

Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday, January 25, 2017
1:00 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Accountability Committee meeting

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the January 25, 2017 Committee on School and Division Accountability meeting: Diane Atkinson; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; Dr. Oktay Baysal; Joan Wodiska; Jim Dillard; Dan Gecker; Elizabeth Lodal; and Sal Romero, Jr. Dr. Steven Staples, the superintendent of public instruction, was present.

Mrs. Atkinson, chairman of this committee, convened the meeting at 1:02p.m. and welcomed the Board members and guests. As part of her introductory remarks, she said that today's meeting would help prepare the Board to revise Part VIII of the Standards of Accreditation. The meeting would start with a panel discussion of school principals regarding school improvement. Then there would be a presentation from VDOE staff on two possible accountability measures, graduation rate and drop-out rate. She outlined that the committee would receive a presentation on one-two accountability indicators per month for the next several months to gain a better understanding of how these indicators could possibly fit into an accountability system.

Approval of Minutes from the November 16, 2016 Meeting

Mrs. Atkinson said the draft minutes from the November 16, 2016 meeting were posted online and provided to Board members. Mrs. Wodiska made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 16, 2016 committee meeting. Mrs. Lodal seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Mrs. Atkinson opened the floor to those persons who wishes to provide public comment:

- Mr. Gene Kotulka – Superintendent of Alleghany County Public Schools on behalf of Region 6 superintendents. Mr. Kotulka commended the Board's work in creating the new school quality profiles and willingness to include additional school quality indicators within the state accountability system. He said that while he agrees with the new approach to create an equitable accountability, he and Region 6 have reservations about a four tiered performance level system of accountability, believing that the new system will create unnecessary and distracting challenges. He recommended that the Board consider

the use of a three tiered system of accountability – green, yellow, and red and identify schools in each indicator who performance is exemplary.

Panel Discussion on School Improvement

Mrs. Atkinson outlined the format for this agenda item and introduced the following panelists who had been asked to share what has made the difference in your each of their schools in terms of the improvements:

- Kori Reddick, Principal, AP Hill Elementary, Petersburg City Public Schools
- Faith Mabe, Principal, Washington-Lee Elementary School, Bristol City Public Schools
- Jeff Blowe, Principal, Hunter B. Andrews PreK-8 School, Hampton City Public Schools
- Subrina Parker, Principal, Kiptopeke Elementary School, Northampton County Public Schools

Ms. Kori Reddick

Ms. Reddick became principal of AP Hill Elementary in 2013. She gave an overview of SOL scores upon her arrival. She took a collaborative approach with her assistant principal to identify strengths of instructional staff and move where appropriate. One major change that occurred was a shift from whole group instruction to small group instruction and a focus on regarding in the content areas. To help with this change, professional development was provided to teachers targeted towards their improvement goals. A data-focused leadership team meeting is held twice a month. Changes in interventions also assisted with the improvements including a change in daytime tutoring staff, now all of those staff are retired teachers. Some of the improvements and changes made in the second year of Ms. Reddick's tenure include a switch from remediation to enrichment, departmentalization of teachers, and implementation of PBIS. Also, the school worked to build partnerships with the local business community and offered field trips every 9 weeks in an improvement area.

Ms. Faith Mabe

Ms. Mabe is in her third year as principal of Washington-Lee Elementary. She gave an overview of the demographics of the school. Before becoming principal, Ms. Mabe was a literacy coach and classroom teacher in Bristol City. When originally applying for the position, Ms. Mabe drafted a five-year plan and they are currently working on year three of that plan. She outlined many of the changes that have taken place over the past two years where the focus has been on the school culture, school environment and teacher alignment. School improvement began by cleaning and repairing the school to build a better environment conducive to student learning with a focus on improving behavior. There has been a climate shift that created ownership for students to make the school their school. On the instructional side, the school participates in looping, departmentalized their teachers, and created an I/E (intervention/enrichment) for all students. The role of the guidance counselor

has been restructured to providing supports for students, not serving in an administrative role. Communities in Schools has been a fantastic partner and a great success. The most important piece thus far has been communication, creating more communication between the school, families, and the community to build a strong relationship.

Mr. Jeff Blowe

Mr. Blowe is in his third year as principal of Hunter B. Andrews PreK-8 school. He gave an overview of the demographics of the school. When Mr. Blowe first became principal, he said that he walked into an atmosphere where students didn't believe in themselves. Since taking over, he has tried to think outside the box, reassign staff members to their strongest areas, and improve the building culture. After seeing small improvements in the first year, they held sessions with VDOE and offered more professional development opportunities. Teachers now have common planning time to work on lesson plans. Pre and post assessments are common practice that allow for intervention groups in the classroom to provide strategic support to students. In addition to data meetings with teachers, the school hosts three data meetings a year with parents to show them what the school data looks like and offer information on how they can help their children at home. Being able to utilize a family engagement specialist as well as math and reading intervention specialists has had a positive impact on the students. Additionally, the school offers a Saturday Academy where they provide breakfast and transportation for those students invited to participate. The school is now fully accredited and parents are more engaged.

Ms. Subrina Parker

Ms. Parker is in her fourth year as principal of Kiptopeke Elementary School on the eastern shore of Virginia. She gave an overview of the demographics of the school. The school is fully accredited and has strong support from the central office staff with weekly meetings from the assistant superintendent. She stated the importance of getting the right teachers in the right spots. When she first came on board as principal, she strategically moved teachers to the right content areas to garner the best results. They do participate in professional learning communities and have weekly professional development. The school has also formalized the literacy framework implementation where each teacher is trained in each component of the framework. Teachers are required to submit lesson plans each week to be reviewed for alignment of content and complexity. Although it was a challenge to shift to this model, teachers now appreciate the feedback they receive on lesson plans. Additionally, they utilize the Virginia Tiered System of Support and closely analyze attendance and behavior data. Students are assessed three times a year and receive different interventions depending on the level of support required.

In response to the presentations, Board members raised the following questions and concerns:

- A Board member asked the panelist to share their secret to increased family engagement?

- Mr. Blowe responded that they have a family engagement specialist which is paid for through Title I funds. They interact and engage with parents before, during, and after school and work to develop events for parents that highlight student performance.
- A Board member asked how do you define quality for your school and how does your community define quality for your school?
 - Ms. Mabe said that she defines quality by the progress that students make and parents define quality by the relationships they have with school staff.
 - Mr. Blowe said that he defines quality by how they go about the business of teaching the standards individually and as a community and that each staff member adds something different to each child in the building. He said that the community defines quality by how they assist/support the school.
 - Ms. Reddick said that quality for the community is defined by how comfortable they are to come to the school for help to provide wrap around services. The school is always working on educating the whole child so they focus on providing basic needs like vision and dental care and work on character education and behavior.
 - Ms. Parker said that the community is looking for a school that engages the students and provides cultural events for students and the community at large. She defines quality by looking at the whole student to become respectful, responsible, lifelong learners.
- A Board member asked about teacher turnover in their schools.
 - Ms. Reddick said that yes, there is a lot of turnover in her school. They experienced the most turnover in the third year when they shifted to a year-round school schedule.
 - Ms. Mabe said that her school has had a large amount of turnover due to improvement plans.
 - Mr. Blowe said that his school has not seen a large amount of turnover in the past two years.
 - Ms. Parker said that Northampton County has large teacher turnover throughout the county due to the location.
- A Board member asked about the readiness of students when they arrive at school.
 - Ms. Mabe said that when they arrive for school in kindergarten the students are behind but they catch them up by grade 5.
 - Ms. Reddick said that the majority of the students come to her below grade level. She outlined many of the supports that are given to students in elementary schools but often those supports are not available in middle school.
 - Ms. Parker agrees with Ms. Reddick about the supports offered at the elementary level.

- A Board member asked what changes should be made in our accreditation system and what do you find hinders what you want to do and keeps you from doing the important things?
 - Ms. Mabe said that you cannot have the same expectations for every school when each school is very different. She wants schools to be accountability but realistic expectations are needed. Poverty needs to be a factor in the formula.
- A Board member asked the panelist follow-up with the Board afterwards about what should be the most important factors in defining quality.
- Dr. Staples asked what might the panelists do different if state accreditation wasn't a factor.
 - Mr. Blowe said he would work more to develop other people, adult learners and faculty, to be better leaders.
 - Ms. Reddick would like to do more with project based learning. Constraints of time and staff training don't allow us to do PBL as much as they would like.
 - Ms. Parker said that she would like to do more hands-on course work in STEM education.
 - Ms. Mabe said that she would like to broaden her students world view, to take them places they wouldn't be able to experience otherwise, and teach a foreign language at an earlier age.
- A Board member asked what lessons have you learned in what you have done that could help us develop/improve our (accreditation) system.
 - Ms. Mabe said that she's learned the true meaning of being poor and that often parents aren't able to appreciate what is being offered in school because their priority is survival. She's also learned that quality can be different depending on where you live, although she doesn't want it to be that way, it is a reality.
 - Mr. Blowe said that helping general education teachers better understand and support special education teachers and students is an important lesson he has learned.
 - Ms. Reddick said that better understanding, helping, and evening out the playing field for ELL students has been a challenge.
 - Ms. Parker said that even though they are working with students of poverty, the students have the same ability and you must have high expectations for those students to succeed.
- A Board member wondered if we are truly changing life outcomes by putting labels on schools and students. He asked, what would you do to change life outcomes if that path is different than what we are doing now.
 - Ms. Mabe said that she believes putting colors, labels, A-F grades, etc. on a school if creates segregation between schools. When we continue to compare unequal circumstances, it creates more problems.

- Mr. Blowe and Ms. Parker said that their communities had a sense of pride once they received their full accreditation ranking.
- Ms. Reddick said that it is important to take growth into consideration. After her first year, they made good progress but many families felt defeated because growth wasn't factored in.

Board members thanked the panelists for their participation and open discussion.

Discussion of Accountability Measures - Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate

Mrs. Atkinson introduced the presenters for this agenda item.

Dr. Cindy Cave's presentation provided a review of the Board's discussion of school quality and school quality indicators over the past few months.

Dr. Heather Carlson-Jaquez's presentation provided an overview of the process for defining school performance benchmarks. This month, the two school quality indicators were Graduation Completion Index (GCI) and dropout rate. To determine a recommended calculation, VDOE staff looked at research from other states, examined patterns in current Virginia data, and established and tested benchmarks for each level on the matrix.

The GCI calculation includes students in the cohort of expected on-time graduates, students who were first-time ninth graders four years earlier, plus transfer in and minus transfers out, and students are carried over from previous cohorts depending on their status. GCI more widely used by other states for accountability than dropout; dropout rate is only reported by other states.

Dropout is calculated as a four-year cohort. Dropouts are not students who are: 1) awarded a diploma, certificate or GED, 2) transferred out of state, 3) deceased, 4) on a long-term absence, 5) still enrolled, 6) enrolled in state operated agencies.

Both metrics have merit. For GCI, all students get points in GCI except long-term absences and dropout. It encourages and gives credit to school for taking steps to help students complete a program of study. For dropout, it is a simple calculation that provides schools with a clear measure of how many students they are losing to dropout and allows schools to determine if their efforts to reduce dropout are effective.

A copy of Dr. Cave and Dr. Carlson-Jaquez's presentations are available at

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_standing/accountability/2017/meeting_materials.shtml#jan25.

- A Board member asked for clarification on Dr. Carlson-Jaquez's slide about other states not using dropout for accountability purposes and they are just reporting it, it was his opinion that it was an important metric.

- Dr. Carlson-Jaquez emphasized that the department agrees and that the slide was in place to point out that we would be one of the first states to incorporate dropout in accountability.
- Dr. Staples shared that he and Dr. Cave recently held a conference call with a group of superintendents to help frame accountability and look at the possible indicators. Superintendents shared that they are concerned about children who “pass through” momentarily and asked the Board to think about disaggregating the indicator data by reporting categories. Overall, the superintendents are supportive of this approach on GCI and dropout.
- A Board member asked how GCI and dropout provide a comprehensive picture of school improvement.
 - Dr. Carlson-Jaquez referred him to Dr. Cave’s portion of the presentation where she gave an overview of all of the metrics that are being considered and reminded him that accountability would use all of those metrics, thus making the system more comprehensive than they are now.
- A Board member stated their concern about the unintended consequences of their policy decisions and discussed their support for exploring the possibility of a three category matrix (as compared to four) in response to the public comment at the beginning of the meeting.
- A Board member stated their interest in an transition plan, possibly a three-year transition to give localities time to accomplish their goals.
- The Board was very interested in how poverty comes into play with all of the indicators that VDOE staff is presenting, citing their experience with the visit in the morning and the panel of principals.
- A Board member discussed the possibility of holding localities (local government) accountable for providing the proper amount of support to schools.
- A Board member asked if one of our unspoken principles to differentiate between quality and high quality.
 - Dr. Staples responded by saying that the intent of the exemplar category was to differentiate between quality and high-quality. In the current system, once you are fully accredited, there is no impetus to move beyond full accreditation. The philosophical notion of the blue category was for schools to strive become even better.
- A Board member stated that labels not only reflect what we see in our schools, but they can incentivize behavior or do just the opposite. He wondered why we compare schools that are different than schools that are more similar. He believes that the current comparisons are unfair.

- Dr. Carlson-Jaquez agreed. Although this process is just starting, she is aware of how all of the extra factors come into the accountability system.
- Dr. Staples responded by informing the Board of a research project that was undertaken two years ago that created groupings of schools based on “like” characteristics. This project was undertaken to look for exemplars. The data was never released because VDOE was worried that this information would be a hammer, not one that helped schools with improvement.
- A Board member agreed with an earlier comment about local financial contribution and the importance it has on making schools successful. Another Board member agreed. This is the information that parents and interested citizens need to advocate to their Board of Supervisors.
- Dr. Staples responded by saying that funding is a factor that creates a context for schools are but it does drive outcomes.
- Dr. Staples outlined the plan for reviewing possible indicators in the coming months. The intent is to bring a few indicators each month for review, allow Board members to ask questions, and provide follow-up on the indicators at the next meeting before reviewing another set on indicators. He reminded Board members that some indicators are driven by ESSA. He asked Board members to continue to provide feedback on this process.
- A Board member suggested that the Board’s philosophy on accountability be updated to only include indicators that schools can influence or control.

Mrs. Atkinson provided closing remarks. She stated that the school visit, panelists, and presentations were very informative. She thanked staff for their hard work and Board members for their attention and thoughtful questions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:35p.m.