MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

September 11, 2014

The 322nd meeting of the State Board of Education was convened on Thursday, September 11, 2014. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 8:55 a.m. by James Barker, Chairman of the Council of Basic Education.

Attending:

James Agras	Sandra Dungee Glenn *(via phone*	Mollie Phillips *(via phone)*
Carol Aichele	James Grandon	Justin Reynolds
Jay Badams	Kirk Hallett	Colleen Sheehan *(via phone)*
James Barker	Maureen Lally-Green*(via phone)*	Craig Snider
Wendy Beetlestone	Donald LeCompte	Karen Farmer White
	Jonathan Peri	A. Lee Williams

The minutes of the July 10, 2014 meeting of the State Board of Education were approved on an **Aichele/Grandon** motion.

REPORT OF THE ACTING SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Dr. Carolyn Dumaresq, Acting Secretary of Education, reported on the following subjects:

Rural Regional College

Dr. Dumaresq reported that the General Assembly recently adopted legislation to establish a Rural Regional College. The legislation directed the Secretary to designate counties to be served by the institution, and the following counties have been identified within the service area: Cameron, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Potter, Venango and Warren. The Secretary also will appoint a Board of Trustees by early November. Dr. Dumaresq said she will further discuss the concept behind the new college at the Board's next meeting.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Competition

Beginning next year, the Commonwealth will host a new STEM competition open to public, nonpublic and private school students in grades 9-12 focused on "Building a Stronger Pennsylvania." Teams of students will explore STEM-related occupations and needs in their local communities and build their projects around those local needs.

The competition will include two phases – regional competitions hosted at the state's intermediate units in February 2015 and a statewide competition hosted at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in May 2015. Each team will be provided with a $500 stipend to cover project costs for the regional level competitions, and each winning local team will receive an additional $750 stipend to support their participation in the statewide competition.

Each student from the top three teams will be awarded postsecondary education scholarships as follows: $2,000 (first place); $1,000 (second place); $500 (third place). In addition, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) will match those scholarship amounts for members of the top three teams who choose to attend one of the 14 PASSHE universities. Dr. Dumaresq thanked businesses across the state for stepping up to help with costs related to the competition.

Review of Eligible Content in ELA and Mathematics

Dr. Dumaresq reviewed background on development of the state's academic standards in English Language Arts and mathematics. She said the Department continues to hear concerns about whether the standards reflect undue influence from the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS), whether they are age appropriate and whether they are rigorous enough in the upper grades. She noted that language in Pennsylvania's own standards mirrors the expectations of states that did not subscribe to the CCSS. She also noted that the standards are written in language understood by educators, and said the Department can do a better job helping communities understand the expectations of the standards.

In response to these concerns, Dr. Dumaresq said she will commence an effort to seek feedback from the public on the Eligible Content (EC) statements reflective of the standards for each grade level in an effort to have all parties develop an agreed upon comfort with the standards. She requested that the Board join in this open and transparent conversation by convening public hearings on the findings of the Department's review process.

The Acting Secretary said it is important to note that the EC represents minimum expectations for students. She further noted that the teaching techniques, textbooks and materials used to deliver EC in the classroom are local decisions and said the state does not and will not mandate a particular curriculum or teaching methodology.

Dr. Dumaresq then outlined the process for seeking public input on the EC. Feedback will be solicited through an interactive public review website. A demonstration site with information related to EC for third grade will be available by October 15, and a site reflecting the full EC by grade level will be open for public review and comment by mid-November. In addition to information about EC, the site also will connect the EC to sample state assessment questions for each tested grade and subject.

Wendy Beetlestone asked the Secretary about the end point for the review given that the standards already have been approved by the Board and sought clarity as to whether the initiative is related to public outreach to build understanding or to open up the regulations for changes. The Acting Secretary said the effort includes public outreach and that if the process identifies amendments needed to the EC the Department can make that policy call. She said if the process

identifies suggested changes that would require the Board to be re-engaged in amending the standards, she hoped the Board would be open to listening to those suggestions.

Lee Williams sought confirmation that the Board's by-laws call for periodic reviews of regulations, and the Board's Executive Director confirmed Ms. Williams' understanding. Thus, Dr. Williams concluded the type of effort being proposed by the Department is in course with the cyclical work the Board normally undertakes.

Craig Snider stated that he supports the opportunity for further input from Pennsylvania citizens and said he would be happy to participate in the Board's public review hearings.

Dr. Barker thanked Dr. Dumaresq for making sure that the Commonwealth listens to its citizens and said the Board, as an independent body, will evaluate the issues and make a decision that will better prepare students for the long-term.

REPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

A representative of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC) was unable to attend the meeting, however, Dr. Barker noted that the PSPC submitted a written report that was made available both to the Board and members of the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Janice Bowman, resident of Bath, said she wanted to address Gov. Corbett's news release on Common Core. She stated that a lot of what she is hearing is spin, and said statements that parents, students and teachers are being actively involved are false. Ms. Bowman stated that 784 school districts should all host meetings on Common Core, and that the Board should host meetings at times that are convenient for parents and teachers. She further stated that districts should put together a database because they each have different problems, and said we have a lot of foreign language problems.

  Ms. Bowman expressed that she feels teachers are facilitators, not teachers anymore. She reflected that during her years in school teachers taught courses isolated to a specific subject, but said today's curriculum mixes math, science, history and propaganda into 45 minutes and this is confusing for kids. She further stated that if instruction was presented this way when she was in school she would have been bored because she hates science and wouldn't have learned history if it was intermixed. She stated that courses are no good if teachers have to stop teaching them to prepare for state tests, and said it is unfair to test special education students who we know won't pass the exam.

  Ms. Bowman said President Obama signed an executive order changing FERPA so that parents don't have to be notified when data is sent out and said there will be a FERPA lawsuit filed in Pennsylvania. She also said she would like to see the state tighten up FERPA laws.

  Ms. Bowman then said the state took over the Philadelphia School District in 2002 and that she had received a letter stating the schools were not being cleaned because of a lack

of funds and that there was a case of MRSA. She also said the district is not putting security guards in place. She said some schools are being run by private management companies, some of which are foreign, and she wants her money going to American companies.

Ms. Bowman said Common Core cannot be stopped because the state signed a copyright that only allows it to change 15%. She then stated that federal grants all have regulations tied to them and said Nancy Pelosi previously sued the U.S. Department of Education because of unfunded mandates. She said she is after school districts not to accept grant money until they look at what unfunded mandates are attached to it. As an example, Ms. Bowman said there are 740 substitutes for the Allentown School District, but Allentown must use private companies to provide tutoring because it accepted a communities in schools grant. She questioned why the substitutes couldn't provide tutoring.

Ms. Bowman said she also wanted to address curriculum and that the health book *It's Perfectly Normal* is pure porn. She further stated that students are committing suicide because we're teaching death and dying in fifth grade. She then said lesson plans say Common Core and asked why schools are using those books if we're not doing Common Core.

Ms. Bowman concluded by stating that we are being changed from American education to a global village. She requested that we give our kids American education and said she is sick of being a global village citizen, which is part of the UN's agenda.

- Joanne Yurchak, retired college teacher and grandmother from West Chester, said she is concerned about Common Core and is pleased that Governor Corbett will attempt to eliminate it. Ms. Yurchak said she is in favor of standards, but these federally-imposed standards need revision. She said a national expert suggested that if Pennsylvania intends to rewrite the standards then there should be a pause in testing since it does not make sense to administer tests aligned to standards that will be changed. Ms. Yurchak said testing should be paused even at the risk of losing the state's NCLB waiver because the federal government wants us to be reluctant to act over fear of losing the waiver and, thus, losing federal control. Ms. Yurchak said Senator Dinniman stated that if the Governor questions the standards themselves then he should put a moratorium on testing until his proposed review is complete.

  Ms. Yurchak also stated that, since the implementation of Common Core in fall 2013, some schools have no Algebra I textbooks. She said her grandsons' middle school in Marple Newtown provided no hard copy or online textbooks, only sketchy worksheets, and that her daughter was forced to search online for materials to help her children do their homework. Ms. Yurchak said this is educationally unsound and unacceptable in preparing students for college and the workplace.

  Ms. Yurchak said she believes there is a methodology associated with Common Core and distributed a handout outlining her concerns with an approach to mathematics instruction that she said will make things worse by favoring group work and putting the teacher in the role of guide.

- Ryan Bannister, parent from Dauphin County, thanked the Board for being attentive to issues related to Common Core. Mr. Bannister said he is told by elected officials that Pennsylvania is not doing Common Core, yet his daughter brings materials home from school labeled Common Core. He noted that Secretary Dumaresq stated Pennsylvania has a hybrid system and he understands our standards are a bit of a mix, but said iPads used in classrooms are loaded with Common Core applications. Mr. Bannister asked the Board to stay true to serving the constituency of parents and students and not special interests who have taken money from Bill Gates, and said this is not a political issue but a matter of right and wrong that can be solved by using common sense. He commended Governor Corbett for his statement, and said we shouldn't care what the U.S. Department of Education thinks about our decisions.

- Richard Felice, resident of Chester County, stated that two years ago he read a newspaper article about Pennsylvania adopting Common Core and, since that time, he went from knowing nothing to being a full-time community activist on Common Core. Mr. Felice said he receives many email complaints from parents about their children's classroom experience and that he is doing this for the kids of Pennsylvania. He said if the Board is looking for public comment, it will come if there is an open door. Mr. Felice thanked Secretary Dumaresq for her moves to get such an effort underway and asked the Board to coalesce to support this effort.

ACTION ITEMS

FINAL-OMITTED CHAPTER 11 (STUDENT ATTENDANCE)

A motion to approve a final-omitted technical amendment to Chapter 11 (Student Attendance) to conform the regulation with the findings of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in *Commonwealth v. Kerstetter* was made by Jonathan Peri and seconded by James Grandon.

VOTE: Roll Call vote: 14-**YES**, 1-**NO**, 0-Abstentions. *(Agras-YES, Aichele-YES, Badams-YES, Barker-YES, Beetlestone-YES, Dungee Glenn-YES, Grandon-YES, Hallett-YES, Lally-Green-YES, Peri-YES, Phillips-YES, C. Sheehan-NO, Snider-YES, Farmer White-YES, Williams-YES)*

RECOMMENDATION TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR GUIDANCE ON WITHDRAWL FROM KINDERGARTEN

A motion was made by Carol Aichele to recommend to the Department of Education that it amend its Basic Education Circular for Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Elimination Plan to address the issue of withdrawal from public kindergarten programs and how it pertains to compulsory attendance requirements. Ms. Aichele further moved that the Board express its sense to the Department that parents or guardians who elect to formally withdraw their child from kindergarten should not be subject to compulsory attendance. The motion was seconded by Craig Snider.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

A motion to approve Recommendations on Special Education for Gifted Students was made by Jay Badams and seconded by James Agras.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Craig Snider said he is concerned about the looming financial crisis that faces public schools and reductions in programs that encouraged many children to attend school, such as sports, art and music. Mr. Snider cited a document published by Commonwealth Foundation that identified a 500 percent increase in the cost of state aid for public schools for pensions over the last five years. Mr. Snider said he understands that pension issues do not fall under the Board's jurisdiction, but he asked whether the Board might think about and comment on this looming crisis. Acting Secretary Dumaresq said the Department would be happy to prepare a history on pension issues and recommended courses of action being discussed by the Governor and General Assembly if it is of interest to the Board.

Maureen Lally-Green announced that the public comment period for Chapter 18 had closed and that the Board received only one public comment on the proposed regulation – a letter of support from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. Mr. Lally-Green said additional comments are expected from the Independent Regulatory Review Commission within the next week. Following their receipt, the Committee on Chapter 18 will review all the comments received and prepare a final-form regulation for the Board's consideration.

Jim Barker recognized the significance of the September 11th meeting date and asked the Board to pause for a moment of reflection.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m. on a **Williams/Phillips** motion.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant