

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Barber National Institute
100 Barber Place, Erie, PA 16507**

September 21, 2011

The 304th meeting of the State Board of Education was convened on Wednesday, September 21, 2011. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 1:43 p.m. by Larry Wittig, Chairman.

Attending:

Erin Agnew	Kirk Hallett (via phone)	Ed Sheehan
James Barker	Francis Michelini	Shannon Sullivan
Connie Davis (via phone)	Ivory Nelson (via phone)	Karen Farmer White
Paul Ferrera	Jon Peri	A. Lee Williams
Dan Fogarty	Mollie Phillips	Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the July 20, 2011 meeting of the State Board of Education were approved unanimously on a **Michelini/Sheehan** motion. Chairman Wittig thanked Dr. James Barker for helping facilitate the Board's trip to Erie for the meeting.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Secretary Tomalis commented that the start of the school year has gone well with one exception. Flooding from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee had a tremendous impact on the central and eastern parts of the state and caused approximately 120 school districts to alter their schedules.. He noted that PDE personally called the superintendents in each affected district to see how the Department could help and that today was the first day many of those districts were back up and running for school.

Mr. Tomalis said that he has met with more than 120 superintendents across the state at meetings hosted by local Intermediate Units since January. He reported that concerns related to the state budget, Keystone Exams and teacher evaluations were the central issues raised by superintendents.

The Secretary also raised awareness about the traveling van program operated by the state's Farm Bureau to bring mobile agriculture education to school districts. The Secretary noted that staff are available to travel statewide to bring the program into local communities and said his office can provide more information to those interested.

The Secretary also provided an update on federal grants. He reported that Pennsylvania received a \$500 million supplemental to the Education Jobs Fund. He also announced that Department had distributed over \$60 million in federal School Improvement Grants; however, he expressed disappointment that only 40 of Pennsylvania's 141 eligible schools submitted applications.

The Secretary also said he anticipated the Obama administration would make an announcement tomorrow regarding waivers they plan to offer for the No Child Left Behind Act. He expressed some personal reservation with the Obama administration's approach to offer waivers of program requirements that are not rooted in federal law, but rather are rooted in the U.S. Secretary of Education's agenda. Secretary Tomalis said he is more inclined to make modifications to the state's NCLB accountability workbook than to seek a waiver until the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is reauthorized.

Finally, the Secretary provided an updated on the Department's forensic analysis of PSSA results and said PDE has received three year of PSSA forensic analysis reports. He reported that the Department is now conducting an internal analysis of the schools identified with anomalies and that, while most have been cleared of any wrongdoing, there are some areas the Department feels further exploration is necessary. Mr. Sheehan asked if the Secretary could elaborate on the areas of the forensic analysis that the Department will focus on. Mr. Tomalis said the Department has been able to screen out instances where issues occurred with data entry or isolated circumstances, but that there were very small areas of concern that are not isolated which the Department will pursue aggressively.

Mr. Wittig asked whether the NCLB waiver approach was piecemeal or would constitute an all encompassing waiver. Mr. Tomalis said unofficial reports of the waiver provisions to date seem like a total rewrite of NCLB that were being proposed because the Obama administration was unsuccessful in getting Congress to pass their desired reforms.

Ms. Phillips said it was important to look at the good with the bad in terms of NCLB's effects. She complimented that the law positively halted complacency with only 30-40% of students being proficient, but said we always knew we would not reach the 100% target.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

Mr. Wittig announced that a representative of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission was unable to join the Board for today's meeting, but that the PSPC had submitted a written report which members could review at their leisure. Highlights of this report are as follows:

- At the September 19, 2011 meeting, the Commission considered 20 discipline cases, including two requests for the release of confidential information.
- The Commission and PASSHE are nearing completion of their joint project creating an online Ethics Toolkit for use by all teacher preparation programs in the Commonwealth.

- PDE's Office of Chief Counsel has a total of 255 active educator discipline cases; 70 of which are "high priority" because they involve allegations of sexual abuse or physical abuse of children.
- As of September 2011, the Department has received 196 new complaints and has resolved 105 cases; it has 57 cases pending before the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bernie Miller with PSEA thanked the Board for inviting Kelli Wells from the GE Foundation to speak at the Board meeting and commented on the exceptional work GE has undertaken related to Common Core that he hopes state policymakers will learn from.

ACTION ITEMS

0921.1: 2012 MEETING SCHEDULE

A motion to approve the 2012 Meeting Schedule was made by Francis Micheline and seconded by Kirk Hallett.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote. (Agras – by proxy)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Sullivan discussed an internship she completed over the summer with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). Dr. Micheline read a letter received from Shannon's internship supervisor regarding the positive experience the USDE had in working with Shannon.

Ms. Phillips thanked the Board staff for their hard work in arranging logistics for the meeting in Erie and thanked Dr. Barker for his hospitality.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.


Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant