

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

December 3, 2012

10:00 a.m.

House Room C

MINUTES

Attending:

Delegates Christopher Peace, Mamyé BaCote, Robert Brink, Anne Crockett-Stark and Peter Farrell

Senator Stephen Martin

Citizen members Gary Close, Frank Royal, and Charles Slemp

Not Attending:

Delegate Beverly Sherwood

Senator Harry Blevins

Note: One Senate seat is vacant.

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Meg Burruss, Joyce Garner, Leah Hamaker

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Delegate Christopher K. Peace

Delegate Peace called the meeting to order and noted that this was the final meeting of the Virginia Commission on Youth for the 2012 study year. He asked the Commission members and staff to introduce themselves.

Student Growth Professional Evaluation and Strategic Compensation: What Works, What Doesn't, and What's Next

Dr. H. Alan Siebert, Superintendent, Salem City Schools

Delegate Peace welcomed Dr. Siebert to the Commission on Youth meeting and thanked him for attending to brief the Commission on Salem City's efforts in education reform.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Siebert discussed the compensation model currently in place in Salem City Schools. Dr. Siebert stated that he was a member of the Virginia delegation who traveled to Finland to learn about the country's educational system. He stated that one lesson he learned from the trip was local control. Dr. Siebert stated that Virginia's school calendar and seat time requirements were unchanged since the industrial era. In Finland, schools are more flexible and autonomous. This theme is also evidenced in the Salem City Schools' Growth Project.

The Salem City Schools Growth Project was established to measure and report student growth in all grade-levels/content-areas. It does this by school, by teacher and by individual student. It also aligns professional evaluation systems to ensure that student growth is the centerpiece of teacher and leader evaluations.

Dr. Seibert noted there is a difference between student growth and student achievement. While Virginia's existing assessments measure student success, they do not reflect student achievement. Virginia has 34 student achievement tests but uses no growth measures. While SOL tests are important, they do not accurately depict whether a student is progressing. Assessing growth is very complex and interconnected and Salem's Growth Project reflects this. He emphasized three points: highly effective teachers help students learn, teacher effectiveness should be reflected and measured by student growth, and compensation should be based on both of these tenets. The SOL tests were not designed to do this because they are based entirely upon student achievement. Student growth must also be measured and growth models must be used that respect differences between grade levels and subjects. Moreover, any type of growth model must feature robust student achievement goals setting in all grade-levels and content areas. Dr. Seibert discussed the model selected by Salem's teachers and staff – a career ladder for teachers. This compensation model was built using a point-based system that was collaborative, sustainable, and meaningful. It was also very flexible and reflects the tenet of what gets measures gets done. He stated that the General Assembly may want to consider reducing the number of student achievement tests (SOLS) in certain years and establish authentic measures of individual student growth that was correlated with the SOLs. The Salem City Schools' Growth Project reflected Salem school division's values of local control, highly effective instruction, and value-added analysis.

Delegate BaCote offered comments about Newport News' STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Academy. Mr. Slemp asked about the point system utilized by Salem City Public Schools. Dr. Seibert stated that, during the first year of the pilot, Salem City teachers identified the goals and the items they wished to have incentivized. Delegate Crockett-Stark asked about the process and stated that, as a counselor, she noted that ability tests may not always measure achievement. Dr. Seibert stated that, in Salem City, school counselors select individual goals and program goals, such as increasing graduation rates and assessing outcomes, by using pre- and post-test surveys. Dr. Seibert emphasized that this is a highly participative approach. Teachers are awarded points but they determine how they wish to be evaluated and select the measures for both student and program goals.

Dr. Seibert then provided an overview of the Finnish experience. He introduced Dr. Forest Jones, Principal of Andrew Lewis Middle School, to share the lessons learned from the Virginia delegation's trip to Finland.

Dr. Jones provided an overview on the history of Finland and stated that Finland became an independent country in 1917. It was a crippled, agrarian society which preserved independency after World War II. Finland's two-path, unequal, education

system prevailed until systemic reform took place in the 1970s. Today, Finland focuses on equity and well-being. Teachers are highly valued and highly trained. Finland has fostered accountability policies, a culture of trust, and sustainable leadership. The major themes and lessons learned from Finland's educational system are the emphasis on individualism, customization of schools, local control and discretion, and a culture of trust.

Mr. Close asked about funding of Finland's schools. Dr. Jones stated that national government provided funding for the schools. Delegate Crockett-Start asked about the size and population of Finland. Dr. Jones stated that Finland's population is 5.4 million with 600,000 citizens residing in Helsinki. There is no state department of education and the national government oversees Finland's schools.

Delegate Peace asked how Finland's expenditures on education compared to Virginia's expenditures. Dr. Jones stated that it is impossible to compare expenditures because Finland did not provide transportation for students and clubs or sports are not offered through the schools. Moreover, there was no special education program or funding.

2012 Legislative Studies

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

Delegate Peace stated that Ms. Atkinson would present the findings and recommendations from the Commission's 2012 legislative studies. He noted that this material was shared with the members in greater detail at previous Commission meetings. In addition, the Commission received written public comments through November 28. A summary of public comments is included in the decision matrix.

Delegate Peace stated that members of the public who have signed up to speak would have three minutes to speak. He stated Ms. Atkinson would first provide a summary of the recommendations for each study, the members would then hear public comment, and then the Commission would vote on the recommendations.

The Commission received the findings and recommendations for the Commission's study – *Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries*.

Mr. Steven Kast, President & CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula and member of the Virginia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs shared information about the Texas AIM model, a public-private partnership that helped participants improve academically. Of the students who participated in this program, 86 percent advanced an academic grade and 68 percent received a letter grade of "A" or "B".

Delegate Farrell requested that Finding 3 – The Achievement Gap – and the accompanying Recommendations found on pages 11 and 12 of the decision matrix under the Educational Innovations category be removed from the block of Recommendations. Delegate Brink expressed concern with Recommendation 2 under

Finding 3. Mr. Slemp moved that Finding 3 and the accompanying Recommendations be laid on the table.

The following recommendations were adopted by the Commission in a block.

TEACHER PREPAREDNESS/EFFECTIVENESS

Finding 1: Teacher Recruitment

Raise the value of the teaching profession in Virginia.

- a. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education develop and implement approaches to make teaching a more attractive career choice.*
- b. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education develop and implement promotional programs and marketing which addresses the value of the teaching profession.*

Develop and implement a rigorous teacher recruitment mechanism.

- a. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education develop and implement a rigorous teacher recruitment mechanism.*
- b. *Recruit top academic achievers who are rising college freshman or already enrolled in college.*

Provide incentives for early identification and attraction of high-performing, high ability candidates.

- a. *Request the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) review Virginia's existing scholarship programs, such as the Virginia Teacher Scholarship Loan Program and Virginia's College Transfer Grants, and make recommendations for building awareness for recruiting highly qualified candidates into the teaching profession.*
- b. *Develop dual enrollment and articulation agreements to establish a career pathway model in Virginia for recruiting high-performing teacher candidates and facilitate their entry into the teaching profession. Such a review will include dual enrollment, Virginia's two-year associates degree programs, articulation agreements with Virginia's teacher preparation programs, and master's degree program requirements that acknowledge teacher candidates who meet other criteria of highly qualified teachers.*

Finding 2: Quality of Teacher Preparation Programs

Raise the rigor of teacher preparation programs.

- a. *Require all student teachers to be supervised and jointly evaluated by an experienced teacher, principal, and university advisor.*
- b. *Request the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) review teacher practicums to ensure the inclusion of a variety of experiences in addition to classroom teaching, such as observation of lessons, conferences with teacher, or participation in extracurricular and professional development activities.*
- c. *Strengthen the exit requirements of teacher education programs to include criteria such as completion of required courses, examinations, project assignments, and a teacher practicum.*
- d. *Expand the use of performance-based assessments proposed in the Virginia State Board of Education Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers for beginning teacher licensing as a means of determining effectiveness before a teacher receives a professional license.*
- e. *Request the Board of Education be advised of the findings from the Commission's study regarding the importance of quality teacher preparation programs and include Virginia's alternative licensing provisions as part of their comprehensive review of Virginia's Licensure Regulations for School Personnel.*

Finding 3: Teacher Support and Development

Improve Virginia's teacher professional development practices/ programs.

- a. *Request Virginia's teacher preparation programs include best practices that translate to high quality professional development to match teachers' training needs.*

- b. *Recommend that additional time be committed to professional development and identify options for providing professional development within existing mechanisms.*
- c. *Provide state funding for school divisions to provide high quality professional development opportunities that correspond with teachers' professional needs.*
- d. *Create policies that encourage school divisions to hold public instruction workshops to demonstrate exemplary teaching practices.*

Finding 4: Teacher Evaluation

Implement teacher evaluation policies which encourage educational excellence and professional accountability.

Implement faithfully and institutionalize, through appropriate funding, the revised teacher evaluation system policy guidelines in the Virginia Board of Education's Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers. Also, provide financial support to implement the Board of Education's Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals and for Superintendents.

Finding 5: Teacher Compensation

Study/revise Virginia's teacher compensation system to include components that foster excellence in teaching.

- a. *Provide funding for teacher salary increases.*
- b. *Provide funding based on a strategic compensation model such as Salem's City Schools Growth Project.*
- c. *Provide funding for establishing a differentiated compensation system based on teacher performance.*

STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Finding 1: Principal Quality

Develop leadership mentoring and development programs that target the skills, knowledge, and attributes of effective leaders.

- a. *Implement, fund, and ensure professional development provisions are included in the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2012.*
- b. *Develop leadership policies and practices, in partnership with Virginia's education associations, to identify and develop promising teachers to assume official leadership positions.*
- c. *Request the Department of Education develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Center for Research on Teacher and Leader Excellence to promote best practices in instructional leadership developed by Virginia's institutions of higher education and to coordinate with other states' leadership programs across Virginia's school divisions.*

Finding 2: Instructional Time and Time Spent Learning

Investigate the Commonwealth's school day structure and school year structure.

- a. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education review best practices in structuring adequate planning time for teachers.*
- b. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education study ways to maximize the instructional learning time for students including the allocation of the time in school day and the school year.*
- c. *Request the Governor and the Secretary of Education review the waivers of seat-time requirements and make recommendations to allow students to earn credit based on demonstrating course mastery.*

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

Finding 1: Virtual Learning

Explore virtual learning opportunities in Virginia.

- a. *Investigate multiple sources of funding, such as enrollment tuition, federal or state grants, or external funders, to ensure the sustainability of the virtual schools.*

- b. *Develop a plan to ensure equitable access to virtual learning resources, in particular for the at-risk student population.*
- c. *Request more research in the field of virtual learning to have a larger knowledge base about what makes virtual learning effective.*
- d. *Develop a plan to create more virtual middle, elementary, and remediation courses. Currently, more courses offered are high school courses, including AP or college level courses geared toward high-achieving students working toward college credits.*
- e. *Consider and plan teacher professional development to require a thorough knowledge of virtual teaching strategies and the workings of specific virtual teaching platforms.*
- f. *Investigate partnerships with other states to attain the most qualified teachers in specialized fields.*
- g. *Explore the best use of virtual learning and what works with ensuring access, success, and accountability.*
- h. *Recommend the expansion of virtual learning in Virginia based on the evidence of what works.*

Finding 2: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics-Healthcare (STEM-H)

Develop a plan to implement rigorous and coherent STEM-H curriculum that deepens STEM-H learning over time.

- a. *Strengthen science education at elementary and middle school levels. Teachers can cover less material, but cover it in depth. For example, separate science into sub-subjects e.g., biology, physics, and chemistry starting at middle school level.*
- b. *Enhance Virginia's STEM-H curriculum to promote mastery.*
- c. *Develop gender-specific student programming to encourage participation in STEM-H-related classes.*
- d. *Build cooperation with STEM-H-related business and industry where students can obtain "real life" experiences in the technology sectors.*
- e. *Increase the proportion of in-field STEM-H teachers, particularly in Title I schools.*

INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Finding 1: The International Baccalaureate

Support, financially and otherwise, the expansion of IB programs.

- a. *Support the expansion of IB programs at the elementary, middle, and high school level.*
- b. *Request more schools with IB programs to have dual credentials (having sister schools in other countries).*
- c. *Request more research on IB curriculum and assessment in order to develop and implement a similar but cost-effective system in every public school.*

Finding 2: More Rigorous Middle School Curriculum

Continue to examine and improve Virginia's academic standards to ensure the rigor and quality of standards.

- a. *Develop more advanced math/science curriculum for grades 6, 7, and 8. For example, offer age-appropriate courses in biology, chemistry and physics in grades 6-8.*
- b. *Conduct more research on the best math/science textbook and pedagogical instruction practices in other countries. Suggest conducting an in-depth examination of the math curriculum developed by Singapore's Ministry of Education. This curriculum emphasizes extensive coverage of a relatively small number of concepts at early stages, and integrates math concepts, such as algebra and geometry, in secondary grade levels.*
- c. *Request a comprehensive development of middle school math and science textbooks, including electronic and interactive versions.*
- d. *Support the Virginia Board of Education's work in establishing rigorous, focused and coherent content at all grade levels, and reducing overlap and variation in implemented curricula across grades.*
- e. *Offer students more opportunities to take challenging classes, beginning at the elementary school level.*

- f. *Recommend schools review and revise curricula on a regular schedule, for instance, every five or ten years. Curricula should concentrate on the topics that must be mastered in order to understand the material presented in the following year.*

Finding 3: Assessing Virginia's Students' Performance

Recommend Virginia consider additional methods to measure students' achievement.

- a. *Request the Virginia Department of Education design a new generation of assessment to assess a broader range of student skills and knowledge. Instead of relying on multiple-choice computer-scored tests, which educators and researchers believe cannot accurately measure higher-order thinking skills, the assessment should be diversified to include essay-type responses or even oral examinations.*
- b. *Request the Virginia Department of Education to develop a plan for Virginia to participate in the 2015 TIMSS and/or PISA assessment as a "separate" country. The plan will discuss recommendations regarding the most appropriate assessment, implementation issues, and potential public and/or private funding sources. The Department will report on the status of this plan to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2014 General Assembly Session.*

DEFINITION OF KINSHIP CAREGIVERS IN VIRGINIA

Ms. Atkinson presented the findings and recommendations for this study. Public comment was received on the study recommendations. Dr. Alan Seibert spoke and noted his support for the Recommendations. He stated that, as a former kinship caregiver to his brother-in-law, he experienced firsthand the numerous issues facing relative caregivers. Dr. Seibert stated that a Power of Attorney may not be sufficient to address these issues.

Ms. Cate Newbanks spoke in support of the Recommendations. She stated that localities were diverting youth from foster care to kinship placements pursuant to the federal Fostering Connections Act. If there was not timely notification of relatives pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act, youth were more likely to be placed in foster care. The local departments of social services need to find families in the early stages during a crisis to increase the likelihood that families can remain together. The Commission previously looked at barrier crime statutes for kinship care families and the Crime Commission study recommended modifying barrier crime requirements for kinship care to increase relative placements. Ms. Newbanks noted that, pursuant to the *Code of Virginia*, local departments of social services must conduct background checks for foster care placements. However, for informal kinship care, there is no requirement that background checks be done. There is a huge need for informal kinship care but consistency in practice was also needed. She also commented that, for Finding 5, informal kinship caregivers do find it difficult to obtain services for children placed in their care. A kinship care navigator grant was drafted by the Department for the Aging to address this; however, there was no information about available services and funding for a kinship navigator.

Delegate Peace noted his disappointed that confusion about informal kinship care was not remedied and his hope for clarity on the definition of kinship care.

Mr. Slemp moved Recommendation 3 for Finding 1. He also moved that the other Recommendations for Finding 1 be laid on the table. Delegate Farrell seconded the motion. Delegate Brink and Mr. Close opposed the motion but the motion passed.

No action was taken on Finding 2. On Finding 3, Delegate BaCote moved that Recommendation 1 be amended to request the Department of Social Services report back to the Commission on Youth on the progress of creating early prevention guidelines for foster care diversion. Mr. Slemp seconded the Recommendation. Delegate BaCote moved Recommendation 1, as amended, and Recommendation 2. Delegate Brink seconded the motion. The adopted Finding 2 and Recommendations are outlined below.

Finding 3: Virginia has no standardized policy or guidance on kinship diversion.

1. Support the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) in the creation of foster care diversion in early prevention guidelines that provide guidance to LDSS workers on the role of the agency in diversion practice, safety considerations, relative notification, and the use of criminal and child protective services (CPS) checks. DSS will report on its progress to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2014 General Assembly Session.
2. Support the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) in the development of an assessment tools for the informal diversion of youth from foster care into family placements and request that DSS report on the progress on the implementation of the assessment tool to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2014 General Assembly Session.

RESTORATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Ms. Atkinson presented the findings and recommendations for this study. Public comment was received on the study recommendations. Christie Marra, Staff Attorney with the Virginia Poverty Law Center, stated that the Poverty Law Center participated on the Advisory Group and strongly supported the Recommendation.

Ms. Atkinson noted that staff was working to address the comment submitted by Michael S. J. Chernau, Senior Assistant County Attorney for Chesterfield County. Mr. Chernau served on the Advisory Group and had offered a suggestion to ensure that local departments of social services maintain the discretion granted to them in existing law. Ms. Atkinson said that this could be accomplished in the drafting process prior to the General Assembly Session.

Delegate Brink made a motion to amend the Recommendation to ensure the on-going participation of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in and during the restoration process. Delegate Farrell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Delegate Farrell moved that the Recommendation be adopted. Delegate Brink seconded the motion. The Recommendation passed unanimously. The adopted Recommendation is outlined below.

Recommendation

Recommend the Code of Virginia be amended by adding a section numbered 16.1-283.2, to provide a procedure for the restoration of the parental rights of a parent whose rights had been previously terminated, with the following conditions:

- Age of Juvenile: 14 years of age
- Exceptions to Age Requirement

- Younger Sibling Exception: the juvenile must be a certain age (14), or a younger sibling of a juvenile of sufficient age for whom restoration is being sought, and the younger sibling independently meets the criteria for restoration; and
- LDSS and GAL File Jointly: a restoration may be filed for a juvenile who does not meet the age requirement where his or her guardian ad litem and the local department of social services jointly file the petition for restoration
- Who May File: the local departments of social services OR the juvenile's guardian ad litem
- Required Time Period Post-Termination: Two years
- Time Period Exception: 18th Birthday Exception
Where the required two-year time period would expire after the juvenile's 18th birthday, the petition may be brought sooner
- Who Must Consent: the juvenile AND the parent whose rights are being restored
- Other Provisions
 - Use a best interests standard with a clear and convincing burden of proof
 - Limit the availability of the restoration procedure for those cases in which a parent's parental rights were terminated pursuant to § 16.1-283(B), (C), and (D)
 - Allow for the participation of a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteer and include a CASA volunteer in the list of people to receive notice and reports
 - Provide for a transitional period during which time the juvenile in the physical custody of the parent and in the legal custody of the local department of social services.

Election of Officers

In accordance with provisions in the *Code of Virginia*, the Chair initiated the annual election of the Commission on Youth Chair and Vice Chair. In response to the call for nominations for Chair, Delegate Farrell nominated Delegate Peace, seconded by Mr. Close. There being no other nominations or discussion, the Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

The election for Vice Chair was taken by for the day in order to ensure representation from the Senate.

Delegate Peace expressed his appreciation to fellow members for their votes of confidence.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.