

# SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

## Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

June 13, 2022

**Members Present (in-person or remote):** Sen. Kevin Johnson; Neil Robinson; Dr. Patti Tate; Rep. Terry Alexander; Rep. Raye Felder; Dr. Brian Newsome; Dr. Bob Couch; Sidney Locke; Melanie Barton; Ellen Weaver; Sen. Dwight Loftis; Dr. David Mathis (representing Molly Spearman); Sen. Greg Hembree (remote); April Allen (remote); and Barbara Hairfield (remote)

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

**Guest(s) Present:** Dr. Jesulon Gibbs-Brown; Levon Kirkland; and David Wyatt

As the first order of business, Mr. Robinson called a vote for the approval of the minutes from the April 11, 2022 meeting. All voted in favor of approving. Next, Mr. Robinson congratulated Dr. Bob Couch, who was recently granted the Governor's Award for Excellence in Scientific Achievement.

Dr. Tate provided a summary of the Academic Standards & Assessments and Public Awareness joint subcommittee meeting held on June 16. Dr. Tate provided a summary of the presentations given and provided members with a summary of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) Report and the Military Connected Students Report. A summary of each can be found in the June 13 Topline (in the meeting packet) and full reports can be found at [www.eoc.sc.gov](http://www.eoc.sc.gov).

Ms. Barton then asked a question about Appendix A in the ECENC report, asking to clarify that the column "% Funded by ECENC" refers to the percent of the school population. Mr. Ferguson confirmed this. Mr. Robinson noted that it was interesting that a majority of the grants went to higher income families. Mr. Ferguson affirmed that this is the case, noting that this has been a consistent trend. Ms. Barton noted her opinion that this could be attributed to lower income parents not knowing how to apply.

Rep. Alexander stated that it is important to be intentional and make sure everyone has the opportunity to access ECENC funds. Sen. Johnson agreed, sharing that to make families aware, it will take extra work.

Mr. Robinson called a vote, with all members voting in favor of approving the report. Mr. Robinson asked if any members had questions about the Military Connected Students Report. No members did, and all voted in favor of approving the report.

Dr. Couch next provided a summary of the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms subcommittee meeting also held on April 11. Refer to the EIA minutes for more information or the topline of today's meeting. Ms. Felder asked a question about what the eight agencies in the teacher retention report are. Mr. Ferguson stated that this included universities with CAP, Bridge programs, CERRA, teacher loan, etc.

Ms. Barton stated that in the budget now, there is a study commissioned to examine systemic plans for how to address teacher retention. Mr. Robinson agreed for the need to address this and that the issue of fewer teachers in the pipeline is compounded with greater need for teachers.

Rep. Alexander questioned if CERRA is utilizing and looking at identifying diverse students, particularly at HBCUs. Additionally, he noted, many potential teachers don't continue to the profession because if they miss a single Praxis, they are out of it.

Dr. Mathis stated that there is an upcoming survey to examine how many school districts are interested in a "Grow Your Own" program. How can we help teachers get into the pipeline and guarantee a job? Ms. Weaver stated that Tennessee piloted a program to repurpose federal dollars for teacher recruitment.

Dr. Tate stated that Teacher Cadets is a great program to recruit. Charleston County School District offered a Teacher in Residency program, so first year teachers were matched with a mentor. Once students are in the classroom, they need the resources to make it a lifelong profession.

Dr. Mathis highlighted Tennessee's model for teacher retention, looking at a two-year model for apprenticeship that would provide the financial help needed to get through student teaching. Mr. Robinson stated that it looks like we are poised for a teacher salary increase, which may help as well. Mr. Ferguson stated that the EOC will continue to monitor the EIA budget changes.

Next, Mr. Robinson welcomed Dr. Jesulon Gibbs-Brown to present the Teacher Loan Report for FY2020-21. Dr. Gibbs-Brown began by outlining the corresponding statutory requirement and provided an outline of the Teacher Loan Program goals. A summary of the key findings can be found in the meeting materials, while the full report is available on the [EOC website](#). Dr. Gibbs-Brown noted that one difficulty in creating the report came in a difference between data from the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. At this time, work is being done to account for the difference in data. Dr. Gibbs-Brown opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Barton asked to clarify the number of applicants in 20-21, 1,250. Dr. Gibbs-Brown confirmed this number. Ms. Barton stated that this was a crisis, as there are more scholarships being distributed, but the numbers are still dropping precipitously. Mr. Robinson asked if students were just not aware of these scholarships. Dr. Gibbs-Brown stated the need to advertise availability to applicants early on.

Ms. Hairfield wondered about why 18-19 data is being used in some cases, noting that it would be helpful to see more recent data to look at possible changes due to COVID. Dr. Gibbs-Brown stated that in the cases where 18-19 data is being used, it is because this is the most recent data given to us and is the most current for outcomes. Part of the reason for a lack of recent data is due to issues with data sharing agreements between CHE and Department of Education, however, there are plans to update the report pending data updates.

Dr. Couch asked where these teachers are teaching, what geographic areas, what levels, and what subjects? Dr. Gibbs-Brown stated that this information is usually gathered through Department of Ed. Dr. Couch asked if teachers are mostly retiring from elementary or high school, noting that the retirement storm could hit South Carolina soon. Dr. Gibbs-Brown said that this question is one worth discussing with CERRA and that Dr. Gibbs-Brown and Mr. Ferguson had discussions with CERRA in preparation for this report. Mr. Ferguson stated that, for context, it is worth considering FTEs when looking at the number of vacancies. While there are approximately more 200 vacancies than in previous years, there are approximately 1200 more FTEs, probably created with nonrecurring federal COVID relief monies.

Mr. Robinson moved to approve the report, with Ms. Barton seconding. All voted in favor of approval.

Mr. Robinson then introduced David Wyatt from the SC Football Hall of Fame. Mr. Wyatt began by introducing the High School Football Hall of Fame, an effort to connect young men to charities and nonprofits. Their award grows every year, with a GPA requirement and necessary leadership. Mr. Wyatt stated that this project led them to look for a way to measure their goals. Mr. Wyatt introduced Mr. Levon Kirkland, who introduced himself and the Bridge Builders Program, a program with the goal of SC students reaching the top ten in College and Career Readiness by 2030 (College and Career Readiness as defined by *US News and World Report*).

Mr. Robinson thanked Mr. Wyatt and Mr. Kirkland and introduced Dr. May to provide a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment brief.

Dr. May highlighted the 4K/5K dashboard as a means to empower EOC members to answer questions. It is recommended to maintain the dashboard, as it currently has a shelf life. Staff are working on how to maintain the dashboard in order to determine for our state the impact that 4K has. Dr. May noted the significant difference between performance of the total population and those in poverty, noting that CERDEP appears to have a significant positive impact on kindergarten readiness. Dr. May then opened the floor to questions.

Mr. Robinson asked to clarify the number of total Kindergarteners, Dr. May stated that it was around 54,000. Mr. Robinson then asked how many students are in the program. Dr. May stated that around 34,000 Kindergartners are in poverty, but that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of pupils in poverty do not access CERDEP. However, those who do tend to fare much better. Ms. Barton stated that in 2019, 37% demonstrated readiness on KRA so the data does not show a huge drop, but we would like to see a higher percentage of readiness.

Sen. Johnson, returning to Mr. Wyatt's presentation, made a comment on the Bridge program. Sen. Johnson wanted to note that this Bridge program is a good reminder that young people aren't all doing bad, those who are doing well just don't necessarily receive the same level of attention. Mr. Robinson agreed with this, before introducing Dr. Mathis for an update from the Department of Education.

Dr. Mathis began by providing an update on content standards revision for ELA and math. The revision process for ELA standards is in its final stages and these standards should be out for public comment sometime in August. There is a significant trend towards focusing on the science of reading and foundational literacy skills. The process has begun for reviewing and revising math standards.

Spring interim assessment from Education Analytics will be available the week of June 20th. Fall and Winter interim data showed evidence of some recovery with less recovery in math than ELA. Several math interventions have begun with use of ESSER funds, including DreamBox Learning and Math Nation. ESSER II and III funds are allocated for a focus on the science of reading in schools with  $\frac{1}{3}$  or more of 3rd grade students scoring in Does Not Meet on SC READY ELA. K-3rd grade teachers receive the training.

Department of Education is also focusing on Multilingual Learners, with a new Multilingual Learner Program Data Management and Instruction Platform that will allow for streamlined transitions between grades and allow for more effective collaboration to meet the language development needs of MLs.

Tutoring services are available to students for free through a partnership with the SC State Library on Tutor.com. This allows students to receive tutoring in specific subjects, help with particular

lessons, and to receive feedback. Department of Ed is also partnering with SC CHE and SC Technical College System to increase dual credit and summer programs to reduce amount of remediation. ESSER III funds have been allocated to Virtual SC to hire more teachers and expand course offerings. Dr. Mathis then introduced Tonya Smith, Director of Emergency Programs, to expand on ESSER spending. For a breakdown of ESSER spending, visit the [ESSER funding dashboard developed by SCDE](#). Program monitoring will begin in fall.

Rep. Felder stated that she didn't see funding dedicated to learning loss in ESSER I, only 16% dedicated to learning loss in ESSER II, and no funding dedicated to learning loss in ESSER III. We know that children are behind, are we going to incentivize these districts with huge gaps in learning loss to be creative in using the funding?

Ms. Smith stated that for ESSER I, the funds came very quickly, but with ESSER III, there was time to slow things down. ESSER III required that 20% of all the funding to the districts had to be set aside for learning loss. Districts were asked to use that 20% to address their academic recovery plans.

Ms. Barton asked why districts aren't using ESSER II for learning loss now and are instead waiting. Rep. Felder stated that she is concerned that the money is not being used for learning loss and that we will be even farther behind after the summer. Ms. Smith stated that districts can use ESSER funding simultaneously, meaning that they do not have to wait for ESSER III in order to fund their learning loss programs. Dr. Mathis added that it will be a new day with the improved growth model. As we look at the data, districts will have to revise their plans based on the growth model.

Sen. Loftis asked to clarify that the money has not been spent in the areas addressed by Rep. Felder. Dr. Mathis stated that money could have been encumbered, but not drawn down. In the fall, we will see the spending reflected in their budget.

Ms. Barton asked if there were any restrictions on how many could be spent. Ms. Smith stated that districts are told everything must be used to prepare for, respond to, or prevent the spread of COVID. Dr. Mathis stated that there is an opportunity to do things differently now. Ms. Barton stated that this is the point, now SCDE has the money and there are no excuses. Dr. Mathis stated that at the same time, there is a caution, before you jump from something to something else, you must be sure that the change is working well. Dr. Mathis emphasized that this provides a new opportunity to affect Tier I instruction for every child. We will get further down the road if we make sure that with the funding we have, we have the best Tier I instruction for our students.

Rep. Alexander asked who will be responsible for the funding of new staff members once the funds expire. Ms. Smith stated that districts have been cautioned about the upcoming expiration and must work towards sustainability at the local level. Dr. Mathis stated that they are keeping this in mind as they are planning now. Rep. Alexander asked about development training for teachers, stating his hope that we can look at enhancing professional development for teachers. Dr. Mathis stated that with LETRS training, the timeline can be tailored and teachers are able to implement the training as they go.

Sen. Loftis asked when ELA standards were last revised. Dr. Mathis clarified that the last time instructional materials were bought for ELA was in 2012. Sen. Loftis asked about math standards. Dr. Mathis stated they are being revised now and may be ready for public review in late fall. Sen. Loftis asked about the basis for Geometry beginning earlier. Dr. Mathis stated that this was one of the EOC recommendations, citing studies out of other states. With Geometry, you can see the visual understanding of the math and then apply it to Algebra. Sen. Loftis clarified if this would help with Algebra, which Dr. Mathis confirmed. Sen. Loftis stated that more Algebra may be

required for Artificial Intelligence and other computer science fields. Dr. Mathis stated that early Geometry will help with the process of learning other courses and that this provides a good starting point. Dr. Couch asked if Dr. Mathis foresaw an integrated sequence of math, such as what is used in other countries. Dr. Mathis stated that we are not ready for that yet, but that eventually we may get there, this is a next step. Dr. Couch asked what the teachers' response was about application of mathematics. Dr. Mathis stated that we are starting with the end in mind; these are the standards necessary for postsecondary success, and working backwards from that. Dr. Couch noted that at Walhalla HS, those students who had completed engineering in middle school and applied math principles, performed much higher. Dr. Mathis agreed and noted a study done with Florida State showing the greatest indicator of success for ACT is preparation success in 5th grade.

Sen. Loftis stated that a few years ago, Arkansas did a presentation on computer science. They stated that they are doing the same things in Kindergarten, just at a lower level. Districts are looking for a model, a pathway, to help with math beginning early and following them through high school. Sen. Loftis asked how SC standards are aligned with national and regional standards. Dr. Mathis stated that our science standards are tightly aligned to national standards; in literacy, they are aligned, and as we are working through the math standards, we are looking to see how we compare to other states. Dr. Mathis stated that a past problem has been in having too many standards. It is important to lower the amount of standards so that teachers can dig deeper. Mr. Robinson thanked Dr. Mathis and asked Mr. Ferguson for an Executive Director update.

Mr. Ferguson thanked Dr. Gibbs-Brown and welcomed her students. The EOC will have its annual retreat from August 7-8 in Hartsville, South Carolina. Dr. Margarita Roza from Georgetown will present on school finance, and Mr. Rainwater will provide an update on the new funding model. Mr. Ferguson thanked the EOC. Mr. Robinson thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.