MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
Wednesday; January 21, 2015; 1 p.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the January 21, 2015 Committee on School and Division Accountability meeting: Diane Atkinson; Christian Braunlich; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James H. Dillard II; Darla Edwards; Sal Romero, Jr.; 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 November 19, 2014 Meeting

Mrs. Atkinson made a motion to approve the minutes for the November 19, 2014 committee meeting, the motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved by the committee members.

Report on Progress on Amending the Corrective Action Plan Required by the Division-Level Review for Franklin City Public Schools

The presenter for this item was Willie J. Bell, Jr., superintendent for Franklin City Public Schools (FCPS). In addition, the following FCPS school board members were present: Jeanette Austin; Will Councill; Nancy Goodwin; Edna King; and Dawna Walton.

Mrs. Atkinson congratulated Dr. Willie Bell on earning his doctoral degree.

Mrs. Atkinson began the discussion by noting that the school and division accountability committee allows Board members to engage in more in-depth conversations with division representatives than is possible in regular Board meetings. She recognized Mrs. Beverly Rabil, director of the department's office of school improvement, and her staff for emphasizing curriculum alignment, instruction, and testing as integral to school improvement. Representatives of schools requesting conditional accreditation have identified curriculum issues in earlier presentations, and the Board is focusing on this issue along with the department.

In addition, Mrs. Atkinson commented that the Board is intervening sooner with divisions that have schools headed toward failing. The division-level review of Franklin highlighted issues with human resources and instruction. The Board has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Franklin as the division works on its corrective

action plan. The review allows Virginia to put additional resources into Franklin including a Chief Academic Officer. The committee encourages Franklin to take advantage of all resources available to it. This work session is to provide Board members with an opportunity to ask questions and engage in conversation with Franklin City about the corrective action plan before it comes before the Board.

Dr. Bell introduced members of the FCPS school board present and provided information about the corrective action plan. He included 2014 Standards of Learning (SOL) pass rates by school and academic subject, and 2015 SOL pass rate targets. The charts also included information from the Interactive Achievement assessments, a benchmark test used by Franklin City Schools

The Board members had many questions and comments, including the following:

- Why were cut scores used in the charts provided rather than a target for proficiency? Dr. Bell explained that this is the first year of using Interactive Achievement, and Franklin City schools does not yet have an indicator on Interactive Achievement that is an accurate predictor of SOL scores. Dr. Staples asked Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent of student assessment and school improvement, to clarify the term “cut score.” Mrs. Loving-Ryder explained that Virginia uses the term to indicate the number of test items that were correctly answered out of the total number of test items, such as 25 out of 50 items, or 50% of items correct. The cut score can vary greatly depending on the difficulty of the test. A benchmark is a target as a percentage of students that meet the cut score on a test.
- One board member noted that the division is trying to identify an estimate on Interactive Achievement that aligns with the scores required to pass the SOL tests. This need calls for using consistent language and terminology so that teachers and the public can interpret data. The department staff can help, and the division is asked to use consistent language in communicating with the Board.
- What kind of intervention is capturing what students did not learn as well as new skills they will need to keep up? Dr. Bell responded that preliminary SOL data show they need to build more time for formative assessment to check for understanding. The school division also needs to increase lab time where teachers can assess skills soon after presenting them in class. Teachers are using more quick checks with promethean boards, and increasing exit tickets so that they can assess what was learned after each lesson. They are using iReady, reading specialists and more warm-ups, and Dr. Bell has asked teachers and principals to ensure that homework includes both current and earlier skills.
- A Board member encouraged Franklin to identify organizational structures that will cause teaching practice to be better, rather than doing more of what is already being done. Teachers must use guided practice in class to ensure that students do not practice the wrong thing doing homework. The division was urged to narrow the number of approaches it takes to allow it to determine what works well. What is working and how do teachers know?

- A Board member felt that it is important to set high standards for all students and not to back off by setting targets that are too low. Other Board members commented that targets presented are unreasonably high given current scores. Dr. Bell indicated that teachers and the community want schools fully accredited. FCPS was encouraged to build a multi-year plan with meeting or exceeding full accreditation as a longer term goal and a series of clear, smaller targets leading to it. Unrealistic targets can increase teacher turnover rates Progress takes time, staff training, and observation.
- At your next presentation to the Board, please tell us what you learned in the first term about what students know very well, how do you know this, and how you communicate that knowledge?
- What do you need from the Board of Education? Dr. Bell responded that he wants to be sure the corrective action plan connects with the data they have, and guidance on how the data should be aligned with the action plan. They also need time to try things out and get feedback on the plan.
- How do you know that professional development is improving instruction? Are you measuring this beyond test scores, such as through observations and conversations with teachers? Dr. Bell said that based on earlier feedback from the Board, they have narrowed their focus and conducted a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). They are looking at ways to provide meaningful feedback to teachers, and he will talk with more of the teachers.
- How many long term substitute teachers are there now? Dr. Bell responded that there are two, with 90% of the staff fully licensed. The division has worked hard to put the right people into place.
- A Board member commented on the documentation required to support evidence of progress and completion of the essential actions in the corrective action plan, saying that the Board is looking for deeper feedback to know that training was understood and made a difference in the classroom.
- Were teachers and parents involved in choosing the essential actions? Yes.
- A Board member advised FCPS to ensure that those who will do classroom observations know how to provide meaningful feedback.

