

Meeting Minutes for the Governor’s Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education

Wednesday, October 16, 2018

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Cumberland County Schools Board of Education, Fayetteville

In attendance: Dr. Fouad Abd-El-Khalick, Hon. Charles Becton, Ms. Melody Chalmers, Mr. Jim Deal, Mr. Alan Duncan, Hon. Rick Glazier, Ms. Leigh Kokenes, Dr. Helen “Sunny” Ladd, Dr. Patrick Miller, Mr. James Moore, Mr. Mark Richardson, Mr. Nick Sojka, Mr. Fernando Solano Valverde, Mr. Michael Williams, Dr. Stelfanie Williams, Mr. Brad Wilson (Chair), Hon. Leslie Winner, Ms. Henrietta Zalkind

Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and welcomed members. The Chair read the Conflict of Interest statement. The Chair recognized Dr. Marvin Connelly, Superintendent of Cumberland County Schools, who welcomed the Commission to Cumberland County. The Chair thanked Thank Dr. Connelly, as well as Ms. Melody Chalmers, Mr. Nick Sojka, and Mr. Rick Glazier for helping to arrange for the meeting in Cumberland County and for hosting the Commission today.

Commission Business and Updates

The Chair presented the minutes from the June 13, 2018 meeting of the Commission and asked if members had any edits. Hearing none, the Chair approved the minutes as presented.

The Chair recognized Mr. Alan Duncan for his appointment to the State Board of Education and for his election as Vice Chair of the Board in September. The Chair also recognized Ms. Melody Chalmers for her recent appointment as Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Initiatives and District Transformation for Cumberland County Schools.

The Chair recognized Mr. Geoff Coltrane, Senior Education Advisor to Governor Cooper, to provide a brief update on hurricane recovery efforts. Mr. Coltrane shared information about the Governor’s \$1.5 billion recommended hurricane recovery package. Mr. Coltrane also shared that the Governor signed legislation passed by the General Assembly to allow school districts in disaster declared counties to waive up to 20 instructional days missed due to the hurricane. The General Assembly also passed a recovery package on October 15 that provided just over \$390 million in recovery funding, including \$60 million to school districts for repairs to damaged school buildings. Mr. Rick Glazier and Dr. Patrick Miller shared that school districts will need additional resources to make up the school days if they choose to.

The Chair recognized Ms. Henrietta Zalkind for an update on the work of the Early Childhood Work Group. Ms. Zalkind shared that the work group met in August and in early October. The work group has reviewed the discussions from the June 13 Commission meeting and is focusing on how to expand pre-kindergarten opportunities for students across the state, how to improve the alignment of pre-kindergarten and K-3 education, and how to build capacity in the early childhood education system to better meet the needs to students.

The Chair recognized Mr. Jim Deal for an update on the work of the Finance and Resources Work Group. Mr. Deal shared that the work group has drafted a preliminary statement about why it is important to ensure that our public schools receive adequate funding, which focuses on the importance of public education to ensure a well-educated workforce and a vibrant and well-educated citizenry. The work group is also looking at how the allotment system should be structured, what goal the state should set around raising teacher and principal salaries, how schools should be funded to better serve students in poverty or with special needs, and how much flexibility school districts should have in how they spend their resources. Mr. James Moore shared that the Commission needs to be thinking about new programs or ideas and not just adding funding to existing programs. Ms. Leigh Kokenes shared that the Commission also needs to be thinking about how to ensure that there are equitable student support services available in all schools across the state.

The Chair recognized Ms. Leslie Winner for an update on the work of the Teacher Work Group. Ms. Winner shared that the work group has been convening by conference call to begin collecting data and information on the teacher pipeline. The work group has begun discussing teacher preparation, recruitment, and induction and has looked at data on those three areas in North Carolina.

The Chair thanked Commission members for their feedback on potential meeting dates for early 2019. Based on their feedback, the Chair asked Commission members to please hold the following dates for potential Commission meetings:

- January 17
- February 27
- March 12
- March 21
- April 11

Understanding the Principal Pipeline

The Chair recognized Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, Professor, University Faculty Scholar, and Director of the Northeast Leadership Academy at NC State University, for a presentation on the principal pipeline in North Carolina. Dr. Fusarelli shared that principals are second only to teachers in impacting student achievement, and that a highly effective principal can help to raise student achievement by 2-7 months. Unfortunately, though, the turnover rate for principals nationally is 20%, and 50% of principals spend less than three years at a school. Districts struggle to recruit and retain high quality principals, and universities are seeking how to improve their school leadership preparation programs.

North Carolina has several preparation pathways for principals. The NC Principal Fellows Program provides a scholarship loan for aspiring principals to complete a Masters in School Administration (MSA). It is difficult to recruit candidates because the loan amount has not changed in 25 years. The program has a high placement rate for completers into schools. The program can fund up to 200 candidates a year, but is currently serving about 60 each year. The program is beginning to focus recruitment on candidates for low-performing schools.

Several universities provide MSA programs, which went through a reauthorization in 2009-10. NC is one only a few states that provide a salary supplement for full-time MSA participants. Aspiring school leaders can also get an add-on license to a masters degree they are completing. However, survey data shows that candidates rated the quality of these programs as lower than other MSA programs. Recent legislation also created the Transforming Principal Preparation Program, which provided grants to five innovative principal preparation programs around the state. Overall, the quality of principal preparation programs is on the rise in NC.

Strengths and Challenges of the Principal Pipeline in NC

The Chair recognized Dr. Tom Williams to facilitate a panel discussion with school leaders. Dr. Williams introduced Dr. Mary Hemphill, Principal, Carver Middle School, Scotland County Schools; Ms. Jusmar Maness, Principal, Southern Middle School, Guilford County Schools; Dr. Freddie Williamson, Superintendent, Hoke County Schools; and Ms. Minnie Forte-Brown, Board of Education Member, Durham Public Schools.

During the discussion, the panelists shared their views on several areas around the role of the principal, including:

- Hiring a superintendent that understands the needs of the schools and community in the district is the first step towards strengthening school leadership.
- To improve school leadership preparation, we need to better understand what an effective principal is and how to support them once they are placed in a school.
- Principals are often juggling 10 different issues at a time. Principals need to understand time management and distributed leadership. Principals need to see themselves as a teacher of teachers or as lead learners or learning facilitators.
- Principals need to understand the structure of their buildings and how to engage with teacher leaders in their schools.
- A principal's work is about changing the culture and instructional behaviors in their schools. This can be difficult for a new, inexperienced administrator to know what to do to change the culture.
- The principal is the CEO, CFO, HR director, etc. in a school. But there is often not a lot of professional learning support in all of those duties.
- Current allotment for assistant principals is 1 per 985 students. The jobs that assistant principals do has not gone away, but many of their duties have been handed off to others (counselors, social workers, etc.).
- We need to make sure that principals have the time and space to figure out what they need to do differently and to be innovative.
- Districts need the flexibility to move high-quality principals and teachers to low-performing schools that need them.

Mr. Glazier asked about the recent changes to the principal salary schedule and if it is creating disincentives for moving principals to low-performing schools. The panelists shared that the districts are having to bridge the salary gap for principals under the new schedule and that the salary schedule needs to be equitable and fair at the state level.

Recruiting and Preparing Principals for the Job

After Commission members got their lunch, the Chair recognized Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli; Dr. Kim Kappler-Hewitt, Associate Professor and Director for the Principal Preparation for Excellence and Equity in Rural Schools at UNC-Greensboro; and Dr. Marjorie Campo Ringler, Professor and Chair of the Department of Education Leadership at East Carolina University, for a series of presentations on recruitment and preparation programs for principals.

Dr. Fusarelli shared information about NC State's MSA program and the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA). NELA focuses on recruiting and preparing principals for high-needs schools. The curriculum focuses on engaging students in solving real world problems that they will encounter in the schools in which they will be working. NCSU admits around 35-40 candidates per cohort, including NELA and on-campus cohorts. The cost per student ranges from \$35,000 plus salary to \$80,000 per candidate. Higher costs include high-quality enrichment experiences. The program also provides post-degree coaching, which is an essential part.

Dr. Kappler-Hewitt discussed the Principal Preparation for Excellence and Equity in Rural Schools (PPEERS) program. The PPEERS is focused on helping rural districts "grow their own" school leaders by developing deep partnerships with the districts up-front. School leaders in each district will identify others in their schools who they recommend to become school leaders. There is a rigorous, two-stage selection process between the district and UNCG. Principal candidates also serve in a full-time, 10-month internship as part of the program. Cost is approximately \$70,000 per participant. Dr. Kappler-Hewitt shared that when it comes to issues around the principal pipeline, our state does not necessarily need more principals. We need better principals.

Dr. Ringler discussed East Carolina University's MSA program. The program is mainly focused on working professionals, except for the Principal Fellows cohort of students. The program does require a superintendent to sign off on candidates who participate. The program assesses candidate's leadership strengths and weaknesses at the beginning through a simulated experience. The program does provide an online option, with a one night per week face-to-face session and a summer learning opportunity. ECU creates cohorts for the online option based on the location of the students. Faculty will drive to the meeting locations and, because they are meeting off-campus, ECU is able to charge distance education tuition. The program costs around \$12,000 per student.

Regarding the cost of the programs, Dr. Fouad Abd-el-Khalick stated that the solutions to these difficult issues is not shorter and cheaper programs, but on high-quality, model programs. We need to be focused on how do we scale and replicate high-quality programs.

Supporting and Retaining Principals on the Job

The Chair recognized Dr. Tom Williams for a presentation on the Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) program. The DLP program, which is run by the NC Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NC PAPA) was developed through Race to the Top funding and is now in its 8th year. The program uses a blended approach to learning, with both online and face-to-face sessions. The program is focused on helping principals adopt continuous improvement practices around data-driven decision-making. Participants focus on an area of student

achievement in their school that needs improvement and use data from their school to develop and implement an improvement plan. More than 1,200 principals have completed the program. More than 988 assistant principals have completed a companion program for assistant principals, Future Ready Leaders (FRL).

Discussion and Next Steps

Ms. Zalkind stated that we need to be focused on school leadership more broadly and not just on principals. The Commission should also be including superintendents in the discussion. Mr. Mark Richardson asked about parent engagement and if there was an expert the Commission can hear from on getting parents more involved in their children’s education. Lastly, Dr. Sunny Ladd asked if the Commission needs to be thinking about revenue streams for education as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.