

Board Work Session Brief

November 29, 2012

Focus: *Academic Excellence Scorecard*

Strategic Plan Priority 4.3: Assemble a collection of rigorous performance indicators and recognized benchmarks that define a world-class educational system.

Work Session Purpose: To provide the setting, resources, people, and time for the Board to engage with staff for conversation and brainstorming to produce a working draft of a balanced benchmark scorecard known as the *Academic Excellence Scorecard*.

Guiding Assumptions:

- Teaching and learning are complex endeavors that cannot be measured by a single indicator;
- High performing organizations use a carefully selected *portfolio* of indicators that are not limited to, but are inclusive of, benchmark performance indicators that can be compared to similar organizations at the state and national level;
- The purpose of the Albemarle County Public Schools *Academic Excellence Scorecard* will be to feature a limited number of research-based indicators that show comparisons to other school systems at the state and national level;
- The Albemarle County Public Schools *Academic Excellence Scorecard* is not meant to be the sole indicator of the Division's performance;
- The Division remains committed to a balanced assessment model including the development and use of performance tasks for assessment.

Structure:

- Staff will provide an overview for the Board on the topic of state, national, and world class benchmarking, including a rationale and considerations in selecting benchmarks. Assistant Superintendent Matt Haas will provide an example, the CWRA, along with a rationale answering the key questions provided later to groups.
- Board members will breakout with heterogeneous teams of elementary, middle, and high school staff with resources (including hyperlinks and our state of the division report) to identify and propose 4 possible benchmarks, one in each category: one elementary, one middle school, one high school, and one division/graduate/post-

graduate. Guiding questions will be provided to facilitate the groups' rigorous selection of the benchmarks and associated data points.

- During the debrief session, staff will record the proposed benchmarks by category along with notes regarding each one.
- This will be a draft document that will be compared to a similar document generated from the coinciding K-12 principal meeting in order to validate the choices.
- The draft will come back to the School Board for additional consideration and clarification at a later Board meeting.

Overview of Benchmarking

Why Benchmark? To build credibility and value with our community. The objective of applying benchmarking concepts to the school environment is to drive towards the identification and implementation of "best practices." Simply reporting outcomes without studying the actions associated with them will not lead to continuous improvement. Outcome measures used for benchmarking should be worthy of study and lead to actionable plans.

- **Benchmarking provides a good look at what others are accomplishing.** It's one thing when the "experts" say you should be able to enact a plan and accomplish a particular goal; it's another thing when you see what others are really doing with this goal.
- **Benchmarking gives you a good look at yourself.** Real data, no fudging. Clean comparisons. Any successful journey starts with an effective assessment of "where are we?"
- **Benchmarking is an avenue for learning.** The first thing we do when we get results is to start asking ourselves many *study* questions from the PDSA process.
- **Benchmarking provides a common language.** From the student and employee to the school board, everyone can use the same metrics. They should be clear, intuitive, and credible. Everyone can get on the same page.
- **Benchmarking can help us identify and incorporate best practices.** How are the leading districts dealing with this issue? We will learn ideas we may not have discovered on our own.
- **Benchmarking helps prioritize our efforts.** There is way too much to do. Focus on the key areas to drive improvement.

How do we select benchmark data? In order to adequately study our results, we first need good measurements that are associated with *Albemarle County Public Schools* Division Goals and desired curricula outcomes. If we don't start with good data, we will not have good

information in order to make good decisions. As we identify performance indicators for a world-class educational system, we should ask the following questions:

- What are the key metrics?
- How can we insure that we are working with quality and meaningful data?
- How do we strike a balance between the quality control business model and a more holistic and evidentiary approach to evaluating our work?
- What are the ethical considerations we should take into account when choosing performance indicators and our response to reports?
- How do our choices communicate our curriculum: The ACPS Life Long Learner Standards and Framework for Quality Learning?

In reviewing a specific metric...

- How will this metric demonstrate accomplishment? What has been accomplished?
- What about this metric will give us evidence of accomplishment?
- How will this metric help us demonstrate progress?
- What makes this a world-class indicator?

Rather than choosing isolated indicators, we propose a hierarchy: each benchmark contributing to the next to develop a child from early elementary school through to college, career, and citizenship readiness.

The pathway to college and a career begins in kindergarten, and our proposal is to provide highlight points that sequentially build to open doors to college for students. It is our intention that students who meet each benchmark along the way will be more likely to be ready for college and better prepared to earn a four-year college degree. In terms of valuation, a college education pays; the average high school graduate will earn \$1.2 million over his or her lifetime, compared with \$2.1 million that the average college graduate will make.

Our measurements should be rigorous and demanding to prepare students to take and do well in college-level classes or prepare them for the workplace, where higher-level skills are necessary. These measurements should also be demanding for our schools and school system, requiring us to learn and grow and improve to meet our students' needs.

References

Five Habits of High Impact School Boards by Doug Eadie (2005)
Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (2011)