MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

July 20, 2011

The 303th meeting of the State Board of Education was convened on Wednesday, July 20, 2011. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Larry Wittig, Chairman.

Attending:

Erin Agnew	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Sen. Jeffery Piccola
Jim Agras	Paul Ferrera	Jonathan Peri
James Barker	Dan Fogarty	Ed Sheehan
Wendy Beetlestone	Kirk Hallett	Shannon Sullivan
David Collins	Francine McNairy	Karen Farmer White
Connie Davis	Francis Michelini	Lee Williams
Sen. Andrew Dinniman	Ivory Nelson	Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the May 18, May 26 and July 6, 2011 meetings of the State Board of Education were approved unanimously on a **Michelini/Agras** motion.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Secretary Tomalis introduced Barbara Minzenberg to the Board as the new Deputy Secretary for the Office of Childhood Development and Early Learning.

Mr. Tomalis reported that the Department has received preliminary results from PSSAs administered in spring 2011 which show some improvement over the previous school year. The preliminary data has been provided to districts for review, and the Secretary will provide an in-depth report to the Board on PSSAs in September.

The Secretary also discussed a report that identified anomalies in PSSA test scores and said the Department has asked schools flagged in the report to respond to the Department within 30 days regarding the data anomalies. Mr. Tomalis stressed that test security is a priority for the Department, and that schools identified in the report were flagged for a data anomaly, not for cheating. The Secretary also reported that the Department has ordered an additional forensic analysis of 2010 PSSA data which, combined with an analysis from the most recent school year, will provide PDE with an analysis for three consecutive years to identify if there are patterns that warrant further investigation. Senator Dinniman commented that the forensic analysis is crucial

if the Commonwealth is going to move ahead with connecting teacher evaluations to PSSA scores.

The Secretary also provided an update on round three of the federal Race to the Top (RTTT III) grant competition. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has announced $700 million for RTTT III - $500 million to support competitive applications for early childhood education grants and $200 million available to the nine states that were finalists in the first two rounds of RTTT. Guidance for the early childhood grant funding has been released and Ms. Minzenberg will lead Pennsylvania's efforts in applying for these funds. Pennsylvania is waiting for parameters for the RTTT finalists funding to be announced before deciding whether it will apply for that portion of RTTT III. Mr. Tomalis said the USDE has acknowledged that the reforms sought cannot be as broad as in the first two rounds because there is not as much funding available this time, and said that if Pennsylvania moves forward with RTTT that teacher evaluation reforms would be a major component of the effort.

Finally, Secretary Tomalis also provided an update on waivers USDE has indicated it would like to offer related to the No Child Left Behind Act. Mr. Tomalis reported that USDE is seeking to issues waivers in exchange for states agreeing to enact reforms outside of what is provided for in NCLB. Mr. Tomalis noted that Congress has concerns over this approach.

MOMENTUM GRANT UPDATE

Dr. Carolyn Dumaresq, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, provided an update on the state's efforts to develop new teacher and principal evaluation systems. Dr. Dumaresq reported that during the 2010-11 school year, the state piloted an evaluation of teacher practice modeled on Charlotte Danielson's work. Dr. Suzanne Lane, with the University of Pittsburgh, has developed recommendations on improving the model evaluation based on surveys and on-site interviews with the pilot sites. In August, the Department will reconvene the workgroup that developed the teacher practice model evaluation to review these recommendations. The Department also will roll out a second pilot of the evaluation in September and will seek to have 20 percent of school districts participate. Dr. Dumaresq also reported that, in October, PDE will host Intermediate Unit "train the trainer" sessions in using the new evaluation. Another external review of the evaluation will be conducted at the end of the second pilot. Dr. Dumaresq said the Department anticipates releasing a new state evaluation form based on this work in 2013.

While the Secretary of Education is authorized to make changes to the current evaluation form, regulatory or legislative support is necessary to include measures of student achievement as part of the evaluation system. Dr. Dumaresq said the Department would like to revise the current value-added data system (PVASS) to take test data to the teacher level. She also reported that the plans to incorporate student achievement into a teacher's evaluation would take into account multiple measure of student achievement, and that an analysis of validated achievement measures beyond the PSSA is currently underway.

Senator Dinniman commented that we cannot have education reform without teacher effectiveness reform and encouraged Governor Corbett to speak up on this issue. Secretary

Tomalis noted that 99.4 percent of teachers were rated satisfactory in their most recent evaluations, which demonstrates the need for improvement in the rating system.

Mr. Ferrera asked if the evaluation would account for benchmarks assessments and would take into account where students start at the beginning of the year. Secretary Tomalis said student growth will be accounted for; however, concerns have been expressed about an overemphasis on growth as the sole measure of achievement.

Ms. Glenn said a key focus of the evaluation system must be on preparing administrators to be good evaluators and that evaluation must not be limited to a one-time assessment. She noted that NASBE will be releasing a paper on teacher evaluation this fall. Finally, Ms. Glenn asked the Department to consider how the new evaluations can inform colleges and universities in improving teacher preparation.

Mr. Fogarty asked if there is a range for how much emphasis would be placed on value-added data. Dr. Dumaresq said this policy decision will be discussed with state workgroups this fall and will include discussion of the amount that should be included at both the building level and the teacher level. Secretary Tomalis commented that 50 percent of the evaluation may be based on student achievement but those achievement factors would not be limited to the PSSA.

Finally, Chairman Wittig noted that the Tamaqua School District revised its teacher evaluation to include multiple tiers – exemplary, satisfactory, satisfactory needs improvement, and unsatisfactory. Mr. Wittig reported a positive response to the revised evaluation with individuals seeking feedback on how they can improve to move into a higher tier.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

Christopher Protho, a music teacher with the Mars Area School District, represented the PSPC before the Board. Mr. Protho reported that the PSPC considered 11 disciplinary cases for educator misconduct at its most recent meeting on July 11. The range of conduct was criminal and non-criminal ranging from incompetency to sexual abuse. Mr. Protho also reported that there are 250 active educator discipline cases currently with the Department's Office of Chief Counsel, 79 of which are designated high priority because they involve allegations of sexual or physical abuse of children.

Board members also were given a copy of PSPC's first newsletter. PSPC is trying to communicate more with the field, particularly with chief school administrators. This newsletter covered the issue of mandatory reporting and will be distributed quarterly.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chairman Wittig reported that Sen. Dinniman has asked the Board to address concerns raised regarding the use of seclusion rooms in school settings. Mr. Wittig noted that there is no consistent recognized definition of a seclusion room, and that there is significant controversy

regarding this issue both in the advocacy community and professional organizations, particularly as it applies to students with disabilities. Mr. Wittig said the Board recognizes these concerns and the need to ensure that interventions for students with special needs are applied appropriately. Mr. Wittig reported that, at the federal level, the Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has indicated it will issue guidance on the use of seclusion rooms and that he anticipates this guidance will be issued in the fall. Given the pending federal guidance, the Board will defer action on this topic at this time and will continue to monitor federal activity on this matter and work with PDE staff to review the guidance when it is issued. If federal guidance is not issued within the anticipated timeframe, Mr. Wittig said the Board will initiate a state-level process to develop a more thorough and comprehensive approach concerning the use of seclusion rooms in schools. He also noted that the Commonwealth's special education regulations already prohibit the use of locked rooms, locked boxes or other structures or spaces from which a student cannot readily exit and that the Department has a process in place to investigate complaints regarding alleged violations of special education law.

Senator Dinniman thanked the Chairman for his attention to this issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

0720.1 KEYSTONE EXAM PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS AND CUT SCORES FOR ALGEBRA I, LITERATURE AND BIOLOGY

A motion to approve Keystone Exam Performance Level Descriptors and cut scores for Algebra I, Literature and Biology was made by Dan Fogarty and seconded by Jim Agras.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote. (Phillips – by proxy)

0720.2 RESOLUTION HONORING ADAM SCHOTT

A motion to approve the resolution honoring Adam Schott was made by Francis Michelini and seconded by Ivory Nelson.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote. (Phillips – by proxy)

0720.3 RESOLUTION HONORING JOHN TARKA

A motion to approve the resolution honoring John Tarka was made by Karen Farmer White and seconded by Senator Andrew Dinniman.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote. (Phillips – by proxy)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Karen Molchanow, Acting Executive Director of the State Board, announced that the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) is up for re-approval of its authority as an accrediting body granted under the State Board's authority under the Private Academic Schools Act. PAEYC intends to seek renewal of its authority to accredit nursery school and kindergarten level programs for another five-year period. Ms. Molchanow thanked Lee Williams for agreeing to serve as the Board's liaison for the application review process.

Chairman Wittig announced that the Board's next meeting will be held in Erie on September 20-21. Dr. Barker said he welcomes the Board's visit and hopes that everyone can come to the next meeting to experience Erie.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant