

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BOARD OF EDUCATION
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

MINUTES:
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY

August 29, 2002

Members of the Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality met on August 29, 2002, in Senate Room A of the General Assembly Building, Richmond, Virginia, with the following members present:

Dr. Gary L. Jones, chair
Mrs. Susan L. Genovese
Mr. Scott Goodman
Mr. Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.

Mr. Mark C. Christie and Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary were also present.

Dr. Jones presided and called the committee meeting to order at 12:45 p.m. He opened the meeting by welcoming all persons in attendance. Dr. Jones then called on Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications at the Department of Education, who gave an overview of the meeting agenda. Mrs. Wescott explained that Department of Education (DOE) staff have prepared briefing papers on some of the major issues raised during the public comment period to assist the committee in its deliberations and that the briefing papers will be presented at this meeting.

Technology Staffing and Support

Lan Neugent, assistant superintendent for technology, gave this report. Mr. Neugent described the background and the status of the technology initiatives in Virginia's schools. He also described the current educational technology requirements, the Technology Standards of Learning, and technology standards for instructional personnel. Mr. Neugent then responded to questions from the committee members. One suggestion was raised regarding forming partnerships and regional consortia to help school divisions with technology integration and other technical support needs.

Instructional Personnel K-3

Michelle Parker, policy analyst for the Department of Education, gave a presentation on instructional personnel in grades K-3. The presentation included a review of the current requirements in the SOQ, the findings in the JLARC study, a summary of the public comments regarding class size, and a research review.

The research review included information regarding practices in Virginia and studies conducted in three states, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and California. The presentation concluded with considerations for consideration by the Board of Education.

Board members commented on the impact on school divisions if classes were to be reduced and suggested that perhaps the class size in kindergarten through third grades should be reduced in schools with the largest percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunches or in the schools where the students have the lowest academic achievement.

Staff was asked to conduct further research to determine the size of classes in the highest scoring schools and the schools most in need of academic support, the fiscal impact of raising the number of teachers required per 1,000 students, and establishing a specific number of teachers for K-3. Staff was also asked to begin expanding upon some of the considerations that were presented to the committee.

K-3 Class Size Reduction Program

Dan Timberlake, assistant superintendent for finance, presented a review of the K-3 Class Size Reduction Program, an incentive-based program to provide additional funding for school divisions to reduce class sizes in kindergarten through third grade below the required class sizes established in the SOQ. The program is available to all schools with grades kindergarten through third grade. It is codified in the SOQ, although it is a voluntary program. School divisions are allowed to count the time spent by resource teachers when calculating the pupil-teacher ratios for this initiative, but are not allowed to count special education teachers. In fiscal year 2002, 796 schools participated in this program. The total state cost of the program was \$65.7 million in fiscal year 2002.

Mrs. Genovese asked if there is data showing the effect of reduced class size and student achievement, especially for students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Mr. Timberlake responded that there has been a correlation between student achievement and students eligible for free or reduced lunch, but that correlation is breaking down. It is not clear if student achievement is improving because of the K-3 Class Size Reduction Program, the Early Reading Initiative, or the At-Risk Four-Year-Old Program, or a combination.

Mr. Jackson commented about resource teachers being included in the calculations, which reduces the pupil-teacher ratio but not the class size. He asked if staff could determine the impact of not including the resource teachers in the calculations and report back to the committee.

Principals and Assistant Principals

Regina Hervey, policy analyst at the Department of Education, presented a report regarding the staffing of principals and assistant principals. A report titled, *A Review of Elementary and Secondary School Funding*, published by the Joint Legislative Audit and

Review Committee (JLARC) revealed a significant discrepancy between the SOQ staffing requirements and actual staffing practices by local school divisions. Public comments compiled from recent public hearings on the SOQ strongly supported a full-time principal in each elementary building and full-time or increased staffing of assistant principals at both elementary and secondary levels.

Concluding the presentation, Dr. Jones expressed interest in a study of staffing practices at low-performing schools compared to staffing practices of high-performing schools with similar demographics. The committee also requested additional information of consideration number three regarding the number of schools that would be affected by reducing the SOQ staffing requirement of assistant principals from one full-time at 600 students to one full-time assistant principal at 500 students.

Limited English Proficiency

Melissa Velazquez, policy analyst at the Department of Education, presented a report addressing the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students was provided to the committee. The presentation included the definition of a Limited English Proficient student contained in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and current state law addressing educating students for whom English is a second language. The presentation also provided comments received from representatives of English as a Second Language programs throughout the state, research reviewed regarding the needs of LEP students, and considerations for the Board of Education when revising the Standards of Quality (SOQ) to address the needs of LEP students.

After the conclusion of the presentation Dr. Jones, chairman of the committee, commented that if the Board of Education chooses to include the needs of LEP students in revisions to the SOQ, the board would be moving into new territory since there is not currently any specific requirements in the SOQ for LEP students.

Technical Revisions

Mrs. Wescott presented a report on the first draft of suggested technical revisions to the Standards of Quality.

Next Committee Meeting

Dr. Jones asked the DOE staff to poll the committee members to set a date for the next committee meeting.

Adjournment

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Submitted by Margaret N. Roberts