# Virginia Board of Education Committee on the Standards of Quality

**Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 1:00p.m**

**Board Room, 22nd floor, James Monroe Building**

## Welcome and Opening Comments

The Virginia Board of Education (Board) convened the Standards of Quality Committee on July 21, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was held in-person and open to the public. It was also livestreamed on the [Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) YouTube webpage](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrbxl9wHScrWKWIEoUWNIfQ/videos).

The following Committee members were present for the meeting: Mr. Dan Gecker, Ms. Anne Holton, Dr. Jamelle Wilson, Dr. Tammy Mann, Dr. Francisco Durán, Dr. Stewart Roberson, and Dr. James Lane, superintendent of public instruction,

Other guests in attendance included: Dr. Leslie Sale, director of policy, (VDOE), Ed Lanza, director of budget, and Emily Webb, director of board relations.

## Opening and Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Dan Gecker, chair of the committee, convened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and asked for a motion to adopt the minutes from the June 16th, 2021 committee meeting. Dr. Wilson made a motion to adopt the minutes and Dr. Roberson seconded the motion.

**Discussion of the Committee Presentation**

**Considering Priorities and New Proposals for the 2021 Review of the Standards of Quality (VDOE Staff)**

Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy, provided the Board with a review of updated estimates for the 2019 prescriptions and considerations for future review cycles.

* Mr. Gecker shared that much of the work of the Board from the 2017 to 2019 prescriptions was based on a few concepts: (1) not all teachers teach as effectively at various points of their careers, (2) younger and more inexperienced teachers tend to teach in schools with higher populations of lower socioeconomic students, and (3) the Board aspired to incentivize localities to have a more equitable allocation of teaching talent. This resulted in prescriptions for the K-3 class size reduction and the equity fund. The underlying concept of the equity fund was for school jurisdictions with higher percentages of lower socioeconomic students to receive additional funding resources to hire more experienced teachers and keep classes at current levels or use inexperienced teachers and reduce class sizes. However, the Board’s thought process does not convey clearly when estimated costs are the top headline. The Board wants to change behavior to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. Additional resources are needed to change results and impact behavior. Additionally, the original concept behind the teacher mentorship was to improve teaching skills and improve teacher retention. However, this concept is not clearly articulation when the focus is solely on funding. Mr. Gecker asked for help in recrafting how the Board presents the SOQ prescriptions in order to better understand that it is not about the dollars but the policy. In terms of leadership, principals clearly matter and the Board needs to be clearer in conveying why the Principal Mentor Program is important. The goal is driving better student outcomes and the SOQ prescriptions were about providing the resources necessary to improve student outcomes.
  + Dr. Wilson stated that the “why” is very important in helping people understand and asked how does staff want the Board to view the list of considerations.
  + Dr. Sale stated that the Board can consider what spaces can drive policy changes where there has not been momentum. Which areas can move the needle and have the most meaningful impact at the division level.
  + Dr. Mann asked if there are other ways to think about younger children and the impact from the pandemic.
  + Dr. Durán asked if there was any feedback on why there was no inclusion of the proficiency level for the proposal to change the ratios for English learner teachers.
  + Ms. Holton stated that the Board should think about a different approach to messaging. Money is not irrelevant. It is the Board’s duty to set SOQs to ensure that all students have access to high quality instruction and necessary ancillary support. Since the current SOQs as funded are not meeting that standard, there is a need to enhance the overall resource package and differentiate more based on student need. The research revealed that students in economically disadvantaged families and communities need more to achieve successful outcomes. The bar needs to be raised on resources and there needs to be differentiation of resources.
* Ms. Holton suggested walking through each prescription and consider backing off of some and expanding others. For the specialized student support, the Board recommended 4 FTE per 1,000 students and the GA funded 3 FTE per 1,000 students. Ms. Holton expressed doubt about having evidence based research to support 4 over 3 and asked if it was useful to maintain 4 per 1,000. For the school counselors, the Board had a basis for the recommended ratio of 1 to 250, but if the GA has gone as far as they will go with 1 to 325 ratio, should the Board declare victory. Ms. Holton asked for consideration of expanding the Equity Fund and Work-Based Learning Coordinators. Ms. Holton also asked for clarification on the potential to use the SOQ to upgrade staffing at VDOE on school improvement. For the SOQ for school divisions, how can the Board obtain more resources? For the Equity Fund, how much of the Board’s original recommendation was moving the equity fund (at-risk add-on and Prevention, Intervention and Remediation funds) from outside of SOQs to inside of SOQs, and by what percentage was the enhancement? The research indicates that students from disadvantaged families need as much as a third to a half more in overall resources. What percentage increase differentiation was given to students of lower income families over the overall average?
* Dr. Lane responded to Mr. Gecker’s comments about the intent of the equity fund and the notion of redistribution of teachers. He stated that the language may not be strong enough because divisions were going to use the fund to build out wrap around services. The Board may want to strengthen the language.
* Ms. Holton expressed interest in connecting the language to evidence based data and possibly including an equity fund recommendation that matched the evidence.
* Dr. Sale shared that the Equity Fund had several components, since it is a per pupil add-on. It combined two sources of funding going to school divisions. One being the current at-risk add-on program based exclusively on calculations of free and reduced lunch students. There were no additional contingencies or calculation factors for these funds. There was also the prevention, intervention, and remediation fund which took into account assessments. These funds saw smaller variation between how the money was being directed to wealthier school divisions versus those serving higher poverty students. This would be combining the two sets of funds into a single formula that more mirrors the current at-risk add-on allowing the funding to find its way to more targeted school divisions serving higher poverty students and not accounting for variables that may adjust the numbers. The difference in the add-on percentages in the first and second year were: in 2018- 13% (1st) and 14% (2nd), in 2019- 14.5% (1st) and 16% (2nd), in 2020- 23% (1st) and 26% (2nd), and in 2021 it is 19.9% (1st year) and 26% (2nd year). This would be more of the formula that we want to follow.
* Ms. Holton asked if in year two of the current budget, the SOQ amount for eligible students would increase by 26% over the allotment over other students.
* Mr. Lanza clarified that the add-on program provides for up to a 26% increase over the basic aid per pupil amount. Currently in the Board proposal of the Equity Fund, the methodology recommended in 2019 changed the calculation from a per pupil amount to a positional add-on. The current formula is calculating add-on positions and converting those to a dollar amount based on salaries and benefits. The amount calculated is approximately $430 million. However, the other portion of the Board recommendation is to remove the existing at risk prevention, intervention and remediation program which pulls back about $350 million leaving a statewide net effect of about $77.9 million. Those variances are different based on the division. Also, the existing range for the at risk add-on is a minimum of 1% and a maximum of 26%. Whereas, the Board recommendation for the Equity Fund was a minimum of 10% add-on and a maximum of 65%.
* Ms. Holton asked if the Board’s recommendation was adopted and funded, would it fund 65% above basic aid for divisions with high percentages of needy students.
* Mr. Lanza replied yes and stated that the current at-risk program is a per pupil amount add-on and this is a positional add-on in the Board proposals.
* Mr. Gecker stated that the Board would require that those schools with varying percentages of lower socio-economics would end up with those positions.
* Ms. Holton stated that she would not recommend any changes to the Equity Fund and proposed the consideration of a change to the work-based learning coordinator of a 1 per 1,000 WBL coordinator mandate for high schools.
* Dr. Lane stated that the Board’s previous SOQ prescription for work-based learning coordinators is funded by the Perkins Plan approved last year. For the needs at the high school level, Dr. Lane recommended limiting the ratio to high schools, using high school ratios, conducting more research, and using a broader approach of career coaches combined with WBL coordinators. This SOQ included the regional model with positions at the VDOE. The idea of the regional coordinator involved reviewing the same job data in multiple counties, yet there are different CTE programs in the localities, so how can we coordinate a regional solution to bring business strategy into job training in high schools. Dr. Lane suggested that the Board review what is needed in high schools and refrain from making changes at this time.
* Ms. Holton accepted the amendment of combining WBL coordinators with career coaches.
* Dr. Lane stated that the Board may want to back off on the counselor recommendation for elementary and middle schools but keep the 1 to 250 ratio of counselors in high schools, considering the importance of preparation for college.
* Dr. Duron stated that he would not support reducing the 1 to 250 school counselor ratio and recommended keeping it due to the increased needs of students to in elementary schools, particularly social emotional and mental health needs.
* Dr. Lane commented on how the Board can think differently about the SOQ in the context of COVID and noted that for CARES Act funds, the VDOE can work in partnership with local divisions to help identify priorities in using funds to make a difference in student outcomes.
* Dr. Roberson stated that he hopes that the material that Dr. Lane highlighted in the Commission on School Modernization presentation will be shared during the September presentation for the Board on school facilities.
* Ms. Holton expressed interest in maintaining the school counselors recommendation of 1 to 250 and suggested adding “*school counselors to include work-based learning coordinators*” in order to help clarify the need. Ms. Holton also asked for consideration of withdrawing the 4 per 1,000 for specialized student support personnel.
  + Dr. Lane stated that the GA may not have been done in the approval of 3 rather than 4 per 1,000. For the school counselors, Dr. Lane encouraged the Board first obtain input from VSCA before changing the language.
  + Mr. Gecker stated that he hopes the Board will prescribe SOQ toward the end of 2021 and frame what is being done by first answering the ”why” question and then talking about how we will get there.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2021.

## Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20p.m.