

**Board of Education Retreat**  
Tuesday, April 24, 2018  
Virginia Housing Center, 4224 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA

The Board of Education members met for an all-day work session on Tuesday April 24, 2018 beginning at 9 a.m. at the Virginia Housing Center, 4224 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA, with the following members present:

Mr. Dan Gecker, President	Mrs. Diane Atkinson, Vice President
Dr. Jamelle Wilson	Mrs. Elizabeth Lodal
Ms. Anne Holton	Mr. Sal Romero, Jr.
Mr. Jim Dillard	Ms. Kim Adkins
Dr. Tamara Wallace	

The following Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff participated in the meeting:

Dr. Steve Constantino, acting superintendent of public institution  
Kent Dickey, deputy superintendent for finance and operations  
Dr. Cindy Cave, assistant superintendent for policy and communications  
Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for student assessment and school improvement  
Patty Pitts, assistant superintendent for teacher education and licensure  
John Eisenberg, assistant superintendent for special education and student services  
Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna, senior executive director for research  
Dr. Lynn Sodat, director, program administration and accountability  
Leah Walker, community and minority affairs liaison  
Charles Pyle, director of communications  
Emily Webb, director, board relations  
Zachary Robbins, director, policy  
Sandra Peterson, senior policy analyst  
Elizabeth Morris, senior policy analyst  
Rebecca Askew, senior policy analyst

Secretary of Education Atif Qarni and Deputy Secretary of Education Holly Coy also participated in the meeting.

The session was opened to the public. No public comment was accepted. No votes were taken.

### **Welcome and Overview of the Board's Comprehensive Plan and Priorities on Teachers and Equity**

The meeting convened with remarks from Mr. Gecker, where he outlined the Board's priorities from the *Comprehensive Plan*: Equity, Support for Teachers, and Implementation of the SOA. He stated that the Board intended to take a systematic approach to addressing these challenges.

He acknowledged the great work happening in classroom across the Commonwealth, but offered that there are still areas that need improvement.

### **Review of Data and National Trends on Teacher Shortages and Retention**

Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna presented a review of data and national trends on teacher shortages and retention. A copy of the presentation is available in the Board Relation's office. To receive a copy, please contact Ms. Sonya Broady at [sonya.broady@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sonya.broady@doe.virginia.gov). Dr. Piver-Renna reviewed data and national trends on teacher shortages, which are often contextual, not universal. The supply of teachers does not meet the demand of open positions. Shortages are often confined to certain subject areas or localities. In Virginia, special education and elementary education are the two areas that have the most unfilled positions and many have a provisional license. By percentage, math specialist and school psychologists have the most unfilled positions. A Board member asked for clarification on what is a provisional license. An individual with a provision license doesn't meet all the requirements for a full license but has completed some coursework. Board members discussed the differences in a classroom math teacher and a math specialist, often referred to as a math coach.

Teacher production is cyclical and responsive to the state of the economy. While the number of individuals enrolling in teacher preparation programs has declined, the number of completers has stayed relatively stable. Cost of living is also an important factor. Board members discussed enrollment and completion in teacher preparation programs and asked for cohort data on Virginia's teacher preparation programs. A Board member asked if the failure to complete teacher preparation programs was a problem. Dr. Wilson and Dr. Wallace responded that about 75 percent of their students complete the program. Some members found the data on teacher preparation enrollment and completion to be misleading.

Teachers who earned less than \$40,000 a year were 17% less likely to continue teaching after five years than those who earned more. Additionally, the shape of the salary schedule matters. Thirteen local school divisions in Virginia pay teachers the same amount for the first five years and four school divisions front-load their salary schedules. Other financial incentives can be effective in teacher retention. Performance bonuses are effective but funding for them must be sustained over time. A Board member asked which school divisions pay teachers the same amount for the first five years and which divisions front-load their salary schedules. Dr. Piver-Renna responded that she did not have that information available.

Board members asked for follow-up on several items:

- Information on existing Virginia teacher recruitment and retention programs
- Information on mentorship and support programs, professional practices, and outcomes of programs in other states

- Information on leadership development programs and outcomes of programs in other states
- Information on successful teacher induction programs and other recruitment and retention tools for new teachers
- Information on teacher licensure examinations, requirements, and alternative methods of assessment for teacher licensure.
- Information on education majors and how their programs are structured

Patty Pitts provided a summary of the recommendations the Board has received related to teacher attraction and retention. The Board has received recommendations from:

- The Task Force on Diversifying Virginia’s Educator Pipeline
- The Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages
- The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure

The full summary of the recommendations can be found online at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/index.shtml#worksession>.

