

Standards of Learning Innovation Committee

Meeting Minutes

Full Committee Meeting

Patrick Henry Building

West Reading Room

1111 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219

October 29, 2015 – 10:00am – 1:00pm

Attendees

Present Committee Members:

Grace Chung Becker, Dabney Carr, Jared Cotton, Karen Cross, Kim Dockery, Veronica Donahue, Jenny Sue Flannagan, Deborah Frazier, Sarah Gross, Meg Gruber, Roger Hathaway, Anne Holton, Tara Lateef, Susan Magliaro, Steve Martin, Brian Matney, Laurie McCullough, Stewart Roberson, Roxann Robinson, Alan Seibert, Steve Staples, Karen Thomsen, Chriss Walther-Thomas, Jeoin Ward, William White, Wade Whitehead and Renee Zando.

Absent Committee Members:

Shawnrell Blackwell, Kelly Booz, Jeff Bourne, Terri Breeden, Susanna Burgos, Billy Cannaday, Creigh Deeds, Tag Greason, Lillie Jessie, Rob Krupicka, Jim LeMunyon, Ben Williams, and Sanford Williams

Scribe

Eric Steigleder/Stefani Thachik

Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Update from Department of Education**
- **Update from Board of Education**

- **Remarks by Secretary of Education**
- **Public Comment**
- **Student Panel**
- **Break/Lunch**
- **Update from Assessment 2.0**
- **Discussion of Recommendations and Actions**
- **Next Steps**
- **Adjournment**

Welcome

- **10:05am** – Secretary Anne Holton began the meeting.
 - Provided the welcome remarks to the group for the final full committee meeting prior to the 2016 legislative session.
 - Reviewed the Charge to the Committee, backwards mapping of SOL Innovation Committee process, and agenda for the day.

Update from Department of Education

- Update from Department of Education presented by Dr. Steve Staples.
 - Dr. Steve Staples stated the updates from the Department of Education and the State Board of Education align, so Diane Atkinson and Dr. Steve Staples have divided their talking points.
 - Discussed the Governor McAuliffe’s recent announcement of accreditation ratings which has rolled out new labels including “progressing” and “near benchmark.” These labels seemed more fair instead of the previous all or none ratings and allow for differentiation of schools.
 - Also, Dr. Steve Staples talked about the DOE receiving feedback on the first year experiences of computer adaptive test (CAT), which is recognized as not being perfect, but is showing some promise and helps to move away from single point-in-time testing.

Update from Board of Education

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- Update from Board of Education presented by Diane Atkinson.
 - Diane Atkinson discussed the progress on report cards and the need for funds to launch a new engaging and easy platform.
 - Diane Atkinson talked about the new accreditation ratings which will interact with revisions to the standards and allow for continuous improvement.
 - Also, provided an update on comprehensive review which is moving slower than they would like, but allows it to be thoughtfully done. The Board is looking at high school and what a Virginia graduate should look like. At the most recent Board meeting, there were great presentations on the High School Innovation Grants showing the need for some flexibility in the future, as well as recent presentations from the Assessment 2.0 and Accountability 2.0 Committee Chairs.

Remarks by Secretary of Education

- Secretary Anne Holton thanked the committee for the work and provided updates.
 - Secretary Anne Holton provided an update on the eight educational roundtables held over the past two months. The roundtables were very exciting and indicated that parents, teachers, and students wanted the state to provide more support to schools.
 - Secretary Anne Holton provided staffing updates.
 - Jennie O'Holleran has started a new job serving as a senior policy advisor to the Governor where she will also continue to work on education issues.
 - Holly Coy has joined as the new Deputy Secretary of Education coming from the Lieutenant Governor's office.
 - Amy Harris started this week as the new STEM Coordinator.
 - Provided an update from the Federal Level including status of the ESEA reauthorization, Secretary Duncan's departure, and the recognition that we have gone too far with testing.
 - Discussed Secretary Holton's recent visit with Governor McAuliffe to Alexandria to visit a school that is now fully accredited and was able to see the students engage in experiential learning in the classroom to understand concepts.

Public Comment

- Secretary Anne Holton opened the floor for public comment.
 - Lisa Thompson, a retired Spanish ESL instructor and current community college ESL professor from Chesterfield talked about the demands placed on ESL students as a result of NCLB. Lisa Thompson discussed issues resulting from students using up their one year SOL exemption based on when they arrive, as well as the possibility of using the state adopted language proficiency portion of WIDA access in place of SOL. This would help English Language Learners and teachers focus on language.
 - Donna Saugh from Portsmouth discussed the need to hold the government accountable as it all comes down to money. Donna Saugh talked about the Portsmouth School Citizen's Budget she created to show where the money is and is not spent. Donna Saugh talked about the difficulty in obtaining information and the need to translate what she's reading as people learn differently. Donna Saugh asked the committee to consider what standards there are for students coming from broken families.
 - Sarah Finley, the Director of the Virginia Council on Economic Education, commented on the Draft of SOL recommendations (see DropBox), commending the committee for their beliefs, especially the recognition that this will be multi-year work and require substantial and immediate resources. These resources include time, expertise and dollars to make these goals a reality. Sarah Finley asked the committee to think through the details of next steps and resources to be effective. She also discussed the framework in the document asking for consideration of social studies at primary and high school levels, as some local schools will do well but other schools are struggling for resources, leaderships and to remember people respond to incentives.

Student Panel

- Secretary Anne Holton facilitated a student panel for feedback on their school experiences with a focus on SOL testing and college and career readiness.
 - Panel participants included:

- Kori Abraham, 4th grader from Ettrick Elementary School, Petersburg.
 - Riley Armentrout, 8th grader from Post Oak Middle School, Fredericksburg
 - Camryn Burley, 12th grader from Ocean Lakes High School, Tidewater
 - Michael Dio Davis –Ruskovitz, 12th grader from Matthews High School, Rappahannock.
 - Amelia Gross, 8th grader at Albert Hill Middle School, Richmond.
 - Adam Kelly, 8th grader at Oak Knoll Middle School, Hanover.
 - Davin MacGoy, 12th grader from Potomac Falls High School, Loudon.
 - Caroline McCaig, 12th grader from Open High School, Richmond.
 - Owen McDonald, 5th grader from William Fox Elementary School, Richmond.
 - Haley Nicholson, 10th grader from Hanover High School, Hanover.
 - Mysia Perry, 11th grader from Open High School, Richmond.
 - Nate Roark, 8th grader from Virginia Middle School, Bristol.
 - Aidan Romasser, 5th grader from Robert E. Lee Elementary School, Fredericksburg.
 - TJ Shaffer, 8th grader from Virginia Middle School, Bristol.
 - Sarah Shah, 12th grader from Park View High School, Loudon.
 - Bella Stroh, 10th grader from Spotsylvania High School, Fredericksburg.
- Notes from the panel discussion are included in Appendix A.
 - Secretary Anne Holton thanked the panel.
 - Dr. Stewart Roberson announced a change in the agenda and the group first took a break/lunch and then heard from the Assessment 2.0 committee.

Break/Lunch

- After a 15 minute break, Stewart Roberson concluded lunch. Dr. Stewart Roberson talked about how the student panel, as well as recent Teacher of the Year banquet has inspired him.

Update from Assessment 2.0

- Dr. Jared Cotton updated the full committee on the progress of the Assessment 2.0 subcommittee.
 - Dr. Jared Cotton talked about design principles that have been the focus of discussion, including who is going to test; amount of testing; frequency of testing; local flexibility; format of testing; equity in testing; teacher involvement; content of tests; growth measures; timing of test; on-demand testing; high school flexibility; developmental appropriateness; scoring; and student choice. Many of these principles will continue to be discussed.
 - Dr. Jared Cotton then reviewed the proposed framework (located in Draft of Recommendations- Appendix A in Dropbox). Changes to this document from previous version was inclusion of achievement measures as subcommittee believes in growth, but at some point achievement measures are needed; the reduced amount of measurements in high school; and recognition of English Language Learners and students with severe disabilities in the model.

Discussion of Recommendations and Actions

- Dr. Stewart Roberson thanked the Secretary of Education, Department of Education, Board of Education, Subcommittee Chairs, and Committee members for their work. He also checked to see if any teleconference participants were present.
- Dr. Stewart Roberson discussed the draft of recommendations document (can be found in Dropbox Account). He went over the major changes in the document from the previous version which included:
 - Broadened language to include more references to citizenship and removal of 21st century language.
 - Clarified language, especially in discussing redesign of high school, defining school climate and eliminating jargon.
 - Placed emphasis on the use of growth measures both in document and in framework.

- Addressed additional concerns from the committee including addition of more meaningful standards for a leaner curriculum, scoring (TEI), and comparing schools vs. ranking schools.
- Dr. Stewart Roberson asked for discussion to be divided into discussion of principle 1 and principle 2.
 - Wade Whitehead asked about the idea of prioritizing the documents into short and long term options. Committee members were asked to send their priorities to the steering committee.
- Dr. Stewart Roberson opened the floor for comments on Principle 1 followed by comments on Principle 2. Comments included:
 - Grace Chung Becker asked if the document should discuss verified credits. Dr. Laurie McCullough answered this was addressed in Recommendation 2, b.
 - Dr. Jenny Sue Flannagan asked if there was research available on redesigning high school. Several committee members talked about different research available and current issues in education and workforce alignment.
 - Dr. Kim Dockery asked that in the future the SOL Committee talk more about the alignment issue.
 - The committee discussed including language on the recommendation for English Language Learners that asks subjects that are non-verbal to use plain English, for example math should be about math/numbers. It was asked that this language be used for all students.
 - Dr. Jenny Sue Flannagan stated she wanted to gauge the committee on the inclusion of diagnostic assessments for social studies suggesting that the DOE provides consistent rubrics. Dr. Laurie McCullough agreed this was important and pointed out it is on the radar as the framework includes locally scored assessments. Dr. Jared Cotton said it is not clearly articulated but could be added and framework would include scaffolding throughout. Sue Magliaro also stated rubrics could include scaffolding and would also be a reliability check.
 - Secretary Anne Holton asked that people send in their specific thoughts on priorities, as well as future discussions.
 - Dr. Karen Cross asked that fixing technology enhanced items be a priority.
- Dr. Brian Matney moved to approve the draft of recommendations document.
- Grace Chung Becker seconded the motion.
- The group unanimously voted for acceptance of the document.

Next Steps

- Next Full Committee Meeting Date:

To be scheduled for spring – likely April and June; Subcommittees will likely meet in meantime.

- Following adjournment, a group photo was taken for the report (Photos of meeting included in Appendix A)

Adjournment

- Dr. Stewart Roberson closed the meeting out at 1:00pm.

Student Panel Discussion

Question: What are your thoughts on the SOL and what changes would you suggest to improve the test?

Response from Students:

- Make the tests shorter – typical SOL test takes 3 to 4 hours
- Tests take a long time – students miss class time and get stressed
- English Language Learners are struggling – they have to take a test that is all in English so they are at a great disadvantage and something needs to be done
- There seems to be two groups of students – good test takers and bad test takers; tests are redundant for students who are already high performing
- There is a lot of overlap in SOL tests and AP tests, as well as missed class time because many tests are scheduled for same day
- Need on-demand testing and pacing

Question: What makes a good teacher?

Responses from Students:

- Students discussed the need for teachers who are fully engaged in student's academic lives – teachers who push them to succeed instead of criticizing them for failing.
- Emphasis on teachers who are flexible and cooperative.

Question: What are your life goals? What will make for a successful adulthood?

Responses from Students:

- Wants to help people get homes and get food
- Would like to get her doctorate – like to work at NASA, plan the human mission to Mars
- Main thing right now is just getting into college – a good college means a good job – a good job is something that is rewarding and that she gets paid well for.
- Wants to go to college, and then become a teacher and a preacher on his time off.
- Interested in foreign diplomacy, Peace CORPS, work with the State Department.
- Interested in international affairs – wants to go to law school to become a lawyer – schools should offer access to careers they may not be aware of.
- Wants to play football or basketball, but wants to be a teacher – wants to be an inspiration

Question: So how do we remake high school to better connect to the work world and beyond?

Responses from Students:

- More job fairs, more opportunities to do internships or shadow people to see if that would be something you would be interested in doing.
- Emphasis on real-world experience – too rigid and students feel limited
- Need to open up new career opportunities to students, especially, connecting more girls to the STEM careers – students don't even know that many of these new fields offer jobs and careers.
- Discussion of just how important core classes are – may be interesting, but if it doesn't fit into what you want to do, you forget it - they also potentially take away from other classes that better fit into what a student wants to do for a career.

Question: Have you taken personal finance and economics class and what are your thoughts on the class?

Responses from Students:

- Took it online - said these classes weren't actually helpful – says personal finance needs to be more applicable to student's lives.
- Found the class really helpful – more geared towards everyday life.
- Hasn't had a good experience with the personal finance and economics course – mostly reading chapters, watching videos, and non-applicable course work.
- Wishes she had a good experience – generally bored – most of the economics was from 8th grade civics – personal finance didn't teach much of anything.
- Concept of the class is great, but the in action, it isn't so great.

Questions from the audience:

Gracie Chung Becker: Are you feeling a lot of pressure to pass the SOL?

Responses from Students:

- **Consensus:** Yes, there is a lot of pressure – teachers are teaching to the test – you are learning this because it's going to be on the SOL – teachers are pressured which transfers to the students –
- In the last 9 weeks, students stop being creative, and start getting serious – no one has any fun, no one goes on field trips. It's easy to learn and have fun.

Wade Whitehead: What do SOL tests tell us about you or not tell us about you?

Responses from Students:

- **Consensus:** Absolutely nothing. Their high school experience cannot be boiled down to one test.
- The SOL tests tell us how well I can take a test, but not how well I can think of the answer
- SOLs tell what kind of a tester someone is, but that's it.

Deborah Frazier: How can you demonstrate what you've learned? Examples?

Responses from Students:

- **Consensus:** more projects, flexibility, less emphasis on the tests.

Group Photos from 10-29-15 Meeting



