

**Virginia Board of Education
Committee on the Standards of Quality
Wednesday, September 22, 2021
1:00p.m to 2:40p.m
East Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building**

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Committee members were present for the meeting: Mr. Dan Gecker, Ms. Anne Holton, Dr. Jamelle Wilson, Dr. Tammy Mann, Dr. Francisco Durán, Dr. Stewart Roberson, Dr. Keisha Anderson, Ms. Pamela Davis-Vaught, Mr. Anthony Swann and Dr. James Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Other guests in attendance included: Ms. Emily Webb, Director of Board Relations; Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy; Holly Coy, Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Policy and Communications; and Kent Dickey, Deputy Superintendent, Division of Budget, Finance and Operations.

Opening and Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Dan Gecker, chair of the committee, convened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Finalizing the 2021 Prescriptions to Amend the Standards of Quality

Holly Coy, Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Policy and Communications and Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy, presented on the following topics: a proposal for a technical amendment to the funding methodology for the enhanced at-risk add-on and teacher leader and mentor program prescriptions; recommendations for student support positions, including how the Board might build on the current work-based learning coordinator prescription; a proposed language amendment to the reading specialist prescription; and elevating some prescriptions in order to encourage legislative action.

- Mr. Gecker reiterated that the Standards of Quality (SOQs) represent the base level of education necessary to meet the General Assembly's (GA) constitutional mandate to provide a system of free public education for grades K-12. The goal is to increase the number of students served well through by the standards and stated that a per-pupil calculation may provide the year over year stability needed for success.
 - o Ms. Holton commented on the potential impact of temporary and long-term enrollment declines.
 - o Dr. Lane shared that there are declines in most school divisions due to the COVID-19 impact and these temporary declines could be addressed through the COVID federal funds. In the longer-term, there is a policy debate for the Board.

Some school divisions are growing significantly and could benefit from quicker access to additional resources that they would otherwise not have with the existing model. However, divisions with declining enrollment would see some funding losses in the first-year; funding amounts would still be trued up to actual enrollment with a new biennium budget with either calculation. The SOQ would track better over time if the funding is aligned to and increases with actual enrollment; if there was a need to preserve funds in school divisions we could do so through hold harmless provisions, similar to those in place for COVID-19.

- Dr. Durán asked if the enhanced at-risk methodology calculation considers school- or division-level data.
- Dr. Sale stated that it would be the division level.
- Dr. Durán stated that there may be issues where the division aggregate does not reflect the need of individual schools with higher concentrations of poverty.
- Dr. Lane shared that a shift to school calculations would be a significant change. Additionally, most superintendents would prefer the flexibility to receive the funding at the division level and make strategic decisions with their boards to drive more resources into the high poverty schools.
- Holly Coy clarified that the language in the existing prescription states that the school divisions shall prioritize the deployment of additional instructional positions to schools within the division with the greatest concentrations of students identified as eligible for free lunch.
- Dr. Durán asked if the per pupil methodology would have implications for the multiplier applied to the add-on amounts.
- Holly Coy clarified that the staff recommendation did not change the multiplier language in the prescription which reflects the concentrated poverty and counts for divisions with more concentrated poverty.
- Ms. Holton stated the Board should look at this, but recommended not this year.
- Ms. Holton asked about a letter received via public comment recommending a minimum 35% add-on amount and inquired whether the existing prescription goes far enough.
 - Mr. Kent Dickey shared that the maximum tier in the prescription is 65% and that the current formula is funded at a range of 1 to 26%.
 - Ms. Coy shared that the language in proposed range is 10 to 65% spread.
- Dr. Wilson asked about the work based learning (WBL), use of the Perkins funds, proposal to move to a division level model and away from a state regional level model, and the need for moving to a division model. Dr. Wilson also cautioned about the assumption that reading specialists could provide support in a way that a literacy coach could.
 - Dr. Lane reiterated the regional coordination design in the current WBL proposal. With respect to reading specialists, divisions noted that specialists are doing great

- work with Tier II and Tier III students and are of the quality to provide peer mentoring and coaching if allowed.
 - Holly Coy clarified that the regional model will stay intact but is federally funded. The proposal is an evolution based on the need. The staff recommendation is to use the state investment at the division level to make further advances.
 - Dr. Mann expressed support for the work based strategy and concept of evolution.
- Ms. Holton expressed support for the prescription recommendation of four specialized student support personnel and a ratio of 1 to 250 ratio for school counselors and shared hesitancy over prioritizing the recommendations. Ms. Holton also noted the public comment data on EL spending for Virginia: 6th worst state for ELL graduation rates, 3rd worst state with measureable data for 8th grade reading scores, and the funding bump for EL students is worse than any other state.
 - Dr. Lane responded that the more immediate issue for ELs is adjusting the staffing ratio by proficiency level. Additionally, recent history has suggested that the GA will take on SOQs in an incremental fashion.
 - Ms. Holton asked if the Board should go as big as the need requires to set base levels and allow the GA decide.
 - Mr. Gecker stated that some of the items will have more impact on children than others and expressed interest in talking about the prescriptions in terms of anticipated outcomes. The goal is to facilitate spending the dollars in a way to get the biggest possible impact on students.
 - Dr. Mann expressed agreement with this perspective.
 - Ms. Davis-Vaught shared that she recently served on a committee evaluating school health staffing and the acuity of need. Schools that are more economically challenged may not hit the 1 to 250 ratio for school counselors, but the acuity of need might be so great that more than one counselor might be needed for a 200 student school. A school nurse might not be needed in another school but in higher poverty schools it might be more important to look at the acuity of need per building.
 - Mr. Swan asked a clarifying question about the reason for the school counselor ratio being amended given the additional need in responding to pandemic-related trauma.
 - Ms. Coy shared that the recommendation from staff is to maintain the ratio of 1 to 250 and the change that occurred stemmed from 2021 legislation for 1 to 325.
 - Dr. Durán encouraged everyone to double down on the need to look at the data and funding for EL students. Level I and II students need additional support and it is important to add more language to reflect the need and continue to educate.
- Dr. Wilson asked about unintended consequences of the proposed methodology for enhanced at-risk add-on and teacher leader and mentor programs. Dr. Wilson also stated

that many divisions with high needs tend to lose students during crisis and expressed concern about these school divisions having fewer resources.

- Dr. Durán shared support for the flexibility provided by the methodology.
- Dr. Roberson shared support for all of the recommendations in the presentation.
- Mr. Gecker stated he was not prepared to make a decision on the WBL coordinators and prior discussion was that smaller divisions might not have the need for a full time staff member. The coordinated regional approach was the option previously discussed.
 - Ms. Holton shared that it might be better to support the counseling recommendation and specialized student support personnel.
 - Mr. Gecker asked for the department to bring back both recommendations.
 - Dr. Lane reminded the Board of the timeline for the Department to submit priorities for the Governor's budget.
 - Dr. Durán shared priorities of supports services for students, instructional needs of students (ELL students and literacy) and social emotional supports.
 - Mr. Gecker expressed reservations about prioritizing prescriptions that should be supported through COVID recovery funds. The priority list is how we improve outcomes which recognizes the importance of experienced teachers, retaining quality teachers, and early literacy.
 - Ms. Holton suggested that the Board establish priorities next month and Dr. Lane could share the Board's discussion with the Secretary of Education.
 - Mr. Gecker asked staff to bring alternatives for two of the prescriptions next month and provide data for the EL to include how many and graduation numbers. The Board will review priorities next month.
 - Dr. Mann asked if it will be helpful to see what has been done in the areas where some things have already been accomplished.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40p.m.