

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality (SOQ)
May 21, 2014
4:30 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr., Committee Chair, called the meeting to order with the following Board members present: Mrs. Diane T. Atkinson, Mr. Christian N. Braunlich, Mr. James H. Dillard, II, Mrs. Darla Edwards, Mrs. Winsome E. Sears, Mrs. Joan E. Wodiska, Mr. Andrew Ko.

Dr. Cannaday reviewed the meeting's focus on an overview of the Standards of Quality (SOQ), a review of the board's 2012 recommendations and subsequent actions taken by the General Assembly, and a recap of outstanding issues and ways to move forward with the latest review process.

Overview of Current Standards of Quality

Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, presented an overview of the *Standards of Quality* (SOQ) as part of the SOQ review process completed every two years as specified in the *Code of Virginia*. Ms. Wescott detailed each of the 10 Standards now included in the Code, noting that she had the privilege of staffing the SOQ committee since 2002 when the Code began requiring a biannual review of the SOQ. She stated that she would be covering what has been done in the past to inform the SOQ in current law. She noted that although many education stakeholders tend to think of the SOQ as related primarily to funding, it is a policy document and the policy drives the determination of funding needs. Her presentation featured a brief review of the composition of each standard.

Standard 1, relating to instructional programs, focuses on the programs and areas of instruction required by law. The requirement for Standards of Learning set expectations about what all students in Virginia will know. This section requires local school divisions to align curriculum with the Standards of Learning due to the Board's recognition of lack of alignment as struggling schools underwent academic review. The requirement that local school boards have programs of prevention, remediation, and intervention developed from board review, as did the requirement for local school boards to collect and analyze data to inform instruction.

Standard 2, the staffing standard, drives discussions about public education funding because 80-85% of costs stem from salaries, benefits and wages. This section requires teacher licensure and relevant qualifications by subject areas and defines ratios of personnel adequate to support student learning. Staffing requirements have originated from Board recommendations, including a mandated planning

period which reduces the ratio of teachers to students to 21:1. Provisions for prevention, intervention and remediation were funded based upon Board recommendations, as were instructional technology resource positions, support positions for English Language Learners, and elementary resource teaching positions. In recent years, the Board's recommendation of local flexibility in deploying some personnel has allowed local school divisions to meet required ratios while addressing the varying needs of schools.

Standard 3 requires accreditation of all public schools and local school board review of the accreditation status of all schools annually in public session. The Board established academic reviews for struggling schools and divisions now codified in the SOQs. This year, the General Assembly amended this standard to reduce the number of SOL tests in grades three through eight. Standard 3 also addresses the performance report card schools will receive as well as issues to prevent potential testing problems or negative impacts on test results. Standard 4 establishes graduation requirements and includes provisions for awarding verified credits needed to graduate.

Standard 5 relates to educational leadership and sets out the requirements for teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations. The Board has made a number of changes in requirements for professional development in response to the recognition of its importance as a tool to school leaders establishing positive academic environments.

Standard 6, relating to planning and public involvement, has changed from previous requirements for a six-year plan to current requirements for a comprehensive unified long range plan reviewed every two years; Ms. Wescott noted that the Board sought to make these plans living documents for continual use and updating. The Board has required that local school boards base their plans on data collection and include strategies for student improvement and parent engagement. This section reflects the Board's desire for local boards to have a consistent plan inclusive of all issues rather than multiple and potentially overlapping plans.

Standard 7 pertains to school board policies and requires updating and web-posting of local school board policy, in effect for a number of years now. Standard 8, relating to compliance, has been changed since 2006 to include steps of division-level academic review and, potentially, a request for a Writ of Mandamus. Standard 9, regarding the VIP incentive program, has been added in recent years to include the Virginia Index of Progress to encourage and support schools and school divisions doing very well. In addition, this year, the General Assembly added Standard 10 establishing the Standards of Learning Innovation Committee.

Status of 2012 Board of Education Recommendations

Ms. Wescott reviewed the 2012 Board of Education recommendations for the SOQs, including required ratios for reading specialists, math specialists, data coordinators, full-time assistant principals and principals, caseloads for speech-language pathologists, and state costs for blind and vision-impaired students which are now included in the SOQ to ensure re-benchmarking every two years. Other Board recommendations for SOQ changes have included increasing local flexibility to

deploy positions such as guidance counselors, librarians and clerical personnel to meet the needs of individual schools as long as the division meets overall staffing ratios.

According to the Board's recommendations, the Code now includes the Early Intervention Reading Initiative and the Algebra Readiness Program. The Board's recommendation to shift SOQ review back to odd-numbered years to better align with the legislative budget process has not been enacted.

Ms. Wescott pointed out that the Board's request for a JLARC study of the SOQ became a General Assembly bill with language that differed from the proposed recommendation for a funding review to a resolution that looks more at efficiency. Discussions have ensued between VDOE and JLARC staff for this study and JLARC welcomes Board involvement as the two-year study advances to draft recommendations in November 2014 and a final report in November 2015.

Ms. Wescott suggested that the Board may want to shift its review process to use the JLARC study results, including staffing recommendations not yet funded. She highlighted an additional issue for Board consideration, the Board's goal to narrow the achievement gap, and the ability to address the issue within the SOQ sections on student achievement and planning, Standards 4 and 6.

Committee comments

Ms. Wescott welcomed member questions and comments as they contemplate other Board goals that may inform the SOQs. Mr. Dillard inquired about the status of support staffing recommendations, and Ms. Atkinson reminded the members of the need to change references from "foreign language" to "world language." Ms. Sears inquired about the new SOL Innovation Committee's input on authentic assessments and student growth measures but reminded the committee that standards must also continue to demonstrate whether or not schools have met benchmarks. Ms. Wodiska addressed previous Board discussions resulting in potential recommendations. Dr. Cannaday affirmed his interest in going beyond student achievement standards to include standards for narrowing the achievement gap. He noted that this will have cost implications, as funding to help all students improve cannot be the same as funds to accelerate learning for students who are behind.

Ms. Atkinson raised concern about the issue of local capacity as changes occur in student instruction and assessment. In particular, she highlighted critical funding needs for professional development and the expansion of Computer-Adaptive Testing (CAT) not included in the legislation on SOL assessments. Ms. Sears requested a list of these and any other unfunded mandates within the SOQs. Mr. Ko emphasized that CAT and personalized learning require foundational infrastructure as well as funding. Mr. Dillard called attention to areas of underfunding noted in the previous JLARC study.

Dr. Cannaday asked Ms. Wescott how the JLARC review could include these and other Board recommendations. She suggested that VDOE staff raise these issues in the review meetings with JLARC staff. Dr. Cannaday reminded the committee that President Braunlich would also provide the Board's perspective in further JLARC study discussions. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.