

Standards of Learning Innovation Committee

Meeting Minutes

Elementary Subcommittee Meeting

Jefferson Conference Room, Monroe Building

October 14, 2014 1:00-4:00pm

Attendees

Present Committee Members:

Shawnrell Blackwell, Chris Braunlich, Dabney Carr, Kim Dockery, Jenny Sue Flannagan, Deborah Frazier, Tag Greason, Meg Gruber, Roger Hathaway, Sue Magliaro, Laurie McCullough, John Miller, Karen Thomsen, William White, Wade Whitehead, Ben Williams, Stewart Roberson, Steve Staples.

Kelly Booz, Alan Seibert, Tara Lateef, and Jared Cotton were present via conference call.

Absent Committee Members:

Lillie Jessie and Creigh Deeds,

Scribe

Frank Gilhooly/Michelle Kirby/Lisa Jackson

Agenda

- Welcome
- Panel Discussion
- Discussion of Recommendations
- Next Steps/Schedule of Future Meetings
- Closing Comments

- Adjourn

Call to Order

- **1:04pm** – Stewart Roberson (Chair of Committee) called meeting to order and presented opening remarks.
 - Presented the idea of having a set draft for the November 6th full committee meeting
 - Began with introductions of the subcommittee

Welcome

- Deborah Frazier offered welcome comments to the committee
 - Offered thanks to persons involved in meeting preparation
 - Reviewed the agenda for the meeting
 - Reviewed committee mission statement and beliefs
 - Introduced the panel participants

Panel Discussion

- Panel Participants:
 - Tamma Farara, Kara Watt, Madeline Ward, Morgan Saxby, Theresa Lewis
- Points for discussion for the panel were:
 - Experiences with SOL
 - Morgan Saxby: Good experience. Approach comes from how teachers approach the test. If teacher project calm demeanor, students stay calm.
 - Madeline Ward: SOLs are too much for students, and can be overwhelming. Elementary grades should be focusing on math numeracy and reading literacy.
 - Kara Watt: Students are upset about SOLs even though they will do well. Most pressure comes from the parents.

- Tamma Farara: Grateful that there are no science or social studies testing. Worries about the developmental implications for young children.
- Theresa Lewis: Students are very anxious in the spring. Parents should be prepared just as the students are, emphasize better communication between all parties.
- Observation of students' experiences
 - Question: Jenny Sue Flannagan – Anxiety and stress was mentioned, where is that pressure coming from?
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – School systems and that accreditation is wrapped up in the scores which raise anxiety in the schools. Students cannot do the normal things during the spring.
 - Answer: Madeline Ward - Whole schools are rated on one score. Often ESOL students don't pass, and schools get knocked down because of that. The curriculum is packed; content is added but never taken away. Teachers have to be parents, teach students rules and manners and content, too much on plates. Pressure comes from above. Curriculum is an inch deep and a mile wide.
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Exams are low stakes for students but very high stakes for adults. Very high stakes for teacher's lives at schools that are accredited with warning.
 - Answer: Theresa Lewis – There is pressure to not fall into priority category.
 - Question: Online Participant – What is it like to function without data to answer what your students did wrong?
 - Answer: Kara Watt – Feelings of stress when students don't pass.
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Takes two years for test to be released. A whole year passes before the next test is released.
 - Question: Dabney Carr - In prior year, teachers have not received test results in a timely manner, has that been your experience? Would it be helpful to get results quickly?
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Scores are obtained quickly.
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Scores obtained immediately. Scores are the only piece of information obtained, nothing more.
 - Answer: Madeline Ward – Teachers not allowed to look at test during the testing period. There are no resources to allow students to practice on the

online testing tool, even though the assessments are administered on them. It is a lot to expect of students.

- Question: Chris Braunlich – Is expedited retake or rapid feedback more important to teachers and students?
 - Answer: Kara Watt – Expedited retakes are more beneficial to elementary students, allow for remediation.
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Expedited retakes are more important because so much comes into play with young students.
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Neither is needed. Elementary level lacks information about expedited retakes. Could be beneficial to deal with individual student issues.
 - Question: William White – A system with high stakes pressure on teachers and students, how to prevent learning from being just about math and reading?
 - Answer: Madeline Ward – A program of studies allow flexibility.
 - Answer: Kara Watt – Schools can conduct cross-curricular activities. Always teach science and history in other courses, for example teaching planets in language arts.
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Science and social studies considered to be the fun parts.
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Figuring out how to get students a rich social studies and science experience can be a struggle.
 - Question: Sue Magliaro – When tests results are returned, how do you why a student passed or failed?
 - Answer: Theresa Lewis – From examination of prior assessments given before the SOLs.
 - Kara Watt: Keeping a data binder of students’ progress. SOLs are not a conformation.
- Common assessment used in school divisions
 - Tamma Farara – School uses common assessments, with a quarterly math benchmark that is done across divisions.
 - Kara Watt – Interactive assessments completed for all four subjects.
 - Madeline Ward – Utilize a district test bank for content areas.

- Morgan Saxby – Math subject uses a common assessment that attempts to mimic technology enhanced items.
 - Theresa Lewis – Content specialist create common assessments and an outside consultant works with the division to create those.
 - Question: With the benchmarking, how many days does it take?
 - Answer: Kara Watt – Benchmarks have been removed, would waste a lot of time testing students.
- Exploration of ways to demonstrate mastery of standards
 - Madeline Ward – Developmental Reading Assessments.
 - Kara Watt – Rubrics can be used. Students required to dig deep into their understanding of content. Use of project based learning.
 - Morgan Saxby – With math, it would be useful to examine the work behind the answer. Can understand why they got the problem wrong.
 - Question: Online Participant - Do panelist feel technological enhanced items (TEI) are there to encourage or discourage students?
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Math it is difficult.
 - Answer: Madeline Ward – Students don't have stamina when they get to the SOLs. Are the SOLs testing what they know or endurance?
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Would prefer interesting, complex problems.
 - Question: Roger Hathaway – How do we assure in professional development of educators there is consistency across divisions and the state?
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – Unsure
 - Answer: Kara Watt – To be consistent, new ideas need to be brought to the districts. It is a work in progress.
 - Answer: Madeline Ward – Have a better understanding of train the trainer.
 - Answer: Theresa Lewis – There is a lack of consistency within divisions. It all starts from the top.
 - Vision for a new testing and accountability system
 - Question: Deborah Frazier – What is your vision? What are the demographics of your school?

- Answer: Theresa Lewis – It is stressful as a parent to prepare students. It is a need to cut down questions from 40 to 20. School demographics: Title I, 700 students, prefer for the SOLs to be eliminated.
 - Answer: Morgan Saxby – Ensure teachers are teaching what should be, and that every student receives a good education. School demographics: Title I, 700 students, diverse population, no need for SOL for all subjects.
 - Answer: Madeline Ward – Include project based learning into testing. SOLs are about accountability. School demographics: middle school, don't like high stakes testing.
 - Answer: Kara Watt – To see assessment of student growth that is also ongoing. School demographics: Title I, 850 students.
 - Question: Wade Whitehead – Do you believe teachers are trusted over the past decade, and if not do you believe trusting teacher would have to be a fundamental part in a new accountability system?
 - Answer: Tamma Farara – SOLs have come around because teachers have not been trusted.
- **Deborah Frazier called for a 10 minute break after wrapping up the panel discussion.**

Discussion of Recommendations

- Subcommittee members were broken into groups of 4 to discuss the draft interim recommendations.
- The groups were tasked with considering the questions:
 - Do the principles reflect what you believe rises from those principles?
 - Do you believe this is in a form to advance to the full committee
- Group 1/Principle I Recommended Revisions (underlined portions signifies the principle and recommendation group was in charge of reviewing)
 - I. **Statement of Principle: The state should utilize the existing revision schedule for the Standards of Learning to ensure that the learning needs of today's students are addressed in the revised standards. The implementation timeline should allow sufficient time for the incorporation of new content and skills into the curriculum before their inclusion in the state tests used for accountability.**

1. Recommend to the Board of Education and the Department of Education that the review process for the Standards of Learning ensures that the revised standards include the knowledge and skills that are most important and relevant to students' future success. To support this goal, the revision process should include opportunities for input from businesses, institutes of higher education, and citizens.
2. Recommend to the Board of Education and the Department of Education that the revised Standards of Learning focus on the knowledge and skills that are essential to students' future success. Such a focus may result in fewer learning goals.
3. Recommend that the General Assembly support funding for the movement of additional tests to a Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) format. The use of a CAT format which will allow for on demand testing and additional opportunities for retests.
4. Recommend legislation that provides opportunities for expedited re-takes for students in elementary and middle school levels who have failed the tests initially. Such opportunities would be provided as an option for students and parents; students would not be required to retake a failed test.

Suggestions:

- Work toward fewer standards and broader goals that reflect the cognitive complexity and higher order thinking skills (that are developmentally appropriate) for Virginia's children.
- Support research on the innovative practices in VA's school divisions that address complex thinking and higher order thinking, and related assessment practices. These projects would be collaborations between the school divisions, IHEs, and the VDOE.
- Revise the current standards and assessments according to the current schedule.
- Revise standards based on input from all stakeholder groups including business, IHEs, as well as public school educators, parents, and students.
- Standards and assessments need to be revised in concert.
- Implementation schedule should allow sufficient time for incorporation of new content and skills into the curriculum for their inclusion in the state tests used for accountability.
- Support funding for explorations of personalized learning as assessment, including alternative assessments using computer adaptive testing.

- Consider ‘expedited retakes’ (currently available only to high school students) as an option for students and parents.
- Group 2/Principle II Recommended Revisions (underlined portions signifies the principle and recommendation group was in charge of reviewing)

II. **Statement of Principle: The state accountability system should allow for a balance between alternative assessments and the existing assessments that comprise the state assessment system, allowing for autonomy and flexibility within school districts.**

- 5. Recommend that the General Assembly provide funding for pilots at the local level that can demonstrate the use of effective authentic alternative measures.
- 6. Recommend that, as the Standards of Accreditation are revised, the Board of Education include opportunities for the use of alternative assessments in the school accreditation system in addition to the SOL tests and other tests that currently comprise the Virginia Assessment Program.

Suggestions:

- Recommendation 5:
 - Funding should be in Governor’s budget to have DOE be able to provide technical assistance as needed on alternate assessments.
 - Suggested getting rid of “pilots” in the text.
- Recommendation 6:
 - Board of Education should use alternative assessments to the maximum extent possible, under federal requirements, moving towards interdisciplinary assessments in the Standards of Accreditation revision.
- Group 3/Principle III Recommended Revisions (underlined portions signifies the principle and recommendation group was in charge of reviewing)

III. **Statement of Principle: The state accountability system should recognize individual student growth and year-to-year progress of schools.**

- 7. As the Standards of Accreditation are revised, recommend that the Board of Education consider accrediting schools on a three -year cycle rather than annually.

Schools who do not meet accreditation would be permitted to request that their accreditation rating be recalculated the following year.

8. As the Standards of Accreditation are revised, recommend that the Board of Education consider adding accreditation ratings to recognize progress in meeting the accreditation benchmarks or to recognize student growth. For example, schools that have not met the pass rates required for full accreditation but have shown improvement or those whose students have demonstrated significant growth might be rated as “provisionally accredited—progress demonstrated.”
9. As the Standards of Accreditation are revised, recommend that the Board of Education consider adding an appeals process for schools that are not fully accredited or do not show improvement in the pass rates. Such an appeals process would allow schools to submit evidence of student growth from other assessments as evidence of progress.

Suggestions:

- Should do some rewording to include suggest development means to recommend recognition of individual student growth.
 - Recommendation 7:
 - Interested in understanding how accreditation will be calculated if system cycles were revised to a 3-year plan.
 - Recommendation 8:
 - Interested in understanding how student growth is defined and how it will be measured.
 - Recommended that a system should be developed to measure student growth.
 - Recommendation 9:
 - Group suggested that such an appeals process as implicit is impractical due to current staffing vs. potential number of schools.
- Group 4/Principle IV Recommended Revisions (underlined portions signifies the principle and recommendation group was in charge of reviewing)

IV. **Statement of Principle: Additional opportunities for students to meet both the standard credit and verified credits required for graduation should be provided.**

10. Recommend legislation and funding to allow local school divisions to pilot alternative ways for students to demonstrate competency and to earn standard credits outside of the traditional Carnegie units.
11. Recommend legislation and funding to allow for local school divisions to pilot authentic alternative assessments that will provide additional opportunities for students to earn verified credits.
12. Recommend that, as the Standards of Accreditation are revised, that the Board of Education consider modifying the criteria associated with the locally awarded verified credits to expand their availability to students. School divisions would be permitted to award verified credits to students who have demonstrated proficiency in the content through an alternative assessment without the requirement that students take and fail the SOL tests prior to being considered for a locally awarded verified credit.

Suggestions:

- Recommendation 10:
 - Suggested clarity of intent, and eliminating jargon of the recommendations
 - Concerned with maintaining the quality of the curriculum
- Recommendation 11:
 - Group did not identify any changes needed for this recommendation.
- Recommendation 12:
 - Group questioned whether the current system was considered to be broken? Whether we want students to graduate without taking any SOL? and Is there potential for abuse at local level?

Next Steps/Schedule of Future Meetings

- Subcommittee was reminded of the upcoming teleconference meeting on October 27
- Deborah asked for additional feedback on principles by Friday October 17
- Next Meeting:
 - Subcommittee Meeting:
 - October 27, 2014 – teleconference Elementary Subcommittee, 10:00am

- October 27, 2014 – teleconference Secondary Subcommittee, 11:00am
- Full Committee Meeting
 - November 6, 2014 – time and location TBD

Closing Comments

- Stewart Roberson provided closing remarks to the subcommittee.

Adjourn

- **4:05pm** – Stewart Roberson adjourned meeting.