

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Full Committee Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting
August 11-12, 2025

Members Present: Tammy Achziger, Representative Terry Alexander, April Allen, Russell Baxley, Representative Neal Collins, Representative Bill Hager, Barbara Hairfield, Sidney Locke, Dr. Brian Newsome, Melissa Pender, Dr. Patty Tate, Senator Ross Turner

Special Guests: SCETV Chief Learning Officer Dr. Salandra Bowman, Beaufort County School Superintendent Dr. Frank Rodriguez, Beaufort Memorial Hospital Education Director Joy Solomon, SC Superintendent Ellen Weaver, Darla Moore School of Business Professor, Dr. Patrick Wright

EOC Staff Present: Tenell Felder, Amina Asghar, Gabrielle Fulton, Crystal Garcia, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May, Dana Yow

EOC chair April Allen opened the August 10th full committee meeting and called forward Beaufort County Schools Superintendent Dr. Frank Rodriguez for opening remarks.

Following Dr. Rodriguez's opening remarks, Allen asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the June full committee meeting. Once minutes were approved, SC Superintendent Ellen Weaver was introduced to provide updates from the SC Department of Education, which included the department's strategic plan.

Following this, Allen called forward Dr. Patrick Wright to present "*Can strategies in corporate culture assist in school improvement efforts.*" During his presentation, Dr. Wright reviewed what culture was, why it is important and how it could be managed. In his discussion on managing culture, Dr. Wright reviewed the significance of differentiation, the power of narrative, the value of alignment, reinforcement of sales, importance of rewards/recognition, and the criticality of redundancy.

Following this, questions were accepted from committee members.

Representative Alexander stated that he believed that education was stuck in a culture where low outcomes were expected from students who were in a low economic status. He stated that that culture needed to be challenged.

Superintendent Weaver stated that literacy was the great equalizer in helping all students to reach their potential and to be lifelong learners.

Following this discussion, committee member Sydney Locke came forward to lead a Question-and-Answer session with committee members.

During this session, members spoke about the challenge of students matriculating with the skills needed for local businesses. Superintendent Weaver noted that the feedback she received from businesses indicated that students were not adequately prepared in the workforce. EOC member Barbara Hairfield agreed with this stating that business leaders had high expectations with the development of the SC Profile of a Graduate, yet that it seemed like those expectations were not being met.

The conversation also turned to the need for recognition for schools and districts that are doing well and/or showing improvement. Allen suggested that positive storytelling be instituted to highlight improvements

At the conclusion of the conversation, Dr. Wright stated that he saw an opportunity to help students build their resiliency and skills and emphasized the need to tell stories with data.

Next, Allen gave the chair update and asked committee members to verify their contact information. Clarifications were also made to upcoming meeting dates.

Following this, EOC Executive Director Dana Yow provided members with an update on ongoing projects which included the new stackable credential system, the upcoming report card release, the Beating the Odds Investigative Study and the Be Present S.C. public awareness campaign.

Yow also informed committee members of upcoming projects which included approval of SC READY science and ELA assessments and the English 2 End of Course exam, and the Launch Years partnership which Yow said would be expounded on later.

Next, Yow informed committee members of the recent hiring of EOC Operations Manager Crystal Garcia and reviewed what her duties would be.

Following this, the meeting was adjourned.

On August 11th, EOC Chair April Allen opened the meeting and called forward EOC Director of Qualitative Research and Stakeholder Engagement Dr. Jenny May to discuss the Beating the Odds Investigative Study.

Dr. May reviewed why the study was being done, the criteria for schools to be selected for the study, and the methods used for focus group interviews.

The main characteristics found in Beating the Odds Investigative Study schools are as follows: strong central leadership, high expectations, effective teachers/strong tier one instruction, consistent use of data, a family-like school culture and community culture.

Dr. May reviewed each theme, providing examples for each that were observed in the partner schools.

Next, Dr. May presented the connections that the Beating the Odds study had with other similar research which included the 8 Critical Elements of Organizational Life, 5Essentials, Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty and, Visible Learning.

For next steps, Dr. May suggested that the strategies found in the current Beating the Odds Investigative Study Schools be piloted in similar schools and studies over a three-year period. It was also suggested that the data be used to study the middle school achievement of students who attended Beating the Odds Investigative Study elementary schools.

Following this presentation, Honea Path Elementary Principal Jeremy Sauceman, Former Kelly Edwards Elementary Principal Monique Smalls, Kershaw Elementary Principal Kelli Overcash, Latta Elementary principal Dollie Morrell and Merrywood Elementary Principal Brian Perrin participated in a principal panel facilitated by SCETV Chief Learning Officer Dr. Salandra Bowman.

The principals' schools were BTOIS participants and provided insight on how their school produced high student achievement in conjunction with having a high poverty ratio.

Principals also discussed the importance of establishing a culture of high expectations, accountability and teacher support.

Following the panel, EOC Communications Manager Tenell Felder was called forward to present on Be Present S.C.

Felder reviewed the campaign's purpose and kickoff date. She also showed examples of Be Present S.C. messaging from around the state and reviewed the schools that were participating in the campaign thus far.

Felder discussed next steps for the campaign which included a Be Present S.C. Essay contest, library partnerships, and another messaging mail scheduled installation for January.

Following this, questions were accepted. Superintendent Weaver suggested that the messaging focus on the positive aspects of school attendance and that the Be Present campaign partner with the department's Hope Network schools.

Next, EOC Executive Director Dana Yow came forward to present on the Launch Years partnership with the University of South Carolina.

Due to USC's Columbia campus experiencing a significant increase of students placed into lower-level math courses, the EOC worked with the university to institute summer JAM (Jump Ahead in Math). The six-week course is designed to prepare students for postsecondary math classes.

Following this, EOC member Russell Baxley and Beaufort Memorial Hospital Education Director Joy Solomon gave committee members a presentation on the hospital's People Achieving Their Highest Program. Following the presentation, members were given a tour of the education labs of Beaufort Memorial Hospital.