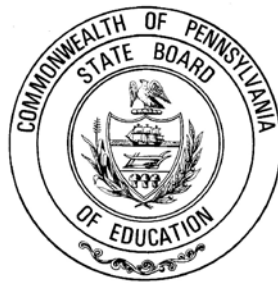


PENNSYLVANIA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

March 2016

Dear Governor Wolf and Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the State Board of Education, it is my pleasure to present you with our Annual Report for 2015. This report summarizes the Board's activities throughout 2015, which were heavily focused on applications that came before the Board on an array of administrative matters. The report also includes membership lists produced by the Board periodically throughout the year as it experienced transitions in its make-up.

Among those transitions, the Board welcomed Mr. Pedro Rivera, newly-appointed Secretary of Education, who by statute also serves as the Board's Chief Executive Officer. The Board also has formed strong working relationships with and receives regular reports from Mr. Matthew Stem, newly-appointed Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, and Dr. Wil Del Pilar, newly-appointed Acting Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education.

We look forward to working together with the Wolf Administration to meet the challenges that lie ahead to ensure that the schools of this Commonwealth meet the needs of all of our children. If you need additional information about this report or the Board's activities, please contact me or the Board office.

Sincerely,

Larry Wittig, Chairman

MEMBERSHIP

The State Board of Education consists of 21 members, ten of whom serve on the Board's Council of Basic Education and ten of whom serve on the Board's Council of Higher Education. Seventeen members are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for overlapping terms of six years, or until their successors are appointed and confirmed. Four members of the Board are members of the General Assembly who serve as long as they hold the position of majority and minority chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees. The Chairperson of the Board and its Councils are designated by the Governor and serve at his pleasure. The 21 members of the board also serve as the State Board for Vocational Education.

The Board meets at least six times per year. Additional Council or Board meetings are held at the call of the chairpersons or at the request of a majority of members. The chairperson of the Board and any of the members are entitled to attend the meetings of the Councils. Board committees are appointed by the chairperson of the Board to formulate policy proposals in those areas which fall within the purview of the Board. Council committees are appointed by the chairperson of each respective Council to formulate policy proposals in those areas which fall within the purview of either Council.

The Secretary of Education is the head of the Department of Education and chief executive officer of the State Board of Education. He is a member of the executive department of the Commonwealth and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Secretary of Education, or his designated representative, is entitled to attend all meetings of the Board and Councils and has the right to speak on all matters before the Board and the Councils, but not to vote.

The chairperson of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC), or a PSPC member designated by the chairperson, serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Board. Likewise, a member of the State Board serves in the same capacity on the PSPC.

Four student representatives serve as non-voting, advisory members of the Board – two high school students who sit on the Council of Basic Education and two postsecondary students who sit on the Council of Higher Education. Annually, two new students are selected to serve a two-year term on each respective Council. High school students are selected through an application process managed by the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils. Postsecondary students are selected to represent the various sectors of higher education in the Commonwealth on a rotating basis. Student members were added by the Board in 2008, and their participation is supported through private grant funds.

The following are listings of the State Board of Education's membership, reflecting transitions throughout the 2015 calendar year.

State Board of Education

January 2015

Mr. Larry Wittig (Tamaqua)
Chairman, State Board of Education

Dr. Carolyn Dumaresq
Acting Secretary of Education &
Chief Executive Officer
of the Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. James E. Barker (Erie)
Chairman, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Dr. Jay Badams (Erie)

Senator Mike Folmer
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Mr. Kirk Hallett (Camp Hill)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Cranberry Township)

Mr. Donald LeCompte
Junior Student Member

Mrs. Mollie O'Connell Phillips (Kingston)

Mr. Justin Reynolds
Senior Student Member

Representative James Roebuck
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Ms. Colleen Sheehan (Wayne)

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)

Council of Higher Education

Mr. James Grandon (Mechanicsburg)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Mr. James R. Agras (Pittsburgh)

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Mr. Bruce Grover
Senior Student Member

Ms. Teresa Lebo
Junior Student Member

Dr. Francis Michelini (Mechanicsburg)

Mr. Jonathan Peri (Glen Mills)

Mr. Craig Snider (Bryn Mawr)

Dr. A. Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)

Dr. Gilbert Griffiths
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

State Board of Education

March 2015

Mr. Larry Wittig (Tamaqua)
Chairman, State Board of Education

Mr. Pedro Rivera
Acting Secretary of Education &
Chief Executive Officer
of the Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. James E. Barker (Erie)
Chairman, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Dr. Jay Badams (Erie)

Mr. Kirk Hallett (Camp Hill)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Cranberry Township)

Mr. Donald LeCompte
Junior Student Member

Mrs. Mollie O'Connell Phillips (Kingston)

Mr. Justin Reynolds
Senior Student Member

Representative James Roebuck
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Dr. Colleen Sheehan (Wayne)

Senator Lloyd Smucker
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)

Council of Higher Education

Mr. James Grandon (Mechanicsburg)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Mr. James R. Agras (Pittsburgh)

Dr. Nicole Carnicella (Bellefonte)

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Mr. Bruce Grover
Senior Student Member

Ms. Teresa Lebo
Junior Student Member

Mr. Jonathan Peri (Glen Mills)

Mr. Craig Snider (Bryn Mawr)

Representative Stan Saylor
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Dr. A. Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)

Dr. Gilbert Griffiths
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

State Board of Education
July 2015

Mr. Larry Wittig (Tamaqua)
Chairman, State Board of Education

Mr. Pedro Rivera
Secretary of Education &
Chief Executive Officer
of the Board

Council of Basic Education

Council of Higher Education

Dr. James E. Barker (Erie)
Chairman, Council of Basic Education

Mr. James Grandon (Mechanicsburg)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Mr. James R. Agras (Pittsburgh)

Dr. Jay Badams (Erie)

Dr. Nicole Carnicella (Bellefonte)

Mr. Kirk Hallett (Camp Hill)

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Cranberry Township)

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Mr. Donald LeCompte
Senior Student Member

Ms. Teresa Lebo
Senior Student Member

Mrs. Mollie O'Connell Phillips (Kingston)

Mr. Jonathan Peri (Glen Mills)

Representative James Roebuck
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Representative Stan Saylor
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Dr. Colleen Sheehan (Wayne)

Mr. Craig Snider (Bryn Mawr)

Senator Lloyd Smucker
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Lavinia Soliman
Junior Student Member

Ms. Joshita Varshney
Junior Student Member

Dr. A. Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)

Dr. Gilbert Griffiths
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

State Board of Education

December 2015

Mr. Larry Wittig (Tamaqua)
Chairman, State Board of Education

Mr. Pedro Rivera
Secretary of Education &
Chief Executive Officer
of the Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. James E. Barker (Erie)
Chairman, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Dr. Jay Badams (Erie)

Mr. Kirk Hallett (Camp Hill)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Cranberry Township)

Mr. Donald LeCompte
Senior Student Member

Mrs. Mollie O'Connell Phillips (Kingston)

Representative James Roebuck
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Dr. Colleen Sheehan (Wayne)

Senator Lloyd Smucker
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Joshita Varshney
Junior Student Member

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)

Council of Higher Education

Mr. James Grandon (Mechanicsburg)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Mr. James R. Agras (Pittsburgh)

Dr. Nicole Carnicella (Bellefonte)

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Dr. Pamela Gunter-Smith (York)

Ms. Teresa Lebo
Senior Student Member

Mr. Jonathan Peri (Glen Mills)

Representative Stan Saylor
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Mr. Craig Snider (Bryn Mawr)

Ms. Lavinia Soliman
Junior Student Member

Dr. A. Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)

Dr. Gilbert Griffiths
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

INTRODUCTION

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education was created by the General Assembly in 1963 and reestablished in 1988. It is the principal administrative regulatory body for both elementary and secondary education and higher education in the Commonwealth. It has the power and duty to review and adopt regulations that govern educational policies and principles and establish standards governing the educational programs of the Commonwealth, upon recommendation of its Councils. The Board also has the authority and duty to approve or disapprove an application for the creation of a new school district, or change in the boundaries of an existing school district; establish committees of professional and technical advisors to assist the councils in performing research studies undertaken by them; manage and have custody of the State School Fund; apply for, receive and administer Federal grants, appropriations, allocations and programs within its purview; adopt policies with regard to institutions of higher education; and, adopt master plans for basic and higher education.

The State Board of Education engages in constant review and appraisal of education in the Commonwealth. The Board's evaluation takes into account such matters as educational objectives, alternative organizational patterns, alternative programs of study, and the operating efficiency of the education system. The chairperson of the State Board refers all studies and investigations to one of its Councils, and receives and places on the agenda the findings and recommendations of the Council for appropriate action by the Board.

For purposes of studying issues and developing policy proposals, the Board is divided into two councils – the Council of Basic Education and the Council of Higher Education. The Council of Basic Education has the power and duty to develop a master plan for basic education in the Commonwealth for adoption by the Board; investigate programs, conduct research studies and formulate policy programs in all educational areas not within the purview of higher education; encourage and promote such agricultural, industrial, vocational and technical education programs as the needs of this Commonwealth may require; and investigate and make recommendations pertaining to the work of any schools of design, schools of industrial arts or industrial schools to which the General Assembly may make an appropriation.

The Council of Higher Education has the power and duty to develop a master plan for higher education in the Commonwealth for adoption by the Board; develop standards for the approval of colleges and universities for granting of certification and degrees; develop standards for all higher education building projects involving the use of state funds or the funds of any Commonwealth instrumentality; and, investigate programs, conduct research studies and formulate policy proposals in all areas pertaining to higher education in the Commonwealth, including a system of community colleges and technical institutions as provide by law.

The Board also serves as the State Board for Vocational Education and, in this capacity, sets policy and promulgates regulations regarding vocational and technical education in Pennsylvania for both secondary and postsecondary vocational-technical education, now more commonly referred to as career and technical education.

Much of the Board's work occurs in meetings of its standing committees, including the Committees on Academic Standards/Chapter 4; Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness; and Vocational-Technical Education. Ad hoc committees also are established from time to time to oversee special projects.

Board committees are the bodies that conduct public meetings to solicit comments, concerns and questions from members of the general public, as well as those involved in the education enterprise on a particular education regulation or issue. When the Board decides to review a current regulation or develop a new one, it begins the process with roundtable discussions or public hearings conducted in several locations throughout the state. The committee takes the information it learns during this exercise and develops recommendations that can take the form of a report or revised regulations.

Proposed regulations are published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Additional public comments on a proposed regulation, as well as comments received from the House and Senate Education Committees and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, are considered and, based on this stakeholder input, the Board may make further refinements to the regulation that it deems necessary in crafting a final-form regulation.

State Board of Education Activity: 2015

Pursuant to Section 2603-B of the Public School Code of 1949, 24 P.S. § 26-2603-B, the State Board of Education is pleased to provide a report on its activities for the year 2015.

Actions Related to State Assessments

The state assessment system continues to be an area where the Board devotes a significant amount of time to thoughtful deliberation. In 2015, the Board engaged in consideration of a number of items related to state assessments.

Prior to the Department of Education convening standards setting for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the Board explored the process used to establish cut scores for state assessments. Standards setting is a methodology used to define levels of performance and the range of scores on an assessment (cut scores) that correspond to those levels of performance. Board members received a detailed presentation on the bookmarking process proposed to carry out this work, provided feedback to the Department on that process, and engaged in inquiry about alternative standards setting methods. Information regarding standards setting was presented at a public meeting with an opportunity for public comment in an effort to increase transparency about the development of cut scores for state assessments and to solicit public input on the standards setting process prior to the Department undertaking this work.

In July, the Board received and approved the Secretary of Education's recommended revisions to the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) and cut scores for the PSSAs. The PLDs were drafted by Pennsylvania educators to reflect the knowledge and skills expected of students at each of the four performance levels for the PSSA: advanced, proficient, basic and below basic. They include Pennsylvania Policy Performance Level Descriptors, which provide a narrative description of each of the four performance levels generally, as well as performance level descriptors for English Language Arts and mathematics that articulate expectations for students in each grade level through detailed narrative statements related to each of the four performance levels. The recommended PSSA cut scores also were developed through a process involving Pennsylvania educators. The adoption of revised PLDs and revised cut scores was necessary to reflect the alignment of the PSSA with the Pennsylvania Core Standards.

In considering the recommended revised PSSA cut scores, the Board also reviewed information showing how the recommended scores translated into student performance based on data from the PSSAs administered in spring 2015. Board members concluded that the standards setting process was conducted with fidelity, and identified the need for an effort to clearly explain that the Pennsylvania Core Standards have raised the threshold of expectations for students in order to provide context for the public, students and parents to understand the impact

of the revised cut scores. As such, the Board adopted a recommendation encouraging the Department of Education to swiftly engage in deliberative communications with diverse stakeholders regarding the revised PSSA, the impact of more rigorous academic standards, and the effect of the revised cut scores and PLDs.

In November 2015, the Board again turned its attention to matters related to standards and assessments. First, the Board reviewed and approved revised Assessment Anchor Content Standards for the PSSAs. Second, the Board reviewed and approved new Alternate Eligible Content for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA).

The Assessment Anchors are a tool to align curriculum, instruction and assessment practices throughout the Commonwealth. The anchors approved by the Board were developed in collaboration with committees of Pennsylvania educators based on the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics to provide clarity to these often broad instructional standards with regard to what content would be included in state assessments. They do not replace the Pennsylvania Core Standards.

The Alternate Eligible Content for the PASA specifies the academic content appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible to take the PASA by reducing the depth and breadth of the State's academic standards. The Alternate Eligible Content was developed to meet a federal requirement that the State's assessment system include challenging academic content standards and alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards in order to include all students. Stakeholders including teachers of students with disabilities, grade level teachers of the academic content and English Language Learners, higher education personnel, school administrators, parents and others used the PSSA Assessment Anchors to develop the Alternate Eligible Content for the PASA in order to ensure alignment to the Pennsylvania Core Standards.

Applications for Accrediting Authority

Section 5 of the Private Academic Schools Act provides for private and nonpublic schools to operate in the Commonwealth in lieu of holding state licensure if the school is accredited by an association approved by the State Board of Education. The Statement of Policy issued by the Board in 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 52 guides consideration of applications from entities seeking recognition as approved accreditors for private and nonpublic schools. Per Chapter 52, the "authority to accredit schools will expire every five years from the date of approval by the State Board of Education, but may be renewed by the State Board every fifth year." 22 Pa. Code § 52.5.

In 2015, the Board considered three applications for renewal of accrediting authority. The Board renewed the authority of the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools to serve as an approved accrediting body for pre-K (nursery), kindergarten, elementary, and secondary private academic schools through September 17, 2020. The Board also renewed the authority of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools to serve as an approved accreditor for pre-K (nursery), kindergarten, elementary, secondary and special education private academic schools, and tutoring centers, educational testing and remedial centers through September 17, 2020. The Board also considered and disapproved an application seeking renewal of accrediting authority by The Educational Enrichment Initiative (TEEI) to continue serving as an approved accreditor for tutoring centers, educational testing and remedial centers.

College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee

In January 2011, the Board formed the College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee, a Standing Committee of the Board established by Act 104 of 2010. The Advisory Committee released its first report in May 2012 with recommendations to improve college textbook affordability and accessibility. Per Act 104, the Advisory Committee is to meet quarterly and to update its report every three years.

The Advisory Committee continued to convene its required quarterly meetings throughout 2015 in order to carry forward discussion of issues related to the cost of college course materials and to explore how institutions in Pennsylvania are undertaking cost savings measures. As part of this work, the Advisory Committee conducted a survey of higher education institutions in Pennsylvania and sought information from national entities about trends in student spending on course materials and non-traditional paths used by students to acquire course materials.

The Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education presented the Advisory Committee's updated report to the Board in November 2015. Upon receipt of the report, the Board transmitted the document to the Governor, Senate Education Committee and House Education Committee as directed by Act 104. The updated report is available on the State Board's website.

In addition to issuing its updated report, the Advisory Committee also established its meeting schedule for 2016, during which it will continue to convene its deliberations on a quarterly basis as required by statute.

Independent School District Application

Among the administrative matters that came before the State Board of Education in 2015 was a petition from the Washington Township Independent School District (WTISD) seeking to transfer from the Dover Area School District (Dover) to the Northern York County School District (NYCSD). At the beginning of the year, the Board appointed a Special Committee to oversee proceedings related to the application and to recommend the proper action the Board should take to dispose of the application. The Special Committee convened a two-day evidentiary hearing in June 2015 to receive testimony from WTISD, Dover and NYCSD, as well as from the Dover Area Education Association and Keep Us In Dover Schools. The Special Committee also made available opportunities for members of the public to deliver comment on the application for transfer both in person and in writing.

Following a thorough review of all evidence presented at the hearing, as well as the oral and written public comment, the Special Committee adopted a report in September 2015 containing its findings of fact and conclusions of law, which recommended disapproval of WTISD's application for transfer. The Board subsequently voted to adopt the Committee's report and issued an order disapproving the creation of WTISD and its transfer. WTISD subsequently sought, and the Board granted, reconsideration of the September decision disapproving the application. The Board undertook reconsideration of the issues raised in WTISD's petition for reconsideration and, in November 2015, issued a decision and order again disapproving the application for the creation of WTISD and its transfer. The matter now stands on appeal in the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania.

Master Plan for Basic Education

A performance audit conducted by the state Auditor General throughout 2015 identified a need to address the currentness of the Master Plan for Basic Education. Upon receipt of the audit findings, the Council of Basic Education was provided with a copy of the most recent Master Plan along with a list of the ten areas outlined in the School Code for which the Board is to offer recommendations through the Master Plan. The matter was placed on the Council's agenda for discussion at its first meeting following receipt of the audit findings. Members were asked to review the most recent plan and, at a later date, provide feedback on the process the Council should use to undertake this work, what information is necessary to inform its deliberations, what resources are necessary to support this work, and how the Council will engage stakeholders in the process.

Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Vocational Education Accreditation

Per approval granted by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), the State Board for Vocational Education (SBVE) holds the authority to accredit public postsecondary vocational education programs. The SBVE's scope of authority is limited to accrediting career and technical centers that offer Pennsylvania Department of Education approved non-degree granting career and technical programs for adults that are 300 hours or longer in duration. The SBVE evaluates institutions that seek voluntary accreditation under this authority through a partnership with the Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE) within the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The SBVE, through the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, authorizes BCTE to manage the State's accreditation program.

In 2015, the SBVE considered three applications for public postsecondary vocational accreditation. Applications were approved to grant accreditation status to the York County School of Technology and to the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute. Each institution was granted accreditation for a five-year period. A third application from the Huntingdon County Career and Technology Center was disapproved. The SBVE provided Huntingdon with feedback on areas where it did not meet the guidelines for accreditation and notified the school of the timeframe to re-apply for accreditation if it chooses to pursue another application.

In order to continue being recognized as a reliable authority to accredit public postsecondary vocational education programs in the Commonwealth, the SBVE must seek periodic renewal of its authority from USDE. In May 2015, the SBVE approved a petition to USDE seeking continued recognition as an accrediting authority. In December 2015, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) met to consider Pennsylvania's petition for renewal of accreditation status. The NACIQI unanimously recommended that the SBVE's recognition as a reliable accrediting authority be extended for another four years. That recommendation now sits before the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education for final action. The SBVE's current authority to serve as an approved accreditor continues until it receives official notice from USDE of action on the petition for renewed authority that is pending before USDE.

White Paper on Community College Issues

In 2014, the Board's Council of Higher Education announced its intention to gather information on the issues impacting community colleges across the state and to raise awareness about those issues. To inform this work, a survey was sent to the 14 public community colleges in the Commonwealth in the fall of 2014.

The survey sought information about the challenges community colleges face related to enrollment, regulatory requirements, and general operations. The survey also sought input from the institutions on measures the Department of Education can take to assist them in better achieving their missions, outside of providing direct budgetary support. The survey further asked the institutions to share ideas for how current state funding for community colleges could be allocated more fairly to meet the needs of the institutions; sought information on efforts employed by the Commonwealth's public community colleges to operate more efficiently in order to understand cost saving measures already in place; and sought information on the relationship between community colleges and their local school districts. Finally, the survey asked the institutions for suggestions on whether there are measures that can be taken by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency to improve its distribution of student grants to better support community college students.

Eleven of the Commonwealth's 14 community colleges responded to the survey. Throughout 2015, the Council reviewed the responses from these institutions and used this feedback as the foundation of a White Paper issued by the Council in November 2015. The Council's *White Paper on Community College Issues* highlights common issues facing community colleges across the Commonwealth, presents recommendations made by the colleges to address those issues, and also includes a profile of each institution.