

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
February 26, 2014
2:00 P.M.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the February 26, 2014 committee meeting: Diane Atkinson, Christian Braunlich, Darla Edwards, Andrew Ko, Winsome Sears, and Joan Wodiska. Dr. Patricia Wright, the superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Mrs. Atkinson, chairman of the Committee on School and Division Accountability, convened the meeting and welcomed the Board members and guests. She also welcomed two new Board members, Mr. Ko and James Dillard, who was unable to be present for this meeting due to a previous commitment.

Approval of Minutes from the November 20, 2013 Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes for the November 20, 2013 meeting, the motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved by the committee members.

Public Comment

Mrs. Atkinson then opened the floor for public comment. Because there were no speakers, she moved on to the meeting agenda items.

Agenda Items

The following items were included on today's committee meeting agenda:

- Updated Corrective Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding with Sussex County School Board (This item will be on the Board agenda for final review tomorrow.)
- Findings from the Division-Level Review and Memorandum of Understanding for Franklin City Public Schools (This item will be on the Board agenda for first review tomorrow.)
- Virginia's Application for a One-Year Extension of Waivers from Certain Requirements of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) (This item will be on the Board agenda for first review tomorrow.)

Report on the Updated Corrective Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding with Sussex County School Board

Dr. Kathleen Smith, director of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Office of School Improvement, introduced this agenda item and the Sussex County school board

representatives: Dr. Willie Bell, school division director of instruction; Mr. Eddie Morris, school board chairman; and Dr. Arthur Jarrett, the school division superintendent.

Dr. Smith provided an overview of this item. The Board met two months ago for first review of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and corrective action. However, at that time the department had not completed the academic review. That has now been done and the corrective action plan (CAP) and MOU have been updated to reflect the findings from that academic review completed within the division and at all three schools.

Sussex County Public Schools was identified for division-level review status in 2004 and entered an initial MOU with the Board at that time. In 2009, the school division appeared before the Board to enter into a second MOU. That MOU was in effect until all schools are fully accredited.

The school division has reconfigured its schools and now has three schools: an elementary, middle, and high school. Because of these changes, an updated CAP and MOU were required. The division-level instructional audit was completed in December 2013, and a number of indicators were examined and a report of findings was included in the Board packet. The audit included a comprehensive review of the following indicators:

- Leadership
- Written Curriculum
- Professional Development

In addition, steps were added to the current CAP for essential actions for these particular indicators.

The proposed updated MOU between the Sussex County school board and the Virginia Board of Education will be in place until all Sussex County Public Schools are *Fully Accredited*. It looks at:

- Teacher Quality
- Division Leadership
- Division Curricula Guide Alignment
- Division Professional Development

The responsibilities of the Sussex County school board and the Sussex County Public Schools under the MOU were reviewed. There will be a follow-up academic review in May of this year, and the school board and school division may be asked to look at some long term actions. If required additions to the CAP are identified, the superintendent and school board will be notified.

The essential actions have been outlined in the boilerplate, and they follow the requirements in the CAP. At the end of Dr. Smith's discussion, Dr. Jarrett, Mr. Morris, and Dr. Smith responded to questions from the Board members. Dr. Wright also made comments, and she said Sussex has come a long way with many challenges. However,

the school division does have a hidden resource in that some teachers do want to work in a small community.

See [Updated Corrective Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding with Sussex County School Board](#) for the material supporting this agenda item.

Report on Findings from the Division-Level Review and Memorandum of Understanding for Franklin City Public Schools

Mrs. Atkinson introduced this agenda item. She said addressing items in a committee allows the committee to really delve into an item that may require more input from the committee or more work between the parties involved. As division-level reviews were set up, she knew there were concerns about division-level issues that contributed to the accreditation ratings for the schools in this division. It is clear from the report from AdvanceED and from follow-up reviews from department staff, that there are systemic issues in this school division that will need to be addressed. Those issues go to the foundation that should be in place in a division to create the opportunity for success for its students. Deficiencies were found in instruction and related issues, professional development, teacher and administrative licensure, board policies and procedures, involvement with the community, and the mission for the division as well for the individual schools. The school division has many serious challenges ahead.

Dr. Kathleen Smith, director of the VDOE Office of School Improvement, introduced school division representatives: Edna King, school board chair; Will Campbell, school board member; and Dr. Michelle Belle, school superintendent. She then provided a review of the status of the division-level review which was completed in December 2013 and took about a week. A report of findings is included in the Board packet.

She reported that a full academic review of the division curricula in the four core areas was completed by VDOE. Staff looked at what was being taught and whether it was aligned to the standards. Two major issues of concern were found:

- Professional development is needed in the alignment of the written, taught, and assessed curricula.
- There was little evidence that principals and/or teachers are provided regular feedback after classroom observations by the central office administration.

There was also a second follow-up report in response to the review conducted by Dr. James Lanham in March 2013. His report shared 13 significant findings. VDOE staff looked at 27 additional findings. Of the 13 findings identified, seven are identified as resolved, while six remain unresolved. In addition, six additional findings were identified during this review. Overall, there are two major human resources findings regarding licensed instructional staff:

- There continue to be administrators (directors, supervisors, and specialists) who work with instructional programs at the division level and/or serve as a resource to teachers, but who are not endorsed in their area of responsibility.
- There continue to be teachers teaching outside of their endorsement area.

Lastly, after the Board expressed an interest in what governance and stakeholder involvement looked like in Franklin City, the department contracted with AdvanceED to conduct a special review for those issues. A special review team was appointed by AdvanceED to go to Franklin. That component of the review found that Franklin City appeared to be in non-compliance with the following AdvanceED standards/indicators:

- Purpose and Direction Standard 1:
The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.
- Governance and Leadership Standard 2:
This system operates under governance and leadership that promotes and supports student performance and system effectiveness.

For purposes of the MOU, the department has asked the school board to adopt four key priorities and implement essential actions:

- Curricula Alignment
- Human Resource Management and Quality of Leadership, Teachers, and Support
- Purpose and Direction
- Leadership and Governance

As described in the MOU, the Franklin City school board, Franklin City Public Schools, the Virginia Board of Education, and the Virginia Department of Education also have specific responsibilities which must be followed. This includes specific requirements regarding the selection of finalists for the school division's superintendent position and all recommendations regarding instructional programs or instructional personnel. Because there were a number of essential actions, they were designated as either immediate priority actions or systemic planning actions. Most of the immediate priority actions include time lines that place immediate priority on curricula alignment and quality of leadership, teachers, and support because that has the most direct impact on student achievement immediately. At the same time, the school board and the division superintendent must begin working on systemic governance and strategic planning issues cited in the review. The Superintendent of Public Instruction will assign a designee to serve as the Chief Academic Officer for Franklin City Public Schools.

The school division is working on the corrective action plan and hopefully will be able to provide it to the public for feedback.

The Board had many questions for Franklin City representatives, and there was much discussion about the issues discussed earlier, as well as transparency in decision-making, involvement of the stakeholder community, leadership, the AdvanceED report findings, systems, licensure/endorsement requirements for teachers and administrators, micromanagement by the board, lack of policies, and hiring practices. Dr. Smith and the school board representative reported that an action plan is being developed to address some of these issues in concert with the Virginia School Boards Association. This effort is in addition to the corrective action plan.

Dr. Wright said the terms of the MOU will be reviewed and revised annually. The terms may be revised based on the level of the progress or lack of progress. She said she has never experienced a report about a division that was this extensive and systemic. She believes there is a lack of understanding of state laws and regulations. She said the department will work with this school board and its leadership team on training. There are legal issues that board members do not know, and this is why training is important. She challenged the school board to take this opportunity to rebuild its system. The department and the state Board will work with them to do so.

See [Findings from the Division-Level Review and Memorandum of Understanding for Franklin City Public Schools](#) for the material supporting 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. The other writers for this project were also introduced: Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for student assessment and school improvement; Patty Pitts, assistant superintendent for teacher education and licensure; Dr. Mark Allen, director for the Office of Teacher Licensure; and Dr. Kathleen Smith, director of the VDOE Office of School Improvement. Dr. Linda Wallinger, former assistant superintendent for instruction, was also a writer for this project.

In September 2011, the U.S. Secretary of Education invited states to submit applications for waivers from certain requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In February 2012, Virginia submitted its initial ESEA flexibility application and, after many months of discussion and negotiation, an amended application was approved in March 2013. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) later issued a letter inviting certain states to request a one year extension.

Principal 1, 2, and 3 updates were discussed and relevant information can be found in the links provided below.

There was some discussion of the item and recommendations made by USED. Virginia will request a waiver for this extension. The VDOE has developed the proposed application for a one-year extension to its ESEA flexibility request based on guidance received to date. The application will be presented to the Board for final review after the monitoring report is received.

See [Virginia's Application for a One-Year Extension of Waivers from Certain Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 \(ESEA\)](#) for the material supporting this agenda item.

See also related [ESEA waiver presentation](#).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.