

## **Virginia Board of Education – March 2021 Meeting Update**

On March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, the [Virginia Board of Education \(Board\)](#) met for their scheduled work session and regular business meeting. The meetings were live streamed for viewers, and recordings of those meetings can be found [here](#). While we do our best to give you a concise summary of the topics discussed during each meeting, we encourage you and your superintendent to delve deep into this information to better understand how it will impact your school division. Additionally, we welcome any feedback that you may wish to provide. If you have any questions, concerns, or compliments for the Board, please send them to me at [jason@vsba.org](mailto:jason@vsba.org).

### **Wednesday Special Committee Work Session**

On [Wednesday, March 17, 2021](#), the [Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation](#) met to continue to review the Standards of Accreditation and provide recommendations to the Board on any potential changes. The Special Committee received reports from Virginia Department of Education staff on the following items: [Proposed Technical Revisions to the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia \(Presentation: Proposed Technical Revisions\)](#) and [Prioritizing Equity in the Standards of Accreditation](#).

In addition to staff presentations, the committee heard from Rashard Wright, Chief of Staff, Newport News Public Schools, Myles Harvey, Student School Board Representative, Portsmouth Public Schools, Dr. Tameshia Grimes, Superintendent, Nottaway County Public Schools, and The Honorable Jim Dyke, Former Virginia Secretary of Education. The four presenters are members of the African American Superintendent's Advisory Council and were invited to present recommendations to the committee on [Advancing Racial Equity in Virginia's Public Schools](#).

With no further business to come before the Special Committee, the meeting was adjourned.

### **Thursday Business Session**

On [Thursday, March 18, 2021](#), the Board reconvened for their regularly [scheduled business session](#). Board President Dan Gecker called the business session to order and welcomed the newly appointed members of the Board of Education, Dr. Stewart Roberson and Mr. Anthony Swann, and invited each to provide an introduction.

Following the introductions, President Gecker announced [Item I- Final Review of Proposed Revisions to the Approval Process for Multi-division Online Providers in Virginia](#)- would be removed from the March meeting agenda to be heard at the April meeting of the Board.

President Gecker asked for approval of the minutes from the January Board meeting. President Gecker explained the need to conduct roll call votes on each item due to the protocols for virtual public meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A motion was made and properly seconded to approve the minutes of the January Board meeting. A roll call vote was made, and the January Board meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Following approval of the January meeting minutes, the Board proceeded to accept the following Consent Agenda items:

**[Item A- Final Review to Certify a List of Qualified Persons for the Office of Division Superintendent of Schools \(Item A- Attachment A\)](#), [Item B- Final Review of Recommended Cut Scores for Substitute Tests for Verified Credit in Reading and Writing](#), [Item C- Final Review of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure’s Recommendation for a Passing Score for the Praxis Middle Schools Science \(5442\) Test for the Middle Education 6-8 Science Endorsement \(Item C- Attachment A\) \(Item C- Attachment B\)](#), [Item D- Final Review of Revised Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Students \(Item D- Attachment A\)](#), [Item E- Final Review to Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition and Intervention Training Curriculum Guidelines \(Item E- Attachment A\)](#), [Item F- Final Review of Proposed Revisions to the World Language Standards of Learning \(Item F- Attachment A\) \(Item F- Attachment B\)](#).**

Having accepted the above referenced items on the Consent Agenda, the Board proceeded to its items for Action and Discussion.

**[Item G- Final Review of Revised Foundation Blocks for Learning \(Item G- Attachment A\)](#).** Ms. Jenna Conway, Chief School Readiness Officer, Office of the Governor, presented Item G to the Board. The proposed revisions to the *Foundation Blocks for Learning* (retitled *Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards*) are in response to recent legislation wherein the Virginia Board of Education (Board) and Department of Education (VDOE) are now charged with ensuring that all Virginia children have equitable opportunity to enter kindergarten ready. These new learning guidelines will replace the *Foundation Blocks for Learning*, last revised in 2013, and the Virginia Department of Social Service (VDSS) *Virginia Milestones of Early Childhood Development* documents. In partnership with VDOE, over 300 early childhood experts and diverse stakeholders (by race/ethnicity, geography, expertise, provider type, etc.) collaborated on the development of the new standards and have produced a comprehensive, up-to-date set of early learning guidelines for children birth to five. An intentional and persistent focus on equity for all learners, cultural responsiveness, inclusiveness and accessibility were integral to the process and final content.

The Board’s first review of the proposed revisions to the *Foundation Blocks for Learning* occurred on November 19, 2020, with a second review occurring on January 28, 2021. Stakeholders from across the birth to five continua were invited to provide feedback and recommendations during two public comment periods (Spring and Fall 2020) and stakeholders with infant/toddler expertise were specifically targeted for workgroup representation. Further, the VDOE ensured that a careful crosswalk of the new standards to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework was conducted, and also aligned the standards with Virginia’s kindergarten readiness assessments (the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening or PALS for literacy; the Early Mathematics Assessment or EMAS for mathematics; and the Child Behavior Rating Scale of CBRS for self-regulation and social skills) and kindergarten standards of learning (SOLs).

In response to feedback offered by the Board following second review, changes were made in the introduction of the standards document and include: the reordering of presented content; modified/added language emphasizing the equivalent value of early childhood *care* to *education* and the nuances of infant and toddler development and use of a more inclusive definition of

early childhood providers (noted examples include parents/families, caregivers, and educators). The later descriptive changes for provider groups, specifically caregiver and educator terminology, were also applied throughout the remainder of the standards document (i.e., section introductions).

Overall, the proposed revisions to the *Foundation Blocks for Learning* support the goals and priorities of the Board of Education and specifically align to Priority 1, “provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students,” of the [Board of Education Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023](#).

Ms. Conway informed the Board it is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Board to approve Final Review of Item G. A motion was made and properly seconded to approve Final Review of Item G. Following a roll call vote, the Board approved Final Review of Item G.

**[Item H- Final Review of Proposed Revisions to the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers](#)** ([Item H- Attachment A](#)). Mrs. Patty Pitts, Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure, VDOE, presented Item H for Final Review. The Virginia Board of Education is required to establish performance standards and evaluation criteria for teachers, principals, and superintendents to serve as guidelines for school divisions to use in implementing educator evaluation systems. The *Code of Virginia* requires (1) that teacher evaluations be consistent with the **performance objectives (standards)** set forth in the Board’s *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents* and (2) that school boards’ procedures for evaluating instructional personnel address student academic progress.

Section 22.1-253.13:5 (Standard 5. Quality of classroom instruction and educational leadership) of the *Code of Virginia* states, in part, the following:

...B. Consistent with the finding that leadership is essential for the advancement of public education in the Commonwealth, teacher, administrator, and superintendent evaluations shall be consistent with the performance objectives included in the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents*. Evaluations shall include student academic progress as a significant component and an overall summative rating. Teacher evaluations shall include regular observation and evidence that instruction is aligned with the school's curriculum. Evaluations shall include identification of areas of individual strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for appropriate professional activities....

Section 22.1-295 (Employment of teachers) states, in part, the following:

...C. School boards shall develop a procedure for use by division superintendents and principals in evaluating instructional personnel that is appropriate to the tasks performed and addresses, among other things, **student academic progress** [emphasis added] and the skills and knowledge of instructional personnel, including, but not limited to, instructional methodology, classroom management, and subject matter knowledge.

The current *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, originally were approved on April 28, 2011, and subsequently revised on July 23,

2015, and January 10, 2020. A workgroup was convened to comprehensively review the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*. The Virginia Department of Education engaged Stronge & Associates Educational Consulting, LLC, to facilitate this work.

Attached is the proposed document, *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*. Revisions to the document presented to the Board on January 28, 2021 are highlighted in yellow, and revisions since first review are highlighted in blue. Since the January presentation to the Board, the Department of Education, including the Office of Equity and Community Engagement, made revisions in the text of indicators for **Standard 6-Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices**, including language to articulate that this standard is inclusive of gender, race, ethnicity, English-language Learners, and students with disabilities.

A “Foreword” has been added to the document to emphasize the following:

- Phase 2 is intended as a bridge between the current and future teacher performance evaluation systems. The major revision to the *Guidelines* in Phase 2 is the creation of a new performance standard, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices*. The establishment of this performance standard addresses [House Bill 1904](#) (identical to Senate Bill 1196) passed by the 2021 General Assembly requiring that “Evaluations shall include an evaluation of cultural competency.”
- Although only observation and measures of student progress are mandated by the *Code of Virginia*, the use of the following data sources is highly encouraged:
  - Teacher artifacts (Documentation Logs)
  - Student surveys
  - Self-evaluations
  - Student Achievement Goal Setting

By using multiple data sources in teacher evaluation, the evaluator is better able to provide a comprehensive and authentic “performance portrait” of the teacher’s work.

- Professional growth and development are integral to any effective teacher evaluation system. While teacher evaluation should provide a fair and accurate summative measure of teacher effectiveness, first and foremost, it should be a tool to improve teaching. Teacher evaluation should serve as a channel to provide targeted feedback, professional development, coaching, and mentorship to our teachers. This approach for teacher growth and support is emphasized throughout the proposed revisions to the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*.

This initiative supports the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023* to encourage and support the recruitment, development, and retention of well-prepared and skilled teachers and school leaders.

Mrs. Pitts informed the Board that it is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction that Item H be approved for Final Review.

After discussion by the Board, Ms. Anne Holton, offered amendments to the document. Further, Dr. Jamelle Wilson asked that minor technical edits be made to the document. A motion was made to approve Item H with amendments and technical edits. The motion was properly seconded. The Board approved Item H with amendments and technical edits for Final Review unanimously via a roll call vote.

**Item J- First Review of Proposed Temporary Flexibility for Meeting Sequential Elective Requirements for Virginia Graduates** ([Item J- Attachment A](#)) ([Item J- Presentation](#)). Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy, VDOE, presented Item J for First Review. In 2017, the Virginia Board of Education finalized its comprehensive review of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (also known as the Standards of Accreditation or SOA). The new graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-51 included a sequential elective requirement for both the Standard and Advanced Studies Diploma to comport with legislation from the 2016 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly. Prior to the 2016 legislation, two sequential electives were only required for the Standard Diploma.

In 2019, the [Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia \(8VAC20-131\)](#) – also referred to as the SOA guidance document – was reorganized to align with the newly implemented 2017 SOA regulatory language. At this time, a number of other standalone guidance documents were also incorporated to create a single, consolidated companion resource to the Standards of Accreditation. One of the many topics addressed in the SOA guidance document is the sequential elective requirement for graduation.

It has recently come to the attention of VDOE staff that a number of school divisions were unaware of the SOA guidance document and clarifications therein regarding sequential electives. Accordingly, there have been inconsistencies in how the sequential elective requirement is understood at the local level, particularly as it relates to the Advanced Studies diploma.

The proposed amendments to the SOA guidance document seek to address this issue by creating temporary flexibility for those students who are most immediately at risk of being affected by any misunderstanding. The proposed language permits students graduating in the 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school years to use a World Language course credit to partially satisfy the sequential elective requirement. This expands on existing flexibilities and provides students another course option for fulfilling the sequential elective.

In addition to this temporary flexibility, the proposed amendments include several technical edits to the guidance on sequential electives. These technical edits include the reincorporation of language regarding career and technical education courses being used to partially satisfy the requirement, which was inadvertently not carried over from past iterations of the SOA guidance document; the addition of a statement regarding two credit courses being permitted to satisfy the requirement; and the inclusion of links to career and technical education programs of study webpages.

Dr. Sale informed the Board that it is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to waive First Review of Item J and approve the item for Final Review. With no discussion, a motion was made and properly seconded to waive First Review and approve Item J for Final Review. Item J was approved unanimously via a roll call vote.

**[Item K](#)**- **First Review of Child Care Regulations Transferring from the Board of Social Services to the Board of Education** ([Item K- Attachment A](#)) ([Item K- Attachment B](#)) ([Item K- Attachment C](#)) ([Item K- Attachment D](#)) ([Item K- Attachment E](#)) ([Item K- Attachment F](#)) ([Item K- Attachment G](#)) ([Item K- Attachment H](#)) ([Item K- Attachment I](#)) ([Item K- Presentation](#)). Ms. Jenna Conway, Chief School Readiness Officer, Office of the Governor, presented Item K to the Board for First Review. Effective July 1, 2021, the Board of Education is responsible for establishing a unified public-private system for early childhood care and education (ECCE) in the Commonwealth, to be implemented by the VDOE. Chapters [860](#) and [861](#) of the 2020 Acts of the General Assembly require regulations governing the implementation and oversight of ECCE programs to be transferred from the Board of Social Services to the Board of Education. These regulations are to be adopted as written, with minor modifications as needed to be incorporated into the Education administrative code section. The Board's initial actions to adopt these regulations with "necessary amendments" are exempt from Article 2 (§2.2-4006 et seq.) of Chapter 40 of Title 2.2 of the *Code of Virginia*. Necessary amendments for the purposes of such exempt action include:

- Renumbering;
- Changing references from the Board of Social Services to the Board of Education;
- Changing code references and descriptions;
- Striking regulations specific to adult care programs and child welfare programs; and
- Striking regulations related to child support enforcement pursuant to [§ 63.2-1911](#).

VDOE will conduct a comprehensive review of these regulations in partnership with the new Early Childhood Advisory Council to identify and recommend substantive policy changes to the Board later this year.

This item supports Priority 1 of the Board's Comprehensive Plan to provide high-quality learning environments for all students.

Ms. Conway informed the Board that it is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to accept Item K for First Review. With no Board member having questions or comments, the Board accepted Item K for First Review.

**[Item L](#)**- **First Review of Proposed Curriculum Guidelines for Instruction on the Safe Use of Prescription Drugs**. Ms. Vanessa Wigand, Coordinator for Health Education, VDOE, presented Item L to the Board for First Review. Pursuant to [House Bill 1532](#) (2018), the *Code of Virginia* was amended to include [§ 22.1-207](#) directing the Board of Education to develop curriculum guidelines for health instruction on the safe use of and risks of abuse of prescription drugs with approval from the State Board of Health. The proposed *Curriculum Guidelines for Instruction on the Safe Use of and Risks of Abuse of Prescription Drugs* include current research and foster equitable, supportive and safe academic and physical environments and encourage engagement of all families in the health and academic lives of their children. They were developed in consultation with educators, multidisciplinary prevention specialists, and other subject matter experts.

The proposed guidelines recognize the central role of the teacher and parents and focus on preventative school-based instruction for prescription drug abuse prevention. They provide

actionable recommendations for optimizing health literacy, empowering teachers, encouraging collaborative supports, and implementing evidence-based culturally responsive instructional resources aligned with the [Health Education Standards of Learning](#) and the [EVERFI](#) curriculum adopted by the School Board of the City of Virginia Beach.

Ms. Wigand informed the Board that it is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to accept Item L for First Review.

Dr. Jamelle Wilson asked for clarification on the process of the guidelines being reviewed with the Department of Health. Ms. Wigand explained the guidelines will go to the Department of Health following approval of accepting First Review of the Item and will be returned with any edits from the Department of Health prior to Final Review by the Board.

With no further discussion, the Board accepted First Review of Item L.

With all Action/Discussion Items having been heard, the Board accepted the following written reports:

**[Item M](#)- Legislative Report: 2021 General Assembly ([Item M- Attachment A](#)), [Item N](#)- Written Report on a New Waiver Opportunity from the United States Department of Education to Certain Requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).**

After accepting the two reports and hearing individual discussion topics of current events by Board members, President Gecker adjourned the March 18, 2021 meeting of the Virginia State Board of Education.

The next meeting of the Virginia Board of Education will be **April 21-22, 2021**.

I thank you for your support as advocates for public education. The full agenda can be found by visiting the following [link](#). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

J.T.