

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting
April 28, 2014

Members in Attendance: Mr. David Whittemore (Chair); Dr. Danny Merck (Vice Chair); Mr. Phillip Bowers; Ms. Anne Bull; Sen. Mike Fair; Ms. Margaret Anne Gaffney; Mrs. Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Wes Hayes; Mr. Alex Martin; Sen. John Matthews; Rep. Andy Patrick; Rep. Roland Smith; Mr. John Warner; and Dr. Mick Zais.

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. He reminded the members of the EOC that South Carolina ETV was telecasting live the committee's proceedings. The House of Representatives, with support of ETV, has equipped several of the full committee rooms in the Blatt Building with the capability of being live-streamed. Working with the Clerk of the House, the EOC is now able to live-stream full committee meetings. Mr. Whittemore then congratulated Danny Merck on becoming the new superintendent of the Pickens County School District.

Mr. Whittemore asked if there were no objections that he wanted to amend the agenda to allow for two changes to the agenda. First, before the EOC takes up the high school biology standard, H.B.5, Senator Fair would like to make a brief presentation. And, second, the chairman and vice chairman of the EOC have asked the South Carolina Department of Education to update the EOC on where South Carolina standards are moving forward with a summative assessment of the new English language arts and mathematics standards for school year 2014-15. There being no objections to the two changes, the agenda was amended.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes of the February 10, 2014 as submitted. Senator Hayes moved to approve the minutes, and Rep. Smith seconded the motion. The minutes as submitted were approved.

Senator Fair presented a PowerPoint that focused on the theory of Darwinism as it relates to natural selection. Senator Fair referred to several scientific discoveries including the Big Bang Theory, heat wave ripples, and the Cambrian explosion that present alternative scientific explanations to macroevolution. Sen. Fair concluded by stating that his desire was that students in South Carolina understand the controversy over evolution with scientific data.

Senator Fair made a motion that the high school biology standard not be adopted and instead he proposed adding another student performance indicator, H. B.5C4 as noted below. Mr. Bowers second the motion. Discussion ensued.

H.B.5C.4. (NEW)

Construct scientific arguments that seem to support and scientific arguments that seem to discredit Darwinian natural selection

Mrs. Hairfield acknowledged that teachers should teach from multiple perspectives using scientific methodology and not religion or morals. Sen. Fair concurred stating that the proposed amendment does not include religion but a theory. Mr. Warner argued against the amendment. He agreed that science should always be critically analyzed but that until an alternative theory has been proven then teachers should teach the science. Rep. Patrick called the question. The

EOC voted by a vote of 7 to 4 to approve the amendment which will now be forwarded to the State Board of Education for its consideration.

Then, Dr. Nancy Busbee, Deputy Superintendent for the Division of Accountability at the South Carolina Department of Education, presented information on the 2014-15 assessment issues facing the state. Dr. Busbee chronicled the actions taken by the State Board of Education in 2012 to join the Smarter Balanced Consortium and recent action by the State Superintendent of Education to withdraw from the Smarter Balanced Consortium. Dr. Busbee discussed the steps that would be taken to process a request for proposal (RFP) to secure assessments for 2014-15. The agency has asked that the chair of the State Board and the EOC appoint two members from each entity to assist in developing the RFP and one member from each to serve on the committee to review the proposals received. Dr. Busbee concluded by discussing Act 155 of 2014 and H.3893 which was still being debated in the General Assembly.

EOC members including Sen. Hayes, Sen. Matthews and Rep. Patrick asked questions about the timeline, the impact of the decision to leave Smarter Balanced on the field tests, and the future of the Smarter Balanced Assessment. EOC members expressed support that the current standards in English language arts and mathematics, which are college and career ready standards and which are to be implemented fully in school year 2014-15, must continue to be implemented and assessed.

Subcommittee reports were then received.

Dr. Merck reported for the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee on the completion of the cyclical review of the accountability system. Because the report is a recommendation of the subcommittee, it did not require a second. Discussion of the report then ensued. Mr. Warner noted that the report in its final form was much better than what was originally stated. He cautioned the committee that there are very challenging statements in the report that will require bold and transformative actions to implement. The Committee approved the report with Mr. Warner asking to be reported as voting no.

Mrs. Barton provided an update on the Fiscal Year 2014-15 appropriation bill which is still being considered and debated by the Senate Finance Committee.

Mrs. Hairfield reported for the Public Awareness Subcommittee on the 2014-15 communications plan for the agency. The plan to engage the media, parents, educators, legislators and business in education improvement was approved. Mrs. Hairfield noted that the EOC will collaborate with South Carolina ETV to document summer reading camps this summer. The plan was approved. The parent survey report for 2013 was also provided to the full EOC.

Finally, Mrs. Hairfield reported on the recommendations of the P-20 Reading Initiative which had been reviewed and approved by the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee. Mr. Warner spoke against the recommendations, expressing his belief that the recommendations were too prescriptive for teachers. Sen. Matthews countered that expanding the knowledge-base of teachers should not be confused with being too prescriptive or bureaucratic. The report passed with Mr. Warner asking to be recorded as voting no.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.