

**CCCS Early Elementary Subgroup  
February 18, 2015 at 1pm**

*Patrick Henry Building, Conference Room #1  
1111 East Broad Street Richmond, VA 23219  
Via Conference Call: 866-842-5779; and pass code 4399398107*

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Panel Discussion with Kindergarten Teachers

Panelists:

Amy Moore, Red Oak-Sturgeon Elementary School, Alberta  
2 Kindergarten Teachers from Groveton Elementary School in Fairfax  
Charmaine Sower, Spring Run Elementary, Chesterfield  
Sarah Warner, Gordon Elementary, Chesterfield

Discussion Questions for Panelists:

- In general, how would you assess the readiness of your students when they enter your classroom in the fall?
- Would you find assessments that evaluate math, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills worth the time required to administer them?
- What information do you lack but need to help you best teach your students throughout their kindergarten year?
- What other challenges do you face?
- What would help you be more effective in working with kindergarten students?
- What recommendations do you have for us?

- III. Discussion of the TS Gold and UVA Kindergarten Assessments (based on webinar presentation)
- IV. Discussion of Potential March 4 Webinar Agenda (see below)

**March 4, 2015 1pm Webinar  
DRAFT AGENDA**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
  
- II. VDOE Data Presentation and Discussion of Opportunities (1-1:45, will invite Data and Governance Workgroup Members to participate with us)  
  
This presentation will simply inform the group of data collected – they may use examples of outcomes if it helps them in sharing data points already collected.
  
- III. Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) Primer by Bethann Canada?
  
- IV. Presentations on PreK summer camp programs (1:45 – 2:30)
  - a. KinderCamp in Fairfax County
  - b. Presentation on Early Literacy, Family Literacy and Hippy Programs for Fairfax County Public Schools (Darryle Craig, Coordinator of Family Partnerships)

**CCCS Early Elementary Workgroup  
February 18, 2015 Meeting Notes**

**Participants:**

Steven Staples, Superintendent, Dept of Education (Chair)  
Dora Wynn, Brunswick County Public Schools  
Hillary Press, VA Counselors Association  
Jim Baldwin, VA Association of Elementary School Principals  
Burnette Scarboro, NOVA PTA  
Debi Melland, Chesterfield County Schools  
Amy Moore, Red Oak-Sturgeon Elementary School, Alberta  
Olympia Carranza, Groveton Elementary School, Fairfax  
Charmaine Sower, Spring Run Elementary, Chesterfield  
Sarah Warner, Gordon Elementary, Chesterfield  
Laura Hackett (representing Pat Popp), William & Mary  
Shannon Venable, Dominion

**Panel Discussion with Kindergarten Teachers**

The first half of the meeting centered on a discussion with kindergarten teachers from around the state about their various experiences. Below are some notes about the questions they were asked and the various responses that were provided.

*In general, how would you assess the readiness of your students when they enter your classroom in the fall?*

Greatly varied, they have all kinds of experiences. There are huge gaps between those with prek experience and those without.

Even huge gaps between those without prek experience – particularly with regard to their vocabulary and independent functioning skills.

*How long does it take kids without prek experience to catch up?*

They do get there; presence of instructional assistants and class size impacts that amount of time. It typically takes at least a month to get kids in the routines and ready to learn; but until the end of the first quarter for those without any type of schooling experience.. We notice a difference between academic and developmental preschools.

If they have prek experience they know most of their letters; if not they may know one or two letters

*Are there different expectations for kindergarteners and you as teachers today, vs 10-15 years ago?*

Yes, big difference even in 6 years

1<sup>st</sup> grade skills are being pushed down in kindergarteners are being required to master them

*Would you find assessments that evaluate math, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills worth the time required to administer them?*

Don't need more than the number assessment and PALS that are already conducting. Self regulating skills are very evident, a formal assessment isn't needed for that.

When teachers stop to do assessment that means no one is working with the other children who at this point in the year still need a lot of assistance because they aren't ready to be on their own in the classroom. It is very hard to do assessments without another adult in the room – if the state wants to go in that direction, hiring substitutes will be necessary

You simply lose instruction during this time. Data is helpful but may not be worth the loss of instruction time. Data affirms what teachers may know anyways. Need to find an appropriate balance.

Kindergarten is so hands on, paper and pencil assessment results are not surprising

Results are indicative of moment in time skills. ELL students are pulled for ESOL tests early on, which end up being unreliable because kids are still trying to figure out school in general.

*As a first year teacher, could you have made same quick assessments of kids coming through your doors?*

Depends on previous student teaching experience, and the amount of time you invest in getting to know kids at the beginning of the year

Strong mentor helped guide one teacher through that, even with other early elementary experience that wouldn't have been intuitive.

Will notice there's a difference, but not yet know why – experience teaches you that.

Report card assessments are another tool to gather that

*Is time spent on PALS and numeracy assessments worth what you get?*

PALS – letter recognition and sounds is important. Concept of word part of the tool is time consuming and not helpful.

Counting assessment is not particularly helpful, comes at a time in the year when preference would be working with kids on other things.

PALS is very consistent though, so tests should be reliable and helps to inform the work of parents and reading specialists.

Some divisions do a pre-k assessment at registration, so they've already assessed students alphabet recognition, letter-sound, rhyming, etc. Because of this there is then lots of overlap, so the current structure of PALS could be refined to be more useful.

*Should we mandate statewide assessments?*

There is a big difference between students in Brunswick county and those in NOVA, and therefore it is hard to compare them to one another at the beginning of the year. End of year results would show tremendous growth, but their experiences before kindergarten are so different that initial comparisons aren't fair.

That decision must be made thoughtfully while considering locally mandated assessments.

Chesterfield teachers found TS Gold to be time consuming, not helpful, and to not provide useful data. 5 year olds have to be assessed one on one orally, HUGE time commitment.

Again, instruction is being lost during assessments, therefore they need to be quicker, more efficient, and substitutes must be available.

*Would you envision using subs to do testing?*

No—teachers learn a lot from how students get answers wrong on assessments and they need to be doing the actual assessment to help inform their teaching.

*What information do you lack but need to help you best teach your students throughout their kindergarten year?*

One teacher shared that she and a co-teacher were afforded the opportunity to conduct home visits with their students, which completely changed their approach to students. Obviously the model is not feasible for all, but was incredibly useful. Helped understand strengths of each child, better able to connect and instruct. Accounting for home life is huge.

*Should we use Co-Teachers during first few months of school to help assess?*

Fairfax – co-teaching models for ELL students. Screen for high needs (ELL, no prek, other early indicators). Even a part time co-teaching model would help immensely.

Dora used a nongraded primary school model to try to close achievement gap in high poverty, rural community, etc. Took 2 years to prep teachers. Required a great deal of research and data collection, including CNU conference on multi-grouping. Unfortunately what undid it was a change in leadership who caved to parents concern about knowing grade level. Biggest problem is gift of time, kindergarteners aren't ready and we don't give them a chance to take the time.

➔ When we talk about kindergarten retention data, need to revisit ungraded model

Some schools provide opportunity for 6<sup>th</sup> grade home visits too – seeing what they experience helps puts together whole child. Schools counselors do much of the same. Makes a big difference in a high needs community.

*What other challenges do you face?*

There is an assumption that kindergarten teachers have access to an instructional assistant all the time, but that isn't the case anymore. Some are still in schools, but they get pulled for all kinds of things. Can't assume K teachers have an assistant; many don't.

Time for kids and teachers. Need benchmarks and assessments, but there's a mismatch between requirements and where the kids are. More time would give them time to be pushed ahead not held against a deficit.

Vast range of skills and abilities.

Average # of students: 20

*Do you experience attendance issues?*

Not on daily basis, depends on population

Low income families in transition mean frequent moves; so kids are changing schools and classrooms often

ELL – kids overseas for long periods of time

Fairfax-homeless liaison office helps

*What would help you be more effective in working with kindergarten students?*

*What recommendations do you have for us?*

Kindergarten needs return to more play time and experiential learning time. Recent studies on kids who learn to read at 5 vs. 7; no benefit to early learning in long run. Early readers had worse comprehension skills (at age 11) because less language, stories, play experience, etc to draw on.

Behavioral issues not tested out in play situations any more. Need more time to observe, work with them, and they can grow at their own speed. This is key to their social emotional growth.

One school had play time on a field trip to the Children's museum, was amazing to watch students and hear their conversations and language.

“So busy trying to give kids what we didn't have that we aren't giving them what we did have.”

Chesterfield does a basic screening at kindergarten registration day- not ideal but helps connect students with summer reading and readiness programs.

Chesterfield's junior kindergarten year (for students who met the kindergarten age requirement but wanted/ needed an additional year) was very helpful in closing the achievement gap. It was eliminated years ago unfortunately.

There is a false dichotomy between developmental and academically focused programs. Need to have student centered programs that helps them develop in all areas at their own pace. Would then have better outcomes at the end of first grade.

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Group Discussion

Hillary – experience with her own children. One was academic focused, the other was not. Need academic assessment for many students who aren't necessarily high risk but need additional services.

Issue not about whether or not to assess, but how not to lose instructional time when we do. And making sure the right assessments are used.

### **Discussion of the TS Gold and UVA Kindergarten Assessments (based on webinar presentation)**

Is anyone using social emotional at local level? Not that anyone knows of.

Didn't consider that some assessments done at k registration – motor skill assessments, literacy and numeracy

### **Discussion of Potential March 4 Webinar Agenda (see below)**

Other than home visits, we should look at how to engage families and build those supportive relationships at home

Home visits vary from school to school based on family engagement model. There are other tools that schools used to engage parents, for example - the welcome walk instead of open house for parents at the beginning of the year.

This of course has to consider single parents or working families; how do we meet them where they are and factor that in to our recommendations. Key is engaging parents, but many have very different than those life experiences represented in this group.

And must allow children to bring parents along with them in their school journey.

Need resources for children with different needs (ELL, no pre-k, etc), not just for children with traditionally defined special needs.

### **Other Follow Up**

- ➔ Do we have data on Montessori and results of those kids? And their kindergarten readiness? Sometimes have hard time adjusting to schedules of classrooms.

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