### **Challenges and Successes in Attracting, Recruiting, and Retaining Teachers in the Commonwealth**

Mr. Gecker welcomed three local superintendents to discuss the challenges they have faced and successes they have had in attracting, recruiting and retaining teachers in their school division. Dr. Robert Benson, superintendent in King George County Public Schools, Dr. Stanley Jones, superintendent in Danville City Public Schools, and Dr. Steve Walts, superintendent in Prince William County Public Schools joined the panel discussion.

Dr. Benson shared with the Board that in King George County Public Schools (KGCPS), the divisions has been successful in attracting and retaining teachers by investing heavily in mentoring programs. KGCPS is diligent about building strong relationships. New teachers are partnered with more experienced teachers, offered social events and activities, and have regularly scheduled monthly meetings and check-ins with mentors. Additionally, KGCPS offers tuition reimbursement based on the availability of funds and adjusted salaries in 2016-2017 to be more competitive. These measures have helped to decrease the number of teachers leaving the school division.

Dr. Jones shared with the Board that in Danville City, there are many factors to cause challenges in attracting and retaining teacher, such as turnover in leadership and school accreditation. While the cost of living is inexpensive, teachers often receive the same salary for the first four steps in their salary scale. For 2018-2019, Danville hopes to implement a new salary structure. Additionally, the division has created a partnership with Averett University to offer master’s

degrees to teachers and help support staff achieve credentials. Dr. Jones is working diligently to create more equity in Danville City Public Schools.

Dr. Walts shared with the Board that in Prince William County Public Schools (PWCPS), the division is experiencing teacher shortages as well as shortages in administrative and bus driver positions. In PWCPS, the division has created several “grow your own” programs such as Educators Rising, Today’s Students Tomorrow’s Teachers (TSTT), and Virginia’s Teachers for Tomorrow (VTfT). Additionally, the school division works with more than 60 teachers who are certified in other countries to help bring diversity and other languages to the division. He encouraged additional help and support from the state with teacher salaries.

A Board member asked the panelists what the Board could do to effect change. The panelists all agreed that additional funding for salaries was vital to teacher attraction and retention. Additionally, there is a great need to create more equity between high poverty and low poverty areas and allow the school division more flexibility with funding to be needs driven. Further, professional development training for teachers is necessary, especially those who teach students with trauma and other challenging circumstances.

Secretary Qarni asked the panelists if there were any unfunded mandates from the state that could be alleviated to help school divisions attract and retain teachers. The panelists responded that standardized testing has had a major impact on the way instruction is directed. Additional resources are needed for students with trauma and other challenging circumstances. The panelists encouraged more focus on skills rather than “teaching to the test.”

All the Board members joined Mr. Gecker in thanking the panelists for joining the Board at their retreat and for the open and honest dialogue on this important topic.

### **History of Virginia’s Decision to Restructure Education Preparation Programs**

Patty Pitts presented a brief history of teacher education restructuring in Virginia. A full report on the history is available on the Board’s website at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/index.shtml#worksession>.

A Board member asked if student performance data was available to correlate to the changes made in teacher education. Is it possible to see if the change made in the early 1990’s made an impact on student performance? VDOE staff will need to report back to answer this questions.

A Board member asked for clarification on the current process teacher education programs for a prospective teacher to major in a subject area and take the education pedagogy courses. Mrs. Pitts responded that for content area teachers, that is the usual process. However, for elementary

education, prospective teachers typically major in interdisciplinary studies. The Board member followed up by asking of the 45 percent of teachers who do not have graduate degrees, are those teachers going through the usual path with a 4-year undergraduate degree? Mrs. Pitts responded that many of Virginia's teachers come from out of state and some go through a 4-year undergraduate degree program in Virginia.

A Board member asked for clarification on the new teacher licensure legislation. Mrs. Pitts responded that with the new legislation, a prospective teacher could major in math education versus a major in math and a master's degree in education.

A Board member encouraged VDOE staff to work closely with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) on implementation.

### **Discussion of Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers in Virginia**

Board members held a robust discussion on the importance of teacher attraction and retention and possible strategies to combat this challenge.

- Mrs. Atkinson stated that research shows teacher recruitment and retention significantly impacts the schools that struggle the most. Since the Board has made equity a priority, teacher recruitment and retention is inherently intertwined with equity.
- Mr. Romero stated that he is interested in more information about black and Hispanic prospective teachers who do not complete the educator preparation program. Are there certain assessments or other road blocks that get in the way of those individuals completing the program? Ms. Holton suggested that this could be a topic that the Board asked Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond to address.
- Mrs. Atkinson and Mr. Gecker expressed interest in learning more about the individuals who enter the classroom through alternative routes.
- Dr. Wilson inquired how the Board and local school divisions could better support teachers beyond the first year to lead to greater teacher retention.
- Dr. Wallace offered that there are unintended consequences of accountability and the assessment program that doesn't encourage veteran teachers to encourage others to enter the profession.
- Dr. Wilson asked if there were alternative means beyond standardized testing to assess for teacher licensure. Mr. Romero offered that the best way to evaluate a teacher is through classroom observation.
- Ms. Adkins asked what are comparable careers that teachers are compared to for statistical purposes. Dr. Piver-Renna responded that teaching is often compared to accounting and nursing.
- Mr. Gecker asked about the capacity of education preparation programs; would EPP's have the capacity to produce an additional 1,000/year. Dr. Wilson responded that the

unique needs of each school division would need to be identified. Additionally, an upfront investment would need to be made.

- Mrs. Atkinson asked to what degree are prospective teachers steered into critical shortage areas when selecting their major. Dr. Wilson responded that students meet with their advisors and often explore areas of interest, often not in education. An education major would allow more students to have a specific interest.
- Ms. Holton offered three levels where the Board could engage in this topic:
  - Develop a messaging campaign to show teacher appreciation and support.
  - Restructure educator preparation programs to allow more majors in education.
  - Advocate for more funding to compensate teachers in high-poverty schools.
- Ms. Adkins suggested a restructuring of the course work to encourage the education courses early in the program of study.

### **Commitment and Common Sense: The Massachusetts Miracle**

Following a lunch break, the Board welcomed Dr. David Driscoll, former Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts to talk about the reforms that Massachusetts made following the *McDuffy vs. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education* court decision in 1993. Dr. Driscoll began his remarks with a video about his career in education. In Dr. Driscoll's overview of the history of education reform in Massachusetts, he shared that a single businessman with six children in public schools helped build an alliance among parents, communities, the legislature and the governor, which ultimately became the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE). MBAE issued a report entitled, "Every Child a Winner," which became the foundation for the 1993 landmark education reform legislation. The *McDuffy* decision stated that Massachusetts had a constitutional duty to educate all children and that it had failed to meet that obligation. From the 1993 Education Reform Act, Massachusetts raised standards for students, raised standards for educators, and raised standards for schools and school divisions while providing a sustained infusion of funding over several years. Dr. Driscoll shared how charter schools played a significant part in their reform efforts.

A Board member asked how did Massachusetts resolve the resource differential issue. Dr. Driscoll responded that the funding model was complicated but that money flowed to school divisions by the number of students as well as the characteristics of students. Most of the new funding flowed to urban districts with the highest need with the state providing foundation funding for all school divisions. Mr. Gecker followed up by asking what the money was spent on in those divisions to create more equity. Dr. Driscoll responded that he did not know the specifics for each division but that the sustained investment allowed school administrators and local school boards to plan ahead and operate in a long-term way.

A Board member asked how Massachusetts created their foundation budget, what student

characteristics were identified and how was money tied to these characteristics. Dr. Driscoll shared that staff worked closely with an economics professor to develop the formula, which also included reserve funding that school divisions could apply for in special cases.

A Board member asked how did Dr. Driscoll and others develop the political will to spend more money on the most impoverished. Dr. Driscoll responded that the decision from *McDuffy* along with the MBAE gave political will to make major changes.

A Board member asked if Massachusetts has explored other school choice options beyond charter schools. He stated that school divisions had the option to become divisions of choice. If a division chose to become a choice-division, students from other divisions could apply to attend if there was additional space at the school.

A Board member asked how rural divisions were impacted in these reforms. Dr. Driscoll responded that there are not as many rural areas in Massachusetts as in Virginia, although rural school divisions did receive a portion of funding based upon the number of road miles that were in the community.

A Board member asked how the school improvement efforts were successful without resorting to state takeover. Dr. Driscoll shared that governance was very important. The state was clear about the standards and expectations of schools and students which allowed the local divisions to implement.

A Board member asked if the original successes from the reforms have lasted over time. Dr. Driscoll responded that the successes have remained although achievement gaps still persist. He shared that student achievement rose across the board but too often gaps did not narrow as much as was expected.

Dr. Driscoll asked Board members what is keeping Virginia from making reforms similar to Massachusetts. Board members responded that the *Constitution of Virginia* is not as strong as Massachusetts constitution. Although there is an awareness of disparity between high income and low income areas, the Board felt that it must do more to find a solution and advocate for schools.

A Board member asked how to better explain the disparities to the General Assembly. Dr. Driscoll encouraged the Board to look at NAEP proficiency and the potential achievement gaps for proficiency.

A Board member asked if all of the reform efforts were focused on the school day or if any emphasis was placed in before and after school opportunities. Dr. Driscoll shared that some

charter schools considered year-round schools or summer programs but those didn't take off due to collective bargaining rights of the union.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Driscoll shared that Virginia needs a catalyst for public education reform and encouraged the Board to be that catalyst. Board members thanked Dr. Driscoll for sharing his insight and wisdom from Massachusetts.

### **Discussion on Equity Strategies**

Following Dr. Driscoll's presentation, Board members held a dynamic discussion on equity strategies, raised questions about equity across the Commonwealth, and potential areas of focus for the work ahead.

Mr. Gecker stated the Board's commitment to creating a more equitable public education system through the authority provided in the *Virginia Constitution* and *Code of Virginia*. He offered that measurement of intra-district inequities is within the Board's purview. Ms. Holton suggested that the Standards of Quality could be used as a way to change the conversation about inequity across local school divisions. The Board must look at how to get additional resources to students who need them most and support staff in high-poverty schools. Mr. Romero offered that new teachers, often new teachers in challenged schools, are expected to perform as veteran teachers. More must be done to support new teachers to ensure they don't become overwhelmed and stay motivated to avoid burnout. For instance, ensure that new teachers receive a full planning period and mentorship support. Mr. Romero also suggested a partial teaching load for first year teachers.

Secretary Qarni stated that he would like to see a comprehensive picture of what inequity looks like in Virginia as there is great regional diversity and often disparity.

Mrs. Atkinson asked if there was research or an analysis of other states progress in the area of equity and closing the achievement gap.

Ms. Adkins offered that the Board could set a goal that no local school division in the Commonwealth would be considered a high-poverty school division. Redistricting changes could be made to local school divisions. Mr. Gecker responded that the goal is to bring student achievement up for all schools as to remove schools as the variable for housing decisions. Currently, school boundaries and attendance are being used to determine where people move.

Dr. Wilson encouraged the Board to define the deliverable for 2019; what specifically will ensure positive outcomes for children. Ms. Holton responded that the SOQ's mostly define staffing ratios. She asked if the Board should broaden the SOQ's beyond staffing ratios. Dr. Wilson asked if there was anything in the SOQ formula that was tied to student outcomes. Mr.



Kent Dickey responded that the SOQ includes program inputs as well as staffing ratios.

Ms. Holton stated that localities are required to come up with the local share which can be problematic. Mr. Gecker responded the Board must do research to discover what interventions work and can incentivize outcomes. Until the Board is able to demonstrate viability, it is not appropriate to ask for additional funding. Over the next 12 months, the Board must look at data to demonstrate what can work to close achievement and opportunity gaps in Virginia's schools. Research on successful programs and outcomes in other states will be vital.

Ms. Holton offered that teacher quality has the most impact on student achievement. She asked what is needed to ensure teacher quality; higher salaries, professional development, working conditions, or a good teacher evaluation system? Dr. Wilson followed-up by stating that the shortage also goes beyond the classroom to administrative positions.

Ms. Holton offered three ideas for the Board to consider:

- Earn more respect for teachers by using the “bully pulpit;”
- Utilize the SOQ's to connect to teacher quality; and
- Work with SCHEV to act on regulatory changes for undergraduate education majors.

Mr. Gecker asked if the Board was ready to take action on Ms. Holton's considerations.

Dr. Constantino shared antidotes' from a Chicago study that looked at what factors made effective urban schools. From the study, learning climate, support for teachers, and family and community support were all offered as pieces of a solution with leadership serving as the greatest drive for change. Dr. Cave offered that social-emotional supports are also shown to be effective.

Ms. Holton stated that VDOE should work with SCHEV to develop the undergraduate curriculum for teacher licensure. There are too many provisionally licensed teachers in Virginia. Mrs. Pitts asked where does the Board want to go with potential changes for undergraduate education majors. She continued that there is positive data coming from teacher residency programs at VCU and ODU. Further, mentorship programs are successful and important but must be sustained over time to have a lasting impact. Dr. Wilson offered that these educator preparation programs must be thoughtful.

Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder stated that using the “bully pulpit” to garner for respect for teachers is important. She offered that the Board could look at internships and student teaching opportunities as well to provide more support for potential/new teachers. Dr. Cave continued that school leadership is vital. Research shows that teachers often leave high-poverty schools due to poor leadership and structure. A focus on staff development is important.

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Gecker offered closing remarks. He stated that there is more work to be done to determine

where the Board can have the biggest impact. Should the Board be limited to statewide policies or direct specific interventions? It is vital to connect policies to outcomes and action steps. Mr. Gecker reminded the Board that they cannot solve all of the problems with education in the Commonwealth but must continue to make progress on the priorities outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023*. He urged Board members to remain focused on those priorities.

The meeting adjourned at 4:14p.m.

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