MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
750 East King Street, Lancaster, PA 17602

May 18, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am by Dr. James Barker.

Attending:

James Barker	Francis Michelini	Shannon Sullivan
Wendy Beetlestone	Ivory Nelson	Karen Farmer White
Sandra Dungee Glenn	Jonathan Peri	Lee Williams
Dan Fogarty	Mollie O'Connell Phillips	Larry Wittig
Kirk Hallett	Edward Sheehan	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 16, 2011 meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Fogarty/Hallett** motion.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

School Report Cards

Ed Vollbrecht and Michelle Sellitto reported on the development of School Report Cards as a tool for parents. The Report Cards will compile and evaluate data on multiple measures of school performance measuring input of resources with the output of performance at both the building and district level, related, but not limited to, student achievement, school safety and climate, and fiscal responsibility. Department staff are working to determine how to fairly factor together disparate data in a way that is statistically meaningful to determine an accurate rating, as well as how to ensure the information is useful for the public. PDE will seek input from parents, business leaders, community groups and educational organizations in developing the system. Report cards with school grades will be posted on the Department's web site by January 2012.

Ed Sheehan asked if the grades assigned to schools on the report cards would be used by the state to enact change if a school is found to be performing poorly. Dr. Dumaresq said the report cards are intended to be a communication tool for parents and citizens, not a tool that would prompt action by the state. Dan Fogarty asked how student achievement would be

incorporated into the assignment of a school's grade. Dr. Sellitto said the Department intends to use PVASS as a measure of achievement, but it remains to be determined how much weight this would have in the calculation of a grade. Larry Wittig asked what other student indicators would be used? Dr. Sellitto said that the Department is reviewing factors such as students who are advanced or proficient on the PSSA, SAT scores and graduation rate, but it remains to be determined if those will be factored into a school's grade. The Department may include other factors of points of information on a school's report card, but not include them in the formula used to calculate the grade.

Gates Grant – New Teacher Evaluation System

Deputy Secretary Dumaresq reported that the pilot sites implementing the practice model as part of the Momentum Grant work to develop a new teacher evaluation system are coming to a close. Interviews of teachers, principals and superintendents in the pilot groups are being conducted to get feedback on changes or concerns with the practice model. Additional information on this effort will be available after the next stakeholders meeting on June 30. Deputy Secretary Dumaresq also reported that data measuring the correlation between the practice model and PVAAS or multiple measures of student achievement will not be available until October.

Common Core State Standards

Dr. Jean Dyszel reported on the beginning of Phase II of the Common Core transition and further alignment review. She reported that the Department has completed crosswalk documents that show how Common Core state standards align to current Pennsylvania standards by grade level and by academic content at the high school level. The Department's review took into account both the rigor and the alignment of Common Core to PA standards. In addition, the Department has compiled instructional emphasis guides and Assessment and Eligible Content alignment documents. Dr. Dyszel reported that PDE has completed six workshops to train IU curriculum advisors on these resources and so that they can in turn train local district staff in using these materials.

Dr. Dyszel said the rigor of the Keystone Exams aligns beautifully with Common Core standards. She said the next step is to examine the rigor of the assessment anchors and eligible content in grades 3 thru 8 to determine if there may be adjustments necessary for use in the learning progressions, PSSAs, Classroom Diagnostic Tests, and in reaching college and career ready expectations of the Keystone Exams.

Keystone Exams Update

Dr. Rich Maraschiello provided an update on the implementation of the Keystone Exams. Dr. Maraschiello reported that the Department has fully developed and put on the SAS web site 212 Instructional Units and 636 lesson plans, related to the voluntary model curriculum provided for in Chapter 4 that cut across kindergarten thru high school in reading, writing, math and science. Dr. Maraschiello also said that diagnostic tools for reading, math and science are now fully developed and available to each school district to use to help support students' growth and success.

Dr. Maraschiello reported that schools just completed Keystone Exam testing this week 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. PA school districts also just completed field testing for the Keystone Exams in Algebra II, Geography and English Composition. In 2012-13, PDE will be poised to launch six Keystone Exams. More immediately, PDE will convene committees of PA educators in June to review data from the Algebra I, Literature and Biology exams administered in spring 2011 and develop cuts scores for the exams. Those cut score recommendations will be brought to the Board for approval in July.

Looking forward, Dr. Maraschiello noted that efforts to find common ground on policy questions have in turn have created implementation challenges ahead. Dr. Maraschiello said using a Keystone as 33% of a final course grade has run into substantial logistical and implementation challenges. In order to return test scores in time for grade calculations, Keystone Exams must be scheduled in early May (or in December in case of Block Scheduling) which some believe is too soon to qualify as an end of course exam. Further, Dr. Maraschiello said in the absence of a uniform state-wide grade scale factoring the Keystone Exam as one-third of a student's grade can have very different outcomes from one district to the next where, for example, a 60 may be passing in one district while a 70 may be required to pass in other districts. Dr. Maraschiello said other concerns have been raised that the Chapter 4 provision for retests could result in seemingly endless recalculation of course marks and GPAs, and that retests could lead to problematic competition within districts for class rank and valedictorian status or result in students who apply for early admission to college having a transcript send with a grade that is blank or undetermined.

Further, Dr. Maraschiello said concerns have been registered on both practical and philosophical counts with the regulation's requirement to award zero points for students who score Below Basic. He noted that with a zero score for Below Basic it would be almost impossible for a student to pass the course.

PRESENTATION ON PSSA-M CUT SCORES AND PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

John Weiss made a presentation on the process used to develop cut scores for the PSSA-M, state assessments based on modified academic achievement standards that is administered per a student's IEP. Mr. Weiss noted that the State Board previously approved cut scores and performance level descriptors (PLDs) for the PSSA-M in math on July 1, 2010, and that the Board would be asked to consider recommended cuts scores and PLDs for the PSSA-M in reading and science on May 26, 2011. Board members were provided a copy of the recommended PLDs to review at the May 18, 2011 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carol Karl of the Pennsylvania State Education Association addressed the Board during public comment. Related to the school report cards being developed by PDE, Ms. Karl said it would be nice if private school and catholic school data would be posted as well as public school data. Related to the Keystone Exams Local Assessment Committee, Ms. Karl said the survey being prepared to ask districts if they plan to develop a local assessment to be used in place of the Keystone Exams should ask if they district will submit its current local assessment system, noting that a system is much richer than a single assessment. Finally, Ms. Karl made the Board aware of potential federal movement that would remove funding for local school counselors and said she will share more information on this at a later date.

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 11:40 am.

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Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant