

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

August 9, 2021

Anderson Institute of Technology

Members Present: Dr. Bob Couch; Dr. Brian Newsome; Neil Robinson; Sidney Locke; Melanie Barton; Barbara Hairfield; Ellen Weaver; Rep. Raye Felder; Sen. Greg Hembree; Molly Spearman; Sen. Kevin Johnson; Dr. Patti Tate; Rep. Neal Collins; and Rep. Terry Alexander

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Matthew Ferguson; Dr. Jenny May; Dr. Matthew Lavery; and Dana Yow.

Guests Present: Dr. David Mathis; Dr. Lee D'Andrea; Diane Sigmon; Pierce McNair; and Sally Cauthen

August 9, 2021

At 9:00 a.m., Ms. Weaver called the meeting to order to begin student presentations. The minutes from the June 2021 full committee meeting were approved. Mr. Ferguson introduced the new Director of Evaluation, Jenny May. Staff from the Institute reviewed how to use the microphones.

Bob Couch welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the day and student presentations. He talked about building the confidence in students by building the students' ownership in their own learning and teachers acting as facilitators. The model is based on a Swiss model; students learn teamwork and each student has a gift/particular expertise and contributes to team success and group learning. All students at the Institute complete a capstone project and present a public presentation. They have hosted over 800 parents at five events. Every student who is a completer can be recognized and wear a sash at graduation with a diploma cover that acknowledges their program certificate as well, so all students are recognized for their accomplishments. The center opened in 2019 and their goal is to be full by 2024. During the pandemic, Dr. Couch attended a virtual course at MIT about artificial intelligence and the goal is to establish a statewide program for artificial intelligence with pilot sites and launch statewide within the next two years should full funding become available.

Dr. Couch introduced a panel of students: Jose, who wants to study mechanical engineering; Ian, who wants to go to a 2-year program then transfer to 4-year program to get a masters in a field he hasn't identified yet; Jonah, who wants to attend Clemson and study IT development; and Adelyn, who plans to go to Clemson for undergrad and medical school with ultimate plans to become a radiologist.

Jonah, Jose, and Ian discussed the details of the Universal Tire Mount they built, which can be attached to a car. They described the mechanics in detail with supplies used to build the device and how Computer Aided Design (CAD) was used to develop the concept. They described how unplanned developments and mistakes supported learning how to fix and troubleshoot. They learned the design could take 100 times more stress than they planned with weight and pull force. They attempted to make the product better than existing products by identifying limitations of other products and having a spring lock that will not interrupt doors and will eliminate the need to lift the tire to the mount. The students worked in the classroom, but also the machine shop and weld

shop, partnering with other students from AIT to develop. The product cost about \$105 to make, compared to \$400 from competitors' products. Sen. Hembree asked where to buy one, and Ian said they would be happy to sell the prototype.

Dr. Newsome asked about the conceptualization of this product. Jonah described using the decision matrix to determine the concept from all initial concepts. Superintendent Spearman asked about educational experience and how this experience has changed their individual career trajectories. Jose said the opened learning experience has more than doubled what he has learned. Real world experience with teachers as mentors and facilitators has been one of the greatest experiences. Ian is still deciding what he'd like to do with his career, and this opened up what he is aware of and exposed to so he can decide what he'd like to do. The freedom to accomplish a project and study with other peers was exciting.

Adelynn presented about compression force in augmented crutches. She described the research she did of the problem and her hypothesis that improved crutches could alleviate muscle strain. She completed an experimental design to collect data and followed safety and HIPPA guidelines with all patients being 5'7". Her data shows .96 lb. difference in compression due to augmented crutches. She is currently expanding research to other heights and also working on a provisional patent.

Dr. Couch provided a Strategic Planning Subcommittee process update. This is a major effort that requires significant collaboration between agencies. Mr. Ferguson added that positive first steps have been made toward accessing data and the Superintendent has been very open and helpful. Ms. Weaver thanked Dr. Couch for his leadership and opened the floor to the full committee for questions and discussion.

Rep. Alexander mentioned the question that had come up during the process of redefining the EOC's role. Ms. Weaver suggested that if we are moving more into programmatic efforts, those would need to originate in the legislature. The obligation currently comes from the General Assembly. Mr. Ferguson said that state law specifies that EOC is the body that sets the standards for schools in state and federal accountability. Rep. Alexander said we need to be sure we stay within the confines of what the Gen. Assembly said 20 years ago.

Superintendent Spearman said working through access to data and rebuilding trust with LEAs is important when talking about sharing data. Superintendent Spearman said that while we have made strides in accountability, we aren't seeing the student improvement we need. We are still not getting results we need while having tried our best. We need teacher prep programs and support of teachers and accountability system needs to be focused on continuous improvement. We rate schools on how they prepare children for careers and citizenship, but she wants to focus on that and how we improve teacher prep programs and continue to improve our accountability system. If they need to share more data, they will. We need to work together to make improvements. We're getting useful information from the Rally tool, but we're not there yet. We're finally at a place where we're getting to the nuts and bolts to work on teacher improvement, and we must help folks decide on curriculum.

Rep. Alexander said for 20 years we've been doing this and not getting different results so we're not doing something right. He believes it is EOC's responsibility to see what we can do to support every student and right now we spend a lot of money but it's not working as it should. He would like for our educational system to support all students. We need to use the public money better to

get different results. Ms. Weaver stressed the need to capitalize on the opportunity that exists with federal money.

Superintendent Spearman stated that the assessments must be correct. We have seen the problem of too many standards, so she will need support here. Focus is better.

Sen. Hembree said we have shifted grant money from EOC to the SCDE. He wanted to know if there is anything else that needs to be moved. Mr. Ferguson said we are open to that suggestion, but he doesn't think there is currently anything we've been charged with outside of our legislative mandate.

Superintendent Spearman said they are trying to really invest and not just spend money on the latest and greatest program---the focus is clearly teacher training, high quality materials and prioritizing our standards. Dr. Mathis said we have to get the assessments right. Superintendent Spearman said it is important to be honest about what's working and what's not.

Sen. Hembree said there's a perception that EOC is out of its lane and run amuck, but he says that is not a problem he sees. He would love to see if we can work on things that make a difference like teacher training and Read to Succeed. Superintendent Spearman agreed that the EOC is operating within its lane.

Sen. Hembree says he feels like districts believe they own their data; he finds that troubling, because it's the taxpayers' data. The public has paid for it.

Ms. Weaver believes there is a fundamental misunderstanding about what accountability is and we have a responsibility to children in this state and taxpayers for the money they invest in education. When she talks to groups about the EOC, she describes accountability like a scale; it measures and weighs you, but it's not going to eat healthy for you or work out. So, we can't hold the accountability system responsible for all other improvements, but we need it. We need to do a better job of recruiting high quality teachers. Student teaching should be a year and not a semester, and we need to recruit the brightest minds into teaching.

Ms. Hairfield, in speaking to teacher efficacy, said we're missing that in higher ed, and teacher prep programs haven't changed a lot. This is Charleston County's second year of teachers coming out with no student teaching. Teachers need ongoing training.

Rep. Alexander stated that the teaching profession is not as attractive because they don't get the support they need. He said we need a different way of looking at the profession, as well as effective collaboration. Ms. Hairfield agreed and wants to ensure teachers collaborate and learning continues. She asserted that no one likes accountability, but you can't be accountable to yourself. An external body who can look at things objectively is needed, and you can't be objective to your own stuff.

Mr. Robinson stated he has been here 16 years. He stated that EOC has not been as effective perhaps because we get too little info, and we get it late. If you look at objectives to clarify, realign and collaborate, it's all rooted in communication. For effective communication, we need to have it timely so that we're not behind. To innovate, he thinks our focus needs to be higher education and Prek-4. Mr. Robinson made a motion to approve the strategic plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

As the EOC reconvened, Ms. Weaver recognized Dr. Andrews and thanked him for 11 years of service. Dr. Kevin thanked everyone and recognized EOC staff for their talents and contributions. He stated that the task of the EOC is to provide accountability. We are inherently outsiders since accountability is not desired by most.

Dr. Andrews provided an overview of the Accountability System from 2018-19 and 2019-20. The purpose of the review is to identify strengths and limitations in schools to meet the Profile of the SC Graduate. It is also important to look at the system as a whole to see how it works together to provide a clear picture. He discussed the ratings history, changes in ratings from year to year, and limitations of the system.

Many items on the Profile of the Graduate are problematic from a measurement and implementation point of view. There is a subjective or teacher reflective measure and that's troubling as part of an accountability system. As we measure things year after year there will be people who learn to game the system and it will be problematic to obtain an authentic reliable measure.

He also discussed the differences existing in the law, which doesn't require the non-academic portions of the Profile to be measured in an accountability system; the language refers to offering opportunities to students. Dr. Andrews went on to discuss each of the indicators in the current accountability system, and how their weightings impacted ratings. He said he wanted to provide a reference for making revisions to the system.

Ms. Barton expressed concerned about coming out of the pandemic with potentially so many children in the lower level academically. Since there are no indicators that measure students before 3rd grade, that may be problematic. Many states are moving away from end of course tests, but she wants to know that when students graduate that they are ready for a career or freshman year.

Mr. Ferguson thanked Kevin for describing where we are; he said he wanted to provide a map for where we could go. He started with recommendations from the Accountability Advisory Committee. He reminded members it was important to translate this data and ensure that we can support schools in using this as part of a comprehensive continuous improvement system.

The timeline for accountability will shift us back to notifying schools during the summer about what we'll be measuring in the next year. This transition year to comply with our 3-year plan is important and we'll have three accountability manuals published for this year. Some highlights are the inclusion of the HS credential; dual credit enrollment; Cambridge in the weighting system; and replacement(s) for student engagement. Mr. Ferguson proposed to the committee that they take up 2 items at each subcommittee meeting. In December, the committee should be ready to vote in full committee on the recommendations after discussion. He mentioned headway being made in looking at a growth to proficiency model, and he also reminded the members that early childhood is an area where meaningful intervention must take place.

Sen. Hembree asked if we already had data from schools for 1st and 2nd graders. Mr. Ferguson said that the data that are reported out are self-reported and often don't align with data on the KRA. Dr. Mathis said there is a cut score provided to districts and while SCDE offers guidance, there is no real check since the data are self-reported by districts.

Mr. Ferguson also told the EOC that we now had an annual subscription to the National Student Clearinghouse. This year, we will look at the aggregate data, but we will soon be able to provide LEAs with individual data they can dig into.

Superintendent Spearman stated that she would like to see the arts and leadership development addressed in the system. She mentioned a program she learned about from John Maxwell.

Ms. Weaver thanked members, staff, and guests for their attendance. Members then toured the Institute.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.