

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

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

May 9, 2018

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by State Board of Education Chair Karen Farmer White at 1:00 p.m.

Attending:

James Agras (<i>via phone</i>)	Caroline DeWitt	Shirlann Harmon
Andrew Ahr	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Jonathan Peri
James Barker	Donald Fey	Rep. James R. Roebuck, Jr. (<i>via phone</i>)
Nathan Barrett (<i>via phone</i>)	Pamela Gunter-Smith (<i>via phone</i>)	Karen Farmer White
Nicole Carnicella	Kirk Hallett	A. Lee Williams

CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

Ms. Farmer White welcomed Ashley Svec, a Norwin High School student selected as the Board’s new High School Student Member-Elect. Ms. Svec was present to observe the proceedings before beginning her two-year term in July.

In honor of Teacher Appreciation Week, the Chair recognized the dedication of the Commonwealth’s more than 120,000 classroom teachers.

Ms. Farmer White then turned to Dr. James Barker, Chair of the Council of Basic Education, to call the Council meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 14, 2018, meeting of the Council of Basic Education were approved on an **Williams/Hallett** motion.

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

Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem provided an update on Pennsylvania’s activities related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). He said that the Commonwealth will establish a coherent, equitable and innovative culture for STEM learning by identifying, aligning and strengthening student PreK-12 experiences; connecting with postsecondary opportunities and building career pathways in STEM; ensuring quality STEM experiences for

every student P-20; and connecting STEM education to postsecondary opportunities through collaborative partnerships with diverse stakeholders.

Sandra Dungee Glenn shared that the School District of Philadelphia is looking to revamp a comprehensive high school to utilize a career and technical education model. She asked the Deputy Secretary to identify resources to help inform the school's redesign.

Deputy Secretary Stem next provided an update on the administration of state assessments. He said the Department of Education (PDE) received positive feedback that most schools had two days less of PSSA testing this year due to the reduced length of the exams. Next year, Mr. Stem said the test themselves will not change, but the calendar for administration will. He noted that the PSSA testing calendar will be moved back at to as late as April 24 to provide schools with more instructional time and said testing will be reduced to two weeks. He also noted that starting next year parents will receive score reports by June 1.

Mr. Stem further reported that the spring administration of Keystone Exams begins next week. He then reviewed findings from the Keystone Exams administered in Winter and Spring 2017 and the number of students retaking the exams. For the Algebra I exam, Mr. Stem said 56% of students took the exam for the first time, 23% of students took the exam a second time, and 21% of students took the exam for the third or up to the seventh time. Mr. Stem said the Department found a steady and steep decline in proficiency after a third attempt at the exam. He cautioned the need to consider the unintended consequences of state policy.

Kirk Hallett asked if students are not being prepared well enough for the Keystone Exams or if the exams are too hard. Mr. Stem said schools should be appropriately resourced to provide remediation and supplemental instruction, and said data should inform policy decisions around graduation requirements to avoid unintended consequences.

Ms. Dungee Glenn asked if PDE has a planned response regarding the Keystone outcomes. Mr. Stem responded that it is important to elevate the role of Math, Science and English Language Arts, which are gatekeeper skills for postsecondary success, but that elevating these core subjects should be implemented in a manner that does not take away other opportunities for students, such as Career and Technical Education.

Dr. Barker complimented the Department's successful efforts to reduce the length of testing for the PSSA.

Safe Schools Overview

Deputy Secretary Stem introduced Carol Kuntz, Director of the Safe Schools Office, for a presentation on the work of the Safe Schools Office. Ms. Kuntz reviewed in detail the efforts of her office that focus on prevention, response, and recovery. Ms. Kuntz also provided the Council with information on proposed legislation related to school safety and an update on the work of the Governor's School Safety Task Force.

Dr. Barker inquired about opioid education curriculum.

Jonathan Peri offered the Board’s School and University Safety Committee as a resource to the Safe Schools Office and the Governor’s School Safety Task Force.

Nicole Carnicella asked Ms. Kuntz to address what is happening related to metal detectors and prevention of violence due to mental health issues. Ms. Kuntz responded that there is discussion about metal detectors as an allowable use of increased funding. Ms. Kuntz also said that her office is trying to bring more resources to schools related to violence prevention and to raise greater awareness of what programs are available. She briefly reviewed student assistance and behavior intervention programs in place to assist students with mental health issues.

Ms. Dungee Glenn asked if trauma-informed instruction should become standard in teacher preparation. Mr. Stem said PDE supports trauma-informed instructional practices and that the Department is working on this approach through community schools models. Ms. Dungee Glenn suggested that schools need guidance in this area.

Mr. Hallett asked how much assistance the Safe Schools Office offers private schools. Ms. Kuntz shared that her office works closely with the Private Academic Schools Office to make information resources available to private schools.

Lee Williams said schools need to build capacity among their staff to respond to and recognize why certain children respond to situations with different behaviors that focuses on supporting the success of the child in a manner that is not punitive and fosters a safe environment. Mr. Stem referenced the Intermediate Unit partnerships that provide boots on the ground technical support in this area.

Shirlann Harmon said students appreciate that school safety is a continued priority and that traction that has been gained in student voice around the importance of school safety. Ms. Harmon asked how schools are held accountable to ensure schools are safe and what actions will be taken to identify safety issues on a school-by-school basis for implementation. Ms. Kuntz shared that she works closely with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), the State Police, and private vendors to provide information to schools based on their demographics. In some cases, Ms. Kuntz said this is accomplished locally through Intermediate Unit supports.

Andrew Ahr asked if the Safe Schools Office or the Governor’s Task Force has engaged in conversation with design professionals on creating design for safety and security standards in the construction and renovations of schools. Pedro Rivera, Secretary of Education, shared that the PlanCon Taskforce is considering a recommendation to include reimbursement for items related to safety and security and emergency items. Mr. Ahr suggested that the reimbursement be structured similar to that available for environmentally-friendly building designs.

PRESENTATION
PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS (PSSA)
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS VALIDATION

Richard Marasciello, Project Manager, and Brian Campbell, Director of the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, reviewed recent action taken by the Department to

reduce the length of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams administered in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science in grades 3-8. They explained that changes in the design of the ELA exam make it necessary to conduct a standards validation for that exam only. They also presented updated Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) for the PSSA ELA and explained that those revised narrative explanations would come before the Board for its consideration. If approved by the Board, the updated PLDs would be used during the validation process.

Mr. Maraschiello and Mr. Campbell provided a detailed overview of the Modified Bookmark procedure proposed to conduct the standards validation. They explained that the process would involve a diverse set of Pennsylvania educators who will determine whether a modification is necessary to the current cut scores for the PSSA ELA. Results of the validation process will be presented to the Board in July.

Ms. Dungee Glenn asked for more information about the purpose of the revised PLDs. Mr. Campbell responded that in shortening the PSSA ELA exam, a specific writing prompt was cut and said the revised PLDs reflect that change in the test design.

Mr. Hallett shared that his wife is a third grade teacher and said there is pressure on educators for students to demonstrate proficiency on state assessments.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Secretary Pedro Rivera honored PDE team member Linda Gagliardo who received the Governor's Award for Excellence for her work helping veterans and their families transition from the armed forces to the workforce. The Secretary said Ms. Gagliardo reduced the turnaround time for paperwork from three to four months to six weeks.

Secretary Rivera then reported on the Data Summit convened by the Department in March.

Next, the Secretary announced that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released the results of its 2017 testing cycle. He reported that Pennsylvania's fourth and eighth graders ranked above the national average in proficiency for Math, Reading and Science on the 2017 NAEP.

The Secretary then announced that \$1 million in federal funding is available through the Department of Labor and Industry to support Teacher in the Workplace grants. These grants will give teachers the opportunity to spend the summer interning in business to acquire skills to take back to the classroom.

Finally, the Secretary said he anticipates that the PlanCon Commission Report will be completed by the end of May and that the Agriculture Education report will be submitted to the Governor's office shortly.

DISCUSSION ITEM **DRAFT MASTER PLAN FOR BASIC EDUCATION**

Dr. Barker invited Mark Hennes, of the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU), to provide a status report on the draft Master Plan for Basic Education. Dr. Barker shared that the Council will work to incorporate additional feedback from Board members and will provide interested stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on the draft updated plan. He said stakeholder engagement sessions would be announced in locations around the state for the end of June.

Mr. Hennes reviewed in detail the work conducted by CAIU to date to support an update to the Master Plan. He said a draft of the update was shared with the Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEM

Revised Performance Level Descriptors for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in English Language Arts

A motion to approve the revised Performance Level Descriptors for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in English Language Arts was made by Lee Williams and seconded by Kirk Hallett.

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 3:12 p.m. on a **Williams/Hallett** motion.



Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant