

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries ROUNDTABLE

House Room 3
The Capitol
June 26, 2012
10:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Advisory Group Members:

Karin Addison, William C. Boshier, Catherine Finnegan, Paula Fisher, Barry Glenn, Sarah Gross, Meg Gruber, Meredith Gunter, Mark Herzog, Sarah Herzog, Nancy Hoover, Andrew Kanu, John Morgan, Susan, Patrick, Patty Pitts, Patricia Popp, Wendell Roberts, James Ryan, Kirk Schroeder, Javaid Siddiqi, James Stronge, Patrick Tolan, Lola Tornabene, Tony Valentino, Linda Wallinger, Emily Webb, Michelle Vucci, Anne Wescott

Guest Participants:

Tunya Bingham, Sandra Booth, Reginald Branch, Irene Carney, Martha Collier, Ellen Davenport, Blaire Denson, John Dougherty, John Eisenberg, Harold Fitrer, Belinda Friday, Secretary Fornash, Belinda Friday, Deborah Jonas, Kathy Gillikin, Vicky Greco, Shanee Harmon, Sarah Herzog, Krystin Husz, Robley Jones, Augustine Kang, Beverly Lammay, Emily Laux, Vicky Manugo Greco, Kimberly Mckay, Tommy McNeil, Michael Molloy, Letha Moore-Jones, Lady Moore, Kelli Parmley, Marcy Reedy, Duane C. Sergeant, Matthew Stanley, Emily Thumma, Jennifer Wallace, Gerald Ward, Edith White, Lilla Wise, Xianxuan Xu, Jingzhu Zhang

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Joyce Garner, Meg Burruss

Welcome and Introductions

Amy M. Atkinson

The Honorable Javaid Siddiqi

Ms. Atkinson welcomed Roundtable participants and recognized the Advisory Group members. Ms. Atkinson outlined the major points about the Commission on Youth's study, which seeks to address concerns that Virginia's students compete with not only their counterparts in other states but also internationally. Especially keen is competition with students in other industrialized countries, including China. Ms. Atkinson emphasized the commonly-held commitment to ensure that every student in Virginia graduate ready for either college or the workplace. She then turned the meeting over to Javaid Siddiqi for an update on activities in the Executive Branch.

Deputy Secretary Siddiqi welcomed the Roundtable participants, noting that the topic was very important to Secretary of Education Laura Fornash as well. The Secretary sends her regrets that she is unable to attend the morning session. Conversations about the global marketplace and student achievement in Virginia have been taking place in the K-12 arena, but there is not agreement about best steps to ensuring how best to position Virginia for these challenges. The Deputy Secretary stated that there are concerns that Virginia's students are not performing at the same level as students across the world. He noted that companies wanting to locate in Virginia were finding that the pool of candidates with the needed job skills is not available, thus the companies are going to other countries to hire workers and bring them here. Conversations about the challenges are extremely important and should include representatives from industry. The common theme of his meetings with industry representatives in Virginia in recent months is that Virginia students lack the math skills necessary to

compete with students in other countries. He has encouraged them to discuss this issue with their local school board.

The Deputy Secretary announced that Governor McDonnell is convening a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) summit on September 10. Industry representatives, CEOs, school boards, universities, and school administrators are being invited to be a part of this conversation.

Ms. Atkinson then introduced Delegate Peter Farrell, newly appointed member of the Commission on Youth. Delegate Farrell extended his welcome to Roundtable participants. He noted that, as the third youngest member of the General Assembly, he was closer in age to the students. He observed that the education system in Virginia is very diverse and that this study hit upon several issues critical to his district. There is great variability among school divisions, e.g., Henrico County Schools and Goochland County Schools. As a Commission member, Delegate Farrell noted that he looked forward to hearing more as the study proceeds.

Ms. Atkinson informed the attendees that, during lunch, they would be participating on a topic-specific subcommittee following presentations by the Virginia Department of Education and the College of William and Mary.

Updates from the Virginia Department of Education

Virginia Educational Initiatives

Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications

Ms. Wescott began the Department's presentation by providing information to the attendees identifying Virginia's recent educational activities, including recent legislative activity. She outlined the following statistics:

- 83 percent of 3rd grade students are reading on grade level.
- 48.8 percent of middle school students are enrolled in Algebra I or higher.
- Virginia's on-time graduation rate for 2011 was 86.6 percent.
- 47 percent of the graduates earned Advanced Studies Diplomas.
- 58 percent of the graduates enrolled in institutions of higher education nationwide.
- In 2011, students earned more than 36,000 industry credentials.

Ms. Wescott then discussed Virginia's progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as the Nation's Report Card, and offered the following statistics from 2011:

- 39 percent of Virginia 4th graders met or exceeded the proficiency standard in reading, compared to 32 percent nationwide.
- 36 percent of Virginia 8th graders met or exceeded the proficiency standard in reading, compared to 32 percent nationwide.
- Only three states, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey, had statistically higher 4th grade reading scores on the 2011 test.

Ms. Wescott outlined the Board of Education's goals to ensure that Virginia's students are college and career ready. The Board is implementing more rigorous Standards of Learning assessments in English, mathematics, science, and history. Moreover, college and career performance expectations in reading and mathematics have been aligned to national and international standards. These standards have been reviewed by Achieve, the American Diploma Project, the College Board, and ACT. Ms. Wescott outlined other recent actions taken by the Board of Education (Board) as they applied to the Commission's identified study issues:

Student Achievement

- The accreditation benchmarks are increasing in English (from a pass rate of 70 percent to 75 percent in grades 6-12) and science and history (from a pass rate of 50 percent to 70 percent in grade 3).
- Students are now required to pass a course in economics and personal finance to graduate.
- The Board will consider emergency regulations to implement changes in the requirements for graduation later this week, which would include requiring an industry credential to earn a Standard Diploma, and folding the Modified Standard Diploma into the Standard Diploma with credit accommodations for students with disabilities.

Structure and Support

- The Board is conducting a review of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) this year, with presentations from stakeholders tomorrow and July 25, and statewide public hearings this fall.
- The General Assembly approved SOQ flexibility for reading specialists, mathematics specialists, data coordinators, and assistant principals.
- Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments are being administered online, and include technology-enhanced items to demonstrate content mastery.
- 30 school divisions have undergone efficiency reviews since 2004.

Teacher Quality

- The Board has approved *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria* for teachers and principals, and guidelines for superintendents will be coming before the Board later this year. The approved guidelines recommend that 40 percent of the evaluation be based on student academic progress.
- 25 Virginia schools are participating in performance pay pilot programs.
- There will be a teacher recruitment initiative this summer to recruit and retain high quality teachers to teach in STEM areas. A related initiative will recruit college students to major in mathematics and science to alleviate the shortage of qualified teachers in these areas.

Educational Innovations

- The Board of Education has developed criteria and application procedures for charter schools and college partnership laboratory schools.
- Two charter schools have met the Board's charter school criteria this year, and a third will be before the Board later this week.
- Four universities have been awarded college partnership planning grants: George Mason, James Madison, Longwood, and Virginia State.
- 14 Governor's STEM Academies have been approved, and the 15th will be before the Board later this week.
- Planning grants will be available this summer of the Governor's Health Science Academies.
- 18 multidivisional online providers have been approved.
- The Board has begun the process of promulgating regulations governing virtual schools, and will begin the process of revising licensure regulations for teachers who teach only online courses.
- This summer, there will be three Positive Youth Development Academies (a character education initiative) offered in Chesapeake, Manassas City, and Danville.

Preparing Virginia's Youth for the Future: College and Career Readiness

Deborah Jonas, Ph.D., Executive Director for Research and Strategic Planning

Dr. Jonas gave an overview of Virginia's graduation index and the issues surrounding college and career readiness. She noted that preparing Virginia's students for college and the workplace was critical. In 2008, college graduates earned, on average, twice as much as high school graduates, a disparity that has grown since 1980. By 2012, 63 percent of jobs in the United States workforce will

require at least some postsecondary education or training. States collectively will need to produce an additional three million college credentials to meet the growing workforce demands.

Dr. Jonas stated that, in Virginia, there were still massive achievement gaps. Children of working parents with no college education are at increasing risk of living in poverty. In 20 years, poverty rates for children of parents who work full-time and have high school diplomas increased by 12 percent. She highlighted Virginia's research from the Virginia College and Career Readiness Initiative (CCRI). This initiative focuses on understanding high school indicators associated with enrollment in college, placement, and passing grades (C or better) in entry-level credit-bearing courses. Results are used to inform all aspects of the CCRI work and to communicate the achievement levels students need for college and career success.

In 2013, Virginia's standard diploma will include a career credential requirement. She noted that this was a very positive step but that it may not be enough to help improve students' math skills because diploma requirements remained unchanged. The independent indicators of college readiness in Virginia are:

- Completion of Algebra II and a lab science;
- Participation in college-level classwork like dual enrollment, advanced placement or IB programs;
- SOL outcomes of "Advanced proficient"; and
- Scoring college-ready on external assessments such as the SAT or ACT.

Dr. Jonas indicated that four-year institutions are not able to offer non-credit bearing "remedial" courses. Thus, it is imperative that students enter college ready for college-level course work. Dr. Jonas noted that, if students earned an advanced diploma and scored advanced proficient on the SOLs, then the likelihood of earning a C grade or better was significantly higher, regardless of ethnicity. Dr. Jonas asserted that high expectation for all of Virginia's students is a critical factor. Moreover, out-of-school time cannot replace teaching, but many youth need supports outside of school. This was evidenced by allowing students to have additional time to fulfill graduation requirements. For example, six percentage points were gained on the graduation index when Hispanic students given five years to graduate. A five-percentage point increase was seen for economically disadvantaged students. A nine-percentage point increase was seen for students with limited English proficiency. If the issue is time, then perhaps a traditional high school is not effective for these youth.

Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries

*James H. Stronge, Ph.D. Heritage Professor in Educational Policy
School of Education, College of William & Mary*

Dr. Stronge followed with a presentation on the preliminary findings from the literature review. He first outlined the methodology used in selecting the comparison countries and then noted that the review attempted to identify attributes that explain/support the positive educational outcomes in the selected countries. He noted that Canada was probably a better comparative country for purposes of the Commission's study. Shanghai was not the best; students with disabilities are not recognized in China and compulsory education ends at grade nine.

Poverty in the United States is not the same as that in China. Virginia's students are not competing against Massachusetts'; they are competing with the world's students. America's successes include quality of life, economic productivity, and number of Nobel awards. The United States has won 34 percent of the world's Nobel prizes. Dr. Stronge emphasized that 1.3 billion people in China want to be us!

Dr. Stronge noted that Virginia has 71,000 teachers. He reviewed the comparison countries' statistics for higher education teacher preparation, salary and class time and underscored his conviction that it was no longer enough to teach only the basics. This means that universities have to change in how they educate their students. He then offered the following statistics to the Roundtable attendees:

- Of all students who enter college, 40 percent must take remedial classes

- Sixty-five percent of college professors report students aren't prepared; blame focus on 9th and 10th grade achievement tests

Dr. Stronge stated that students in the U.S. are being prepared for achievement tests—not real world skills. He then offered the following recommendations, based on the review of these countries' best practices:

- Recruit potentially effective teachers and principals;
- Provide quality professional development;
- Utilized valid and credible evaluations;
- Ensure equal resource allocation;
- Establish educational policy that nurtures quality teachers; and
- Encourage a "STEM" focus.

Concurrent Subcommittee Meetings/Breakout Sessions

Participants then broke for a working lunch and attendees divided into four breakout sessions facilitated by members of the Commission's Advisory Group. The breakout sessions focused on each subcommittee's topic and attendees were asked to identify barriers, solutions, and action items. Upon completion, each subcommittee's designated reporter summarized the subcommittee's discussion for the Roundtable attendees.

SUBCOMMITTEE I – INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Leader: Patricia Popp

Attendees: Meg Burruss, Deborah Jonas, Andrew Kanu, Emily Thumma, Jennifer Wallace, Xianxuan Xu

International comparisons make it possible to compare the quality of educational outcomes across educational systems. They also reveal differences in these countries' educational structures as well as the investments made in education. International comparisons provide different insights for improving educational efficiency. This subcommittee discussed what other countries' best practices can be considered for use in Virginia.

Identified Issues

- Community supports and what youth are doing out of school (Finland)
- What are expectations for parents?
- How are teachers selected? Pedagogy
- Importance of effective mentoring
- Remember, comparing apples with oranges, what the focus should be is what is important to the citizens of Virginia.

Questions & Comments

- Parenting styles and techniques – parental expectations for behavior at school; cultural expectations
- What are the children doing with the time they are spending out of school/classroom? – after school, "wrap around" activities
- How do the other countries work with their "at-risk" populations (i.e., poor and immigrant populations) – less discrepancy among socio-economic status (SES) – a funding difference in the schools
- At what age do children start school? What do they do before they start school?
- Quality of preschool programs
- Really strong teachers are able to effectively teach all levels of students (i.e., high performing and low performing students)
- How do other countries deal with ineffective teachers? The research focused on the recruitment of the teachers – more selective when hiring teachers
- What are the selection criteria in other countries? When and how do they weed out teachers?
 - What else is it beyond academic achievement that gets a teacher in the door in the other countries?
 - Content knowledge isn't enough; pedagogical skills

- What is the preparation of the teachers? Coursework, clinical experiences, math and science training for primary teachers
- Mentorship, quality professional development
- What is the teaching approach in the classrooms? How does it vary across the countries? Good classroom management skills required
- What is actually in the assessments? What types of assessments are used? *Student and teacher assessments*
 - Assessment-driven society. However, how do Virginians use assessments compared to other countries?
 - When we do not know what's wrong or how to fix it, we tend to start measuring
- How do we sell teaching as a profession?
 - In Scotland, they increased teaching salary by \$10,000 and it does not seem to have a real impact on their educational achievement
 - How do you change a long-term structure, and effectively?
 - Should teaching even be sold solely as a “profession”?
- How do we define “progress,” particularly for different levels of students? What is progress for one child will not necessarily be progress for another.
- How are materials (i.e., textbooks) chosen for the classroom?
- Can we make policy that includes parental responsibility?

SUBCOMMITTEE II – STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Leader: William C. Boshier

Attendees: Amy Atkinson, Ellen Davenport, Blaire Denson, Vicky Greco, Sarah Gross, Meg Gruber, Sarah Herzog, Michael Molloy, Wendell Roberts, Anne Wescott, Gerald Ward

By examining the educational systems and structures of high performing countries, Virginia policymakers can obtain information about what works to bring about improvements in schooling and better preparation for young people during a time of deepening global interdependence. This session will discuss the system-wide reforms implemented by high-performing countries and how they may be applied in Virginia.

- Need to identify variables
 - Year-round schools, how are they financed? How are they governed? Curriculum goals - where do you get the policies that drive decisions.
 - Role of parents in these countries
 - Class size in countries
 - How do countries group students
 - How do they organize students (elementary, middle high)?
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Nongovernment entities and role of private sector
 - Do they have career/technical education (CTE)?
 - Cultural differences in these countries
 - Expectations for K-12 and Higher Ed
 - What is done to train leaders?
 - Teacher prep institutions
 - How do the countries account for how students get in
 - Structure of the day
 - Account for differentiated instruction
- What if's
 - What are the constraints for lifting expectations?
 - Compensation
 - Reducing number of assessments and replace that funding in needed areas
 - How do you deal with joint services and collaborative work?

- Be sure to look at Standards of Quality (SOQ); this is an issue.
- Be sure good communication with critical stakeholders and COY
- Look at new ways to engage parents
- Look at new ways to engage homeowners

SUBCOMMITTEE III – TEACHER QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Leader: James Stronge

Attendees: Belinda Friday, Irene Carney, Nancy Hoover, Catherine Finnegan, Lola Tornabene, Kathy Gillikin, Lilla Wise, Patty Pitts, Robley Jones, Jingzhu Zhang, Lady Moore

Of all the factors in the educational enterprise, teacher quality matters most. There is no other school-related factor that will influence students as profoundly. Virginia must develop policies that ensure good teachers are selected and retained and develop teachers based on the qualities of teacher effectiveness.

Problems	Solutions
How do we get support to address teacher quality issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish benchmark goals on teachers' salaries ➤ Engage the business community ➤ Awareness ➤ Conduct studies related to resources and teacher effectiveness
How do we recruit the best and brightest teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruit the top students from their high schools, provide financial and support incentives to become teachers ➤ Rebrand the profession ➤ Recruit high potential career switchers and support them prior to entering into classrooms
How do we best prepare best teachers in the pre-service programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Require focused Master's or +1 year ➤ Provide deeper/richer experiential training ➤ Professors must have relevant and periodic school experience ➤ Restructure how teacher preparation programs are designed to be relevant and robust to effectiveness ➤ Restructure teachers/leader preparation programs from practitioners ➤ Use technology to share best practice around the world ➤ Align and collaborate with PK/workforce
How do we establish the rigorous admission to teacher/leader preparation programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement high standards for admission statewide
How can the teachers' days be best structured to improve the teacher effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Change the proportion of teachers' planning and teaching time ➤ Use support personnel for non-teaching assignment
How do we nurture, support, and develop new teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better assignments ➤ Mentor programs ➤ Creating master teacher programs that nurture new teachers
What makes the in-service professional development effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More individualized ➤ Relevant to needs ➤ Research based ➤ Provide in formats how adults learn ➤ Provide regional professional development centers ➤ Professional development on demand ➤ Track professional development to implementation/transfer of learning
How should teacher effectiveness be evaluated and what should be done with the results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training, training ➤ Provide e-management to track data ➤ Use evaluation results for individualized professional growth ➤ Make personnel decisions
How can we ensure the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Differentiated pay

presence of the high quality teachers/leaders in high need schools?	
What are the optimal conditions to support teaching and learning? To retain effective teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use support personnel for non-teaching assignment ➤ Active teacher involvement in teacher selection and other facets of school environment

SUBCOMMITTEE IV – EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

Leader: Meredith Gunter

Attendees: Shanee Harmon, Kim McKay, Matthew Stanley, John Dougherty, Beverly Lammay, Duane C. Sergent, Reginald Branch, Michelle Vucci, Marcy Reedy, Paula Fisher, Tunya Bingham, Leah Hamaker

This subcommittee discussed educational initiatives which compliment high-performing educational systems. These initiatives enable Virginia’s school divisions to broaden the array of courses they offer, reach out to non-traditional students and provide more educational options for families. The issues covered by this subcommittee include Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – Health care (STEM-H) academies, programs that address students at risk of not graduating, high ability students, and virtual learning.

Barriers to STEM-H

- Expensive (equipment, faculty, teachers); needs more money
- Create cross-divisional shared facilities for STEM-H
- Need to get students interested and to retain them
- A structured approach for mutual reinforcement
- Gender-free curriculum for female students
- STEM must be pertinent to careers and learning, specify pathways to education levels
- Build co-ops to allow students to obtain technology exposure

Achievement Gap

- Need calendar flexibility, increase summer learning opportunities
- Create a regional level model to address workforce needs (articulate workforce needs to child/parents)
- Build relationships with employers, incentives for employers, take some of the burden off of school divisions
- Must train great teachers for urban classrooms
- Prepare teachers with special training and differential pay for teachers
- State or nationwide reentry program for dropout prevention, creating longer length of stay in schools

Virtual Learning

- Questions need to be answered (research point of view, unbiased)
 - Whom does virtual learning serve best? (Teach to the child)
 - Models of virtual learning
 - How does this apply to the at-risk population? Is it or is it not advantageous for at-risk population
- Credentialing is a challenge.
- Equal access is an issue (internet capacity)

Three Takeaways

1. Reading is the number one indicator of academic success.
2. Do not forget soft skills! (Work ethic, showing up on time, communication skills)
3. Teach to the child, individualized instruction is critical.

Closing Remarks

The Honorable Laura Fornash, Secretary of Education

Secretary Fornash offered closing remarks. She thanked everyone for participating in the Roundtable. She noted that Governor Bob McDonnell was the Chair of the Southern Regional Education Board. Secretary Fornash stated that the Governor is focusing on school innovation and increasing students' college readiness, access and completion rates, as well as how Virginia can do a better job preparing more students for college and career training.

Secretary Fornash emphasized that the issues discussed today were very important ones and thanked everyone for their involvement.