

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

June 25, 2019

NC Department of Transportation Board Room

### In attendance

Dr. Fouad Abd-El-Khalick, Judge Charles Becton, Ms. Melody Chalmers, Mr. Jim Deal, Mr. Alan Duncan, Hon. Rick Glazier, Mr. Mark Jewell, Ms. Leigh Kokenes, Dr. Helen "Sunny" Ladd, 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, Mr. Brad Wilson, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and read the Conflict of Interest statement.

### Commission Business and Updates

The Chair presented the minutes from the May 14, 2019 Commission meeting. Shortly after, the Chair approved the minutes after hearing no edits from Commission members. The Chair announced to the Commission that Judge Lee, the presiding judge over *Leandro v. North Carolina*, has received a working draft of the WestEd report. The Chair stressed to the Commission that the report will remain confidential, but members will eventually have access to the report and the Commission will schedule a meeting to discuss WestEd's findings when appropriate. Mr. Rick Galizer asked the Chair if the Commission's work will be sent to the parties in the case and to the Governor. The Chair reminded the Commission that the Commission's work is public, and that the Commission will prepare to formally share its priorities with the Governor. Before moving onto the next agenda item, the Chair reminded the Commission of the relevant highlights and key findings from the *Leandro* rulings.

### Finance and Resource Work Group

The Chair recognized Mr. Jim Deal for a presentation and discussion on the revisions to the draft priorities identified by the Finance and Resources Work Group. Mr. Deal began his presentation noting concerns about the wording of the core value's second bullet, specifically the phrases "ensure educators are compensated adequately on average and equitably" and "a minimum statewide salary schedule." Ms. Leslie Winner added that the Commission should make sure that the language is aligned with the Teacher Work Group's priorities. Dr. Helen Ladd suggested removing the word equitable because people often confuse "equitable" and "equal." Ms. Winner also recommended removing the word "minimum." Dr. Fouad Abd-El-Khalick suggested removing the word "average" due to outliers. Mr. Glazier noted that the phrase "robust statewide salary schedule" would be appropriate. Dr. Ladd followed and suggested that the phrase "robust, differentiated statewide salary schedule" would be best. The Commission then discussed the differences in robust, competitive, and living wages. Mr. Alan Duncan stated that this bullet point is difficult to meet. The Chair asked the Finance and Resources Work Group to take this feedback and make a recommendation to the full Commission on the appropriate phrasing for this statement.

The Commission then moved to briefly discuss the third bullet point of the core values, specifically the phrase "Resources should be continually adjusted so that a student's race, geographic location, and family income level do not limit his or her access to a sound, basic education." Mr. Glazier stated that the system must be flexible to move forward and adapt to changes over time. Additionally, Mr. Glazier noted that factors, like race and geographic location, should not be predictive of outcomes if the state is providing a sound, basic education to all students. Mr. Glazier lastly added that the word "annually" rather than "continuously" yields more flexibility. Ms. Leigh Kokenes recommended adding language about proportional staffing. Ms. Winner suggested adding ethnicity as a factor that does not limit a student's access to a sound, basic education.

Following the discussion on the Finance and Resources Work Group's core values, the Commission briefly discussed the group's priorities, particularly priorities 4, 5, 9, and 10. Mr. Deal first addressed priority 4 and Ms. Kokenes thanked the Finance and Resources Work Group for including the final phrase, 'such allotments should not be used for other purposes.' With no other comments, Mr. Deal moved on to priority 5 and stated that the state must have some level of responsibility to make sure LEAs have the capital they need. Mr. Duncan voiced his concern that this would change the basic premise for which the state pays for operations and LEAs pay for capital. Mr. Duncan added that this is an issue for every county, not just low-wealth counties, and the Commission needs to figure out a formula or be very careful about going through with this recommendation. Mr. Deal responded to Mr. Duncan's concerns and stated that the point is if the state is actually funding all necessary operations, some counties would be able to put up the necessary capital and others would not.

Mr. Deal further concluded that the state must ensure that all students have access to adequate facilities. Dr. Ladd mentioned that the state is in a much better position to issue bonds than a district. Ms. Winner concluded that the Commission must not accept the current scheme where the state is inadequately funding the operational costs. Mr. Mark Richardson pointed out that it is up to the General Assembly to determine how something would be funded and that the Commission should consider deleting the second phrase from the priority about funding streams. The Chair then recommended that the work group restructure the paragraph or make a separate finding. Mr. Deal briefly noted that the priority should read "fully funding" in the first sentence.

Mr. Deal introduced priority 9 and pointed out that the way charter schools are currently funded takes money away from traditional public schools and school districts. Dr. Ladd stressed the complexity of the issue and stated that the last sentence of the priority doesn't solve the problem because traditional public schools are still funded on a per-pupil basis and traditional public schools cannot downsize facilities or reduce teachers in case students come back. Ms. Winner suggested less specificity because the discrepancy is coming from local funding and the state is already mostly paying charters in a direct appropriation. Mr. Duncan noted other complexities, like disabled students that are expensive to educate and skew both outcome data and funding. Dr. Ladd added that there is an inconsistency because districts are a system of schools and charters are individual schools.

The Commission further discussed the charter issue and Ms. Winner recommended making funding for charter schools based more on student characteristics and noted that the state could count student numbers more than once a year. Dr. Ladd further suggested that the work group should add a comment of support for a study on charter school funding because this issue is so complex and important. The Chair then asked the work group to do more thinking on this issue and to come back to the Commission with additional revisions.

Lastly, Mr. Deal briefly discussed priority 10. The Commission agreed that the language should be firmer and state that 'child nutrition is an integral aspect.' The Finance and Resources Work Group concluded that they would meet after the Commission meeting to make final revisions. The Chair then moved to take a 10-minute break and re-work the agenda to appropriately meet the schedule.

### **Early Childhood Work Group**

Following the break, the Chair announced that the Early Childhood Work Group would present next, followed by the Assessment and Accountability Work Group, Principal Work Group, and lastly the Teacher Work Group.

The Chair recognized Ms. Henrietta Zalkind for a presentation and discussion on the draft priorities identified by the Early Childhood Work Group. Ms. Zalkind briefly discussed each priority, but focused

on the language changes in the “access to early intervention” and “ensure elementary schools are ready to meet the needs of all children” sections.

Ms. Zalkind first pointed out the changes in the language in the section on access to early intervention, specifically focusing on support for infants and toddlers that need mental health services. Hearing no comments, Ms. Zalkind then noted the added language on school improvement plans and district needs assessments. The Commission then discussed differences between universal pre-K and current eligibility for the NC Pre-K program. Ms. Zalkind noted that the NC Pre-K program’s purpose was to serve at-risk four-year-old children. One Commission member suggested the need to review the “at-risk” definition for NC Pre-K. The Commission then shifted topics and touched on the importance of schools ready to support all kids, with Dr. Stelfanie Williams stressing that specialized instructional support personnel need to be in early childhood classrooms, in addition to elementary, middle, and high schools.

### **Assessment and Accountability Work Group**

The Chair recognized Ms. Melody Chalmers for a presentation and discussion on the draft priorities identified by the Assessment and Accountability Work Group. Ms. Chalmers first pointed out that work group revised the first priority to say that assessments should be student-focused and discipline should be disaggregated by demographics. Ms. Kokenes asked that the discipline data also be disaggregated by offense as well. Ms. Chalmers continued and noted in priority 2 that the work group changed ‘data-driven’ to ‘student-focused.’ In priority 3, Ms. Chalmers pointed out that equal weight in the state’s accountability system should be put on student proficiency and student growth. In addition, Ms. Chalmers asked if the Commission should recommend eliminating the current school performance grades. There was agreement among Commission members and Ms. Chalmers said they would make that revision.

Ms. Chalmers briefly noted the word change in priority 4 and language change in priority 6. Ms. Chalmers stressed the importance of eliminating unfair suspensions. Dr. Williams noted that accountability should not always be focused on the teacher and school, and requested that that be reflected in the entire document. Ms. Winner reminded the Commission that the *Leandro* rulings are focused on student proficiency has how the state should measure whether students are receiving a sound, basic education. Dr. Williams responded that growth is more important than proficiency. Ms. Winner stated that growth is important for teacher and school performance, but she does not want the Court to say that growth is sufficient. Dr. Ladd asked the Commission what it wants out of the educational system and stated that it would be ideal if the Commission recommended looking at more educational goods that go beyond reading and math. Mr. Glazier asked the work group if they discussed accountability for EC students because some are in the system and some are not. The Assessment and Accountability Work Group concluded that they would go back and rethink some of these assessment issues.

### **Principal Work Group**

The Chair recognized Mr. Alan Duncan for a presentation and discussion on the draft priorities identified by the Principal Work Group. Mr. Duncan first apologized for Dr. Patrick Miller’s absence before reviewing the changes made since the last Commission meeting. In priority 3, the work group added language on teacher recruitment and support and collaborative leadership and decision making. Mr. Deal asked the Commission if principal training should touch on school safety and opioids. Mr. Duncan responded that priority 3 includes language on health and wellness.

Mr. Duncan then briefly reviewed wording changes in priorities 5 and 7, which are highlighted in the draft document. After presenting priority 9 to the Commission, particularly the flexibility in funding for assistant principals, the Commission suggested that the Finance and Resources Work Group reflect flexibility in their priorities as well. Dr. Abd-El-Khalick asked for more clarity on this point, particularly stressing the issue of flexibility versus fundamental requirements. Chair Wilson recommended that the Finance and Resources priorities include an overarching statement about flexibility and then each work

group could provide specific statements within their own context. Before Mr. Duncan finished his presentation, one Commission member reminded the group of legislation on the TP3 program. The Chair then moved for a 5-minute break before the Teacher Work Group's presentation.

### **Teacher Work Group**

Following the break, the Chair recognized Ms. Leslie Winner for a presentation on the draft priorities identified by the Teacher Work Group. Ms. Winner first discussed that the work group did not have the capacity to determine how many new teachers and teaching assistants in what subjects are needed across the state. Ms. Winner also shared that the work group will not discuss in its priorities charter schools due to the complexity of the issue. Ms. Winner continued her presentation and noted that currently 50% of the teaching workforce in North Carolina come from in-state preparation programs. The work group is recommending that the state work towards the goal of 70% of the workforce coming from in-state programs because data shows that in-state prepared teachers tend to be more effective than out-of-state prepared teachers.

After discussing issues involved with the teacher pipeline in North Carolina, Ms. Winner introduced the sliding scale concept that the work group developed. Mr. Glazier asked how many years worth of data are included in the low-wealth formula and if this concept could incentivize districts to move more students in poverty to certain schools to boost funding, which could lead to more re-segregation. Mr. Jewell noted that we need to ensure that teachers who are moving to disadvantaged schools and districts are high-quality and highly effective teachers. Mr. Glazier asked if the sliding scale will apply to charter school funding as well. Mr. Glazier pointed out that there is a difference between charter allotments that take away funding from district capacity and allotments that could enhance charter schools ability to serve disadvantaged students. Mr. Deal noted that if we do not want the sliding scale to apply to charter schools, then our documents need to explicitly say that. Mr. Deal went onto note though that whatever the Commission decides to do should not penalize charter schools or district schools. Mr. Duncan noted that the work group should consider adding veteran teachers who are effective to the recruitment bonus programs.

### **Next Steps and Adjournment**

Given the discussion and feedback from Commission members, the Chair recommended that the Commission hold another meeting over the next month or two to review the revised versions of the draft priorities from the work groups. The Chair stated that Mr. Geoff Coltrane would follow up with Commission members to arrange a date. Dr. Fouad Abd-el-Khalick recommended that the Commission begin putting together these priorities into a coherent piece that will fit these areas together.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:30 pm.