

**MINUTES  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION**

**333 Market Street | 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126**

**May 11, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m. by Chairman Larry Wittig.

**Attending:**

James Agras *(via phone)*  
Carol Aichele  
Jay Badams  
Nicole Carnicella  
Sandra Dungee Glenn  
*(via phone)*  
James Grandon  
Kirk Hallett

Pamela Gunter-Smith  
Maureen Lally-Green  
*(via phone)*  
Teresa Lebo  
Donald LeCompte  
Jonathan Peri  
Mollie Phillips *(via phone)*  
Colleen Sheehan

Craig Snider *(via phone)*  
Lavinia Soliman  
Joshita Varshney  
Karen Farmer White  
*(via phone)*  
A. Lee Williams  
*(via phone)*  
Larry Wittig

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 9, 2016, meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Badams/Aichele** motion.

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem provided an update on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Mr. Stem said that ESSA creates a significant policy shift by placing greater autonomy with states and that the Department takes this responsibility seriously. He reported that PDE moved swiftly to engage stakeholders in developing recommendations for the State Plan required by ESSA. More than 200 diverse stakeholders met on April 28 for the first ESSA General Stakeholder session. Mr. Stem said additional workgroups would be convened in four key areas: accountability, assessment, educator evaluation and educator certification. Mr. Stem said he anticipates this stakeholder engagement work will conclude in October and result in framework recommendations for the State Plan. He directed the Board to PDE's website where documents related to this work will be made available throughout the course of stakeholder deliberations.

Chairman Wittig asked how the new initiatives would impact the State Board. Mr. Stem said that remains to be seen depending on the nature of the recommendations.

Colleen Sheehan commented that there seems to be a focus on assessing both students and teachers with entire offices now dedicated to assessments. She asked if this is due to a more skills-oriented way of thinking that has changed the way we think about learning and said she

wondered whether the human effect of such thinking had been considered. Dr. Sheehan spoke to a need to focus on principles related to good teachers, students and the learning environment rather than viewing those involved in the education process as widgets. She commented that before we can assess a skill set, we first have to identify what is worth teaching. Dr. Sheehan shared that she believes there needs to be room for creativity within the standards and that everything should not be top down.

Mr. Stem replied that demonstrable improvement in achievement, particularly among certain student populations, has been seen through the current system of assessments and accountability. However, he cautioned that there also is a point of diminishing return with unintended consequences, such as narrowing of curriculum and a hyper-focus on certain subject areas.

Dr. Sheehan referred her colleagues to consider *The Lost Tools of Learning* by Dorothy Sayers. She stated that just as the federal government is passing some decisions back to states, the state should pass some things back to local communities where they belong.

James Grandon asked what leeway PDE has related to federal mandates. Mr. Stem said that is a hot topic right now as it relates to negotiated rulemaking at the federal level. He said PDE has a collaborative relationship with the U.S. Department of Education and advocates for what it thinks is best for Pennsylvania students while also working with federal law.

Carol Aichele asked to hear more about the positive outcomes from assessments during the last five years. Deputy Secretary Stem replied that assessments have been in place for more than five years and said he would be happy to share data trends and report back to the Board.

### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION** **PROPOSED CHAPTER 11 (IMMUNIZATIONS)**

Chairman Wittig announced that proposed revisions to Chapter 11, and companion revisions to Department of Health regulations that govern immunization requirements for student attendance, were published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on April 9. That publication initiated a 30-day public comment period, and Mr. Wittig said more than 100 comments were received on the proposal. Mr. Wittig said all public comments were made available to Board members for review prior to the meeting. He said he expects additional comments from the Independent Regulatory Review Commission and that he would share those comments with the Board when they are received.

Mr. Wittig then provided an opportunity for discussion among the Board on the proposed revisions to Chapter 11 and the public comments received on the proposal. Hon. Aichele noted that she visited Coatesville High School in Chester County and said that out of 2,200 students enrolled in the high school only 25 that did not have updated immunizations. She said the school nurses believed that many of the non-compliant students were homeschooled.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chris Clayton, of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, commented that he believes an equity audit is an effective instrument for the philosophic changes that PDE is trying

to implement with ESSA. He suggested that the ESSA work sessions link the framework to that process.

**ACTION ITEM**

There were no action items.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m. on a **Sheehan/Hallett** motion.

  
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Stephanie Jones  
Administrative Assistant