

**MINUTES**  
**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Committee on School and Division Accountability**  
**May 21, 2014**  
**2:30 P.M.**  
**Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building**

**Welcome and Opening Comments**

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the May 21, 2014 Committee on School and Division Accountability meeting: Diane Atkinson; Christian Braunlich; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr; James Dillard; Darla Edwards; Andrew Ko; Winsome Sears; and Joan Wodiska. Dr. Steven Staples, the superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Mrs. Atkinson, chairman of the committee, convened the meeting and welcomed the Board members and guests.

**Approval of Minutes from the March 26, 2014 Meeting**

A motion was made to approve the minutes for the March 26, 2014 meeting, the motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved by the committee members.

**Introductory Comments by Mrs. Atkinson**

Mrs. Atkinson said today's meeting is focused on guidelines the Board will develop later this year related to local assessments. The 2014 General Assembly passed and the Governor signed HB 930 and SB 306 which require, among other things, that local school boards annually certify that they have provided instruction and administered an alternate assessment consistent with Board guidelines to students in grades three through five in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Today the Board has invited the Virginia Consortium of Social Studies Specialists and College Educators and the Virginia Association of Science Teachers to provide feedback to this committee related to the local assessments. The Board through this committee intends to hear from other stakeholders in the coming months as it works to develop the necessary guidelines.

**Public Comment**

Mrs. Atkinson then opened the floor for public comment.

Emily Webb (who is with the Virginia School Board Association) spoke on behalf of the Virginia Assessment and Accountability Roundtable. She introduced representatives from organization members: the Virginia Education Association (VEA), Virginia

Association of School Superintendents (VASS), Virginia School Board Association (VSBA), Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP), Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP), Virginia Parent-Teacher Association (VPTA), and Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD). She stated that this group first met to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current assessment and accountability system. On behalf of the group, she asked the Board, as it undertakes the process of developing guidelines, to draw on the best thinking in the field regarding assessment practices that not only measure but also improve learning. She also asked that the Board encourage school divisions to utilize and share existing locally-developed assessments, as well as support professional development related to the design and interpretation of alternative assessments. The group would like to be a resource to the Superintendent, the Board, and the department, as these guidelines are developed. The Roundtable has issued a report regarding Virginia's accountability and assessment system, and she provided copies of that report to the Board members.

Dr. Alan Seibert began his comments by saying that he was wearing three hats today. He is president of VASS, the superintendent of Salem City Public Schools, and the father of three boys in grades four, six, and eleven. He said he wanted to talk about four topics.

- Regarding HB 930, VASS asks that the Board make the guidelines very broad and very brief. There is an opportunity here to affirm teachers and say to teachers, we acknowledge that you are already assessing your students on these standards, you are doing it well, and you know how your boys and girls are doing so certify that to your principal who will certify that to your superintendent and he will certify that to the state Board. The goal of HB 930 was to allow some room to innovate, and, if the guidelines are onerous and create a new set of assessments, there will not be an opportunity to do some new and different things.
- Prepare now for the outcomes of the current assessment season. A few years ago he said we went with new standards, new technology-enhanced items, and new higher cut scores. He noted that he said then that changing three variables at the same time would put us into a quandary and it is about to do so. The Board and the department are encouraged to begin planning now for the outcomes of this assessment season.
- Title I schools face a double jeopardy. Based on the requirements for each accountability program, divisions may be identified as successful in one and failing in the other while the overall achievement level of the total cohort may be quite similar. After pointing out several scenarios in his handout, he asked that the Board give thought to schools that find themselves with these challenges.

- He referenced the handouts that he provided to the Board. The first was a document from Batelle for Kids that illustrates how a more complete picture of student learning requires measures of student achievement and measures of student progress. As we begin thinking of assessment, he said we should remember that we are very good at measuring achievement, but we need to do more about measuring growth. He then contrasted the Standards of Learning (SOL) test results of a fourth grade student as compared to his MAP [Measures of Academic Progress] test results which showed his significant academic growth. There are better tools available, and he said his organization looks forward to assisting the Board with this process.

Fred Hoffman spoke on behalf of the Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition (VMSC). He said it is interesting that the Standards of Accreditation are being reviewed at this time as consideration is given to a change that will allow students to earn credits without doing 140 seat hours but by showing competency by assessment processes within the school. The implementation of the House and Senate bills is something that provides lots of excitement and concern. He said there is excitement because this opportunity may provide a chance to have a real impact on assessment. He referenced a list of definitions recognized by his organization as they believe it is critical that they have a common vocabulary as these issues are discussed. He said the Coalition would welcome the opportunity to be involved in this process if possible. However, it is concerned about the lack of funding and there are other resources that need to be available at the district and classroom level.

Mrs. Atkinson then asked if there was anyone else who wished to provide public comment. Because there were no other speakers, she moved on the next agenda item.

### **Presentation from the Virginia Consortium of Social Studies Specialists and College Educators**

Cathy Hix (president), Meredith Rapp (president-elect), and William Brazier (past president) represented the Virginia Consortium of Social Studies Specialists and College Educators during this presentation. All are supervisor specialists within their school districts.

Ms. Hix spoke on behalf of the group. She said they are really pleased with the direction HB 930 is taking social studies. They believe authentic performance assessment can really measure student growth and inform instruction in social studies. They believe authentic performance assessment is curriculum embedded and standards-based, focused on deeper understanding of content, focused on higher order thinking skills, and often integrated with multiple disciplines. Authentic performance assessment moves students forward because it requires students to demonstrate

understanding, allows students to analyze primary and secondary sources, allows students to improve literacy skills, and equips students to explain, interpret, give perspectives, apply, and synthesize things they would do in a real world situation. It allows students to apply knowledge, reduces de-contextualization of testing, prepares students for college and real world opportunities to problem solve, communicate, create, and collaborate, demonstrates interconnectivity of multiple academic disciplines, and ensures differentiated engagement and personalization of instruction.

She then showed the Board what it would take to put together one of these tasks. She walked them through the process and the variety of documents that would be used to create the product. To implement authentic performance assessments in schools across Virginia, she said we need time to create rich and rigorous assessments, professional development to enrich instruction to prepare for authentic performance tasks and to implement and evaluate these tasks, financial support for task development and professional development for teachers, and clear guidelines from the Virginia Department of Education on defining alternate assessments as authentic performance assessments. Because this organization realizes that this will take some time and expertise, she provided a timeline for consideration with professional development in year one as well as parallel performance instruction. They also believe they can get at least one performance assessment prepared to be delivered at the end of the year. The goal in year two would be full implementation of these authentic performance assessment tasks as the measure of certification of the mastery of the particular content for the non-SOL tested courses. This organization is committed to developing these kinds of tasks. They believe that this kind of assessment will really move the students forward and are committed to working with the state to do this.

Discussion with Board members followed. Issues raised included the following:

- A concern that social studies will not be taught at all because it may no longer be considered a priority by teachers.
- A state-wide assessment (although this is not the expectation).
- School divisions working together cooperatively to develop assessments because resources vary by district.
- Collaboration within the school divisions.
- Necessary additional resources, including funding and professional development.
- Number of social studies teachers currently prepared to implement this.
- Potential spot-checking by the state.
- Timing for administration of assessment.
- Lessons learned from the past as related to the implementation of the SOL.
- A possible credibility gap.
- What is needed to help teachers and school leaders to succeed.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked the group for its presentation.

### **Presentation from the Virginia Association of Science Teachers (VAST)**

Dr. Jenny Sue Flannagan spoke on behalf of the Virginia Association of Science Teachers. She said they wanted to lay out as part of the presentation a road map for success. Some principles to be considered include:

- Principle 1: The alignment between curriculum and assessment.
- Principle 2: Assessment for and of learning.
- Principle 3: Science education is an ecosystem.

Dr. Flannagan said what is great about the science standards is students not only know facts, but they investigate and understand what a scientist does. The brain learns best by seeing, touching, and then making connections. She said we also know that it is important for students to see content build over the years. It is important for teachers to look at not only what is in their grade level standards, but vertically because of sequencing. In Virginia, we are doing things right. Our National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores in the fourth grade are outperforming. In 2011, the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed our eighth grade students were competing and ranked equally with students in Finland and some of the other top countries. In addition, our AP scores have been increasing and continue to increase. This is because of all of the hard work from the VDOE to clearly define what teachers need to do and what students need to know and be able to do. Recognition should also be given to those teachers who are taking time to learn and improve their practice every year.

She said that the task before the Board is very big so she shared a tale of two classrooms and how she saw inquiry in action. She took them through two scenarios where she worked with a teacher and a librarian on lessons, how many SOL these activities covered, and what the impact was on the students.

VAST surveyed its members, and there are some concerns about this bill. If science is not being tested in grade three, what will happen to science in grades one and two?

Whatever is developed needs to measure the SOL, and it should include all grades through sequencing so that the system that we currently have in place continues to give students an accurate picture. Moreover, it should measure student growth over time. This rests with the school boards and should be aligned to the school division's program.

VAST has heard from its members, and it is asking for clear guidelines to help them do their work. Moreover, the guidelines should be reflective of the three principles mentioned earlier. What's most important is that students are getting science. Professional development and financial resources are also needed. Validity and reliability are required. VAST also recognizes that it needs to form partnerships with other organizations, and it is working with VASCD, VMSC, and VSELA as these groups can help to do this work.

The following issues were raised in discussion with the Board:

- Level of staff professional development required.
- Financial resources needed.
- Sequencing of grade-level teaching.
- Implementation this year.
- Chance, if science not taught, students may not have the foundation needed for higher grades.
- How to certify that instruction is provided in science to assure that it is taught.
- Impact on hard-to-staff schools.
- Impact on failing schools.
- Opportunity for innovation.
- Time needed.
- Collaboration and partnerships.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked both groups for their presentations.

### **Discussion of Local Assessment Guidelines in Response to HB 930 and SB 306**

Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for student assessment and school improvement, made this presentation. She prepared an overview of some of the questions the Board had seen previously about the guidelines. She said the Board is at the beginning of the process and will hear from additional groups in June. In addition, the department has asked that the school superintendents be polled about the following questions:

- How quickly do they need the guidelines?
- What issues does the Board need to address in the guidelines?

Those responses are due back tomorrow. Mrs. Atkinson asked the Board members to look at the questions for the next Board meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25.