SC READY student performance data and highlighted that Hispanic and African American students were falling behind their peers. Next, Dr. Knight presented a review of commendations and recommendations to the mathematics standards.

Ms. Barton asked about a timeline for these new standards, to be released fall of 2023. Ms. Hairfield voiced her support for embedding standards and supporting documents.

Sen. Hembree inquired about how South Carolina compared with sister states in math. Dr. Knight stated that the research showed that some states were looking at core courses. Sen. Hembree asked a clarifying question about Bloom's taxonomy. Dr. Knight stated that this was a taxonomy of rigor, meant to show higher-level thinking. Next, Sen. Hembree inquired about the stark drop-off almost every year. Dr. Knight stated that a possible reason for this drop-off could be that the tests are not vertically aligned across grade levels.

Sen. Hembree stated that he noted up to 35 people involved in creating the standards, 22 of whom were teachers. Dr. Knight confirmed this number, adding that many of these were actual math teachers. One of the reasons for such high participation rates may be because they were conducted via Zoom.

Rep. Alexander asked a clarifying question about recommendation six, asking if it was the recommendation that all students explain their answer. Dr. Knight confirmed that yes, this was the recommendation. Rep. Alexander asked if this was doable for 1st and 2nd graders, which Dr. Knight affirmed. Rep. Alexander next asked about how this might be qualified based on different perspectives, inquiring if this was fair to all students. Dr. Knight stated that letting students verbalize their answers is important to their knowledge development. Rep. Alexander stated that it was his concern that we are not giving all students the same opportunity to explain their thinking.

Next, Dr. Turner inquired about why JROTC is not considered a Career Ready option within accountability. Mr. Ferguson stated that one of the topics discussed during cyclical review was whether ASVAB should be tied to JROTC, as some districts don't have JROTC. Dr. Turner stated that he would still like this to be considered and looked at. Mr. Ferguson stated that this would be added to the docket for the next ASA subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Barton asked about how teacher voice will be assessed in the school climate surveys. Mr. Ferguson stated that the State Department of Education has procured new software within PowerSchool allowing surveys to be conducted via the platform. According to PowerSchool, these surveys will be more secure and with the increased security, schools and districts will not be able to link surveys to individuals.

All voted in favor of the report; the report carries.

Next, Mr. Couch presented on the EIA subcommittee meeting, also held November 15, 2021. First, he discussed the EIA projections for 22-23; based on EIA estimation, there is a surplus. Mr. Couch presented a summary of recommendations, found in page 6 of the report, and a summary of nonrecurring use of surplus.

Because the EIA subcommittee did not have a quorum, it was the recommendation that these be approved by the full committee. This recommendation was seconded by Dr. Turner.

Rep. Felder asked about the working conditions survey. Mr. Ferguson stated that this would be handled via the working conditions survey. Perhaps SC Teacher or CERRA would handle this work, but regardless, the working conditions survey should live outside the school districts and Department of Education.

Sen. Hembree asked about the \$34M regarding literacy supplement focusing on Palmetto Literacy Schools, asking if training was connected to receipt of these funds. Mr. Ferguson stated that yes, training was connected and funding for the training would be provided with the amount. Sen. Hembree stated that with 5,500 teachers, not all of whom are struggling, this could be frustrating for teachers who don't need it. Mr. Ferguson stated that this provided an opportunity for retraining.

Ms. Hairfield next asked a clarifying question about high dose tutoring. Mr. Ferguson stated that the key is in making sure tutors are highly trained; research shows that when high dose tutoring is done with fidelity, it can be very beneficial. Sen. Hembree asked if there were any examples of districts doing this right. Mr. Ferguson stated that none come to mind, but he will inquire about this further.

Ms. Weaver suggested that perhaps this could be an opportunity for matching funds, which Sen. Hembree stated may be an appealing option.

All members approved the EIA recommendations unanimously.

Mr. Ferguson provided an update on the spring research docket. In ASA in spring, the subcommittee will address the growth to proficiency model, an on-track measurement in high school, seeking to look at what the end of 9th, 10th, and 11th grades look like. In addition, the ASA subcommittee will look into the question of JROTC as addressed by Dr. Turner during this meeting. Additionally, recurring interim assessment data should be provided in January.

Mr. Alexander asked about the status of a State broadband. Next, Mr. Alexander asked about looking at the overlap between early childhood programs who may be doing the same work, to ensure that we are not being redundant. Ms. Weaver made note of these on the research docket.

Next, Ms. Weaver thanked everyone and announced her plan to resign as Chair, effective end of year, because of her interest in running for superintendent. Ms. Weaver appointed Ms. Hairfield, Sen. Johnson, and Ms. Allen to the committee to recommend her successor. A transcript of Ms. Weaver's remarks is provided below:

As we come to the end of another challenging year, I have been reflecting on what an incredible honor it has been to serve as your Chair for the last 3 years.

It has been an eventful tenure, to put it mildly, starting almost immediately with key staff leadership transitions, followed quickly by COVID's unprecedented disruption.

Through all these challenges, I've been so proud of and grateful for the competence and professionalism of our Committee staff. They have risen to every occasion, fulfilling the EOC's critical mission to report facts, measure change, and promote progress.

In addition to its routine and ongoing work, over the last three years our Committee has:

- With the help of Dr. Knight's stabilizing transitional leadership, hired a new executive director. Matthew – it has been exciting to see you owning the work, bringing new ideas to the table, expanding communication initiatives, and building your team for future impact.*
- Provided essential early technical assistance under the leadership of Dr. Lee D'Andrea, applying lessons learned from the EOC's e-Learning Pilot Project, when school flipped to emergency online learning overnight in March of 2020.*
- Delivered analysis requested by the General Assembly—the only analysis of its kind—of projected and actual impact of pandemic-driven learning losses on students.*
- Brought new structure and focus to our EIA budget recommendation processes, this year focusing on essentials of teacher recruitment and retention and helping students recover basic literacy and math skills.*
- Completed a Board-level strategic planning process, laying out a robust vision for the EOC to find new ways to report data and convene and collaborate with key stakeholders to push for continual education improvement for students across our state.*

In short, I hope that together we have left the EOC's mission and vision as strong or stronger than when you entrusted me with the Chairmanship in 2019.

And as you just heard in Matthew's report, there so much more work to do.

So it is bittersweet to share with you today that I plan to resign my position as Chair effective at the end of this year. After much prayer and advice, I have decided to run to be South Carolina's next Superintendent of Education. I believe deeply that the EOC's mission of transparency through independent oversight is needed now more than ever, and I don't wish for the partisan nature of this election to become a distraction to this Committee's vital work.

So in my final act as Chairman, I have appointed our Vice Chair Barbara Hairfield, Senator Kevin Johnson, and April Allen to a special nominating committee. They will return a recommendation for your approval at our February meeting for a candidate to complete the remainder of my term, which runs through the end of 2022.

I am excited to continue to serve with you as a Member of the Committee and am once again grateful for the 3 years you entrusted me as Chair to help move our mission forward for kids across this state. I believe the constructive conversations and can-do attitude we have here at the EOC are a model of how we can move education forward in this state in the months and years ahead.

And speaking personally, I just want to say "thank you." The lessons I have learned here will serve me for the rest of my life. I am deeply indebted to each of you for your patience, good humor, insights, and kindness.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:10pm.