Committee members will share their comments and questions with Mrs. Atkinson by next Monday, January 26 so that they can be shared with the staff.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked Dr. Bell and the FCPS board members.

The committee took a five minute break and then resumed the meeting.

Public Comment

Mrs. Atkinson introduced Sandra Brooks, who proposed adding language to the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-203 to emphasize prayer and silent reflection as part of the school day.

Presentation on New Growth Measure
The presenter for this item was Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent of student assessment and school improvement.

Mrs. Loving-Ryder explained that the department has been using student growth percentiles in reading and math for the last few years as a measure of student growth. This model compares student scores with those of other students with similar score histories. Data calculations must be completed each year and cannot occur until all data are available. As a result, student growth percentile data are not available to divisions until September each year. Because of concerns about student growth percentiles, the department has been looking at other models. Department staff recommend that Virginia move toward the use of Progress Tables (Value tables). While "value tables" is the technical term used for this method of measuring growth, Virginia is using "progress tables" to emphasize the numerical values associated with students' learning gains. Progress tables are more understandable and are available for more students than student growth percentiles. Student growth percentile data are not available for students taking alternate assessments and for certain other students who take the SOL.

Progress tables would measure student growth based on an individual student's score this year on the SOL compared with his or her score last year on the SOL test. Current performance levels for the SOL tests are below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Each performance level is divided into low and high to allow students more opportunity to demonstrate growth. Classifications were based on score distribution the first year the test was administered so that about 50% of students in "below basic" fell into "low below basic" and 50% fell into "high below basic," for example. The tables show movement among performance sublevels.

In the value table model, students will know what score they need to achieve in order to show growth from one year to the next. That is not possible using the student growth percentile model. Students are not compared with other students, only with their own scores. This method recognizes students who are still failing but who did make significant progress. Scores will be available almost immediately so that teachers and students will not have to wait until all testing is completed. Data from this model are available to all students assessed, including those taking alternate assessments.

Virginia will submit its flexibility waiver application to the U.S. Department of Education in late January and will include the transition to the use of progress tables as a measure of growth. The waiver application describes how Virginia will use progress tables as part of teacher and principal evaluation only; the application does not address the use of progress tables as part of federal accountability. However, the Board may wish to consider using the concept to derive an adjusted pass rate to recognize students who fail but make progress as part of a new accreditation rating recognizing growth. One possibility might be to provide "partial credit" for students who demonstrate growth but continue to fail the test. The new accreditation rating would recognize schools that have been successful in making significant progress with failing students.

The value table model could be used for teacher and principal evaluation by looking at aggregate growth.

Virginia is not the first state to use value tables. Other states use them as part of their accountability systems.

The Board members' questions and comments included the following:

- Can we recognize more than 3 blocks of growth, and might we account for two years' worth or more of growth? Mrs. Loving-Ryder responded that the impetus for the tables was to recognize students who improved but not enough so that they passed. If students moved four sublevels, they would have passed.
- We have not yet defined significant growth? Correct.
- Is a regulatory change needed, or could the Board take action to put this in effect for accreditation more quickly? Mrs. Loving-Ryder will investigate.
- Are there any anticipated negative consequences? Does this model give the false impression of progress? The department is not aware of negative consequences, but will continue to explore how this would affect students and classrooms. It recognizes growth for failing students, but does not penalize students. The Board will need to decide whether to change the accreditation rating to recognize growth. There may be public concern that while students are moving up they are still failing.
- If we provide expedited re-takes, which test scores will be used to show growth? What can we learn from other states or other business sectors about any unintended consequences of using this growth model? What has been the impact of using the value table model on instruction? We will investigate.
- Is it mathematically possible for a school with no students passing the SOL to have enough growth to give it an adjusted pass rate over 70%? This would be reflected in adjusted accreditation rating which does not exist, but which would not adjust the overall accreditation pass rate. A school in this example would not be fully accredited. We will continue to look at how other states have used value tables in accountability.
- If value tables were used in accountability, would the accreditation formula still include the 3 year average? Yes.
- A Board member felt that if a student moves from low proficient to high proficient, the value table should recognize it since growth is important for students at all levels. Mrs. Loving-Ryder responded that it will be considered. She noted that students who continue to pass an SOL test from one year to the next could be considered to have made a "year's growth" since they have mastered the content for that grade level.
- Would the model make public sensitive student data? Available data would be adjusted pass rates, not individual student results.
- The department has been looking at existing data to see how it would affect schools. One benefit to this model is that it can be used with existing data.

School divisions would not need to take any action demonstrate growth and the opportunity for demonstrating growth would be available to all divisions.

Board members applauded the staff for recommending the model, which is easy to understand and rewards schools that make good progress.

Presentations from School Division on Local Assessment

Henry County Public Schools

The presenter for Henry County was Dr. Jared Cotton, superintendent. Henry County Public Schools (HCPS) began with a strategic plan that asked what skills graduates should possess. HCPS conducted book studies, looked at research on the work force, and met with business leaders to ask what they seek in future employees. HCPS identified critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity as its most important skills. Henry County Schools found that some of those skills were not being assessed. The schools and division were using available measures rather than measuring what was valued.

HCPS examined its assessment system and looked for ways to use assessment to highlight improvement rather than punishing schools for poor performance. In the area of reading and literacy, it was found that some students were not reading on grade level despite passing the Standards of Learning.

HCPS uses Measures of Academic Progress to identify expected student growth. A learning continuum report helps teachers address areas of weakness promptly. HCPS adopted use of the College & Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA), which presents students with realistic scenarios that measure student skills including critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication.

A major initiative in the development of a balanced assessment system has been the development of performance tasks aligned to the standards that measure higher levels of thinking. Professional development has helped teachers to develop performance tasks, develop and use rubrics, and use peer review to provide feedback on assessments.

Questions and comments from Board members included the following:

- HCPS was commended for its work on assessment, and its partnerships with business and community colleges.
- What are some risks HCPS encountered in revamping its assessment system? Dr. Cotton replied that some teachers were concerned that pass rates would suffer with an emphasis on higher order thinking, but examples of successful teachers has helped as results have come in. Active support from the business community has helped with public acceptance of the changes.

- What would you like to see in the accreditation system to reward schools going above minimum expectations? Dr. Cotton responded that flexibility to create local assessments that align to local vision and mission is helpful, and resources related to developing and using performance tasks would help.

Dr. Staples noted that during Dr. Cotton's presentation, the Office of the Governor announced 29 new jobs in Henry County. He also noted that the department has issued regional grants to upgrade teacher skills on authentic assessments, and Region 6 was awarded one of these grants.

Virginia Beach City Public Schools

The presenters for Virginia Beach were Dr. Don Robertson, assistant superintendent, department of planning, innovation, and accountability; and Dr. Brian Matney, principal, Landstown High School, Governor's STEM and Technology Academy.

The presenters noted that VBCPS regards the Standards of Learning as minimum standards rather than as a goal. VBCPS, like Henry County Public Schools, embraces critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. The movement toward a balanced assessment system began in 2007 in VBCPS.

The College & Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA), a performance-based assessment was introduced about a decade ago. A new version was introduced last year. Board members were shown a sample CWRA performance task that is now given to high school juniors in Virginia Beach. CWRA has been phased in over the past few years in VBCPS and is now taken by all high school juniors and seniors.

VBCPS has also developed assessments like the CWRA for the lower grades. These assessments are called the Integrated Performance Tasks and have been validated for critical thinking and problem solving. VBCPS asked teachers where this assessment would best fit, and they selected grades four and seven. Integrated Performance Tasks are given in fall to these grades as a diagnostic and in spring as a summative assessment. In fall it is given to students along with the rubric, and it is given to students without the rubric in the spring. Teachers support the process and this has led to changes in instruction. VBCPS has shared its Integrated Performance Tasks with other school divisions. Much of the cost involves the summer scoring of tests, which is done by teachers. The cost was roughly $14 per student.

VBCPS also administers the OECD Test for Schools which measures knowledge and competencies in reading, mathematics, and science. The OECD for Schools is modeled on the internationally administered PISA assessment and is given to a random sample of 15 year old VBCPS students at a cost of $11,500 per school.

The reduction in the number of SOL tests has assisted VBCPS in its work on it other assessments. VBCPS cooperates with others in its region in creating performance

tasks, and will be part of an effort in Region 2 to use the regional grants mentioned by Dr. Staples to develop shared formative assessments.

Questions and comments from Board members included the following:

- A Board member asked if Integrated Performance Tasks will be validated for other skills. VBCPS will look for other tests against which to validate additional skills measured by Integrated Performance Tasks.
- How is PISA used? The OECD Test for Schools was based on PISA and produces a robust report. Assessing 15 year old students at the beginning of the year allows VBCPS to share this information with middle schools. The skills of critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity align closely with PISA.
- What percentage of 15 year old students are tested using OECD? A random sample of 100 to 150 students is invited, and students can opt out of the test.

Mrs. Atkinson thanked all the presenters, and the meeting adjourned.