MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

March 13, 2014

The 319th meeting of the State Board of Education was convened on Thursday, March 13, 2014. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 8:50 a.m. by Larry Wittig, Chairman.

Attending:

James Agras *(via phone)*
Carol Aichele
James Barker *(via phone)*
Kevin Bates
Emily Clark
Sandra Dungee Glenn
Maureen Lally-Green *(via phone)*
Mollie Phillips *(via phone)*
Justin Reynolds
Craig Snider *(via phone)*
Karen Farmer White
A. Lee Williams
Larry Wittig

REPORT OF THE ACTING SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Dr. Carolyn Dumaresq, Acting Secretary of Education, presented the Governor's proposed Education Budget for 2014-15, which was released to the General Assembly in February. Dr. Dumaresq said over the last three years, Governor Corbett's Ready to Learn education agenda has transformed Pennsylvania's public education system by:

- Increasing accountability and transparency in schools;
- Infusing stronger educational resources into classrooms; and
- Focusing financial resources on supporting students at all levels.

Dr. Dumaresq highlighted initiatives from the Governor's proposed 2014-15 Education Budget, including the Ready to Learn Block Grant ($341 million) focused on supporting needs expressed by the field; the Governor's Expanding Excellence Program ($1 million) focused on having high-achieving schools share best practices in increasing student achievement; and a new competitive grant program to support hybrid learning in up to 100 schools.

The Acting Secretary also noted that the proposed budget provides an increase in special education funding for the first time in six years. New dollars would be distributed based on categories of support for students with disabilities. Dr. Dumaresq also said the budget seeks to support three Governor's Schools (Sciences, Technology and Engineering, Agricultural Sciences) and that she hopes support will be made available for a fourth Governor's School for the Arts. She further highlighted proposed investments in early learning, merit-based Ready to Succeed Scholarships that would be available to students of families with adjusted gross income up to $110,000 attending a postsecondary institution in Pennsylvania, and $283 million in federal grants awarded since Governor Corbett took office.

Board member James Barker congratulated Acting Secretary Dumaresq for her continued dedication to the student across the Commonwealth. Craig Snider also stated his support for Acting Secretary Dumaresq's efforts and said he continues to be impressed by the improvements that are being made on behalf of Pennsylvania's education system.

Sandra Dungee Glenn asked if the formula for distributing the Ready to Learn Block Grant is slightly different that the formula for the original Accountability Block Grant (ABG). Dr. Dumaresq stated that the $100 million in the ABG is distributed based on 2002-2003 student counts. The Ready to Learn Block Grant is sensitive to the current student population and current aid ratios, and also take into account two other factors - poverty and English language learner status. Ms. Dungee Glenn also asked if schools are given any flexibility in how Ready to Learn grants can be used. Dr. Dumaresq said districts can seek waivers to support alternative programs to increase student achievement outside the Department's suggested categories of use. Finally, Ms. Glenn asked for more information on regional centers she recalled would be established as part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. Dr. Dumaresq offered to share a list of locations where such support would be located.

Chairman Wittig offered a personal editorial comment on the postsecondary education budget. He stated that total funding for affiliate schools was larger than the amount budgeted for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. He then stated that one idea discussed, but not advanced, by the Governor's Commission on Postsecondary Education, was to turn the affiliate schools into private institutions and allow PHEAA to distribute funds allocated for their support directly to students.

PRESENTATION

Janet Hurwitz, Board Secretary, Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences (PGSS), made a presentation on the PGSS Campaign. PGSS is a 5 week residential summer program, held at Carnegie Mellon University, that gives students the opportunity to study advanced sciences with University faculty, perform laboratory experiments, conduct original research, publish their research findings and present their work in a scientific symposium at the culmination of the program. It provides a quality Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based education for the Commonwealth's highest caliber students. The program was created by Governor Thornburgh in 1982 because of the importance of STEM education to ensure Pennsylvania's global competitiveness.

Ms. Hurwitz said admission to the program is merit-based, and spots are available for at least one student from every Intermediate Unit to ensure geographic diversity across Pennsylvania for statewide impact. PGSS students receive a full scholarship in order to make sure the opportunity is available to economically challenged students. Further, a male/female balance is maintained.

PGSS was one of eight historic Pennsylvania Governor's Schools that were cancelled due to lack of funding during the state's 2009 budget challenges. Ms. Hurwitz said PGSS alumni worked for four years to bring back the program, founding a 501(c)(3) nonprofit called PGSS Campaign to raise money to restore it. Alumni raised support for the program through individual donations, corporate grants, and a partnership with the Commonwealth restored at a reduced

level. Through these efforts, the PGSS Campaign funded a restored PGSS program in 2013 with 59 students participating. Ms. Hurwitz said alumni volunteers are hard at work to again provide a quality program in 2014, but the Campaign faces greater challenges since the $150,000 state grant received in 2013 was proposed to be scaled back to only a $50,000 grant for 2014. Ms. Hurwitz asked for the Board's assistance in identifying resources to support the program.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

Chairman Wittig said a representative of the PSPC was unable to attend the meeting; however, he noted that PSPC Executive Director Carolyn Angelo submitted a written report that was available for Board members to review at their leisure.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEM

There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

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Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant