

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
September 26, 2012
2 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Ms. Betsy Beamer, vice chair of the committee, convened the meeting with the following Board members present: Mrs. Diane Atkinson, Mrs. Darlene Mack, Mr. Rob Krupicka, Mrs. Winsome Sears, Mr. David Foster, Dr. Billy Cannaday, Dr. Virginia McLaughlin, and Mr. Chris Braunlich. Dr. Patricia Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Dr. Patricia Wright made introductory remarks and stated that Dr. Linda Wallinger would make the initial presentation. She also indicated that several school boards would be calling in today for discussion of their agenda items. The agenda items discussed today are scheduled for review at tomorrow's Board of Education (BOE) meeting.

The [first agenda item](#) was discussion of the proposed amendment to Virginia's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) on June 29, 2012. Dr. Wright indicated that at tomorrow's meeting the Board would consider for first review a proposal to revise the methodology for calculating the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) under the NCLB Flexibility Plan. That proposal for an alternate methodology is for the accountability year 2013-2014 based on the 2012-2013 test results. This proposal requires all schools and all school divisions to meet or exceed the same passing rate AMO, but the key feature is that the same AMO in Year 6 will be expected of all students in the aggregate and all student subgroups. The proposal keeps all of the starting points for Year 1 the same. The starting points were calculated based on actual data for students at the 20th percentile – data that was reported several weeks ago. The Year 6 goal would be the same for all subgroups, 73, an AMO and a minimum pass rate expectation. All schools are expected either to meet the minimum pass rate or the previous year's pass rate, whichever is higher. The rules say we must have AMOs by subgroup, the targets must be set annually, they have to be equal in increments from Year 1 to Year 6, and the greatest gains expected have to be made with the lowest performing subgroups. In the letter from USED, staff there re-affirmed that they had approved the application June 29 and they stand by the methodology as being sound. The difference is that we now have the new mathematics test scores and we are leading the nation in implementing the college and career ready standards and assessing those standards. When we received the data, we looked at it and realized that the methodology that we chose and USED approved did not fit the model for the new mathematics test scores. Therefore, Dr. Wright asked the BOE to consider an alternate methodology.

Dr. Wallinger then proceeded with her presentation. She started by providing an overview:

- When NCLB was due for reauthorization in 2007, Congress did not complete that process.
- In the summer of 2011, the Secretary of Education announced that flexibility would be offered to states in the form of waivers under certain conditions.
- In August 2011, Governor McDonnell sent a letter to the Secretary of Education regarding the flaws in the federal accountability requirements because it was misidentifying schools that were high performing.
- In September 2011, the USED spelled out requirements for the waiver and later that month the BOE was provided information about that application.
- In January and February 2012 the Board worked on the proposed application and it was approved in February. We received feedback in April from USED about the state's application. Virginia agreed at that time to establish a methodology that we thought would produce increased AMOs. However, the department had no assessment data at that point. A draft proposal was submitted to USED in May and USED indicated that it would be acceptable.
- In May the BOE approved the application and on June 29, 2012, USED indicated that the application was approved.
- On August 24, 2012, USED contacted Dr. Wright because of concerns about the targets. While there was praise regarding college and career ready mathematics assessments, the letter also indicated that they did not produce aggressive enough targets.

Dr. Wallinger then went through the [PowerPoint presentation](#) and explained the revised AMOs based on the proposed alternate methodology. She referenced the [letter](#) received on August 29, 2012 from USED. In the letter, USED acknowledged that it had approved the initial methodology, but indicated that once the data was inserted into the methodology, it did not produce aggressive enough targets. USED agreed to work with Virginia in resolving these issues. Dr. Wright is now proposing a methodology to consider establishing AMOs for 2013-2014 through 2017-2018 specifically for mathematics, but also for English next year. Schools have already received preliminary notice of their status.

Dr. Wallinger asked if any of the BOE members had any questions as she went through the presentation. A BOE member raised a concern about the response of the Black Caucus to the initial changes. The BOE member said when Dr. Wright mentioned this issue to the BOE members, they saw that Black children were learning at a different rate and this has been mentioned constantly. BOE members asked the same questions and asked how they could increase this number. The BOE member asked what would happen when the students do not meet the expectation. Dr. Wallinger said interventions and supports will be provided to the schools. USED asked the state to identify Priority Schools (36) and Focus Schools (72). Priority Schools will be asked to hire a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) and implement one of four improvement models. The Focus Schools must contract with a VDOE-approved coach to assist with interventions as determined through a needs assessment and a school improvement

planning process. There are other schools that will be required to develop an improvement plan to increase the academic achievement of any subgroup that needs focus.

