

Provided by Joan Fefferman

(August 24th) Questions for Dr. Jack Dale, Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia

1. How can a school district best enable each local school to meet the educational needs of diverse populations? And, what would be the role of the federal government in this?
2. Has Virginia signed up for the Common Core Standards? Why or Why not?
3. What do you think of usability of National Standards and the proposed assessment? And, what might be the dangers or advantages of a national curriculum that would follow?
4. Should outstanding school districts be limited by the National Standards? We do understand that states can add 15% of their own standards to the existing Common Core.
5. How should national assessment data best be used?
6. How would you propose to have fair public funding in all states?
7. With fairness in mind, how would you propose to have quality long-term training for teachers so that all children will benefit from highly trained teachers?
8. Arne Duncan has posed waivers for AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). And, by doing so has suggested that Common Core be mandated. What are your feelings about this?
9. How should curriculum be mandated and defined?
10. How should early childhood be incorporated in the public schools?

1. Dr. Dale began by talking about the local school districts going through the states for federal funding. Thus, districts are accountable to their states. Then he gave an example of a federal mandate that was not appropriate—in his eyes—and the district applied for a waiver. It was the assessment used for English Language Learners (ELL). His district asked to have the assessment administered 18 months after students were in English language programs.

2. Virginia has not approved the Common Core Standards for several reasons:

- a. They believe their own standards are strong
- b. States rights issues
- c. They believe they also need to extend their standards to include **4Cs**: communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration
- d. They believe that standards should extend much farther than the Common Core Standards
- e. He believes that we should be looking toward 21st century skills, i.e. those **4Cs**.

3. Teams of teachers to evaluate the learning process should use test data. In his district, teachers work in teams of 4-8 teachers to evaluate each child's learning, growth, and outcomes. Thus, one teacher is not responsible for a child, but rather a team. He believes that the assessment data should inform this team and then the team is responsible for planning the goals for learning outcomes. He talks about the "flipped paradigm" where a teacher is evaluated and the burden is on one teacher rather than the team.

What the NCLB has done is change teacher behavior, not student behavior. Unfortunately children do not have to be responsible for their growth, but teachers do. He would like to see that shift so that children have a chance to retake assessments and to learn the core materials. All of us learn through mistakes and these mistakes should be honored. That is how we learn.

4. He believes that a national assessment should be informative and diagnostic, not punitive. Data should be used each year to re-assess learning goals and outcomes.

5. He also talked about using other methods to measure children's potential such as rubrics, viewing portfolios and projects. This work began in the 90's but NCLB assessment demands eliminated many of the alternative ways of measuring growth of student achievement that were good.

6. Public School funding is a complex issue. To achieve a steady source, school funding should come at the state level from income taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes. Richer school districts do not receive the same state funding as poorer districts. Special needs children (poverty, ELL and learning disabled) cost more and states need to recognize this. He suggested a 50% increase for ELL and poverty and a 100% increase for special needs children.

7. Teacher training: He has an entirely new structure for teachers. They are no longer a lonely teacher in a room responsible for learning. Rather he has teams of teachers with the following responsibilities;

- a. A team to work with admin to analyze assessment data and develop the learning goals and school improvement plan
- b. All first and second year teachers have a mentor teacher who works on a daily basis with new teacher.
- c. Teachers at each grade level work together to analyze assessment data on regular basis and develop learning plans. Special teachers work with grade level teachers.
- d. Vertical content area teacher work together so that curriculum and instruction is aligned across grade levels
- e. Children who need additional help receive 1 to 1 instruction/tutoring in longer day, on Saturdays or in summer.

8. Waivers suggested for AYP. He realizes that there must be some sort of accountability so that Common Core Standards would be one way to work through this accountability. Below is his idea for **RE-IMAGINING ESEA**

9. We talked about curriculum as well and the importance for teachers to be given the freedom to develop curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of the students. His team approach for teacher will include this. Methods such as Reading Recovery have worked well. We must not be prescriptive in our approach to curriculum but rather flexible to meet the needs of children. His district has a repository for materials, methods, materials that teachers may access.

10. He also talked about the importance of quality early childhood education so that all children would come to school ready to learn in kindergarten. If we start early, we will be able to eliminate many language and learning disabilities that arise later in school. Children learn language easily at young ages so English language instruction must begin earlier than in Kindergarten.

### **RE-IMAGINING ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act)**

#### **CURRICULUM STANDARDS**

- Develop national minimum performance standards for grades 5, 8 and HS Graduation
- All states develop measurable, aspirational standards for HS Graduates

#### **PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

- Report proficiency performance by race/ethnic subgroups only
- Expect 95% participation
- Expect all ESOL students to participate in Reading tests after no more than three years of US education (Revise Title III provisions to allow ESOL students to “test out” of language acquisition).
- Assess Special Education students based on the IEP curriculum and performance standards.
- Develop AYP gradations:
  - o A – 90+%
  - o B – 80+%
  - o C – 70+%
  - o Not meeting performance standard – below 70%
- Use four year cohort graduation rate (NGA proposal) as a national standard.

#### **PROFICIENCY LEVELS**

- State determines reading and math assessment and equates to national standards.
- Levels – Grades 5, 8 and High School Graduation

#### **STUDENT/FAMILY STANDARDS**

- Develop performance expectations for students and families including attendance, behavior, effort, and planning for the future.

#### STATE INTERVENTIONS

- States design interventions for those schools consistently not meeting minimum performance standards (below 70%) for school or group of students in a content area.
- State must develop comprehensive approach over multiple years.
- State must address training and performance of teachers and principal.
- State must provide sufficient funding for interventions.

#### US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Research and disseminate effective practices across all domains of curriculum, instruction, proficiency and performance standards, effective teachers, principals and school districts; all directed at improving student achievement.
- Provide effective technical assistance to states.
- Convene knowledge sharing opportunities or states and the 250 largest school districts.
- Focus assistance on those states/jurisdictions consistently below performance standards.

#### HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

- Full time teaching roles and responsibilities focused on:
  - o School improvement analysis and planning
  - o K-12 Pyramid curriculum and alignment of instruction
  - o Analysis and improvement of instructional skills
  - o New Teacher induction, training and mentoring
  - o Student transitions between schools and grade levels
  - o Extended student learning time – pre-teaching, enrichment, remediation.