

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Full Committee Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting
June 9, 2025

Members Present (in-person or remote): April Allen, Melanie Barton, Representative Neal Collins, Dr. Bob Couch, Representative Bill Hager, Barbara Hairfield, Sidney Locke, Melissa Pender, Dr. Patty Tate, Senator Ross Turner

Special Guests: Heather Bolinger, Tracey Davenport, Dr. Abbey Duggins, Dr. Matthew Madison

EOC Staff Present: Tenell Felder, Gabrielle Fulton, Hope Johnson-Jones, Dr. Rainey Knight, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May, Dana Yow

EOC member Barbara Hairfield opened the meeting and asked for a motion to approve minutes from the April 14, 2025 full committee meeting. After a motion was given by Senator Ross Turner, the meeting minutes were approved. Hairfield then asked EOC Executive Director Dana Yow to read the Academic Standards and Assessments (ASA) subcommittee report from the May 19, 2025 meeting as the first action item.

Yow informed the committee that the ASA subcommittee took action to approve the South Carolina Tiered Credential System for use in the upcoming school year and for its integration into the accountability system.

Yow then presented to the full committee an overview of the Tiered Credential System. She informed them the subcommittee received reports on the proposed system and were able to ask questions about the system to Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) staff as well as to the State Department of Education. Yow informed the committee that the current system was an equal weight credential system, and that districts and schools would be able to transition into the new tiered system during the 2025-26 school year, with full implementation not taking place until the 2027-28 school year. She also emphasized the importance of making sure that credentials provided credential currency – real employment values that align with labor market demands and workforce priorities.

Next, Yow reviewed the tier descriptors and how credentials would be organized under the new system. Calling committee members' attention to their meeting packet, Yow stated that credentials highlighted with red were "low use" credentials meaning that they had been used by students less than 50 times in the last five years. She also noted that there were approximately 512 credentials on the list.

Students who entered high school prior to the 2024-25 school year will meet their career ready status under the current system. Tenth graders for the 2025-26 school year will be the first class under the new system for their high school career.

In contrast with the equal weight system where only one credential is required, students will have to earn at least three points under the new system in one of the following three combinations:

- One Tier 3 credential aligned with their career cluster.
- A combination of one Tier 2 and one Tier 1 credential within the same career pathway.
- A Universal Credential (e.g., OSHA 10) paired with a Tier 2 or higher credential within the student's career cluster.

Yow also clarified that for a student to receive their career ready designation, the credentials must align with the student's designated program of study and career cluster.

For the final approval process, Yow explained that all tier placements and TAC recommendations will have to be finalized by Oct. 1. The ASA subcommittee will then review and vote on the list in November and will send the list to the full EOC for approval during the December meeting.

At the conclusion of the presentation, ASA subcommittee chair Dr. Tate informed the committee that the ASA subcommittee unanimously approved the tiered credential system. Questions were then accepted.

Melanie Barton asked for clarification on who would be making the submissions on Oct 1. Yow replied that it was an evolving process that would have to come before the S.C. Department of Education. She stated that the department had created a form that districts could use to submit recommendations and that the window for accepting those would close on Oct. 1.

Barton then asked if Yow could verify that the system was being implemented so that South Carolina public school students would leave high school with employable credentials for high quality jobs with future career options. Yow confirmed that this was the reasoning behind the new system being implemented

Next, Dr. Couch asked for clarification of how many certifications students would need to get to be considered career ready.

Yow clarified that one certification would fulfill the requirement with the following conditions: it must be a Tier 3 certification, the student must have a combination of a Tier one and Tier two

certification, and the student must have completed their career pathway in addition to the first two conditions.

Barton then asked how the Tier designations were determined.

Yow clarified that the EOC along with the SREB and SC Department of Education looked at business and industry requirements internally along with convening with individual TACs.

Following this there were no further questions. Hairfield asked all in favor of approving the tiered credential system to vote for such. The tiered credential system was passed unanimously.

Dr. Tate then informed the committee that the ASA subcommittee received an evaluation of the Biology I End of Course exam with K-12 Assessment Solutions at the University of Georgia. This evaluation was carried out pursuant to section 59-18-320 of the South Carolina Code of Laws for the EOC to review the state assessment program and course assessments for alignment with state stands, level of difficulty and validity. Due to questions that emerged during the presentation at May's ASA subcommittee meeting – no action was taken.

EOC Deputy Director Dr. Matthew Lavery then provided an overview of the assessment noting that a similar review of ELA, English 2 and two other science tests would also be reviewed once those scores were collected. He then turned the presentation over to K-12 Assessment Solutions Co-Director Heather Bolinger to present the evaluation of the biology exam. Bolinger stated that the review included a blueprint analysis, content alignment, a depth of knowledge review, a psychometric evaluation, and the performance classification analysis.

In terms of the test blueprint, Bolinger reported that the EOCEP Biology 1 test blueprint reflected a subset of 2021 SC standards with generally balanced coverage, but that the terminology and categorization differ slightly between the blueprint and the curriculum. It was suggested that this could be refined for clarity. Recommendations also included adding standards to further improve balance across reporting categories and to increase DOK Level 3 items to improve assessment of higher order skills. It was also recommended to revise flagged items in the item validity and alignment review.

Next, Department of Educational Psychology assistant professor Dr. Matthew Madison was introduced to discuss Psychometric Quality and Fairness. He reported that the analyses indicated high quality items and appropriate difficulty, strong reliability and that item comparisons showed negligible bias. They recommended continuing monitoring fairness, considering more flexible IRT models and considering CFA for internal structure validation.

Next, Dr. Madison discussed their review of the Performance Level Classification. Recommendations for this included to add items near cut scores and to explore classification-supportive models.

Following this, questions were accepted.

Barton asked if the Biology I exam was only taken on a computer.

Dr. Lavery confirmed that the exam was primarily and almost exclusively computer based as 99% of students took the exam on a computer while a small population of students could take the test on paper as an accommodation.

As a follow up, Barton then asked how many items on the test were technology enhanced to allow them to analyze data.

Bolinger replied that of the 60 items on the test, 13 were technology enhanced items. Of these 13 items, 3 were field test items and the other 10 were operational items.

Following this presentation, Yow informed the committee that Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Abbey Duggins would respond to the SCDE Biology I evaluation on behalf of the department.

Barton then asked Dr. Lavery to confirm that the test they were looking at was valid and reliable without bias. She expressed that her concern was that the test that was administered this year would be used for accountability before the EOC approved it. She stated the EOC needs to get the process better aligned because it would make a difference to educators – noting it was fortunate the test was found to be reliable since it has to be administered before approval.

Dr. Ferguson replied that he had spoken with EOC Executive Director Dana Yow about the matter – saying the timing of approval for the test could not be helped because it interfered with school report cards.

Yow stated that in a conversation with the University of Georgia, it was determined once science results were received from the department there could be a quick turnaround of one to two weeks. Yow also acknowledged that it was a process.

Barton agreed and responded that two field tests were used previously. She also mentioned that math testing had a high likelihood of possibly requiring changes and urged the committee to keep that in mind. She asked the committee to consider working closer with the Department of Education to resolve the matter as she believed it would benefit educators.

Hairfield stated that the ASA subcommittee had many questions about the Biology I end of course exam because of confusion around the test's blueprint.

Yow then reminded committee members that the present discussion was about approving UGA's evaluation, not the test itself.

Dr. Duggins was then called to provide the SCDE's response to the Biology I exam acknowledging that there was some confusion at the ASA subcommittee meeting that she hoped to provide clarity on. She stated that the SCDE agreed with the report's clarification. She then addressed that a double alignment of items presented by Bollinger led to an accounting error with the SCDE's assessment contractor. Therefore, the biology form 420 D used in the review was constructed based on a correct alignment. She stated that this was a point of clarification that should have been made when the subcommittee met in May.

Duggins then stated that there were two other items in question. For the first, she stated that the office of assessment and standards was in agreement with the testing contractor about having a two-dimensional alignment and aligning with performance expectations. Dr. Duggins clarified that the Office of Assessment and Standards at the State Department of Education agreed the form is valid for all intended uses and apologized for the confusion in the subcommittee meeting. Dr. Duggins then stated that the department was working internally to strengthen their processes to ensure communication both internally and with the testing contractor would be more seamless.

Hairfield thanked Dr. Duggins for her response then asked if the alignment she mentioned addressed the blueprint to which she replied that it did.

As there were no additional questions, a vote was taken to approve the University of Georgia's report. The motion carried.

Next, Dr. Tate informed the committee that the ASA subcommittee also received the 2025 report on the Educational Performance of Military Connected Children from Dana Yow. She stated the report is a requirement of Act 289- the Military Family Quality of Life and Advancement Act. Part five of the act requires the EOC develop a report on the educational performance of military connected children. The report recommended South Carolina school districts should require the collection of military-connected data during school enrollment procedures, and that the data should be populated into the student information system. Dr. Tate also mentioned that the EOC should partner with the South Carolina Department of Veteran Affairs to include a data visualization dashboard on military connected students.

Following this update, Hairfield called forward EOC Director of Qualitative Research & Stakeholder Engagement Dr. Jenny May to discuss the EOC's report on the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children program.

Dr. May stated that the ECENC program is not funded through taxes but through donations and also clarified that the EOC's role is to approve schools for the program. In general, the Lowcountry region has the most schools approved for the program at 39 schools. Dr. May also pointed out that the average amount per student to participate in the program has increased over the past two school years. Another notable trend is that the percentage of ECENC funded students in each grade also increased from the 2022-23 to 2023-24 school year.

The following recommendations were presented in the report:

- To offer summative assessments to ECENC students who attend public schools. This would provide qualitative data to help determine the effectiveness of the ECENC program for students.
- To reconvene the Advisory Committee for the purposes of confirming processes for communication and collaboration on ECENC work and to advise EOC staff on a process to consider school approval when there is a special circumstance or a discrepancy about services offered.
- To consider communication about the ECENC Program and other scholarship programs offered by the state.

At the conclusion of the presentation, questions were accepted.

Barton suggested that the committee consider looking at school level data for assessments, rather than just grade level data, to help measure the program's success.

Melissa Pender then asked Dr. May to confirm if students needed to be tested in public schools. Dr. May clarified that students could be presented with the option to be tested in a way that is compliant with assessment rules. Yow also clarified that it had to do with test security, which was currently not allowable.

Following this, Hairfield asked if there were any additional questions for Dr. May. Seeing none, a motion was presented to approve the ECENC report. The report approval passed.

Hairfield then commented that there were two clarifications that the committee had for Dr. Duggins. The first clarification was asking if the committee had one month to hear from the

department on how the concerns on the Biology I end of course exam would be addressed. Dr. Ferguson responded that he believed the department would have to respond in writing 30 days once the motion was approved. Hairfield then asked if the committee could get a date on when science tests for 4th and 6th grades would be ready to go to UGA for their assessment.

Dr. Duggins replied that the superintendent had a meeting for June 17th and that to her understanding, the scores would be ready then. Dr. Ferguson commented that he believed the scores would be provided later in July as the scores would need to be processed through DRC.

Yow also stated that the EOC would have a meeting with the department to help mitigate issues.

Pender asked for a clarification if the 4th and 6th grade scores would count towards accountability to which Dr. Ferguson replied that they were currently in the accountability manual to count for the current school year. Pender then asked what would happen if UGA came back and reported that the test was not valid. Dr. Ferguson replied that he did not expect that the assessment would not be unreliable.

Melanie Barton then asked if the UGA assessments were used to get the US Department of Education to approve the test. Dr. Ferguson responded he would have to get back to her with that answer.

Following this, Dr. Bob Couch was asked to update the committee on the EIA Budget. Dr. Couch informed the committee that a majority of the committee's recommendations passed, then called on Yow to provide the detailed review. Yow then provided an overview of the EOC's recommendations noting the recommendations that passed and those that did not. She noted the EOC's recommendation to decrease by \$1.4 million the South Carolina State University Bridge Program and reallocating those funds to Call Me Mister was passed. In addition, the committee's recommendation to allocate \$6 million to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library was accepted. She then reviewed the proviso recommendations, noting that all provisos passed with exception of the proviso to reinstate social studies testing.

Following this, Yow provided an update in the 2025 Retreat for August 10-11th asking members to confirm their attendance.

Yow then recognized Dr. Ferguson's new position acceptance as the superintendent of Darlington School District. She expressed gratitude to Dr. Ferguson's service to South Carolina's education system. She also recognized Dr. Couch who served on the EOC since January 2015. Yow thanked Dr. Couch for his ten years of service to the committee.

After thanking the committee for the recognition. Dr. Couch provided a report to the committee on the nomination committee to nominate April Allen and Dr. Newsome to serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the committee.

After the motion carried, the meeting was adjourned.