Dr. Wright stated that at the end of the day what matters most is what happens in the classroom that will make a difference in closing the achievement gap. The Office of School Improvement is already working with these schools. Every school not meeting the objectives will have to develop a focused improvement plan. Resources will always be an issue, but funding will need to be much more targeted now.

A BOE member indicated that he concurred in that children will not move forward without the right level of support. Some schools are not taking Title I funds. He asked what is being done to see that school improvement plans get down to the classroom and student level. How are we driving the focus on each child? What is being done when we know certain interventions are necessary, but there is a lack of resources? Dr. Wright responded with information about NCLB expectations. The requirement of the flexibility is that the states target the greatest assistance on the lowest performing Title I schools. The state only has so much capacity to intervene in local school divisions. In Virginia, the day-to-day operations of school divisions rest with the local school board. The plan focuses on the lowest performing Title I schools first. The funding is for Title I schools. Non-Title I schools still have to have school improvement plans. Many of these non-Title I schools struggling to meet the objectives will also be struggling to meet accreditation ratings. School divisions are responsible for the other schools. There is no state capacity to monitor at the school level or classroom level for non-Title I schools that may not be meeting the AMOs. The department will issue guidance on this.

A BOE member responded to this discussion by indicating that he appreciated the other member's comments regarding the letter from the Black Caucus. Somehow the methodology was not clearly communicated. The right questions are being asked now and he believes much of the responsibility has to come back to the local division. There also will have to be a discussion of resources. They have reached out to better explain what this is about and how it reflects high expectations.

Another BOE member raised several issues. He hopes they use their positions in a way that can be understood. Had they chosen not to raise expectations to college ready particularly for math, we would not be having this conversation. We chose to think about what children need moving forward because the expectation is higher and rigor does not adequately define it. A report regarding the needs and conditions of schools is sent to the General Assembly in November and the BOE needs to be explicit about what the needs are, the gravity of the need, and why it is different now. The Standards of Quality (SOQ) is not about just more money. It is about targeted resources and how the BOE creates a set of recommendations with a balanced set of responsibilities and accountability for resourcing this need. The state has a responsibility and so do localities. The BOE can have conversations around the SOQ with the community and associations on what should be the guiding questions about reviewing the SOQ and how we use the SOQ funding more appropriately.

Dr. McLaughlin reminded everyone of the following. The Standards of Accreditation states that a school shall be rated *Accreditation Denied* based on its academic performance and its failure to achieve the minimum threshold for the graduation and completion index required to be rated *Fully Accredited* or *Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate* for the preceding three consecutive years or for the three consecutive years anytime thereafter. Moreover, as an alternative to the memorandum of understanding required for schools rated *Accreditation Denied*, a local school board may choose to reconstitute the school and apply to the BOE for a rating of *Conditionally Accredited*.

At this point Dr. Kathleen Smith, director of the office of school improvement, presented four additional items to be introduced at tomorrow's BOE meeting from the following localities: [Norfolk City School Board for William H. Ruffner Academy Middle School](#), [Norfolk City School Board for Lindenwood Elementary and Northampton County School Board for Kiptopeke Elementary](#), [Albemarle County School Board for Murray High School](#), and [Alexandria City School Board for Jefferson-Houston Elementary School](#).

Dr. Smith stated that Norfolk City would be joining the meeting remotely and introduced Norfolk's first agenda [item](#). Norfolk staff members present remotely were Dr. Samuel King, superintendent for Norfolk City Public Schools; Dr. Sharon Byrdsong, executive director of secondary schools; Dr. L'Tanya Simmons, deputy for operations and school leadership; Dr. Linda Sevigny, deputy for teaching and learning; Lillian Thomas, internal Lead Partner; Carolyn Taylor, executive director for elementary schools; and Dr. Christine Harris, director of instruction, academic affairs, and accountability. Norfolk City Public Schools requested a rating of *Conditionally Accredited* for William H. Ruffner Academy Middle School. This is the fourth year of this school's rating as *Accredited with Warning*. In the past the school has continued to be warned in mathematics and history. The school has been identified as a persistently low-achieving school and is in the third consecutive year of receiving grant funds. Johns Hopkins University is its LTP. A new principal, who has several years of middle school experience, was hired this year. A new assistant principal has also been assigned to the school and other staffing changes were also made this year which is the last year of the school improvement grant. The school continues to meet the definition of reconstitution. The Office of School Improvement has been following this school very closely.

Dr. Smith asked if the BOE members had any questions. A member asked about the school's English scores as there seemed to be a discrepancy. Dr. Smith said the data in the letter in the [item package](#) (Attachment A) may not match the data that we have because that data is more recent. This member also asked about the school's demographics. Dr. King stated that the school's population for Free and Reduced Lunch is around 81%. The school has 748 students, of which 632 are African-American, 56 are white, 31 are multiracial, and 29 are in other subgroups. A member asked if there is a significant English language learner population, but Dr. King responded no. Dr. King indicated that he was also new in his position and they are in the process of developing a strategic plan. Dr. Smith also stated that this school is not *Accredited with Warning* in English. Another member stated that school accreditation was denied for the school year 2012-2013 and asked what that meant. Dr. Smith stated

that if this request is not granted and the school moved into denied status, then a Memorandum of Understanding would have to be developed with the BOE and it would include the school's corrective action plan and a plan for how that school would be monitored by this department. A member asked if they continue to have all of the previous teachers, but Dr. Smith said 1/3 of the staff has been replaced. The member also asked where these teachers went. Some of them were on performance plans. Some resigned. Some are still in the division. The member asked where most of them went. Norfolk did not have this information at this point. Dr. Smith said the department looked at the current teacher evaluation system and the previous system as part of the grant and they found that it was a very good system that aligned with the state system. When asked about the teacher/student ratio, Dr. King said it is about 1:25. The member asked how many are now repeating a grade. Dr. King said there is a very low percentage repeating because of support placed around deficiencies. With support it is about 1.5 percent. In response to a member's question as to whether this was an arbitrary goal or did the system yield the 1/3, Dr. King said the teacher evaluation system yielded the 1/3. The member asked if any of these teachers continue to be employed in the system. Dr. King reported that some on current plans showing progress were kept based on their strengths.

Another member said there are two units of accountability being discussed here. Children do not get a pass when they do not meet the expectations and still want a diploma. However, schools can get a pass if they think that there are conditions that warrant it. If this BOE is asked by the public or schools what accreditation means and when does it really count, this request will either answer that or cloud the picture. He said he did not expect an answer at this time. He said he had a difficult time seeing a justification for a conditional approval instead of one denied. Another member asked what characteristics did they look for in new staff to ensure their outcomes were not the same as previous staff and who had the ultimate authority to make the decision to hire a teacher for that school. Dr. King responded that they took a look at the subject area needs and once that was pinpointed, they looked at the certification, "highly qualified" status, and previous experience to ensure the teachers had the necessary background to work with this population. This is being done across the entire division and it is data driven. The member asked how many new teachers are transfers and how many are new. Approximately 10% came from other schools within the division and approximately 10% are new to the division and ultimately the principal decides who goes into the building. Another member asked what had been done with the feeder elementary schools. Dr. King said staff at the middle school level have to be involved in the elementary schools, and among other things, look at the Standards of Learning, and their strengths and weaknesses so that changes could be made as necessary. Also communication with parents is important. The member asked how frequently the elementary and middle school principals are reviewing the status of each child regarding growth during the school year. Dr. Smith responded that these schools are required to do this monthly. The member also had a question about the staff turnover because this is one of the issues raised as part of the justification for this request. What happens if we are in the same place three years from now? What should the BOE perspective be when it comes to the number of times you can re-start this process as an intervention model? Dr. King responded that that notion centers on a relevant strategic

plan that aligns with the needs of the division. He has about thirty people as part of a strategic planning team which is representative of the community, law enforcement, higher education, and other areas. They are looking at where students are on task, where they are struggling, and where they are exceeding expectations and teachers are being empowered. A member had one more question. In her reading, she found that the experts believe teacher experience and qualifications are a major factor in children's success in school. She asked how many are teaching in their subject area, how many are PRAXIS completers, and how many are certified in a particular subject area that will help the school be more successful. Dr. King said 100% are in line with subject area alignment and credentials and more than 99% are highly qualified staff. The member asked if this school was hard to staff. Dr. King said it has been, but he believes they can change that by developing a strategic plan, focusing on the priorities, and communicating with the stakeholders.

At this point the committee moved on to Item III which included [requests](#) for a continued rating of *Conditionally Accredited* from Norfolk for Lindenwood Elementary School and from Northampton County for Kiptopeke Elementary School for the second year of their school improvement grants. These schools have been identified as priority schools.

Lindenwood Elementary School continues in warning this year only in mathematics and has requested funding of 1.76 million dollars over the course of the three grant years. It has selected Pearson as its LTP and its agreement includes a focus on literacy, numeracy, and data. In addition, its federal statewide assessment pass rates are included in the packet. The school is continuing to meet the reconstitution requirement through restructuring. The Office of School Improvement has been pleased with the school this year based on the difference in the school climate and the leadership provided by the principal and the LTP at the school and has decided to continue funding for this school. Dr. Wright reiterated that this is a school that has been awarded conditional accreditation status, it is implementing its approved reconstitution plan, and it is asking for a continuation based on its progress. A BOE member raised similar questions asked earlier: what happened to those teachers who are no longer assigned to this school, have they left the school system, have they been reassigned, how many of the teachers are certified in their instruction area, how many have completed PRAXIS, what is the number of students, what is the number of students per classroom, and is this a hard to staff school. Dr. McLaughlin asked that that information be provided before the next meeting since this item is up for first review and the data may need to be checked. Dr. Smith agreed to provide the additional information requested prior to that meeting. Another BOE member had one question about the approval process. Dr. Smith explained that the school is asking for approval of its second year in a three year period. At the end of each year the school has to be approved for continuation up to three years.

Dr. Smith then proceeded to discussion regarding a request for a continued rating of *Conditionally Accredited* from Northampton County for Kiptopeke Elementary School for a second year. Dr. Walter Clemons, the division's superintendent, was present for the discussion. This school has selected Edison as its LTP. This school continues to be warnws in mathematics this year and was provided a conditional accreditation rating

last year. It has requested funding of \$2.37 million over the three year period. It is a pre-K through 6 school and this is a change over the last year. The agreement is included in the packet and its focus is on leadership, teacher effectiveness, and data. The principal is new to Virginia, but experienced in high poverty schools. The federal statewide pass rates are also included in the packet. At one point there was concern about implementation of the grant. However, Dr. Smith worked very closely with Dr. Clemons to ensure success and it was decided to continue with the grant. It is also believed that the current principal is very strong. Noting that replacing the principal is an extreme action, a member of the board asked where the previous principal is now. He said the principal had moved to the county as a retiree and was in the third year. Last year was his first year as the superintendent. As he looked at the school's direction and leadership, he decided changes needed to be made. He replaced the principals in all three of the schools last year and he believes they have a solid plan in place. When he first arrived, he saw that there was not a focus on instructional planning and leadership. Last year there was some improvement, but they have to move forward. He wants to get the job done for all children. He interviewed and hired all new staff for this school year because he wanted them to know what the expectations are. A BOE member asked how the teachers are differentiated to meet the developmental needs of the children in the pre-K through grade 6 where the needs are different. In addition, how is he working with the principals to ensure that all of the focus is not on the grades where the SOL are given. Dr. Clemons said this will be worked out through their weekly data meetings. If you have a weak pre-K through 2, then you are setting yourself up for failure when you reach third grade because the children will not have developed the necessary skill set. The best way to look at differentiation is to make sure they are monitoring on a day-to-day basis, the curriculum is aligned, the teachers understand the blueprint, and children at the lower grades are monitored. Northampton is a hard-to-staff division. This year he believes they have a good plan with teachers who are in the best place to be successful. Dr. McLaughlin thanked him for explaining the systematic approach they are taking.

Dr. Smith then moved on to the next item on the agenda, a [request](#) for approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Albemarle County School Board for a high school graduation cohort of 50 students or less for Murray High School which has 37 students. Murray High School is a charter school. Schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer students may request an alternative education plan to meet the graduation and completion index (GCI). The item shows Murray has a GCI of 78. This figure came from preliminary data, but now the current index should read as 82 and the total number of students in the 2012 cohort is 37. Due to the small cohort size, one student can make a significant difference in the GCI; thus, the GCI alone is not an appropriate measure for these types of school and additional criteria are needed. Page two of the [request](#) includes additional criteria requested by this school division. In addition, the proposed plan for the school is included in attachment A of this request. Dr. John Haun, present at a remote location, was then introduced to the board. He stated that he would like to bring this request forward because Murray High School is a special purpose school which serves an at-risk population. He then introduced Ashby Kindler, Bonnie Pendleton, and Chris Gilman, Albemarle staff who were with him for this presentation. One of the board members asked how they chose this criteria. Dr. Haun stated the first

three criteria had been on plans approved by the board before. He asked if the board would be open to amending the fourth to add advanced placement and/or dual enrollment courses as well. A member asked if they offered IB, but they do not. The member did include advanced placement and/or dual enrollment courses as part of the fourth criterion.

Dr. Smith then moved to the next item: a request from [Alexandria City School Board for a rating of Conditional Accredited for Jefferson-Houston Elementary School](#). This is the fourth year of the school's rating of *Accredited with Warning*. It is now warned in all four core content areas. Since 2002, this school has been fully accredited once in the past 11 years and then has been warned for three consecutive years since. This school has been identified as a priority school based on the "all students" performance in reading and/or mathematics performance on federal AMOs. At this time the school has not selected an LTP, but must do so by January. The statewide assessment scores are included on page 3 of the board item. The school division has submitted a reconstitution plan attached to the board item and there is a team present to represent the school division. Dr. Morton Sherman, the superintendent, was unable to be present today due to a religious holiday. Dr. Holmes was present to represent the school division and introduced other staff present, Rice Harris, the new principal; Mark Eisenhower, internal Lead Partner; and Natalie Mitchell, who is the Title I director. She stated that the achievement at the school is dismal at best. She came to the division 15 months ago and after reviewing the data, the school division decided that the school had to be reconstituted. The new principal, Ms. Rice Harris, was hired. Dr. Holmes said they have a proposal before their board to extend the school day. This proposal will be considered by their board tomorrow night. Dr. Holmes also said they are very proud of their PALS scores. In addition, there are some other growth measures.

The board members were given the opportunity to ask questions. A member noted the school was fully accredited in 2008-2009 and asked what happened. Ms. Rice noted that she has only been with the school for about 13 months, but she did discuss this issue with the previous principal. There was a lot of intervention during the 2008-2009 school year, but those results could not be sustained. Another member asked about the PALS results and asked what was encouraging. She responded that the pre-K-K up to third grade PALS results were very promising. The first graders are reading and reading at mid-first grade level coming into first grade and did not experience a substantial summer reading loss. This shows that they are breaking the cycle. A member asked how many of the kindergartners were with them in pre-K. The pre-K program is small. The majority of the students come from another school. A member asked why it did not happen if they knew what worked. Ms. Rice responded that Jefferson-Houston is a hard-to-staff school and it has a unique population. It is a suburban school with an urban population. Moreover, the school did experience a significant turnover in staff. A member asked if the same group from 2008-2009 was responsible for the success. Ms. Rice responded that there are seven teachers from that cohort of 60 teachers at that time. A member asked for clarification about a note in the materials regarding an LTP previously selected for the school in 2011. Dr. Smith said at that time the school worked with an alternative governance provider who was a consultant, but this person was not an LTP. A member asked why it is taking so long to identify what is working

and what is not when there were many years of *Accredited with Warning*. Dr. Wright stated that the new principal led off with the recognition that what they have done in the past has not worked. We have to assure that the program to be implemented is significantly different from past efforts. A member stated that the proactive efforts are appreciated, but what is the benefit of the label *Conditionally Accredited*? Ms. Rice said it would validate the efforts the team has put forth over the past year and the growth seen in the students over the past year. This designation will enable them to function with a greater level of integrity with a recognition by the BOE that a lot of the decisions made over the past year were right for the students. Dr. McLaughlin thanked them for the presentation.

There was no one signed up for public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.