

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
October 23, 2013
3:00 P.M.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Mrs. Diane Atkinson, chairman of the Committee on School and Division Accountability, convened the meeting with the following Board members present: Betsy Beamer, Christian Braunlich, Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr., David Foster, Winsome Sears, and Joan Wodiska. Dr. Patricia Wright, superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Mrs. Atkinson welcomed the Board members and guests to today's meeting.

Approval of Minutes from the September 25, 2013 Meeting

Copies of the minutes from the September 25, 2013 committee meeting were distributed to all committee members prior to today's meeting. Mrs. Beamer made a motion to approve the minutes and the motion was seconded by Dr. Cannaday. The minutes were approved by the committee members, with one abstention, Ms. Wodiska.

Agenda Items

Ms. Atkinson outlined today's agenda items:

- The proposed A-F school grading formula developed in response to the 2013 Acts of Assembly.
- Proposed amendments to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131) (Proposed Stage)
- A report on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 waiver renewal process and options for amendments to Virginia's renewal application.

The first two items will be on the Board's agenda tomorrow. The last item will come before the Board in November and January.

Public Comment

Mrs. Atkinson then went into public comment.

Nicole Dooley of Just Children was the first speaker. She provided comments on the proposed A-F grading formula and the proposed amendments to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. She thanked the Board for recognizing the importance of improving student attendance by including chronic absenteeism in eighth grade as part of the definition of at-risk for the high school grading formula. However, she noted that Just Children would again like to request the inclusion of chronic absenteeism in the elementary and middle school formulas, too. In addition, Ms. Dooley said Just Children again would like to encourage

the Board to update the principal's existing responsibility in the accreditation regulations to ensure "that the school division's student code of conduct is enforced and seek to maintain a safe and secure school environment" to include a duty to take steps to reduce out-of-school suspension rates.

The next speaker was Elizabeth "Bet" Neal from the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals. She stated that she was asked by her board to report on a vote they had taken expressing opposition to the committee's blueprint that they had seen previously. In a letter sent to the board, the Virginia Education Coalition, including every major education group and the Virginia PTA, asked that the blueprint and the report to the General Assembly be delayed to 2014 as permitted by law, and she stated that proceeding ahead of the schedule outlined in the A-F legislation would not be helpful. She noted that [HB 1999](#) purposely included a 2013 date for growth measures and a fall 2014 date for a grading blueprint and a report to the General Assembly. School divisions need time to understand how such a policy can lead to real change and provide helpful data. On behalf of her organization, Ms. Neal asked that the Board give thoughtful consideration to a delay in rollout of the newly revised blueprint.

In addition, Tom Smith spoke on behalf of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS). He said VASS is on record as asking the Board to postpone this decision. Even a month's delay would be helpful as information received yesterday indicated that some of the data used by the school divisions to run this formula has not been available because it was being verified by the department and they understand that. If there are tweaks needed, they can be done before a final decision is made. Once a school receives a grade, even if the formula is tweaked a month later or two months later, that grade will not go away automatically as it is reported in the news and to parents and that impression is extremely hard to change. That is why the superintendents are asking that the Board take a little time with this and postpone the decision tomorrow.

Proposed A-F School Grading Formula Developed in Response to the 2013 Acts of Assembly

Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for the division of student assessment and school improvement, presented this agenda item. She reported that today she brought back some revisions to the A-F school grading formula first reviewed in September. Ms. Loving-Ryder said there was significant discussion in September so she would not go into detail. However, as a reminder, she said there are three components of the grading formula:

1. Proficiency of a school's students in the core content areas of mathematics, English (reading and writing), science, and history and social science as measured by the passing rates on statewide assessments. This component is present for all schools.
2. Growth or learning gains of an elementary or middle school's students in reading and mathematics as measured by year-to-year growth on state assessments.
3. College and career readiness of a high school's students as measured by indicators that students have graduated with college and career ready credentials

or are progressing on a pathway to graduating from high school prepared for college and careers.

Some technical edits have been made to the September version, but some substantive revisions also have been made:

- The higher of the current year pass rate or the three-year pass rate will be used in determining proficiency on state assessments.
- The total number of bonus points available for schools was decreased from 100 to 50 points and commensurate adjustments made in the points available for earning the bonus points.
- Meeting all federal annual measurable objectives is included in the bonus points' options.
- At-risk students are those who failed the grade 8 reading or mathematics tests, who were chronically absent in grade 8, or who have been identified as at-risk using additional criteria approved by the Board.
- Two changes are proposed in the decision rules:
 - Schools that are identified as Title I *Priority* or *Focus* schools under federal accountability and that have not met federal accountability assessments benchmarks shall not earn a grade of A or B. This change allows Priority and Focus schools to receive the grade they earn when they make progress even though the designation may not change.
 - Bonus points may increase a school's letter grade by a maximum of one grade level.
- Presented for the Board's consideration were two point-to-grade conversion options for elementary and middle schools and two options for high schools. These point-to-grade conversion options represent grades prior to applying decision rules.

There was quite a bit of discussion regarding transparency, fairness, and accuracy in the grading system and the potential impact on schools with large numbers of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. In addition, there was discussion of the development of a communications plan to ensure adequate communication with the public, the development of a review and evaluation plan, and related information to be included in the annual report.

See the [Proposed A-F School Grading Formula Developed in Response to the 2013 Acts of Assembly](#) and the related [presentation on proposed A-F School Grading System](#) for additional information about this agenda item.

Proposed Amendments to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (8 VAC 20-131)* (Proposed Stage)

Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for the division of policy and communications, presented this agenda item. She stated that basically, the changes in the proposed

amendments are minor editorial changes. However, she did refer to page 8 of the Board agenda item where substantive changes are listed. (See the item below for this information.)

Mrs. Atkinson indicated that this item will be before the Board at tomorrow's meeting for final review and then the proposal will go through the Administrative Process Act (APA) executive review process. Once that process is completed, the proposal will go out for 60 days of public comment. The Board members discussed the proposal and suggested some revisions which will be made at the appropriate time in the process.

See [Proposed Amendments to the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia \(8 VAC 20-131\) \(Proposed Stage\)](#) for additional information about this agenda item.

Report on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waiver Renewal Process and Options for Amendments to Virginia's Renewal Application

Veronica Tate, director of the office of program administration and accountability, presented this agenda item. She provided an overview of the proposed updates and revisions to the state's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility proposal. She said during the September meeting of this committee, Dr. Linda Wallinger shared with the committee the process established by the United States Department of Education (USED) for states with approved ESEA flexibility plans to apply for a two-year renewal of those plans. To be considered for renewal, a state must submit a redline version of its ESEA flexibility application to USED. The redline sections must respond to questions outlined in the ESEA renewal request form hyperlinked in the summary provided to the Board for this meeting. (See the second hyperlink on page one of the document below.) For Virginia, the majority of responses for the renewal process will consist of updates regarding the state's implementation of the three principles of ESEA flexibility. The executive summary includes proposed updates and revisions to the application, and Ms. Tate summarized the components of the application. There was also discussion of the principal and teacher evaluation component. This agenda item will come before the Board in November and January.

See [Report on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\) Waiver Renewal Process and Options for Amendments to Virginia's Renewal Application](#) for the executive summary provided for this agenda item.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.