



Governor's Children's Cabinet Stakeholder Forum

West Reading Room
Patrick Henry Building
1111 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

*October 24, 2016
2:00PM – 5:00PM*

MEETING NOTES

Agenda:

I. Welcome

The Honorable Governor Terence R. McAuliffe

II. Opening

The Honorable William A. Hazel Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Resources
The Honorable Dietra Y. Trent, Secretary of Education

III. Overview of the Governor's Children's Cabinet

Daniela Lewy, Executive Director of the Virginia Governor's Children's Cabinet

IV. Challenged Schools Initiative

Moderator: The Honorable Dietra Y. Trent, Secretary of Education
Panelists: Steven Staples, Virginia Department of Education Superintendent of Public Instruction
Daniela Lewy, Executive Director of the Virginia Governor's Children's Cabinet
Pamela Kestner, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources
Eddie Oliver, No Kid Hungry Virginia State Director

V. Classrooms not Courtrooms Initiative

Moderator: The Honorable Brian J. Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Panelists: Andrew K. Block Jr., Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice
Steven Staples, Virginia Department of Education Superintendent of Public Instruction
Fran Ecker, Director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Scott Reiner, Executive Director of the Virginia Office of Children's Services

VI. Policy Advancement

Moderator: The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, Lieutenant Governor
Panelists: Margaret Ross Schultze, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services
Alexis Rodgers, Policy Director at the Office of Lieutenant Governor

VII. Closing

The Honorable William A. Hazel Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Resources

I. Welcome Remarks:

The Honorable Governor Terrance R. McAuliffe:

Governor Terrance McAuliffe provided a brief overview of the history and formation of the Children's Cabinet, which was formed two years ago and has become increasingly successful and effective within its targeted areas. The Governor highlighted the economic importance of investing in an education system built for students to access high paying jobs in Virginia. The Governor expressed a passion to create an education system that equips all students, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, with skill sets and specializations such as Cyber Security.

Governor Terrance McAuliffe introduced First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe to highlight the successes of her nutrition programs that address childhood hunger.

First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe:

First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe discussed her work to end child hunger and stressed the need to address nutrition in order to enhance children's capacity to learn.

II. Opening by Dr. William Hazel and Deitra Trent

The Honorable Dietra Y. Trent, Secretary of Education

The Secretary of Education said the work of the Children's Cabinet is systematically changing the ways youth are impacted long term. She said the Children's Cabinet is a subset of the Governor's Cabinet and is focused on how to most effectively impact the children of the Commonwealth.

The Honorable William A. Hazel Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Resources

The Secretary of Health and Human Resources said a collaborative effort must be in place in order to improve the overall life of a child. The initiatives and positive change that the Children's Cabinet is implementing will require the efforts of agencies, businesses, and stake holders around the Commonwealth.

He said there needs to be a thorough assessment of where money is being spent by the state to help children throughout the lifespan in order to address the gaps in resources.

Secretary Hazel said children need a fair start in life because that is where success begins.

III. Overview of Governors Children's Cabinet:

Daniela Lewy, Executive Director of the Children Cabinet

Daniela Lewy provided a history of the Children's Cabinet since its establishment in August of 2014. Dr. Lewy introduced the members of the Children's Cabinet.

Dr. Lewy described how the Cabinet operates and said the Children's Cabinet has been internally focused as an advisory Cabinet to the Governor. However, the Cabinet is now at a point where they are able to engage external stakeholders more integrally into the work.

A stakeholder forum will be held once a year. Dr. Lewy said the Children's Cabinet has three main initiatives:

1. Challenged Schools Initiative in Petersburg, Richmond, and Norfolk
2. Classrooms not Courtrooms Initiative
3. Advancing policy for the betterment of children in the Commonwealth

IV. Challenged Schools Initiative

Moderator: Secretary Dietra Trent

*Panelists: Steven Staples, Virginia Department of Education Superintendent of Public Instruction
Daniela Lewy, Executive Director of the Virginia Governors Children's Cabinet
Pamela Kester, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources
Eddie Oliver, No Kid Hungry Virginia State Director*

Secretary Trent said the strategic plan of the Challenged Schools Initiative is to focus state level support on school divisions that are underperforming. Secretary Trent then introduced Dr. Steve Staples to give an in-depth presentation on initiative.

Dr. Staples acknowledged that each challenged school is not alike, and therefore each school needs a different approach. However, he stated that there are commonalities broken up into three categories: People, Process, and Partners.

1. People

The Challenged Schools Initiative seeks to address the consistency and quality of people and staff because research shows that there is too much turnover amongst employees in underperforming schools. Dr. Staples addressed the need to build capacity and recruit a diverse workforce so that children could see teachers that look like them. The approach includes:

- Teacher leadership training: Teachers become leaders and have a voice
- Principals leadership training: Principals give feedback to teachers to improve consistency
- Division-Level Memorandums of Understanding
- Academic reviews to identify priority focus areas

2. Process

Program effectiveness is essential and often dependent on effective processes with accountability.

3. Partners

Dr. Staples said school performance is greatly impacted by out-of-school factors. Therefore, the Children's Cabinet has focused on improving preschool programs, expanding nutrition programs, supporting health initiatives, and prioritizing housing stability to ensure that students arrive at school ready to learn. State agencies have come together to support the Challenged Schools Initiative in order to fulfill this goal. Dr. Staples introduced the panel to exemplify how the partnerships are working.

Daniela Lewy said the initiative launched in Petersburg because of its small size and high need. The idea was to learn how to collaborate and partner effectively with localities before taking the lessons and approach to Richmond and Norfolk. She said while the state played a role, the effort started at the grassroots level and the Children's Cabinet wanted to ensure that local sustainability was at the forefront of the work.

Approach:

Dr. Lewy mentioned that in order to understand Petersburg, an understanding of the history must be present. She shared some of the powerful Petersburg African American history.

Dr. Lewy explained how many groups were working to improve outcomes for Petersburg students. In order to align efforts, Petersburg identified six priority areas and the Children's Cabinet ensured that work groups were established accordingly. Each work group was co-chaired by a state and local leader so the locals could identify the needs and state could access the resources. The six work groups included:

1. Improved nutrition
2. Enhanced school climate
3. Housing stability
4. Health and wellbeing
5. Out of school programming
6. Academic engagement

In addition to increased attendance, decreased suspensions, and improved test scores, there have been other positive outcomes in the region, many of which can be found in the [annual report](#).

Housing stability:

Pamela Kestner spoke on the importance of housing stability to support students, explaining that housing is critical to a student's success and wellbeing. The purpose of Housing Stability Workgroup is to create a sustainable system to secure housing for students at risk of homelessness. Below are some of the issues addressed:

1. Identifying affordable housing
2. Financial and resource management
3. Connecting families with resources
4. Working with landlords to help struggling families remain in their homes throughout the school year

Ms. Kestner described a demonstration project that is being launched in Petersburg to create a system where families in need get resources to stabilize their housing. Attendance, suspensions, housing, and school mobility are being used as outcomes to track in order to make the case for additional resources.

Improved nutrition:

Eddie Oliver described how the nutrition work group seeks to provide healthy meals in the hands of kids who are hungry. Mr. Oliver said there are federal, state, local and nonprofit parties working together to strengthen existing nutrition programs in the Commonwealth, but there needs to be a greater investment in leveraging these tools to reach more children in need. He described the work in Petersburg:

- Breakfast after the Bell: Breakfast participation increased by 17%
- Winter break meals: Meals were served to over 200 students in Petersburg
- Summer Meals: Petersburg City Public Schools became a feeding sponsor with 14 feeding sites across the city and over 3000 meals served on a daily basis.

Topics covered during the Question and Answer session:

- Backpack programs for weekend feeding
- Head start programs in Petersburg
- Professional development for teachers
- Home visiting
- Two-generation approach
- Alignment between school and community social workers
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V. Classrooms Not Courtrooms Initiatives

Moderator: Brian J. Moran, Secretary of Public Safety

Panelists: Andrew K. Block, Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice Services

Dr. Steven Staples, Virginia Department of Education Superintendent of Public Intervention

Fran Ecker, Director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Scott Reiner, Executive Director of the Virginia Office of Children's Services

Director Andy Block said out of school suspensions have a negative impact on the academic and behavioral performance of a child. For example, on average, children are 2 years academically behind when they come out of jail. The Classrooms not Courtrooms Initiative not only addresses suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement, but pays close attention to the disproportionate referral rates for students of color and students with disabilities.

The intended work-plan includes tracking juvenile petitions brought to court from schools officers. Of 50,000 cases:

- 7500 were school based
- 85% were diversion eligible

- 45% were diverted

Director Block posed the question, “If we are diverting so many children, did they need to come to court in the first place?”

Department of Education

Dr. Steve Staples said a Center for Public Integrity (CPI) report found Virginia to be number one in the country for school referrals to law enforcement. The Classrooms not Courtrooms initiative is actively working to change this statistic. Research shows that very few out-of-school suspensions or referrals to law enforcement were for children who are committed serious crimes, but rather for behaviors that can be changed. However, out of school suspensions is not working and must be tackled differently. School boards must dig into the data and understand the ramifications of school discipline. They must look into the disproportionate discipline practices for students of color and students with disabilities. And they must look into new solutions. Proposed interventions include expansion of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and expansion of Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS). Additionally, educators must better understand the circumstances students face at home and how that impacts their actions in the classroom.

Department of Criminal Justice Services

Director Fran Ecker said the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services has been addressing the findings in the CPI report that found Virginia led the nation with school referrals to law enforcement at a rate of 15.8 per thousand. However, after working closely with Jarrod Lawson from the National Institute of Justice, a ten month study found that the rates were slightly different than that of the CPI report. Preliminary data show that the referral rate from schools to law enforcement resulting in court action is 2.3 per 1,000 students. However, the disproportionality remains constant. In response, the team is working on a model memorandum of understanding between School Resource Officers and local schools to clarify each group’s role.

Office of Children’s Services

Scott Reiner described how OCS partners with many localities to provide a system of care for children and families, to help children early and prevent deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system. OCS was established to meet the needs of families through high fidelity wraparound services throughout the state.

Topics covered during the Question and Answer session:

- School Resource Officer evaluations
- Evidence based alternatives to suspension
- Preschool suspensions

VI. Policy Advancement

Moderator: Ralph S. Norman, Lieutenant Governor

*Panelists: Margaret Ross Schultze, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services
Alexis Rodgers, Policy Director at the Office of the Lieutenant Governor*

Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam addressed his efforts with the Commonwealth Council for Childhood Success (CCCS). The goal of this council was to work in three areas:

1. Affordable high quality childcare
3. Expansion of Home Visiting
4. High quality Pre-k Education

Example of policy advancement

Commissioner Margaret Schultze described the efforts to change the juvenile justice system in Virginia. One difficulty was that those entering juvenile justice from foster care had no system in place for that transition. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Social Services has improved the lives of eight foster care youth over the past year. Commissioner Schultze shared a success story from the program.

School Readiness Council

Alexis Rodgers gave a recap of the 2016 Legislative session and what laws were put in place regarding Virginia's youngest children. Solutions were enacted around safe daycare facilities, upskilling early childhood workforce, and improving nutrition for Virginia's children. Ms. Rodgers described how the School Readiness Council became the vehicle to continue the work of the Commonwealth Council for Childhood Success. She described the Council's priority areas.

Topics covered during the Question and Answer session:

- Trauma informed care
- Marginalized populations and English Language Learners
- Affordable childcare
- School Readiness Council
- Multisystem children and families

VII: Closing

The Honorable William A. Hazel Jr. gave the closing remarks.