MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

September 11, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 1:45 p.m. by Chairman, Larry Wittig.

Attending:

James Agras	Kirk Hallett	Justin Reynolds
Kevin Bates	Maureen Lally-Green	Colleen Sheehan
Wendy Beetlestone	Francis Michelini	Edward Sheehan (via phone)
Emily Clark	Jonathan Peri	Karen Farmer White (via phone)
Sandra Dungee Glenn	Mollie Phillips	Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 8, 2013 meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Hallett/Phillips** motion.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Wittig introduced and welcomed Rita Perez as newly appointed Acting Deputy Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education. Ms. Perez most recently served as Director for the Bureau of Teaching and Learning.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON DATING VIOLENCE EDUCATION

Dr. Colleen Sheehan, committee Chair, reported that the committee held its first meeting earlier that morning. She explained that the committee was formed to carry out an assignment made to the State Board by the legislature in Act 104. That Act requires the Board to conduct a study of the benefits and detriments of mandating dating violence education in the public school of the Commonwealth, and directs the Board to submit a report with recommendations to the House and Senate Education Committee Chairs by January 15, 2014.

Dr. Sheehan reported that the committee will ask the full Board to support a $5,000 funding request to support scholarly research to inform the committee's work. Further, Dr. Sheehan said the committee will invite interested individuals and organizations to submit brief studies, statements or opinions regarding this issue to the State Board for consideration in preparing its report. Finally, Dr. Sheehan said the committee will submit a draft study, as well as its recommendations, to the full Board for final consideration at its January 2014 meeting.

REPORT OF THE ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Acting Deputy Secretary Rita Perez presented a status report on the following subjects:

ESEA Flexibility Waiver

Ms. Perez reported that the U.S. Department of Education had approved Pennsylvania's request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). She said the waiver encompasses three key principles: college and career-ready standards and rigorous assessments; a differentiated system of accountability, support and recognition; and, efforts to improve educator effectiveness. Ms. Perez said these principals act as an integrated system to support improved student achievement. Ms. Perez then described the annual measurable objectives that will determine a school's performance under new accountability system established in the waiver, the supports that will be available for all schools, and the additional supports and planning for schools that are identified in Priority or Focus status.

Maureen Lally-Green asked what system would be used to identify schools that would be the focus of the program. Ms. Perez said schools would be identified through criteria included in the Department's new School Performance Profiles, and that the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools would be designated as Priority schools and the next lowest 10 percent would be designated as Focus schools. The Honorable Lally-Green then asked how a fiscally-distressed district would be taken into account under the new system. Ms. Perez responded that the purpose of school improvement planning is to take a deep look at the school's entire picture, including whether funds are being allocated in a manner that is focused on student achievement.

Wendy Beetlestone asked when a school has to provide supplemental education services (SES) now that AYP is no longer being utilized for accountability. She also asked whether homegrown SES programs need to become licensed in the same manner required of other SES providers and whether requiring licensing of private SES providers puts them at a disadvantage. Acting Secretary Carolyn Dumaresq responded that districts are evaluating the most affordable options for providing SES services, and noted that a benefit of the approved waiver is that SES now does not have to be provided afterschool or in the summer but can include a range of options during the school day. Kirk Hallett stated that Ms. Beetlestone's comments were accurate. Mr. Hallett said the SES services provided by his organization are no longer in business because the district he served is now doing it on its own to retain the funding. However, Mr. Hallett said his organization continues to provide tutoring services free of charge to students.

Sandra Glenn asked what oversight is in place to evaluate whether the SES being offered is effective. Ms. Perez stated that the Department's Division of Federal Programs is revamping its monitoring system for Title I schools and that the revisions will address Mr. Glenn's question. Ms. Glenn then asked how non-Title I schools are monitored. Ms. Perez said that all schools will have annual measurable objectives publicly reported on the School Performance Profiles, but noted that the real focus on improvement is for those identified as Priority schools. Finally, Ms. Glenn asked what is required of schools that are low-performing but not in Title I status. Ms.

Perez responded that such schools are encouraged to craft an improvement plan and the Department's supportive resources would be available to them, but there is no federal requirement for such schools to put an improvement plan in place. Ms. Beetlestone said this raises an underlying question about whether ESEA and the newly approved waiver applies only to Title I schools. Ms. Glenn asked how many school were identified for corrective action under AYP versus how many schools were identified as Priority or Focus schools under the new accountability system. Dr. Dumaresq said she would provide data to Ms. Glenn on the overlap.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Elliot Seif, retired Pennsylvania educator, congratulated Dr. Dumaresq on her new role and thanked Ms. Perez for her presentation. He expressed hope that the Council of Basic Education would take up the issue of districts in financial distress. Mr. Seif spoke to the limited availability of counselors in Philadelphia and said many of the supports discussed today would be difficult given lack of those staff. He then gave comments on the revisions to Chapter 4. Mr. Seif expressed opposition to the implementation of Keystone Exams, including problems he identified as using standardized tests as graduation gatekeepers, duplication of effort since similar tests already are given in high school, high implementation costs, bureaucratic complexity and difficulty administering the tests and associated projects, the need for tutoring, time diverted to test prep, and diversion of resources to testing layered on top of budget cuts. Mr. Seif said he believes these tests are a poor way to become college and career ready. He asked the Board to review sample math and biology questions from Keystone Exams and to reflect on whether the knowledge needed to answer those questions is necessary for every student to be college and career ready. He further asked the Board to reflect on whether correctly answering these questions demonstrated a student's study skill competency, analysis skills, creativity skills, or a student's ability to work collaboratively, and whether not answering enough questions correctly means a student should not go to college. Mr. Seif asked the Board to set aside Keystones and establish a new accountability system that does not negate four years of high school work. He concluded by referencing an article from USA Today regarding other states that are moving away from graduation exams.

- Dr. Joan Duvall-Flynn, retired teacher and President of the Media Area National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, asked the Board to remove the Keystone Exam requirement for graduation from Chapter 4. She stated that those of us in the hinterlands fear that appointees have been put in place to carry out the policy vision of the individual who appointed them, and asked the Board to recognize its immense unbounded power. She asked the Board to consider what will happen if 60% of kids are pushed out of school with no access to a future. Dr. Duvall-Flynn stated that if you have not walked with the homeless and the poor you have no idea how people are suffering and said it was unconscionable to add to that chaos. She stated that 65% of kids are living with emotional trauma, which is a medical condition that impedes learning and must be taken into account when determining why kids are not doing well in school. Dr. Duvall-Flynn said it is scientifically unsupported that test scores predict human potential, and said standardized testing is cruel and unusual punishment for a 17-year-old that flunks

and then has no future. She referred to a suburban high school student with a 3.9 grade point average who has taken Keystones twice and been unsuccessful in passing the exam, and said having the girl complete the project option only to have her diploma stamped project was equivalent to the Haitians fight to finally have the word peasant removed from birth certificates. She said standardized testing is another form of eugenics attempting to sort people into different classes.

- Lois Kaneshiki, resident of Blair County, commented that she was shocked to hear that the State Board is completing a study on mandating dating violence education when the Common Core dictates the standards and we only have 15% leeway on what else we can teach. She questioned why we would include dating violence education unless it is part of the Common Core that she hadn't read yet. Ms. Kaneshkik said the Chapter 4 regulation says it is applicable only to the public school of the Commonwealth, but she said that was misleading because everyone will have to take the tests. She said Keystones are just adding one more test when students already take SATs, ACTs and AP exams, and she asked what's the point since they will all be aligned to the Core. She asked who would be evaluating alternative projects and how the projects would address parents' objections if the they are aligned to the Core. Ms. Kaneshiki said the state's Race to the Top (RTTT) application said the state expects districts to use state-created curriculum and that the grant application shows the state will be collecting personal data. Ms. Kaneshiki further stated the RTTT application speaks to coordination for community-operated infant and toddler programs and asked why the public sector should have intervention in the lives of infants and toddlers. She said teachers, not standards, are what make a quality school and that parents know who the good teachers are. She asked why the legislature refused to enact teacher tenure reform and expressed support for school choice. She further expressed support for eliminating school busing and for letting the market prevail. Ms. Kaneshiki said we do not know how much it will cost to implement Common Core, don't know if it will do any good, and said we need to be honest that Common Core is all about the money. She concluded by stating that federal money is like heroin in our society, and suggested Board members read a report on the standards produced by The Pioneer Institute. She said the changes to Chapter 4 do not get us out of Common Core.

- Janice Bowman, resident of Allentown, stated that she had handouts for Board members that she would highlight in her comments. She said she wanted to answer unanswered questions about Common Core. She said she had a paper from the internet called Evaluation of the Alignment Between PA Academic Standards and Common Core 2010 that shows we are Common Core. She also said she found a study on alignment in the states that shows we are data mining. She also said she is providing information on who wrote the standards and the money source. Ms. Bowman stated that she did a budget study for the Allentown School District on what it costs the public for Common Core, and that Allentown will need new computers in the next few years. She asked how we could implement a program that requires new computers for students when we have no money for computers. Ms. Bowman said teachers do not like the standards, but do not speak out because they fear they will lose their jobs. She said she is providing information on teacher gag orders from other states, and stated that blogs are the best news sources. Ms. Bowman commented that there are 49 states fighting Common Core.

Finally, she expressed concern with the National Sex Education Standards that she said the Core is teaching. She said she is not sure which schools in Pennsylvania are using this, but that she considered it porn and that staff utilizing it should be arrested. She said she requested a list of books being used for certain subjects in Allentown and was told that attorneys needed to be consulted before the list could be provided and that she further threatened to arrest staff if she found out they were using these materials in classrooms. She provided the Board with copies of the sex education materials that she said teach how to have sex and said she did not understand why the Board was looking at dating violence education when these materials promote dating rape in schools. Ms. Bowman said pastors and parents will fight the porn in Common Core. She said teachers and parents are not being listened to, and that Common Core was our 9/11 and uniting not just those of us in the room, but thousands and millions over the country. She asked how we can give a student a project and just waive them through and said that's not education. She concluded by stating that students need to know that the right answer and not what's close enough, and that Common Core would break America where we're already broken.

Colleen Sheehan asked if Ms. Bowman's preference was to go back to the prior system of testing. Ms. Bowman said Pennsylvania should have its own system of testing not connected to a national test.

- Susan Buzzen, resident of Chester County and concerned parent, said she felt her voice has been heard in her local school district as a local taxpayer and asked how taxpayers can have grievances heard when the federal government will largely control what kids learn. She asked whether this constitutes taxation in education without representation. Ms. Buzzen said in 2010 the National Center for Education Statistics released a brief on longitudinal data systems that formulated a detailed plan for data stewardship in education, including extracting personal information such as parents names, social security numbers, date of birth, place of birth, maiden names, political affiliations or belief of student or parents, mental and psychological problems of the student or student's family, critical appraisals of individuals with whom respondents have close relationships, religious practices, and family income. She said a recent Department of Education report emphasized the use of facial recognition cameras, posture analysis chairs, wireless cameras and skin sensors to be used for garnering information from students in K-12. Ms. Buzzen said that was enormously intrusive and she wants to ensure her children's information is not sold to third parties such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Anastasia Przybylski, employee of Freedom Works, said listening to the testimony she feels like we are in 1984 and that she is startled how far Pennsylvania is into the implementation of Common Core. She said that too many tests are taking away a teacher's ability to use her skills to reach individual children. She said educators, parents and teachers don't like Common Core and yet the Commonwealth signed up for it a few years ago without our knowledge. She asked what could be done to stop the implementation of this horrible program and how will we get a response.

Chairman Wittig said the Board was here to listen and said the fact is that Common Core was put in place a few years ago. He the current regulation is trying to unwind that action.

- Todd Keefer, resident of York County, made a procedural comment following his testimony at the July 10 State Board meeting. He said the Sunshine Law does not require meetings to be recorded and that he has asked his state legislature to enhance the law to make at least audio recordings available hours after the meeting. He reinforced that choice, vouchers, and competition are what is really necessary to drive improvement in education.

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 3:00 pm by a **C. Sheehan/Hallett** motion.

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant