

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting June 12, 2017

Members Present: Neil Robinson (Chair); Cynthia Bennett; Anne Bull; Dr. Bob Couch; Rep. Raye Felder; Sen. Greg Hembree; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Sen. John Matthews; John Stockwell; Patti Tate; and Ellen Weaver.

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

Mr. Robinson welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

He announced that Senator Leatherman had reappointed Barbara Hairfield for another four-year-term on the EOC, to commence on July 1, 2017. Mrs. Hairfield serves as the education designee of the President Pro Tempore.

The minutes of the April 10, 2017 meeting were approved as distributed.

Subcommittee Reports were received accordingly:

Academic Standards and Assessment

In light of Dr. Merck's absence, Mr. Robinson called upon Mrs. Barton to provide background information on two action items that were on the agenda. The first Action Item was adoption of the first of three independent evaluation reports on SC Ready and the end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1, English 1 and Biology. Not only does the EOC by law have to approve the assessments, but the General Assembly funds the assessment program through annual EIA appropriations that are reviewed by the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee.

Unlike in the past when the EOC staff conducted the review, Mrs. Barton explained that the agency went through a competitive bids process to select an independent evaluator to determine if the assessments adhere to industry best practices and state law. The vendor that was approved was the Human Resources Research Organization, HumRRO. In discussion with HumRRO, it was determined that as data are provided and analyzed, HumRRO would produce three interim reports. These reports would contain interim recommendations accompanied by a priority rating:

Urgent - Definitely needs to be addressed; should be considered and addressed immediately

High – Needs to be addressed; should be considered and addressed as soon as possible.

Medium - Should be considered and possibly addressed.

Low - Might be considered if time allows.

By producing interim recommendations, the EOC hopes that the Department of Education working with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), the testing vendor, will review and address the recommendations along with the way. Officials from HumRRO participated in the May meeting via webinar. Mrs. Barton summarized the results of the HumRRO report:

Item development for SC Ready and Algebra 1:

- High Priority Recommendation focused on improving item development processes by: (1) clarifying the goals of the assessment; (2) expanding item review checklists; (3) improving record keeping; (4) cross-referencing information in support documents; and (5) obtaining more detailed information about the qualifications of expert judges and quality assurance staff.
- High Priority Recommendation to expand available documentation describing the processes and procedures for item development by creating a technical manual to centralize the item development process in one document for both assessments.
- Medium Priority Recommendations to add item tryout or cognitive labs, which are processes for trying out new items on smaller numbers of students than field tests, which can inform the creation of better field tests.
- High Priority Recommendation unique to SC Ready was to use readability and grade-level appropriateness reviews for mathematics items, so that math items assess students' knowledge and skills in mathematics rather than their reading ability. For a test of mathematics, reading ability is regarded as an irrelevant construct.
- This most important recommendation was to improve the documentation of item development by creating a technical manual to organized the tasks of item development and centralize all relevant documents with cross-referencing. The final report will include analyses from a site visit of the item development process.

Test construction for SC Ready and Algebra 1

These following focus on the processes involved in creating different test forms for test security purposes. For both SC Ready and Algebra 1, the test construction process was judged to be consistent with industry standards. HumRRO recommended these actions:

- For Algebra 1, an **Urgent Priority** recommendation was made to eliminate from the item pool any items with negative point-biserial corrections. These are items that higher scoring students are less likely to get correct than low scoring students. It was noted that the item bank for Spring 2017 was improved and did not contain items with negative point-biserial correlations.
- For both SC Ready and Algebra 1, a High Priority recommendation was to improve the documentation of test construction by creating a technical manual to organized the tasks of test construction and centralize all relevant documents with cross-referencing.
- A Medium Priority recommendation for SC Ready was to document the differential item functioning (DIF) between tests administered in paper and pencil format compared to tests administered on computer. The final report will include analyses from a site visit of the test development process.

Content alignment for Algebra 1 Only

A panel of five experts was used to evaluate content alignment; four were Kentucky educators and one, a national expert. Kentucky Algebra 1 standards are very similar to South Carolina standards as noted in Appendix B of the report. Ninety-nine items were reviewed by the panel who determined that only two items raised concerns with their clarity of presentation. Recommendations included that South Carolina:

- Enhance the item difficulty to the standards to measure the Structure and Expressions standards (Medium Priority).
- Increase the item pool for the Number and Quantity content strand. These recommendations are critical if reporting at the key concept level is to be implemented in the future (Medium Priority).
- Consider using additional item types rather than relying exclusively on multiple-choice items (Low Priority).

The Subcommittee recommended to the full EOC approval of Report #1 and to ask the South Carolina Department of Education for a formal response regarding Finding 3.3 and Interim Recommendation 3.1, which was the only Urgent Priority recommendation.

Members discussed several issues related to the report. Rep. Loftis asked if the Algebra 1 assessment will measure the key math concepts needed by students. Rep. Felder asked that there be a specific timeframe by which the Department of Education would respond to the reports. Mr. Robinson called upon Liz Jones, Director of Assessment for the South Carolina Department of Education, to determine what timeframe would be acceptable to the Department. Ms. Jones stated that the agency has already dealt with the Urgent Priority Recommendation and would address all other High Priority recommendations by the end of December 2017.

There being no further discussion, the members voted unanimously to adopt the report and seek feedback from the Department of Education on implementation of the recommendations, especially all High and Urgent Priority recommendations by end of the December 2017.

The second action item on the agenda concerned criteria for rating special schools. As explained by Mrs. Barton, the Academic Standards and Assessment Subcommittee recommended criteria for evaluating the six special schools using the general indicators that all other schools will be evaluated against in the new accountability system: Academic Achievement; Student Progress; Graduation Rate; Positive Learning Environment; and Prepared for Success. The six schools are:

- Governor's School for the Arts & Humanities
- Governor's School for Science & Mathematics
- SC School for the Deaf & Blind
- SC Department of Juvenile Justice
- Palmetto Unified School District (Department of Corrections)
- Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

The EOC staff worked directly with the presidents/executive directors/superintendents of these schools in designing the criteria. Draft report card templates were created through a dialogue with representatives from each of the special schools. The front page for all six report cards will have the same format as for all schools in South Carolina, with a description of the school and its students, the overall rating of the school, and links to the information for each of the five areas assessed for each school. Examples of how different measures were appropriate for each school in the areas of achievement and student preparation for success were presented, and the use of GED Success in place of graduation rate for schools with incarcerated students was noted. For measuring Prepared for Success, the Governor's School for Science & Mathematics will use WorkKeys scores as well as first semester freshman grade point average of its most recent graduates.

Mr. Robinson asked for discussion. Sen. Hembree asked staff to summarize the changes in the criteria used to rate the special schools as compared to the process or criteria used in the past. Mrs. Barton described the process that included incorporating accountability measures used by the agencies as well as specific goals and strategies being implemented at the special schools to better serve students.

The committee unanimously approved the adoption of the criteria for rating special schools.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms

Dr. Couch, chair of the subcommittee reported on the only action item from the subcommittee, the annual evaluation of the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program. Dr. Couch noted that the report includes a summary of public policy strategies of other states, including Florida. Florida has invested significant state funding to attract and retain teachers, including hiring bonuses, monies for district-directed recruitment, and methods to recruit high performance teacher candidates. The importance of working conditions for the retention of teachers was also discussed. The report highlights the following findings:

1. The gap between the number of teachers leaving the classroom and the number graduating from a South Carolina teacher education program is growing. This state trend is occurring nationally as well. In 2016-17, 1,898 individuals graduated from a South Carolina teacher education program, representing a three percent decrease from the previous year. About 4,842 teachers did not return to any teaching position in 2016-17 school year, representing a 19 percent increase in teachers who did not return during the 2015-16 school year.

2. In 2015-16, state teacher education programs provided 29 percent of the new teacher hires, a three percent decrease from the previous year. This decrease continued in 2016-17; state teacher education programs provided only 25 percent of the new teacher hires. About 28 percent of the hires came from another state, were new graduates from teacher education programs in other states, or through alternative certification programs.

3. The number of applications to the Teacher Loan Program continues to decrease. There were 1,448 applications in 2014-15 and 1,396 applications in 2015-16. In 2014-15, the number of approved loans was 1,130 and in 2015-16 the number remained relatively steady with 1,128 approved loans, totaling \$4,460,184. Since Fiscal Year 2009-10, the number of applicants to the Teacher Loan Program in 2015-16 has declined by 40 percent.

4. The total amount of EIA funds appropriated for the SC Teacher Loan Program in 2015-16, \$5,089,881, was more than sufficient to meet the total costs of loans approved and of administrative costs related to the SC Teacher Loan Program. At the end of Fiscal Year 2015-16, there were unexpended EIA funds totaling \$310,247 in the program. Consequently, for the third consecutive year, no funds were needed from the Revolving Loan Fund to supplement the EIA appropriation. In fact, at the end of Fiscal Year 2015-16, the balance in the Revolving Loan Fund was \$19,483,127, an increase of 18 percent from the prior fiscal year. Due to the large surplus in the fund, the General Assembly in the 2017-18 General Appropriation Bill is considering using \$16 million in the Revolving Fund for capital improvements in public schools.

5. Subject areas with the most vacancies remain unchanged from 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school year. The subject areas of science, early childhood/elementary and special education continue to exist. It is important to note early childhood/elementary vacancies account for 19 percent of all vacancies. Additional subject areas with relatively high levels of vacancies are English language arts and speech language therapy. An increase in the need for teachers in the areas of English/Language Arts and Speech was noted. An increasing percentage of new teachers in South Carolina are either coming from other states or from alternative certification pathways.

Dr. Bob Couch then asked Mrs. Barton to highlight the budget as adopted by the General Assembly. Mrs. Barton focused on those funding issues that were recommended by the EOC or that address accountability. She noted that Governor McMaster had issued his budget vetoes

earlier in the day that included vetoing \$20.5 million in lottery revenues for school bus purchases or leases.

Dr. Stockwell asked if there was any systemic approach to addressing the teacher shortage with institutions of higher education being involved in addressing the pipeline as well as the issue of principal leadership. Dr. Couch and other members of the EOC also emphasized the growing teacher shortage issue.

The EOC unanimously adopted the report.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Dr. Andrews to summarize the results of the parent survey for school year 2015-16. Dr. Andrews highlighted the following:

1. In 2016 the number of parent surveys completed and returned totaled 55,221, a decrease of 6,971 surveys (11.2 percent) from the prior year. Estimates are that between 29 and 34 percent of all eligible parents surveyed responded to the 2016 parent survey. This substantial decline in responses is consistent with a pattern of decline from 2011 to 2014. The increase in responses in 2015 appears to be the anomaly in this trend. The number of responses in 2016 is 75 percent of the 73,755 responses obtained in 2011.

2. An analysis of the respondents to the 2016 parent survey concluded that the survey 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. There were noticeable differences between two categories of respondents' education from 2015 to 2016; there was a 9.6 percent increase the percent of respondents who indicated that they had completed high school or obtained a GED, and an 11.2 percent decrease in the percent of respondents who indicated that they had earned an associate's degree. Despite this difference, there did not appear to be any difference in the income levels of respondents from 2015 to 2016.

3. The results of the 2016 parent survey demonstrate that parent satisfaction levels with the three characteristics measured - the learning environment and social and physical environment of their child's school—were consistent with the prior year's results. However, there was a substantial decline (12.7 percent) in the parents' perceptions of whether their child's teachers cared about their child as an individual. Not only did the percent who agree with this statement decline from 84.6 percent to 71.9 percent between 2015 and 2016, but the percent of parents who disagreed and the percent of parents who did not know increased more than 5 percent between 2015 and 2016. In other words, half of the decline in the percentage of parents who thought their child's teachers cared about their child is attributable to an increase in responses of "don't know".

4. Regarding parental involvement, parents report that their work schedule continues to be the greatest obstacle to their involvement with their child's learning in the school setting.

5. Regarding bullying, approximately 19 percent of parents reported that their child had been bullied, unchanged from 2015. When bullying occurred, parents most frequently reported that it occurred in the classroom (11.3 percent). The second most frequent location for bullying was on the school bus (8.8 percent), which is a change from 2015 when the second most frequent location was at some other location at school. In both 2015 and 2016, the two locations parents reported

the least amount of bullying were at sporting events and online or via texting, which were reported by fewer than 1 percent of parents in both years.

EOC members engaged in a discussion to determine how to improve the parent response rate. Ms. Weaver asked about efforts to improve parent response rates by administering the survey online. Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Tate conveyed their experience working to incentivize participation. Rep. Felder asked if there are parent survey forms written in Spanish for parents. EOC staff will follow up with the South Carolina Department of Education on this issue. Dr. Stockwell asked staff to look at analyzing the data by education level or by income area. EOC staff will follow up with information.

Finally, Mr. Robinson called upon Mrs. Barton to provide an update on the summer retreat and on passage of the accountability legislation. Mrs. Barton notified the EOC that Dr. Monique Chism, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education US Department of Education will attend the retreat on Monday. She will discuss the administration's goals for accountability and innovation. Mrs. Barton also updated the EOC on implementation of the new accountability system. Governor McMaster did sign over the weekend H.3969. The EOC staff hopes to have preliminary simulations for the EOC to review at its July retreat.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.