MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor Honors Suite
Harrisburg, PA 17126

July 20, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am by Dr. James Barker.

Attending:

Erin Agnew	Paul Ferrera	Ivory Nelson	Karen Farmer White
James Barker	Dan Fogarty	Jon Peri	A. Lee Williams
Wendy Beetlestone	Kirk Hallett	Mollie Phillips	Larry Wittig
David Collins	Francine McNairy	Ed Sheehan	
Connie Davis	Francis Michelini	Shannon Sullivan	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 18, 2011 meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Sheehan/Beetlestone** motion.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Jonathan Peri reported on the July 19, 2011 Committee meeting. He provided an update on pending school safety regulations that will be presented to the Board in September and brought for action before the Board in November. The Board was tasked with promulgating regulations by Act 104 that includes a model MOU between school entities and local police, establish protocols for notifying local police when certain incidents occur on school property, establish protocols for the response and handling of students with special needs, and establish protocols for emergency and non-emergency response.

Mr. Peri reported that the Advisory Committee convened to provide input on this work met on June 23, 2011 to review sample MOUs from other states along with a sample created by PDE. The Committee will continue to review these samples, along with additional MOUs currently used by Pennsylvania schools and Intermediate Units, and will provide written comments on these documents by the end of July. The Advisory Committee will reconvene on August 12, 2011 for an in-depth discussion on elements it will recommend that the Board include in the model MOU placed in regulation. In the interim, the Advisory Committee will also convene two subcommittees via conference call for more focused conversation on the handling of students with disabilities and identifying national best practices surrounding the protocols that are required to be placed in regulation.

Mr. Sheehan asked if the Department will be more proactive in releasing these forensic reports to the public in the future. Dr. Dumaresq responded that the Department is developing a workplan identifying procedures for when they receive reports and how they will release them and that she will share this plan with the State Board.

SAS Institute

Dr. Dumaresq noted that an upcoming SAS Institute will be hosted by the Department on the following topics: the new model teacher evaluation system, School Report Cards, Common Core Standards implementation and SAS Updates.

PRESENTATION ON PSSA-M CUT SCORES AND PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Dr. Rich Maraschiello presented the Department's recommended cut scores and performance level descriptors (PLDs) for the Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Literature and Biology. He was joined by staff from Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). Dr. Maraschiello reminded Board members that the recommended cuts scores and PLDs had been presented at a public meeting of the Board two weeks prior on July 6, as required by Chapter 4.

Dr. Maraschiello noted that exams in Algebra I, Biology and Literature were the first three Keystone Exams identified to be made operational in Chapter 4. These exams were prioritized due to the plan to replace the current 11th grade PSSA with these Keystones, using Keystone Exams in Literature and Algebra I to make AYP determinations at the high school level and using the Keystone Exam in Biology to meet the science testing requirement of No Child Left Behind. Dr. Maraschiello reported that the Department has begun collecting documentation necessary to submit to the federal government for peer review in order to receive approval for using the Keystones as part of Pennsylvania's federally-approved accountability system

Dr. Maraschiello reported that schools just completed Keystone Exam testing in May in Algebra I, Literature and Biology as operational exams. Over 180,000 students participated in at least one exam. The exams were administered both online and in paper/pencil formats. The cut scores and PLDs being recommended were based on the spring 2011 administration of the Keystone Exams.

Dr. Maraschiello reviewed scale scores and impact percentages based on those scores, which identified the number of students who took the exam in May 2011 that would fall into each performance level based on the recommended cut scores. He noted that the recommended cut scores were developed by teams of Pennsylvania educators using the ordered item-booklet method.

Dr. Ivory Nelson said he appreciated the focused discussed on borderline students that was part of the process in developing the cut scores because it is important to not just focus on how the best and brightest students will perform.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Dr. Barker noted that Deputy Secretary Carolyn Dumaresq represented PDE and the Commonwealth at the International Society for Tech Educators conference in Philadelphia. More than 20,000 people from around the world attended the event, and Dr. Barker complimented Dr. Dumaresq for an extraordinary job in representing PDE and the great work that is being accomplished in the Commonwealth.

Dr. Dumaresq was joined by staff from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for updates on various initiatives.

Common Core

Dr. Dumaresq reported that crosswalk documents aligning the Common Core State Standards with Pennsylvania academic standards were complete. The Department will convene teams to review Eligible Content in September to conduct a rigor analysis of the content tested by the state currently compared to the Common Core. If the rigor does not align, Dr. Dumaresq reported that the Department will revise the Eligible Content and look at necessary adjustments to the PSSA to reflect those revisions to the Eligible Content, with the goal of having any recommended changes to the PSSA ready to align with the Common Core full implementation date established in Chapter 4 of 2013-2014.

Mr. Wittig asked how the Department would marry generic concepts in the Common Core math standards with course specific Keystone Exams. Dr. Dumaresq said alignment is provided through a process called back-mapping. She also said the focus of some exams may be narrowed so that questions require students to go deeper in their thinking and demonstrate a greater application of knowledge and analysis of concepts.

Mr. Wittig noted that the Common Core Standards as they stand are welcome, but expressed concern about outstanding questions regarding their future governance.

PSSA Testing

Dr. Dumaresq addressed recent media reports regarding potential cheating on the PSSA exams. She explained that a "data forensic" report was provided to PDE in 2009 by DRC, the state's assessment contractor. This report identified statistical anomalies in PSSA results based on erasure marks, increases in scale scores, increases in the number of students proficient or advanced, and increases in scores for special populations. Dr. Dumaresq stressed that being identified in the report does not mean cheating was occurring, it simply identified a statistical anomaly that should be further reviewed. She noted that it was unfortunate that the report was made public prior to being released to schools, and reported that the Department has contacted each school district and charter school identified in the report and asked them to respond to PDE regarding the identified anomalies within one month. Finally, Dr. Dumaresq said PDE will conduct an analysis of the investigation and responses made by the school district and charter schools, along with forensic reports on PSSA data from additional years, and that this information will be shared with the State Board at a future meeting.

Mr. Peri reported that the Students with Special Needs subcommittee had already held one meeting. Members of this subcommittee are considering a suggestion that the model MOU include a statement recognizing that the act of providing notification to law enforcement, as required by Act 104, does not require law enforcement to respond, intervene or file charges. Mr. Peri recognized the subcommittee's concerns, but noted the need to retain discretion for law enforcement in conducting its work. Discussion of these proposals will be a central focus of the Advisory Committee's next meeting.

Mr. Peri also reported that Mike Kozup, who will lead PDE's new Office for Safe Schools, presented a draft model dating violence policy to the Committee. The policy was developed as a voluntary, model guide for school districts, as required by Act 104 of 2010, and Mr. Kozup's presentation was made to solicit input from the State Board on the draft policy, also as required by Act 104. Mr. Peri noted that all State Board members were provided with a copy of the draft model policy and encouraged members of the Board who wished to submit additional comment on the document to submit their remarks to Mr. Kozup.

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Mollie Phillips, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, reported that the inaugural meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on School Libraries was held on July 19, 2011. The committee was formed to over the school library study requested by House Resolution 987 of 2010.

Mrs. Phillips provided an updated on work related to the study that had occurred to date. In order to complete the study requested by H.R. 987, the State Board needed to solicit data on current school library staffing, services, funding and resources since such information was not readily available. To collect this data, the Board worked with PDE to create a survey, which was shared electronically with all chief school administrators. Mrs. Phillips reported that the Board had received a very high response rate to the survey. A copy of the survey document was provided to Committee members.

Mrs. Phillips also announced that the Board has contracted with the University of Pittsburgh to complete the data analysis and drafting of the School Library Study. A copy of the contract with the University of Pittsburgh was provided to Committee members. The study will be supported with $12,500 from the State School Fund, authorized by the State Board in May 2011, and with a matching $12,500 in federal LSTA funds, provided by Clare Zales through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Finally, the Ad Hoc Committee selected dates and locations for three public roundtable discussions on a draft of the School Library Study. Roundtables will be held in Allentown on September 13th, in Harrisburg on September 15th and in Erie on September 20th in conjunction with the next State Board meeting. The Committee expressed an interest in using school libraries as the sites for hosting these roundtable discussions, and asked State Board staff to look into securing facilities in the cities identified.

Ms. Beetlestone requested clarification as to why the impact data for students scoring below basic in Biology showed a higher percentage of students below basic in Biology than in the other subject areas. She asked if the data demonstrate a need to look into whether there are improvements needed in how Biology instruction is provided to students, rather than the data demonstrating lack of achievement on behalf of the student. Mr. Maraschiello reported that the incongruity may be explained by the fact that we just start teaching Biology in high school, whereas the other subjects tested represent cumulative content knowledge that is taught from the earliest grades. Dr. Williams noted that the impact data demonstrate that schools improve instruction in subject areas that have been assessed for a longer period, and that while math and reading have a long assessment history, Biology assessments are relatively new in the Commonwealth. Mr. Maraschiello said the impact results also point to a need for districts to refocus their Biology curriculum to ensure it aligns with the performance level descriptors and expectations of the state's academic standards. He also noted that the spring 2011 administration of the Keystone Exams did not carry stakes for students' graduation requirements since cut scores for the exams had not yet been established, and offered that students may be motivated to perform at a higher level when the exams carry weight for individual students.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 am.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant