

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting
December 15, 2014

Members in Attendance: Mr. David Whittemore (Chair); Dr. Danny Merck (Vice Chair); Ms. Anne Bull; Sen. Mike Fair; Mrs. Margaret Ann Gaffney; Sen. Wes Hayes; Ms. Deb Marks; Mr. Alex Martin; Sen. John Matthews; Mr. Andy Patrick; Mr. Roland Smith; and Ms. Patti Tate.

Others: Ms. Barbara Hairfield participated via conference call.

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Mrs. Melanie Barton; Ms. Paulette Geiger; Dr. Rainey Knight; and Ms. Dana Yow.

Mr. Whittemore called the meeting to order, wishing staff and members a very Merry Christmas. He acknowledged three members of the EOC who were attending their last EOC meeting: former representatives Andy Patrick and Roland Smith and outgoing State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Mick Zais. He thanked them for their contributions to the EOC.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the October 13, 2014 meeting. Mr. Robinson asked that the minutes be corrected by deleting an extraneous sentence on page 2. The minutes being amended, were then approved.

The EOC then heard from representatives from the special panels created to review the existing English language arts and mathematics standards and the draft new standards created by the standards writing team formed by the South Carolina Department of Education.

Mr. Jim Reynolds, President of Total Comfort Solutions, summarized the findings and recommendations from the math panel. Regarding the math K-8 standards, Mr. Reynolds noted that they generally embodied the skills needed for students to be college and career ready. The panel did make specific revisions at each grade level to guarantee clear vertical progress of student knowledge. For high school math standards, Mr. Reynolds noted that the draft standards increased the number of high school standards from 193 to 297 and did not define the necessary knowledge and mathematical skills that all students, those attending college or entering a career, should have upon graduation. The panel, therefore, recommended a rewrite of the high school math standards and provided to the writing panel specific suggestions, which included keeping the mathematical process skills in the standards. Mr. Reynolds noted that the process skills in the standards were needed to ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to be college and career ready. Currently, forty-one percent of students graduating from high school and entering the technical college system take remediation courses. If students had mastery of the fundamental mathematics skills that are assessed with WorkKeys, these students could have successful careers in 65 to 93% of the jobs in America. He concluded by adding that this review of existing standards gives South Carolina an opportunity to clearly define and set benchmarks for what students should be able to know and do along the continuum. Ms. Hairfield, Sen. Fair and Mr. Patrick asked questions about the review process, including which standards were consulted by the writing team. Christopher Cox, a parent who served on the math team, also addressed the Committee, noting that students today are no longer competing within South Carolina or within the United States for jobs. The competition is global; therefore, our students have to be prepared.

Debbie Barron, Academic Specialist for grades 6-12 in English language arts for the Greenville County School District then summarized the findings of the ELA review panel. Ms. Barron noted that the sheer size, 250 pages, of the draft standards and its organization, resulted in an unmanageable document for teachers. The panel also found a lack of vertical articulation. For example, keyboarding was mentioned in second grade but not mentioned again in the standards. Lack of clarity, specificity and rigor were also found. There was also a concern that the draft standards did not address speaking and listening skills or research, skills that are critical for preparing students for careers.

Ms. Hairfield and Senators Fair and Matthews respectfully raised questions about: (1) the lack of national experts consulted; (2) the importance of consulting with other states' standards and (3) the need for South Carolina students to be able to compete nationally and internationally.

The EOC received the report from the review panel.

Subcommittee reports were then received.

Dr. Merck reported for the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee. He noted that the subcommittee received on December 1 an in-depth report from the review panels, noting that many of the panelists were present and answered questions. He cautioned the EOC members that the standards, assessments and evaluations for teachers and principals have to be aligned and operate in a coherent system.

Mr. Martin reported for the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee. He summarized the key EIA budget and proviso recommendations. Mr. Patrick offered an amendment to the subcommittee report that was approved after discussion. The amendment would clarify that future funding for online music curriculum would be handled through the State Procurement Process rather than through a pilot program funded through the K-12 Technology Initiative. Sen. Matthews asked about funding for music curriculum. Mr. Martin noted that the Subcommittee had recommended a \$20 million increase for instructional materials. The amendment passed with Ms. Marks voting against it. The subcommittee report was adopted as amended.

Ms. Barton provided an update on the Early Readiness Assessment Subcommittee. Act 287 of 2014, the Office of First Steps Reauthorization Act, requires the EOC to recommend by July 1, 2015 to the State Board of Education a readiness assessment to measure students' readiness for 4K and 5K programs. The assessment must be aligned to first and second grade English language arts and mathematics standards, which are currently under revision. The assessment must evaluate a child's early language and literacy development, numeracy skills, physical well-being, social and emotional development and approaches to learning. In making its recommendation the law requires the EOC to "seek input from the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates."

Just as the EOC did in June, when the EOC recommended the characteristics of a readiness assessment for early literacy for 4K and 5K children, the EOC will make recommendations on the characteristics of assessments across the domains enumerated in the law. The EOC in August appointed a special subcommittee on early readiness to address the requirements of Act 287. The subcommittee had its first meeting in November and will meet again on January 26.

The Subcommittee met on November 17 at the Lexington 4 Early Childhood Center in Swansea. This center is a Montessori Program that is part of the TransformSC initiative. After a tour of the facilities, the subcommittee began by hearing from the following early childhood

advocates: Dr. Leigh Kale D'Amico (Research Assistant Professor at USC College of Education); Leigh Bolick (Director, DSS Division of Early Care and Education); Mary Lynne Diggs (Director, SC Head Start Collaboration Office); Dewayne Frederick (Director, Head Start of Beaufort and Jasper Counties); Lillian Atkins (Principal, Lexington 4 Early Childhood Center); and Dave Morley (Early Childhood Committee Co-Chair, SC Council on Competitiveness).

Ms. Barton passed out for the EOC members a recent Attorney General's Opinion that addressed dual office holding and the filing of ethics reports. Beginning January 2015, business and education appointees to the EOC must complete online ethics reports as required by the Ethics Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.