

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

**333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126**

September 16, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 1:20 p.m. by Chairman James Barker.

Attending:

Jay Badams	Kirk Hallett	Craig Snider <i>(via phone)</i>
James Barker	Donald LeCompte	Lavinia Soliman
Nicole Carnicella	Jonathan Peri	Joshita Varshney
Sandra Dungee Glenn <i>(via phone)</i>	Mollie Phillips <i>(via phone)</i>	Larry Wittig
James Grandon	Colleen Sheehan <i>(via phone)</i>	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 8, 2015, meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Badams/Hallett** motion.

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

Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem commended schools in the Commonwealth for an excellent start to the school year and shared the following updates on behalf of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

PSSA Communications

Mr. Stem reported on actions the Department of Education (PDE) had taken to communicate with various stakeholder groups about the revised PSSA cut scores and performance level descriptors adopted in July, per a motion adopted by the State Board of Education directing PDE to engage in swift communications.

Mr. Stem reported that PDE had:

- Created and disseminated communication resources to LEAs
- Gathered stakeholder feedback to inform key messages, outreach and updates
- Provided media with background and understanding of new assessments
- Created an informational presentation on the PSSA standard setting process, impact and next steps

- Created a PSSA information tab from the main PDE website to ease navigation and heighten transparency
- Testified at House Education Committee hearing on assessments in July 2015

Mr. Stem further reported the following forthcoming communication plans:

- Disseminate a comprehensive, statewide press release to include data, quotes and context
- Modify PA School Performance Profiles website to provide context of new assessment and scores
- Use social media to deliver key messages
- Included direct messaging to parents with the Individual Student Reports that are sent home in the fall

Board member James Grandon asked if all communications to schools and parents were in English. Nicoel Reigelman, PDE's Press Secretary, shared that the Secretary's letter to parents has been translated into Spanish and sent to requesting school districts.

Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education, Dr. Wil Del Pilar, followed up on a question raised during the Council of Higher Education meeting earlier that afternoon regarding whether the GED test was administered in other languages. Dr. Del Pilar shared that the GED test is offered in French and Spanish as well as English.

School Performance Profile (SPP)

On September 8, 2015, the U.S. Department of Education approved Pennsylvania's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver. The waiver allows for a one-year pause in use of the 2015 PSSA scores to calculate SPP and teacher effectiveness ratings due to changes to the assessment that took effect in the 2014-15 school year. Schools that administered Keystone Exams in the 2014-15 school year will continue to receive SPP scores, and the Keystone will be the only exam used to help establish those scores. In the absence of SPP scores for most schools with grades kindergarten through eight during the one-year pause, PSSA achievement scores will not be used as part of the evaluations of teachers and principals in these schools. Evaluations will continue to include student growth scores.

Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA)

Mr. Stem reported that PDE will present Alternate Eligible Content for the PASA as an action item at the State Board of Education meeting in November 2015. Similar to the PSSA, PDE also will present revised Performance Level Descriptors and Cut Scores for the PASA in mid-2016. Mr. Stem noted that the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that the PASA be aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. He directed members to the PaTTAN website for more information about the alternate eligible content.

Bullying Prevention Hotline

Mr. Stem provided an update on the new Bullying Prevention Hotline supported by the Commonwealth. From April 2015 through the end of the 2014-15 school year, the consultation

line responded to 55 calls. Since the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, six calls have been received. Mr. Stem described the process of providing guidance that ensues after a call is received. Chairman Wittig asked if Mr. Stem has any anecdotal examples of how the calls are followed. Mr. Stem said he did not believe any calls had reached PDE staff for additional resources, but that he would look into Mr. Wittig's question.

PRESENTATION

Update on Implementation of Gifted Education Recommendations **Pat Hozella, Director, Bureau of Special Education**

Pat Hozella, Director of the Bureau of Special Education, appeared before the Council to provide a status update on PDE's efforts to implement the gifted education recommendations adopted by the State Board of Education in September 2014. At that time, the Board requested that the Department report back to it in one year on its progress with the recommendations. Ms. Hozella reported that 10 of the 13 recommendations either had been completed or were in progress. Three of the recommendations were not completed due to the cost associated with carrying them forward.

Ms. Hozella also provided PDE's annual Summary Report of Gifted Education Complaints and Monitorings for the 2014-15 school year. Out of the three formal complaints filed, two were completed and one is in investigative status. The basis for the complaints included Gifted Individualized Education Plans (GIEP) not being implemented; lack of funding for gifted services; and a concern over the qualifications of a gifted educator. In addition to the formal complaints reflected in the report, Ms. Hozella said PDE staff field hundreds of informal inquiries throughout the school year. Ms. Hozella also reported on the compliance monitoring visits PDE conducted in ten school districts during the 2014-15 school year. All districts monitored had corrective actions identified, and PDE is working to follow-up on those.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bernie Miller, Director of Education Services for the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), thanked the Bureau of Special Education and PDE for the timely report on gifted education. Mr. Miller expressed that he was very appreciative of PDE's terrific follow through on the recommendations, including the transparency of documents on PDE's website and, in particular, the swift timeframe in which the Gifted Program Endorsement Certificate was established. Mr. Miller shared that Millersville University already is working on a program to offer the new endorsement. Mr. Miller asked if PDE's wishlist for the next state budget would include additional compliance monitoring for gifted education. He noted that, under the current monitoring cycle, a district that is monitored will not be reviewed again for another 50 years.

Chairman Wittig asked how districts are selected for compliance monitoring. Ms. Hozella said it is a random selection that attempts to capture districts in the central, eastern and western parts of the state, and that districts that have been monitored are not put back into the population of those selected for future monitorings. Mr. Wittig stated that if the process truly was random, districts potentially could be selected for monitoring again. Ms. Hozella noted that, per Chapter 16, if there are serious concerns with a district's gifted education program, PDE has the authority to go onsite and target specific areas outside the formal monitoring process.

Chris Clayton, Assistant Director of Education Services for PSEA, thanked the Board and Deputy Secretary Stem for the work that has been accomplished in addressing many of the issues involving the PSSA Cut Scores.

ACTION ITEMS

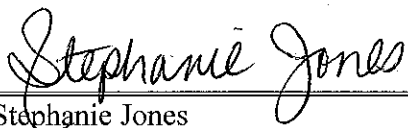
There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m. on a **Hallett/Badams** motion.



Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant