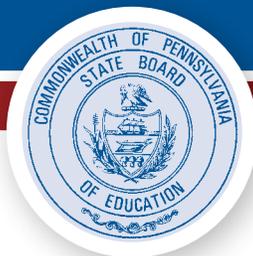




**Annual Report to the
Governor and General Assembly**
January 2010



State Board Of Education

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Pursuant to Article XXVI-B (24 P.S. § 26-2603-B) of the Pennsylvania School Code, the State Board of Education is pleased to provide a report on its work for the year 2009, and to look ahead to the education policy challenges that will require our attention in 2010. The electronic transmission of this report is the latest in a series of efforts the State Board is taking to reduce its operating expenditures in light of the significant economic challenges confronting state government.

The State Board has made important headway on each of the policy priorities identified at the beginning of 2009: **teacher effectiveness; high school reform; and student safety, health and welfare**. The backdrop to this progress was an unprecedented effort by our all-volunteer Board to engage stakeholders in our work and to increase the transparency of the Board's operations by holding eight public hearings in all corners of the commonwealth.



Effective Teachers and Leaders

Nothing matters more to our students—and their futures—than the quality of their classroom teachers. Research tells us that good teaching deployed across successive school years can help a student overcome a disadvantaged background, just as poor teaching can permanently disrupt a student's academic trajectory.

On this front, the Board worked closely with Department of Education staff to embed proven teacher quality reforms in Pennsylvania's application for the federal Race to the Top initiative. Meanwhile, the Board has continued to play an important role in ensuring effective implementation of the Chapter 49 requirements that strengthen the content, pedagogy and human development training for our emerging educators and school personnel. Already, 68 percent of preparation programs statewide have been revised according to the new Chapter 49 guidelines.

Looking ahead, the Board expects delivery of a major study on teacher quality—supported through generous grants from the Heinz and William Penn foundations—early this year.



High School Reform

The most significant action by the Board in 2009 concerned our efforts to align state-level high school graduation requirements (which the Board has set since the 1960s) with the knowledge and skill levels that will allow our young people to compete in an increasingly challenging and global economy. The Chapter 4 regulation passed by the Board on August 13 and published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on January 9, 2010 will provide students, beginning with the Class of 2015, with more options to meet state-level graduation requirements and couples these requirements with instructional supports, including a voluntary model curriculum that will improve the equity of academic expectations statewide.

While this regulation enjoyed strong support, the Board recognized legitimate concerns and worked to address these in the final-form. For example:

- The regulation reduces testing time by providing for a series of end-of-course assessments that can *replace* both the final exams students currently take and the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment.

- Under the regulation, no student will be denied a high school diploma based on test scores alone—students will be able to satisfy graduation requirements based on a combination of course grades and state assessment scores and students can improve on assessment performance through re-tests or by completing a performance-based project.
- Districts, for the first time, will receive state support in designing rigorous local assessments that can also satisfy state requirements.

The Board's passage of the Chapter 4 regulation allows Pennsylvania to join 32 other states that integrate college- and career-ready measures with high school assessment systems (Achieve, 2009).

As a next step, the Board will take a lead role in convening stakeholder committees to ensure that implementation of this regulation works for Pennsylvania's students and schools.

The State Board's high school reform agenda also includes support for the Department of Education's efforts to boost achievement of students enrolled in career and technical education. These initiatives include improving technical program content, aligning technical content to 11th grade Pennsylvania academic standards, and providing assistance to instructors and administrators. By developing statewide technical standards aligned to industry expectations and connecting these to 11th grade academic standards, the Department is helping students earn college credit for their secondary career and technical education coursework. These initiatives align directly with the Board's efforts to ensure a more relevant and rigorous high school experience for every young person.



Safe Schools for Every Child

High academic standards for every student is a critical public policy aim—but it's also an abstract notion for the child who is alienated, fearful or harmed in any way in a Pennsylvania public school. The latest school safety reporting for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years show nearly 68,000 school safety incidents occur annually and that more than 25,000 Pennsylvania students attend schools labeled as “persistently dangerous.” A critical step in truly leaving no Pennsylvania child behind is an uncompromising commitment to his or her safety at school and a dramatic reduction in these statistics.

During 2009, the Board has worked to draw attention to the issue of school safety by leveraging our own limited resources to commission a study by Penn's Fels Institute of promising practices in other states, by joining the Secretary of Education and legislative leaders in outlining state-level reforms and district-level interventions, and by forming a standing committee that will ultimately take the lead in developing regulations.

These regulations will focus on two important areas:

First, the State Board sets clear statewide goals, for example, for what we expect a fourth grader to be learning in math class, but we don't do that for the behaviors that we expect of him or her in the hallway outside. To this end, the Department of Education is gathering national experts and stakeholders from across the state to draft expectations for school climate. These standards—which address critical issues like bullying prevention and instilling a culture of respect—suggest strategies that make sense for every school and context. The State Board of Education will take up these regulations early in 2010.

The second component of this reform plan is ensuring accurate and meaningful reporting of school safety data. Currently, school administrators—most of whom have no formal law enforcement training—are asked to make difficult judgment calls in cataloging and submitting safety reports. For example, the brave principal who (correctly) demonstrates an abundance of caution and is diligent in reporting incidents may appear to have less control of his or her building than the administrator who neglects to disclose these incidents.

Both to support school leaders and protect kids, it's critical to institute a reporting system that requires local law enforcement to co-sign school safety reports and equips the Department of Education with the ability to verify the accuracy of these submissions. Legislation that has passed the Senate and been referred to the House Education Committee would require both of these measures, and the State Board stands ready to develop regulations to implement it quickly and effectively.

On the related issue of student health, the Board's Health and Wellness committee is working with stakeholders to develop nutritional standards for foods sold outside regular school breakfast and lunch programs, such as those sold through vending machines. In 2009, more than 40 percent of vending machines in Pennsylvania high schools dispensed carbonated beverages that could easily be replaced with beverage options that would give students *real* fuel for learning and exercise. In the months to come, the Health and Wellness committee will turn its attention to identifying standards for physical activity. According to the 2009 Pennsylvania Youth Risk Behavior Survey, high school students were more likely to watch three or more hours of television daily than they were to take a daily physical education class. With the support of a grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Board looks forward to developing recommendations to reverse these trends.



Additional Activities

In addition to the progress in each of our priority areas, the Board wishes to report on the following regulations:

- The Board's final-omit regulation on Chapter 14 was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on January 3, 2009. The regulation amended section 14.143 (relating to disciplinary placements) to align the Commonwealth's regulations with the December 1, 2008 version of Federal IDEA-implementing regulations.
- The Board approved proposed regulations on Chapter 33 (College and University Security) on January 22, 2009.

As mentioned previously, the Board has also adopted the practice of holding meetings outside Harrisburg to ensure stakeholder involvement in

our policymaking. 2009 took the Board to the following locations: Parkland Senior High School (Allentown), Westmoreland County Community College (Youngwood), Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (Lewisburg), Lock Haven University, the Philadelphia Public Library, William Allen High School (Allentown), and Bloomsburg Area School District. The Board wishes to extend its thanks to the faculty, staff and students who make these visits an important part of *our* continuing education.

Likewise, the Board continues to benefit from the perspectives shared by our four student members. The Board added student members in 2008, and their views and voices have become an important part of our deliberations.

Following the Board's January meeting, we'll be in touch with additional detail on our priorities and plans for 2010. In the meantime, please contact the Board office with any questions or to share your thoughts on our progress.

Sincerely,

Joseph Torsella, *Chairperson*

Dr. James Barker, Chairperson
Council of Basic Education

Dr. Francis Michelini, Chairperson
Council of Higher Education

