

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

February 10, 2020

Members Present: Ellen Weaver, Chair; Terry Alexander; April Allen; Neal Collins; Bob Couch, Rep. Raye Felder; Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Sen. Johnson; Brian Newsome; Katie Nigles (for Supt. Molly Spearman); Neil Robinson; John Stockwell; and Patti Tate

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. The minutes of the December 9, 2019, EOC meeting were seconded and approved. She asked Dr. D'Andrea to present the Report of State-Funded Full-Day 4K for fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The General Assembly first created and funded the Child Development Education Pilot Program by a budget proviso in Fiscal Year 2006-07. In 2014 the General Assembly codified the program in Act 284 and renamed it the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). CERDEP provides full-day early childhood education for at-risk children who are four years of age by September 1. In school year 2018-19, eligibility is defined as an annual family income of 185 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or Medicaid eligibility. Both public schools and non-public childcare centers licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) may participate in the program and serve eligible children. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) oversees implementation of CERDEP in public schools and South Carolina Office of First Steps to School Readiness (OFS) oversees implementation in non-public childcare settings, including private childcare centers and faith-based settings.

Dr. D'Andrea summarized the number of four-year-olds served in FY 2018-19. Essentially, SC is serving about 70% of four-year-olds in poverty in some capacity (CERDEP, Head Start, and Public Non CERDEP 4K). She also pointed out the amount of carry forward over time; the amount is down significantly in the current fiscal year.

Dr. Andrea went through all the findings and recommendations in the report. She stated there was increased cooperation between SCDE and OFS, and evidence of waiting lists begin shared between offices. There is great need to focus on creating alignment among assessments. Currently, there are three assessments given in 4K, and there is no alignment with the KRA or future assessments. She discussed the Framework for Comprehensive Systemic Approach to Reading, which she stated would be provided to members via email.

Dr. Fred Greer presented assessment findings from within the report. Dr. Greer stated that some of the 4K assessments had changed from the previous years, which presented challenges. For example, we are only able to compare two years of data from the Gold assessment. In general, Dr. Greer stated that children improved a great deal from the previous year. However, the three assessments are very different, so it is difficult to compare the results from test to test.

Mr. Robinson asked what the negative was for requiring the same test among classrooms. Dr. Greer stated that he couldn't think of a negative, especially since there is insufficient evidence to make comparisons.

Rep. Alexander asked if we are seeing differences in inner city, rural, suburban centers and schools. Dr. Greer stated that he has not seen those differences, but he said if we defined the differences, we could look for that.

Ms. Weaver asked if most private centers are in rural areas. The data are only aggregated statewide by test. We can't disaggregate data into a small section to make comparisons at this point.

Rep. Neal Collins asked which districts use what 4K assessment. Taylor from the SCDE stated that she could pull this together.

Dr. Couch asked how we evaluate the instructional strategies for students who learn differently; this is about instruction. This still goes back to how students are taught and how that matches up with how they learn best. Dr. D'Andrea stated that this is not a focus of this report, but this is being done by the SCDE and SC First Steps.

Ms. Weaver stated that she appreciated the focus on efficiency and effectiveness and the incredible deep dive on where we are as a state. A recent Brookings Report shows a fade out approach between K4 and 3rd grade. It is accepted across the board. She asked if we are being realistic in our expectations for 4K. Dr. D'Andrea stated that there is evidence where it has worked; the Perry Preschool Project is one such exemplar. Ms. Weaver stated she would like to see more of that data reflected in our report.

Rep. Alexander stated that once children leave PreK and leave the system, there is unevenness across the system. Once they leave, where are they going?

Sen. Hembree asked Dr. Greer if there is a test he would recommend. Dr. Greer said he would need to have more time; the research hasn't been done. From the perspective of a practitioner, Dr. D'Andrea wants to know what assessment will help teachers best demonstrate growth.

The EOC approved a motion made to approve the 4K Report.

Ms. Weaver asked Ms. Yow to update the EOC on the Cyclical Review process. Ms. Yow told members that the EOC is partnering with the SCDE and the Center for Assessment to accomplish a cyclical review pursuant to Section 59-18-910. The core group, composed of 12-15 individuals, will represent educators, parents, business people, and community members. The final Accountability Framework will be available in December 2020. Dr. Sockwell wanted to know how members would be able to provide feedback. Ms. Yow said that the EOC is developing a survey which will be sent to EOC members and other constituent groups.

Ms. Weaver then called upon Ms. Jeanette Altman, the Executive Director of The Continuum in Lake City. Ms. Altman presented along with Marion Fowler, President of the Darla Moore Foundation.

The idea for The Continuum began five years ago. Today, college is eleven times more expensive than it was 35 years ago, and we hold more student debt than credit card debt. Average student debt is approx. \$35,000. The group recognized that students lack the financial resources they need. Additionally, there are 70,000 jobs that aren't filled. The team felt it was vital to create an

educational system to effectively meet the needs of students and business. Partnering with Francis Marion University and Florence Darlington Tech College, the team created a regional education center with serious academic rigor, which is accessible and affordable. Ms. Altman said they wouldn't be there today without the expertise of Dr. Bethea, Dr. Carter, and Dr. Knight. They believe it is a template for a new model of education, an anchor to recruit industry and spur economic development. It is a change agent.

Rep. Felder said this is exciting and possibly something we will in future years duplicate across the state. Is there a model they put together for high school counselors to educate them on the available opportunities? Ms. Altman said they early on met with the guidance counselors and that shaped what they told them. Initial courses offered were related to the feedback they got from principals and counselors.

Mr. Robinson asked if all courses offered accepted as high school credit. Altman said it depends on the course. They work very closely with guidance counselors. It is up to the high school to see if it is dual credit. The tuition is paid from the public schools to the institutions. There is no charge to The Continuum.

Rep. Alexander thanked The Continuum for putting this together; it is a good example of how learning has changed.

Sen. Hembree asked about the cost to students. Dr. Carter said the cost is free to the student; they use funding formulas that school districts use. FMU structures these courses as contract courses. From the perspective of FMU, this is not a profit accruing venture. Most of these kids are first generation college-goers.

Members asked about scaling a model like this especially in areas where a district, tech school, and higher ed are co-located. Dr. Knight said the key is cooperation, collaboration and communication.

Ms. Weaver then called upon Dr. Harrison to report on the SC 4K Community Block Grants for Education Pilot Program Awardees. She shared with members the districts and the projects they are working on.

As a good of the order announcement, Ms. Weaver reminded members about the State Ethics Commission Filing for Committee Members

Ms. Weaver asked for a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of receiving recommendations from the Executive Director Search Subcommittee. The EOC moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of receiving and discussing these recommendations. The motion was seconded and passed. With the veil lifted, a motion was made to appoint Christopher Matthew Ferguson as the Executive Director of the EOC. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.