

DRAFT MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday, September 27, 2017
12:30 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building
101 North 14th Street, Richmond, Virginia

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the September 27, 2017 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Kim Adkins; Diane Atkinson; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James Dillard; Daniel Gecker; Anne Holton; Elizabeth Lodal; Sal Romero, Jr.; and Dr. Jamelle Wilson. Dr. Steven Staples, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Ms. Atkinson, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from the July 26, 2017 Committee Meeting

Ms. Adkins made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 26, 2017 committee meeting. Ms. Holton seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Atkinson explained that the Board would be addressing schools seeking the accreditation rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted, which is used for schools that has not earned Full Accreditation for three consecutive years and fails to meet state standards for a fourth consecutive year. Such schools can apply for a rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted if the local school board agrees to reconstitute the school's leadership, staff, governance, or student population. A Partially Accredited: Reconstituted school can retain this rating for up to three years, if acceptable progress is being made. This is determined based on an eligibility rubric that is used by Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff to evaluate the applications requesting reconstituted status. During this meeting, the Board is reviewing three schools that meet the eligibility criteria and three schools that are appealing because they do not meet the eligibility criteria. Schools wishing to present information in addition to what is reflected in the application have been instructed to do so during public comment.

Rodney Jordan, co-chair of the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) task force on schools in challenging environments, spoke about the work that the VSBA task force has done in support of schools in challenging environments and the willingness of the task force to continue to work with the Board in supporting such schools.

Dr. Angela Wilson, superintendent of Greenville County public schools, spoke about the changes that Greenville County schools have implemented to address challenges with obtaining

accreditation. Greenville is working with Longwood University to develop professional development courses to support quality literacy instruction. Greenville is also working with Mary Baldwin University and Southside Community College to provide professional studies courses and assist and support teachers in various other ways.

Dr. Barbara Johnson, superintendent of Prince Edward County public schools, spoke about ways in which Prince Edward County schools have responded to accreditation challenges, specifically regarding reading. Prince Edward County schools have taken steps to ensure alignment with the Standards of Learning (SOL) and implemented a process for teachers to receive direct feedback and professional development. The school division has also hired a reading coach and replaced certain administrative staff.

Dr. Jim Roberts, superintendent of Chesapeake public schools, spoke about the challenges faced by Chesapeake, including new principals, high teacher turnover, and the addition of preschool instruction. Dr. Roberts described changes that have been made in an effort to address these challenges, including hiring new administrative staff and coaches.

Mark Greenfelder, executive director of the office of school support for Fairfax County public schools, spoke about the changes that have been made at Mount Vernon Woods Elementary school to address the school's accreditation challenges. These changes include the hiring of new administrators and instructional staff, as well as a full-time school psychologist and an interventionist.

Dr. Rodney Berry, superintendent of Nottoway County public schools, spoke about the progress Nottoway County has made in reaching full accreditation for all schools. Only one school, Nottoway Middle School has not reached full accreditation. Adjustments have been made, including hiring a new principal, to put them on track to reach full accreditation next year.

Dr. Scott Burckbuchler, superintendent of Essex County public schools, spoke on the improvements made at their intermediate school. The school has become student-focused, positive and professional. Focus has been placed on improving instructional practice, parent engagement, and ensuring there is a vibrant instructional community. Essex's scores have improved. The school has strengthened its student behavioral program. They decided to keep the existing principal because to remove that principal would be counterproductive at this time.

Dr. Jay McClain, Assistant Superintendent for student learning and success for Lynchburg City public schools, spoke on the appeal for accreditation for Heritage Elementary School. Over the last three years, Heritage Elementary has experienced double digit gains in both English and math, including a 29% increase in math. Lynchburg has moved from two accredited schools to seven. Dr. McClain explained that 80% of teachers in tested grade levels are in their first three years of teaching due to the recruitment challenges. All of the fifth grade teachers are in their first three years of teaching at Heritage and fifth grade is the only tested grade for science. There was also a spike in the number of students who are new to the school district. Over 20% of students who tested last year were in their first year at Heritage compare to those who have been at Heritage for more than one year. When comparing the testing scores of students who tested last year for the first time versus those who tested the first time this year, there is a 10% pass rate

in English and a 30% increased pass rate in science for students who have been there for more than one year. They are requesting partial accreditation to allow for the work to continue without the stigma of failure.

Nancy Hicks, Brunswick County director of curriculum and instruction, spoke about excessive teacher absenteeism at Meherrin-Powellton Elementary School and Totaro Elementary School. The nineteen teachers at Meherrin Elementary accumulated 265 absences. Twenty-one percent of the teachers missed more 10% of instructional time. The twenty-eight teachers at Totaro Elementary missed a total of 371 days of absences. Twenty-five percent missed more than 10% of instructional time. One teacher, who taught in all core areas in a testing grade level, missed 42.5 days. Human Resources is looking at the current leave policies and examining ways increase comraderies, relationships and morale within the schools and looking at efforts to promote wellness activities. Excessive student absenteeism and behavioral issues is also a challenge. The division is currently working to implement the Virginia tiered system of support and its positive behavioral interventions and supports components.

Dr. Ashby Kilgore, superintendent of Newport News City Schools, noted that the infrastructure for SOL achievement in Newport News school has supported growth in all 38 schools. The number of fully accredited schools has doubled in the past four years. All six high schools are fully accredited for the first time since 2010 and a denied school earned full accreditation this year. Staff changes at several of the schools have shown a marked difference. This stability of leadership and teacher continuity has translated to increases in SOL scores. Two Newport News schools have been awarded two extended learning grants. These grants will be used to extend after hours instruction at each of these schools.

Presentation: Review of Requests for an Initial Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools Meeting the Reconstitution Eligibility Criteria

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement (OSI), gave a presentation on several items that would be before the Board during its September 28 meeting and the Board has been asked to waive the first review at that meeting.

Ms. Rabil explained that there were three categories of schools: (1) those schools who are entering their fourth year of not being fully accredited; (2) those schools that were rated Partially Accredited, Reconstituted for 2016-17; and (3) those schools that were rated Accreditation Denied for 2016-17. Within each of those three categories, one of the follow actions was before the Board: (1) requesting initial or continued reconstituted status and meeting the eligibility rubric for doing so; (2) submitting an appeal for reconstituted status as a result of not meeting the eligibility rubric requirements; or (3) entering into a school-level memorandum of understanding as a school that is denied accreditation.

Ms. Rabil gave the Board an overview of the rubric criteria and provided examples on how schools can meet the criteria set out in the rubric. Ms. Rabil then updated the Board on 14 schools that have not met accreditation for four years and the efforts being made to obtain accreditation.

A Board member asked if they should be concerned that they do not have all of the applications yet. Ms. Rabil explained that the schools whose applications will be submitted at the end of November are the schools whose scores fall with five points of the English passing score. The timeline was tight and those schools had not had the opportunity to submit their applications. These schools have been notified and pending Board action they will have to submit.

Presentation: Review of Requests for Continued Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools Meeting the Reconstitution Eligibility Criteria

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, indicated that there are 16 schools that currently have a Reconstitution Plan and are seeking to continue this designation. One school, Hurt Park Elementary School in Roanoke City, received this designation because of principal replacement eligibility. All others used the requirements found in the rubric.

One Board member asked how one of the schools, which did not meet the standard for science, still qualified. Ms. Rabil explained that in the eligibility rubric, if you do not meet the metrics for math, science and history, but you do meet the requirements around principal replacement, you are meeting the metric of the rubric.

Presentation: Review of Appeals for an Initial Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools Not Meeting the Reconstitution Eligibility Criteria

Ms. Atkinson explained that the next group of schools did not meet the eligibility criteria and is appealing. Staff has developed a two-page appeal application. Dr. Staples explained that upon review of these applications, DOE staff had determined that most appeals fall into the following categories: the school experienced staffing challenges (including long-term substitutes), teachers with little or no experience, excessive teacher absences, principal turnover, or discipline data. It was also determined that new principals assigned during the 2017-18 has experience in a similar school, but previously served as an assistant principle or served a different demographic. It was also determined that the school may have had achievements, but does not meet the criteria in the rubric.

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, explained that there are 18 schools listed that did not meet either of the metrics for Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School and are thus submitted an appeal form. The schools were grouped into three categories: school with compelling evidence to support reconstitution, school with some evidence to support reconstitution and those with little or no evidence to support reconstitution based on what is in the two page appeal document. This item will be on first review before the Board at its September 28 meeting.

A Board member asked why the plans for improvement were not included with the application. Ms. Rabil explained that the appeal does not ask for a plan. The Board member asked why there is no request for a plan and how the Board is to assess the division without knowing their plan. Ms. Rabil explained that the appealed asked for data as to why the eligibility rubric was not met. For schools that are new before the Board, they will work with OSI staff to develop a plan. For those schools that have been before the Board before, the division already has an Memorandum

of Understanding (MOU) and a plan is in place. The process is that the appeal form will provide insight into why the requirements have not been met and then OSI will work with the division to develop a plan.

A Board member asked where the data is for those schools that already had a plan to access how they are doing. Though the school may not have achieved the desired result yet, are they taking the right steps to reach that goal? Ms. Rabil explained that the process takes time. Once a plan has been developed, it takes multiple visits with that school to determine proper steps. Some schools have had their plans in place for a year and have been working with OSI. There is an effort to be an advocate for both the school and the student. The Board does not traditionally receive an in depth progress report on each school's plan and it's progress.

Ms. Rabil further explained that the purpose of the process is to allow those schools who have not met the requirements of the rubric to provide additional information that would explain why the school has not performed better.

A Board member asked whether schools had to have a plan in their prior status because they have all been partially reconstituted or accredited with warning for some time. Dr. Staples explained that it would depend upon how they earn reconstituted status originally.

A Board member thought that it would be reasonable for those reconstituted schools, where the rubric indicates that they don't qualify that have had a plan, yet they submit an appeal, to show how they are doing in their efforts to meet eligibility.

Presentation: Review of Appeals for a Continued Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools Not Meeting the Reconstitution Eligibility Criteria

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, explained that this represents 21 schools that already have a reconstitution plan in effect and have worked with OSI over the past year and are appealing to obtain partially accredited status. It is important to note that schools were asked to provide context around the data provided in their appeal form versus write a plan.

Dr. Staple emphasized that schools were limited to two pages in an effort to limit the paperwork the Board would need to review during the meeting.

One Board member suggested that the Board focus its attention on those schools that show little or no evidence to support reconstitution to be more efficient when reviewing. Within that group, staff was asked to include any additional information provided by these schools in the Subcommittee binder with the two page appeal form.

One Board member asked are we helping these schools by advancing these appeals. Are we driving meaningful change at the school level and improving these schools by granting the appeals? Or does it help the superintendents who are being graded on whether their schools are obtaining accreditation?

Board members discussed that one of the challenges is that the data that the Board looks at year after year is not based on the same population. The Board looks at the data as if it is connected in some way, but it's really not. There is concern that it causes the focus to be on what a school division looks like instead of the student's progress. The bottom line is that accreditation is the bottom line. It is tied to money.

Board members discussed the rubric and the eligibility requirements. Staff explained that the rubric was DOE's attempt to quantify and to define "progress." The discussion also included a discussion about the stigma associated with a school that has been denied accreditation. One Board member stated that accreditation matters.

Another Board member noted that upon graduation, colleges and employers do not ask if their school was accredited. Instead they ask whether students can handle college-level work or whether a graduate possesses the skills to do the job.

One Board member stated that they felt the additional information is important to help the Board decide if a school should be awarded accreditation. The supporting documents are extremely helpful. This process may not be perfect, it is moving in the better direction.

Presentation: Review of Requests for Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School for Schools Previously Rated Denied Accreditation

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, reported that there are four schools that have met the rubric. Two in Madison County and are sister schools, Madison Primary and Waverly Yowell Elementary School. These are schools that currently have accreditation denied. These schools had a school-level MOUs and a corrective action plan.

Presentation: Review of Appeal Requests for Rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted Schools for Schools Previously Rated Denied Accreditation

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, reported that there are 21 schools in this category that were previously rated accreditation denied.

The Board members discussed the process for a school to move from being denied accreditation and to partial accreditation. Two Board members stressed the importance of schools to show actual progress before being moved from the denied accreditation status.

Presentation: Review of Memoranda of Understanding as Required of Schools in Accreditation Denied Status

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, reported that these 26 schools are denied accreditation for the first time in 2017-18 and been affirmed through an MOU between DOE and the school division. These MOUs are customized to the needs of the individual division and lays out the corrective action plan for the division. The MOU is written broadly and remains in place until a school is fully accredited. Ms. Rabil explained that the MOU establishes the responsibilities of the schools, the division and DOE to work towards full accreditation.

One Board member asked if staff will be able to complete the diagnostic meetings for all 26 schools this fall. Ms. Rabil explained the process of how the diagnostic meetings are scheduled and who needs to be there. Several DOE offices are involved in diagnostic visits with the individual school. Because of the process and the number of offices involved, DOE has not met with all 26 schools.

Board members asked about the process for taking away funds from a school that has been denied accreditation. Ms. Rabil explained that this is a new requirement and that so far no funds have been taken back.

The Board also discussed the need for schools that have been denied accreditation to be fully aware that it is expected that school divisions will collaborate with the DOE to develop an MOU. Dr. Staples emphasized the difference between a division-level MOU and a school-based MOU. A school-based MOU addresses instructional improvements in the classroom specific to the school. DOE does not negotiate very much with the individual school because it does not involve the overall operation of the division as in a division-level review. However, on the division-level, DOE may be willing to negotiate in more areas because of the impact it may have.

One Board member stated that she believes the labels matter and it is important that some schools are denied accreditation because it pushes the school division to do certain things, make certain changes that need to be done or should have been done, but for whatever reason has not been done to improve instruction in the classroom.

Presentation: Review of Request for Division-Level Review for Greenville County Public Schools

Bev Rabil, Director, Office of School Improvement, reported that Greenville has four schools: two elementary, a middle school and a high school. A chart has been provided to show the progress towards accreditation in Greenville. Only one of Greenville's schools is fully accredited based on the legislation passed in 2016. The 2016 legislation established that if a school is fully accredited for three consecutive years, it will be accredited for three more years. This school was fully accredited in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, therefore the school will be fully accredited through 2018-19. However, this school has not met the accreditation benchmarks in math for two consecutive years. DOE has provided technical assistance and met with the school division to access progress. Once approved by the Board, DOE will begin working with the division to develop an MOU and a corrective action plan.

Dr. Staples noted that Greenville County's superintendent spoke during the public comment phase and acknowledges that the division has been putting forth an effort, but has significant resources challenges and difficulty attracting personnel for all positions. The superintendent provided written comments for the Board to consider.

Presentation: Review of a Proposal to Withhold School Accreditation for 2017-2018 for AP Hill Elementary School in Petersburg City

Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement, gave an update on the proposal to withhold the accreditation for 2017-18 for Petersburg. Based on a review of student and faculty interview, assessment data, and investigation by Petersburg City Public Schools with DOE staff assisting, it was concluded that there were serious testing irregularities during the Standards of Learning (SOL) administration at AP Hill Elementary. Assistance was provided during SOL testing for a significant, yet undetermined, number of students. Because DOE staff cannot determine the number of students who received assistance, all SOL test have been invalidated for the 2016-17 school year. DOE staff is asking the Board to withhold accreditation scores for 2016-17.

Presentation: Update on Public Hearings and Public Comments received relative to proposed amendments to the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA)

Link to presentation: [Summary: Public Comment on the Proposed Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation](#)

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Policy and Communications, provided a summary of the comments received from the five public hearings held around the state during the summer on the amendments to the SOA regulations. DOE staff has also received comments via email and mail. At last count 365 people attended these hearings and 117 comments have been provided as well. Public comments were received from students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, professional associations and businesses. Highlights of the comments include:

Supports:

- Students having more opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned in the 5C's they can apply after graduation.
- The need for students to learn how to work with employers.
- Be prepared to go to higher education.
- Work exposure opportunities would be expanded.
- Reduction in the verified credits.
- Performance-based assessments.
- Support to include multiple indicators for accreditation.
- Incorporate recess into the instructional day

Concerns and suggestions:

- How to incorporate the 5C's in student learning.
- Need for professional development.
- Implementation.
- Consider eliminating some assessments.
- Consider alternate assessments.
- Rural school divisions may have limited opportunities to provide work-based learning.
- Look at the number of school counselors in each school.

- Ensure that students with disability receive education in the 5C's.
- Incorporating the 5C's should not interfere with students participating in the Fine Arts.
- Add "recess" into the definition of "instructional day".

One Board member asked if there was any evidence that recess is being withheld. Dr. Staples agreed that we have received anecdotal stories, but DOE has not done a comprehensive review to determine compliance.

Presentation: Progress Report on the Use of Performance Assessments to Prepare Virginia Students for the World

Link to presentation: [Progress Report on the Use of Performance Assessments to Prepare Virginia Students for the World](#)

Dr. Steve Constantino, Chief Academic Officer and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, gave a presentation on how Virginia has been at the forefront of education. There is a need to continue to develop ways to accurately assess whether Virginia students are receiving education and skills that will be valued in the workplace. Skills that were previously considered "soft skills" are now important in the workforce such as communication, good citizenship and interacting with others.

Dr. Constantino explained that there is still ongoing discussion and concern about testing. There is an effort to teach content, assess that content and apply it to living experience. The goal is measure the 5C's. This can be done through performance assessments. Learn content and apply that content. Through performance assessments, it is expected that the:

- Profile of a graduate will raise the bar for learning.
- Schools and students will still need to demonstrate mastery.
- Approach to assessment must be balanced.
- A system for state-wide continuity will need to be developed.

A Board member asked if there is a plan to ensure that continuity and consistent roll-out will occur around the state. There will be an assessment of all areas of the state to determine who is adopting the changes and who is lagging behind. Dr. Staples emphasized that it will take time for all divisions to incorporate these changes.

A Board member asked to ensure that the term "citizenship" be included consistently when referencing preparing graduates for college and career and that a focus be placed on problem-solving.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:44 p.m.