

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

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

May 10, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m. by Ms. Karen Farmer White.

Attending:

James Agras <i>(via phone)</i>	Nicole Carnicella	Maureen Lally-Green
Andrew Ahr	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Jonathan Peri <i>(via phone)</i>
Carol Aichele	James Grandon	Joshita Varshney
James Barker <i>(via phone)</i>	Kirk Hallett	Karen Farmer White
Nathan Barrett	Shirlann Harmon	Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 8, 2017, meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on a **Lally-Green/Hallett** motion.

COMMITTEE REPORT
SPECIAL AND GIFTED EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Maureen Lally-Green, Committee Chair, reported that the Special and Gifted Education Committee met earlier in the day to receive an informational presentation from Ann Hinkson-Herrmann, the Department of Education's new Special Education Bureau Director. She said the presentation included an overview of the role that Approved Private Schools (APSs) play in the Commonwealth's education system. Hon. Lally-Green also reported that the Department of Education identified a need to update the current standards for APSs that are published in Chapter 171 and to newly extend these standards to state's four chartered schools for the deaf and blind. As part of her presentation to the Committee, Ms. Hinkson-Herrmann reviewed proposed updates to those standards.

Hon. Lally-Green cited Sections 1376 and 1376.1 of the Public School Code that authorize the State Board of Education to promulgate standards applicable to APSs and Chartered Schools for the Deaf and Blind. As such, she said any changes to Chapter 171 would need to undergo regulatory review by the Board. She said she anticipates that the Department will submit a proposal to the Board for its consideration and noted that the Special and Gifted Education Committee will engage stakeholders for input on the proposed changes.

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

Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem reported on activities of the Department focused on providing quality resources and supports to assist schools in preparing students to be College and Career Ready. He reported on the Data Summit convened by the Department in March 2017, noted that updated math and science curriculum frameworks were uploaded to the SAS portal, and reviewed a needs assessment conducted by the Department's Migrant Education team that will be used to update the program. He also reported that the Comprehensive Planning tool was updated to reflect the Act 118 delay and said that, moving forward, the Department will create a tool aligned with its Every Student Succeeds Act plan. Mr. Stem also reviewed the School Climate Survey administered by Safe Schools Office.

Mr. Stem then spoke to work of the Department focused on ensuring that assessment and accountability systems are aligned to College and Career Ready student outcomes, incentivize effective practices at the school level and provide meaningful indicators of success. He noted the recent conclusion of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) for the 2016-17 school year and said Keystone Exams would start on May 15-16. He said the Department continues to monitor schools during state assessments and noted that 61 visits were completed thus far in 2017. Mr. Stem also reported that a taskforce was created in 2016 to determine whether the length of the PSSAs could be shortened while still maintaining levels of rigor and alignment to state academic standards. As a result of that work, he said the Department is looking into possibly shortening the exam in the 2018-2019 school year

Carol Aichele asked if the state assessments could be administered later in the year. Mr. Stem replied that the taskforce examined that topic and that it could possibly happen in the 2019-2020 school year.

Mr. Stem then reviewed Department activity related to creating systems that foster the ongoing growth and development of all Pennsylvania educators. He reported on the following trainings and conferences: a train-the-trainer session for 180 educators on the development and hand scoring of assessment items held in conjunction with Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit #5; Migrant/ESL Conference attended by more than 300 educators; training sessions on the SAS Portal; Special Education Conference attended by more than 1,700 educators; International Autism Conference; trainings for over 1,200 participants related to the Speech Language Hearing Initiative; and the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Implementers' Forum.

Finally, Mr. Stem reported that the Department is working with stakeholders from PDE, PK-20 education, business and industry to make framework and standards recommendations for Computer Science.

James Grandon shared that he works with a church-based ESL group in Harrisburg and asked whether there is any state support for those programs. Mr. Stem shared that the revised English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) will be brought before the Board in July. He also said that a metric was added to the Future Ready Index pertaining to language acquisition for ELL students.

PRESENTATION
PENNSYLVANIA ALTERNATE SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT
ALTERNATE ELIGIBLE CONTENT

Ms. Hinkson-Herrmann, Director of the Bureau of Special Education, provided an overview of the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA). She then presented new Alternate Eligible Content (AEC) in Writing for grades 3-8 and 11 and updated AEC in Science for grades 4, 8 and 11 for the PASA. She explained that the AEC is aligned to grade-level Pennsylvania Core Standards, but that the content is modified by reducing its depth, breadth and complexity. Ms. Hinkson-Herrman noted that these items would come before the Board for action at the end of the Council meeting and invited questions from Board members on the AEC. She said if the AEC is approved by the Board, the Department anticipates presenting recommended new cut scores for the PASA for the Board's approval in July.

Mr. Grandon asked whether the PASA is preparing students to take the SAT. Ms. Hinkson-Herrmann spoke to the severe cognitive disabilities of students who take the PASA and said while there are pipelines for these students into postsecondary education, those routes likely are related to criteria other than the SAT.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION
MASTER PLAN FOR BASIC EDUCATION

Ms. Farmer White reviewed provisions of the Public School Code related to the Master Plan for Basic Education. She noted that the current Master Plan is out-of-date and that, as directed by the Auditor General, the Council previously opened discussion about updating the plan. Since that time, Ms. Farmer White said Jill Neuhard and Mark Hennes, staff with the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU), were identified as potential resources to support an update to the plan due to their expertise in long-range planning for school systems through their work with comprehensive planning for school entities throughout the Commonwealth.

Ms. Farmer White asked her colleagues to review a draft proposed statement of work and draft proposed project budget to engage CAIU staff in providing support to the Board in updating the Master Plan. She asked Board members to provide feedback on the possibility of engaging CAIU in this work through support from the State School Fund or to propose other avenues for support in updating the plan. She also introduced Ms. Neuhard and Mr. Hennes who appeared before the Council to answer questions.

Ms. Farmer White said any updates to the Master Plan would be guided by input from the Council and that the Board would remain responsible for approving the final plan. She encouraged the Council to develop a process for stakeholder input on a draft plan prior to adopting a final Master Plan.

Karen Molchanow, the Board's Executive Director, noted that Council member Lee Williams was unable to attend the meeting. She read comments submitted by Ms. Williams that spoke to issues Ms. Williams felt should be addressed in the plan. Mr. Hennes replied that he felt the draft statement of work was in line with Ms. Williams' ideas and that the plan should focus

on data and assess the impact of policy changes on education, in addition to reviewing educational research and consulting with other states to identify best practices.

Kirk Hallett spoke to the value of input from education professionals in developing an updated plan.

Ms. Dungee Glenn asked how the CAIU staff had been identified as a resource. Ms. Molchanow replied that CAIU staff were identified by PDE leadership because of their expertise in educational planning. She noted that the Board also could consider developing a scope of work and seeking qualified bidders or undertaking an update independently, and she welcomed input from Board members on pursuing other avenues for updating the plan.

Hon. Aichele asked how often the plan is referenced. Mr. Wittig said he could not speak to that, but noted the plan is a legislative mandate and that the Board should do its best to make the document meaningful. Ms. Farmer White commented that the budget proposed by CAIU seemed in line with a study conducted by the Board a few years ago.

Mr. Stem said he believed Ms. Neuhard and her team are well-positioned to bring alignment to a Master Plan because of their understanding of the whole spectrum of school district planning. Ms. Neuhard stated that much of the work proposed in updating the plan would focus on a gap analysis. In addition to assisting school districts, charter schools, Intermediate Units and Career and Technical Centers with comprehensive planning, Ms. Neuhard said she also had experience with development of the state's special education plan and professional development plans.

Ms. Dungee Glenn thanked Ms. Neuhard for the contextual information. She then stated that the Board should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the Master Plan and what should be done to improve the document compared to the current plan. Ms. Molchanow drew members' attention to a document that outlined the statutory requirements for what must be covered in the plan. Ms. Dungee Glenn said the plan is intended to be a policy document that sets a framework for the direction of education policy in the Commonwealth.

Ms. Aichele asked whether staff from PDE might work with the CAIU staff on the update. Mr. Stem said the Department could collaborate to provide information, but that the Department does not have the capacity to take a leadership role.

Ms. Dungee Glenn requested that the updated Master Plan address disparities in education and issues related to the provision of equitable resources. Mr. Wittig replied that the plan should meet statutory parameters and that the Board cannot write a plan specific to individual districts. Mr. Dungee Glenn suggested the issues could be addressed under other areas deemed appropriate by the Board. She said the purpose of a Master Plan should be to identify how to move from where we are to improved outcomes for the Commonwealth.

Mr. Hennes said the plan would serve as an articulation of the Board's guidance to the Commonwealth, and CAIU would work to formulate that guidance as the Board sees fit. Ms. Neuhard suggested that the plan be informed by existing educational data.

Hon. Lally-Green said the plan should be a strategic plan that provides a vision and sets goals for the Commonwealth's education system. Ms. Dungee Glenn commented that the plan should not just identify goals, but address how those goals would be met. Mr. Hallett commented that he thought that approach would be too comprehensive and too specific to address in this context. Chairman Wittig commented that he did not think the plan could adequately address the minutiae of how and said the purpose of the discussion was just to get the process started.

Mr. Stem surmised that there were two separate questions being discussed – one related to the process of how to undertake an update to the plan and another related to the product itself. He noted that the Department can provide data necessary to address achievement gaps and said decisions about the content of what priorities are reflected in the plan would be made by the Board.

Mr. Hallett asked who would be responsible for implementing the plan and what path its recommendations would take after the document is complete.

Wil Del Pilar, Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education, noted that he has read the Master Plan for Higher Education and expressed support for highlighting disparities and trying to address them. He stated that the plan could serve as a broad north star for policy.

Thomas Howell, counsel to the Board, said that procedurally the proposal currently before the Board is a statement of work from CAIU and a determination of whether to use that direction to move forward.

Mr. Hennes noted that there is a difference between a Master Plan and an implementation plan. He said the guidance provided in a Master Plan generally is at a level high enough that it would not constrain the hands of the implementers and that such plans generally serve as guidance documents across administrations. However, he said judgments about what should or should not be included in the plan are up to the Council.

Mr. Barker surmised that the plan should describe the Commonwealth's current conditions for students and reflect the desire to provide a quality education for all students.

Ms. Glenn noted that CAIU's proposed statement of work included identifying exemplar plans from other states and said if that work is done with fidelity she felt the issues she was raising would be recognized because those issues are not isolated to Pennsylvania. She said her intent was not to speak to implementation, but overarching policy. Ms. Farmer White commented that she believed the comments from Dr. Williams supported Ms. Dungee Glenn's recommendation.

Nicole Carnicella said the plan amounts to a promise to the kids of Pennsylvania about the issues that should be looked at, not how every scenario related to those issues would be addressed. Mr. Hallett stated that he felt CAIU can assist in updating a plan in the context described by Dr. Carnicella under the current proposed budget.

Hon. Aichele expressed support for engaging CAIU staff in assisting with an update to the Master Plan and called for the new plan to be a bold document that outlines our promise to Pennsylvania's students.

Hon. Lally-Green echoed Hon. Aichele's sentiments and said the plan should not only look to the future but also should provide a benchmark of where we are currently.

Ms. Neuhard thanked the Board for its comments and noted that the suggestions offered could be incorporated into the plan in collaboration with the Board and PDE.

In light of the support expressed for engaging CAIU, Mr. Wittig said the proposed statement of work and proposed project budget would be placed on the July agenda as action items.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Farmer White called for public comment and noted that comments would be limited to three minutes per commentator.

Dr. Robert Sklaroff addressed the Board and referenced a handout he provided. He first spoke to the Holocaust and said he was reading the AP's history of how they acquiesced the Nazi's. He then stated he went to West Chester University for a lecture on alternative methods to teach the Holocaust. He read excerpts from four award-winning poems that were presented at the West Chester forum and expressed frustration that the content had nothing to do with the Holocaust.

Dr. Sklaroff said the Board's survey is a disgrace. He said in Act 70 you are supposed to teach Holocaust, genocide, and human rights violations – not or – and that grouping them together does not find out what happens with each topic. He said the survey should be thrown out. He then stated that Mr. Flaherty's report said she hit at least 1,500 people, but the sign-in sheets he obtained show only 200.

Dr. Sklaroff said the Board is collaborating with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and that the SPLC is a hate group. He said the Office of Open Records said they have no records on this matter, but that he is aware of the teaching tolerance program and someone is blocking the law. He cited a pamphlet from the SPLC that he said demonstrates they are a hate group, and said it is counterintuitive to fight hate with materials from a hate group.

He requested feedback on the issues he raised. Chairman Wittig responded that public comment is not an interactive setting. Dr. Sklaroff said he has documented problems with the Department of Education and filed complaints and said he would approach the Legislature to convene hearings on those matters if he does not receive answers to his complaints.

ACTION ITEM

PENNSYLVANIA ALTERNATE SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT: ALTERNATE ELIGIBLE CONTENT FOR WRITING AND SCIENCE

A motion to approve new Alternate Eligible Content in Writing and updated Alternate Eligible Content in Science for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment and to transmit those items to the State Board of Education for its review and consideration was made by Carol Aichele and seconded by Nathan Barrett.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. on an **Aichele/Lally-Green** motion.



Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant