MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION

333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

May 13, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 2:08 p.m. by Chairman James Barker.

Attending:

James Agras	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Justin Reynolds
Carol Aichele	James Grandon	Colleen Sheehan
Jay Badams	Kirk Hallett	Craig Snider *(via phone)*
James Barker	Maureen Lally-Green *(via phone)*	Karen Farmer White *(via phone)*
Nicole Carnicella	Jonathan Peri	A. Lee Williams
		Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 14, 2015, meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on an **Aichele/Hallett** motion.

REPORT OF THE ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Acting Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem shared the following updates on behalf of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Pennsylvania Learns Program iTunesU

Pennsylvania Learns on iTunesU is a set of resources and activities created by Pennsylvania educators that includes video footage, web content from subject matter experts and pages from libraries across the world that can be used to enrich classroom lessons. The content is organized around the instructional framework modules available in the Standards Aligned System (SAS) portal and each course contains content and resources that have been vetted to assure alignment to the standards. Currently, resources are available in Algebra I, Biology, English Language Arts for grades 9-12; and Mathematics for grades 6-8. Mr. Stem said Pennsylvania Learns is a living project and the Department plans to expand the library of resources to include professional development courses in leadership and school climate and will explore adding additional grade levels.

Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo & Conference (PETE&C)

More than 3,000 people attended the annual Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo & Conference in February. The forum brings together students, educators, administrators and other stakeholders interested in innovative STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Mathmatics) related activities and preparing children to be competitive in the global citizenry.

Pennsylvania Bullying Prevention Consultation Line

The Department's Office of Safe Schools has established a bullying prevention consultation line. This toll free number will allow individuals experiencing chronic and unresolved bullying to discuss effective strategies and available resources to deal with school-based bullying. The line is available at no cost to students, parents, guardians and school districts across Pennsylvania. Mr. Stem said messages can be left 24 hours a day, seven day a week, and calls will be returned Monday through Friday during normal business hours. The line is staffed by trained bullying prevention specialists with social work backgrounds and appropriate credentials. Staff reach out to schools to make contacts and provide support and guidance to schools that may not be aware of a bullying incident and to try to make connections between the school and the home regarding bullying.

Upon time for questions, Jonathan Peri commended the Department's work on Pennsylvania Learns on iTunesU. Mr. Peri stated that iTunes is a potential future competitor in providing postsecondary education and inquired about legal considerations around its use of the term university. The Acting Deputy Secretary said he would follow-up on Mr. Peri's questions regarding whether iTunes meets certain standards for postsecondary institutions or certain requirements of the Bureau of Corporations. James Grandon asked whether Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) participates in iTunesU. Mr. Stem confirmed that HACC has contributed coursework and said the Department is among many providers of content to the iTunesU repository. Terry Barnaby, Director of the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality, said the Department does not see iTunesU as a competitor since PDE does not view it as a degree-granting institution. However, she noted that Mr. Peri's question raised a new perspective on iTune's use of the term university that she said she would discuss with counsel.

Dr. Colleen Sheehan shared that the Board previously looked into dating violence education, including limitations on time in the academic curriculum to address such other matters. She asked if there is a trade-off in terms of academics for administrators attending to calls coming through the new bullying prevention consultation line. She also asked whether there was any liability associated with the new consultation line. Mr. Stem said the bullying consultation line is an example of what the Department should do to recognize the limitations of school districts in certain areas and partner with them to provide supports. He clarified that much of the work is consultative and staff of the phone line reach out to schools only in cases where it is deemed appropriate and necessary. He further stated that the Department will continue to monitor feedback on use of the line and noted that initial feedback has been positive. Mr. Stem said he is fairly confident that liability issues were addressed when the line was developed and said he would follow-up to confirm.

PRESENTATION
Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Cut Scores and Performance Level Descriptors

John Weiss and Ray Young, staff of the Department's Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction, were joined by David Chayer, Deedra Arvin and Shaundra Sand, staff of Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), to discuss changes in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the process the Department planned to undertake to develop recommended new cut scores for the assessments.

Mr. Young explained that the PSSAs in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics were revised to align with the new Pennsylvania Core Standards, and he highlighted specific examples of changes to the assessments. He identified the performance levels for the state assessments – advanced, proficient, basic and below basic – and reviewed recommended revisions to the performance level descriptors (PLDs) that narratively describe what students at each four performance levels should know and be able to do based on the academic content standards. Mr. Young noted that the recommended PLDs were crafted by Pennsylvania educators.

Mr. Weiss then discussed the intensive process the Department planned to conduct in early June at which time they would gather approximately 60 Pennsylvania educators to engage in standards setting for the new assessments. Mr. Weiss provided a detailed explanation of the bookmarking process that would be used by the educators over a four-day period to develop cut score recommendations. He noted that these educators will submit their recommendation to the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary then will present a recommendation to the Board for review and approval.

Upon time for questions, Carol Aichele asked whether it was possible to determine the bookmarks prior to students taking the exams since determinations are based upon the PLDs. Mr. Chayer explained that no impact data would be available if cut scores were established at an earlier point. Members inquired about why impact data is utilized as part of the process if cut score determinations are made relative to the PLDs. Mr. Chayer further explained that the educators engaged in standards setting go through multiple rounds of consideration and do not see impact data until the very last round, which he described as an industry standard for legal defensibility. Jay Badams reminded the Board that cut scores will not be changed every time the assessments are administered, only when the content of the exams changes. Members also inquired about replacement of test items and how DRC ensures that new test items are of equal difficulty. Mr. Grandon asked how information from the standards setting process is used after the process is completed. James Barker explained the difference between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments and spoke to the value of the PSSAs as criterion-referenced assessments.

Mr. Peri said cut scores will be based on only one year of data and asked what happens if there is an anomaly with the cohort of students who took the assessments during that year. Mr. Chayer said impacts are based on the entire state and, given the size of the student population in Pennsylvania, cohort effects should be fairly minimal and can be compensated for by the psychometricians. Mr. Badams said the work before the Board now is about establishing a

baseline and if anomalies are identified in subsequent years that would be a cause for additional research.

Sandra Glenn asked if DRC constructs the PSSAs to include a certain number of questions that fall into each performance level and, if so, why don't the cut scores follow that. Representatives of DRC responded that draft PLDs were composed by Pennsylvania educators prior to development of items for the new PSSAs, and that DRC referenced those to ensure the exams included some items from each level but not a specific number from each level.

Dr. Sheehan asked how many students opted-out of the PSSAs and the cost of development and administration of the PSSAs. She also asked for an explanation of vertical articulation. Mr. Stem said he would follow-up to provide Dr. Sheehan the information she requested. Mr. Chayer explained that in this context, vertical articulation is looking across grades.

Kirk Hallett commented that teachers generally do not like state assessments, and that he felt heartened that educators were involved in developing the cut score recommendations and trusted they will do the best job they can do to undertake the standards setting process with fairness. Ms. Dungee Glenn requested that the Department provide detail on how standards setting proceeded at the Board's next meeting in July. Nicole Carnicella requested that the Department also provide information on what the educators involved in developing the recommendations thought about the process. In response to member requests for additional deliberation, Chairman Wittig said he would schedule time for more in-depth discussion on the PSSAs during the Board's July meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Clayton, Assistant Director of Education Services for the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), raised three issues regarding the bookmarking process used to develop PSSA cut score recommendations. Mr. Clayton asked whether educators involved in the process would have information about how each question was determined in terms of depth of knowledge levels. Mr. Clayton then stated that the Pennsylvania Core Standards are heavily based on levels of text complexity. He said text complexity can be looked at in three different ways – quantitative, qualitative, and task and purpose – and asked whether the educators would know what level of complexity pertained to each question. Mr. Clayton also asked whether the educators would have information about whether there are mitigating answer choices as a means to determine the psychometric reliability and validity of questions on the assessments. Finally, Mr. Clayton said text dependent analysis is based on how well a student writes, what type of evidentiary support they pull and how they articulate or communicate that answer. He asked what role that played in the bookmarking process and if the educators would be informed in those aspects.

Dr. Harris Zwerling, researcher with PSEA, recommended that Board members who want to get a jump start on cut scores should read through the technical manuals on PDE's website which provide lengthy descriptions on the development of the PSSAs. Dr. Zwerling asked for a more detailed description of how teachers on the panels are chosen. He further inquired about

what will be done to validate the cut scores once they are in place. He stated that, to his knowledge, a validation of Keystone Exam cut scores was not completed.

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

AJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. on an **Aichele/Hallett** motion.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant