MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

January 12, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Chairman Larry Wittig.

Attending:

Erin Agnew
James Agras (via phone)
James Barker (via phone)
Wendy Beetlestone
Sandra Dungee Glenn
Kirk Hallett
Francis Michelini
Mollie Phillips (via phone)
Colleen Sheehan
Shannon Sullivan
Karen Farmer White (via phone)
A. Lee Williams
Larry Wittig

OPENING COMMENTS

Chairman Wittig welcomed Ms. Colleen Sheehan as the newest member of the Board, and announced that Ms. Sheehan will serve as a member of the Council of Basic Education and on the Board's Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee and School and University Safety Committee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 15, 2011 meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Phillips/Hallett** motion.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Deputy Secretary Carolyn Dumaresq provided an update on initiatives of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Common Core State Standards

Deputy Secretary Dumaresq provided an update on academic standards implementation and said she anticipates a revised set of Pennsylvania Common Core Standards would be presented to the Board in March. Thus far, the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content for English Language Arts and Mathematics have been rewritten to match both the content and rigor of Common Core. The Bureau of Assessment also reports that it has a draft Anchors and Eligible Content for Writing that will be reviewed in early January.

Dr. Dumaresq also reported that, on January 18-20, 2012, a team of educators from across the state will convene at PaTTAN Harrisburg to revise the existing PA Academic Standards. This work will use both the revised Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content and the Common Core Standards to create a cohesive set of standards that link to Eligible Content and embrace Common Core. The Deputy Secretary also presented a timeline of anticipated implementation activity related to Common Core standards through Spring 2015.

Teacher Evaluation

Deputy Secretary Dumaresq reported that there are now 113 school entities volunteering to participate in phase two of a pilot of a new teacher evaluation tool focused on evaluating elements of professional practice, including traditional public schools, Career and Technical Centers, intermediate units and charter schools. Dr. Dumaresq said Dr. Suzanne Lane, of the University of Pittsburgh, will once again evaluate the pilot and feedback received will be used to finalize the rubric to be used for classroom evaluation.

Dr. Dumaresq also noted that Mathematica is in the process of wrapping up stakeholder group discussions on correlations between elements of teacher practice and academic achievement measures, and said a new workgroup is being formed to provide guidance to the Department in incorporating multiple measures of student achievement into the evaluation tool. She noted that work identifying such correlations was lacking in the teacher evaluation models pursued in other states and said she was glad to see Pennsylvania addressing this as part of the initial development of its new evaluation system. She also noted that the development includes a strong focus on ensuring inter-rater reliability among principals in consistent administration of the evaluation.

PSSA Forensic Analysis

Dr. Dumaresq provided an update on the PSSA forensic analysis that was initiated by the Department a few months ago based on a report from Data Recognition Corporation that identified anomalies in PSSA results such as unusual increases in scale scores or the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced. Dr. Dumaresq reported that 26 of the school initially flagged for anomalies has submitted data for review by PDE and received notification that they had been cleared of any infractions. PDE is following-up with the remaining schools that had anomalies identified based on an erasure analysis to determine if the anomalies were caused by a student data problem, proctoring issue or incorrect behavior. She noted that there was no clear pattern among the remaining schools. One of the first matters the Department of Education investigated was whether there was a pattern of erasures in a single grade level that may have indicated a problem with the exam itself, however, anomalies were identified across a range of grade levels. Finally, Dr. Dumaresq said PDE will be receiving forensic analysis results from the 2010-2011 PSSA in the next few weeks and will share the results with the Board as they are concluded.

Chester-Upland

Dr. Dumaresq reported on the financial circumstances surrounding the Chester-Upland School District and noted that the district has not yet met any of the seven triggers identified inlaw that would provide for the district to be declared fiscally distressed. Without meeting one of those triggers, the state does not have the legal authority to intervene. Dr. Dumaresq said the Department has been working to develop legislation that would allow the Department to intervene more quickly in instances where it sees a district headed toward fiscal distress. She also noted that the Department had previously provided direct assistance to Chester-Upland by providing staff support to assist the business manager's office and by advancing funding to the district last spring. Based on prior advanced payments, she said there is concern that unless stronger accountability is put in place simply advancing funds again will not help. She also noted that competing legislation requires payments to be remitted to charter schools first, which could negate the impact of advancing funds to the district because of the high percentage of students in the district who attend charters. Finally, Dr. Dumaresq said that a fiscal analysis revealed that Chester had not applied for certain federal subsidies and that the Department has provided staff assistance on that front.

Wendy Beetlestone said she was pleased to hear the steps PDE has taken relevant to Chester-Upland and understood that the Department currently does not have legal authority to intervene. Ms. Beetlestone noted the legislature could pursue other legal remedies such as merging Chester-Upland with a neighboring district. She also expressed a concern regarding the district's ability to meet its obligations for students with IEPs and litigation that may ensue as a result.

Sandra Dungee Glenn asked the Deputy Secretary to address the difference between Chester's current situation and its previous designation as a fiscally distressed school district. Dr. Dumaresq again noted that Chester currently has not met the triggers in law for a designation of fiscal distress and that the Empowerment Act that provided for additional intervention in Chester had since expired. Ms. Glenn then asked how Chester's situation compared to prior consolidation that created the Woodland Hills School District. Greg Dunlap, legal counsel to the Board, explained that Woodland Hills was created as the result of a federal court desegregation order and not a situation that parallels the circumstances currently facing Chester-Upland.

Act 104 of 2010

Dr. Dumaresq stated that the Department has developed a draft of business computer and information technology standards as required by Act 104 of 2010 and that these standards will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Lee Williams reported that the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC) notified the Board that it will not seek re-approval of its status as an accrediting authority. In the spring of 2011, the State Board notified PennAEYC that its five-year approval to serve as an accrediting authority was coming to a close and that an application for re-approval needed to be approved by the Board by January 2012 in order to continue awarding accreditation to private school pre-K programs in Pennsylvania. After meeting with the Deputy Secretary for the Office of Child Development and Early Learning and consulting with its membership internally, PennAEYC determined that it is no longer prudent to continue offering accreditation service to its members.

Under the Private Academic Schools Act, the State Board of Education is charged with approving accrediting bodies for private schools. Schools that receive accreditation from an entity approved by the Board are then able to operate without obtaining state licensure. PennAEYC had been approved to accredit nursery school and kindergarten programs in the Commonwealth's private schools. Fortunately, Dr. Williams reported that there are two other entities - Middle States and the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools - that also are approved by the Board to accredit pre-K programs. Schools that had previously been accredited through PennAEYC will be able to continue receiving accreditation through those other entities.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant