

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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

March 15, 2018

The 343rd meeting of the State Board of Education was convened on Thursday, March 15, 2018. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 8:48 a.m. by Chair Karen Farmer White.

Attending:

James Agras (*via phone*)
Andrew Ahr
Carol Aichele
James Barker (*via phone*)
Nathan Barrett
Nicole Carnicella

Sandra Dungee Glenn
Hon. John Eichelberger
Donald Fey
Pamela Gunter-Smith
Kirk Hallett
Shirlann Harmon

Maureen Lally-Green
(*via phone*)
Jonathan Peri
Colleen Sheehan (*via phone*)
Craig Snider (*via phone*)
Karen Farmer White
A. Lee Williams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 11, 2018, meeting of the State Board of Education were approved on a **Gunter-Smith/Dungee Glenn** motion.

**REPORT OF THE
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION**

Dr. George Drake provided an update on behalf of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC). The PSPC met on March 12, 2018 at which time it considered 36 disciplinary cases. Of those, Dr. Drake said eight involved allegations of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse or exploitation; 21 involved criminal charges or convictions.

Dr. Drake reported that the PSPC's Practices Committee also met to discuss its plans to develop a contingent discipline and to update its regulations pertaining to procedures in disciplinary proceedings. He noted that the PSPC is particularly interested in exploring ways to reduce the backlog of cases and to introduce more accountability into the process.

Dr. Drake shared that the PSPC is finalizing its 2017 Annual Report, which reviews the disciplinary actions taken in 2017. In 2017, the PSPC imposed 186 disciplinary actions.

Dr. Drake concluded his report with an update on the number of cases before the PSPC. Currently, the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) has a total of 2,121 open educator discipline cases, of which 459 are designated as "high priority" because they involve allegations of sexual abuse or physical abuse of children or criminal charges/convictions for crimes set forth in section 111(e) of the Public School Code of 1949. There are 168 cases pending litigation before the PSPC and one

case pending in Commonwealth Court. Dr. Drake reported that the OCC has received 133 educator misconduct complaints and 69 mandatory reports thus far during the 2018 calendar year.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Farmer White called for an Executive Session of the Board for the purpose of receiving a legal briefing from counsel on the William Penn School District litigation.

The Board adjourned its Executive Session and the Chair re-convened the 343rd meeting of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEM

RESOLUTION HONORING JAMES GRANDON

A motion to approve a resolution honoring James Grandon was made by Jonathan Peri and seconded by Sandra Dungee Glenn.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Farmer White shared a status update on the matter of the Washington Township Independent School District. The Chair announced that the independent hearing officer engaged to conduct proceedings in Washington Township's appeal of the Board's decision on its application set a hearing date for April 23. If necessary, the hearing will continue for a second day on April 24. Following the conclusion of the hearing, the Chair said the hearing officer will prepare a report for the Board's consideration, and the Board will issue a determination in the appeal.

Ms. Farmer White also provided an update on the State School Fund. Per the School Code, Ms. Farmer White said that the State School Fund is under the custody of the Board for the purpose of engaging in contractual research projects and equalizing educational opportunity across the Commonwealth. While language establishing the Fund still remains in the School Code, Ms. Farmer White announced that the Board recently received notice that the balance of the fund – \$677,000 – was lapsed into the state's General Fund. She said the transfer was executed due to a provision in the 2017 Fiscal Code that required the transfer of \$300 million from special funds and restricted accounts across state agencies.

Finally, Ms. Farmer White announced that the Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness Committee would meet following the conclusion of the Board meeting.

Ms. Dungee Glenn sought clarification about whether the action related to the State School Fund means there are no dollars available for the Board to conduct auxiliary work and means that no new dollars will go into the fund. Chair Farmer White responded that the fund's current balance is at zero and that she did not know whether new dollars may be available at a later time. She further noted that the Department of Education (PDE) offered to provide support to the Board through its General Government Operations line in the absence of the State School Fund. Ms. Dungee Glenn stated that the Board needs resources to carry out its work and should engage in future discussion on a course of action. Jonathan Peri, Lee Williams, and Maureen Lally-Green all agreed that the Board should have a level of independence from PDE and should have funds available to operate separately from the Department. Chair Farmer White directed staff to include discussion and action surrounding an appropriation for the State School Fund on the next meeting agenda. Mr. Peri also asked staff to explore whether there was precedent, at either a state or national level, for Boards to receive non-profit foundation support for their efforts.

In conclusion, Ms. Farmer White shared that she desires to foster an atmosphere of transparency and inclusion for the Board, and that she wants to ensure meaningful service for members of the Board where their voices are heard. She encouraged her fellow members to share their ideas for the work of the Board with the herself and their relevant Council Chairs.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m. on a **Gunter-Smith/Dungee Glenn** motion.



Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant