



THE BOARD REPORT



2004-2005:
Issue 3

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The following is a summary of the December 1, 2004, and January 5, 2005, meetings of the State Board of Education.

**RICHARD ROTHSTEIN:
Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform
to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap**

“Closing the gaps between lower-class and middle-class children requires social and economic reform as well as school improvement,” Richard Rothstein told the State Board of Education. Rothstein is a research associate of the Economic Policy Institute and a visiting professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. He was the national educational columnist for the New York Times from 1999 to 2002.

Mr. Rothstein delineated the social class differences in health care, nutrition, childrearing practices, housing quality and stability, parental occupation and aspirations that affect how well children learn and ultimately succeed. He claims that we prevent ourselves from solving the achievement gap because of a commonplace belief that poverty and race cannot “cause” low achievement and, therefore, schools must be failing to teach disadvantaged children adequately. In his paper, “Class and the Classroom: Even the best schools can’t close the race achievement gap,” Rothstein writes, “Demography is not destiny, but students’ family characteristics are a powerful influence on their relative average achievement. Widely repeated accounts of schools that somehow elicit consistently high achievement from lower-class children almost always turn out, upon examination, to be flawed. In some cases, these ‘schools that beat the odds’ are highly selective, enrolling only the most able or most motivated lower-class children.” He continues, “Partly, our confusion stems from failing to examine the concrete ways that social class actually affects learning. Describing these may help to make their influence more obvious – and may make it more obvious why the achievement gap can be substantially narrowed only when school improvement is combined with social and economic reform.”

(Rothstein, continued on page 2)

**SUPPORT FOR CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS IN THEIR FOURTH YEAR OF
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT UNDER THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) ACT**

The Board reviewed a proposal developed by the Commissioner to focus attention and resources to support the eight schools that are now in their fourth year of “school improvement” under NCLB. The schools in this category are Beardsley and Columbus in Bridgeport; Kinsella, Milner and Moylan in Hartford; and Hill Central, Roberto Clemente and Jackie Robinson in New Haven. In reference to these schools, Commissioner Sternberg wrote in her memorandum to the State Board of Education, “They need a targeted, comprehensive, no-holds-barred infusion of support in all of the following areas in order to improve student achievement both quickly and sustained over time. Federal school improvement funds will be used to implement programs at the district level, but progress can only be made with specific, targeted efforts in the schools themselves.” The targeted areas include preschool; family resource centers and school-based health clinics; incentives to retain outstanding teachers, support staff and administrators; and a longer school day and school year. Commissioner Sternberg referred to these initiatives as a “full-course meal,” noting that they all should move ahead in concert.

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(School Improvement, continued

ROTHSTEIN (continued)

Factors associated with marked differences in achievement include the extent to which children are read to and have access to books at home and outside school, the extent to which they are spoken to and encouraged to think, the huge difference in a child's vocabulary as a result of their social class and the extent to which they are engaged in conversation at a young age, the educational level of their role models, health issues directly associated with socioeconomic status and housing conditions. These are the areas we must address in a comprehensive manner in order to improve achievement, Rothstein concluded. "We must combine our school improvement efforts with policies that narrow the social and economic differences between children. Because the gap is already huge at age 3, the most important new investment should no doubt be in early childhood programs."

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (continued)

Representatives of the Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport school systems attended the State Board of Education meeting on January 5, and responded to the following questions:

1. Do the Commissioner's proposals represent the factors that need to be addressed?
2. Are there other factors that should be considered?
3. Can current federal and state resources be used to address any of these proposals?

New Haven Assistant Superintendent Eleanor Osborne and Board Chair Brian Perkins agreed that the Commissioner's proposals are supportive of the districts' needs, and expressed their appreciation in having input into the development of the proposals. Initiatives already underway in New Haven to improve student achievement include making schools pre-kindergarten through Grade 8, thereby decreasing student mobility and increasing continuity; using funds to provide literacy specialists at the kindergarten through Grade 3 level, and seeking additional funding for literacy initiatives in Grades 4-8; removal or reassignment of staff members; and reducing class size, coupled with ensuring teachers are well trained. Ms. Osborne added that it is also important to have skilled leaders in a school. Mr. Perkins expressed his concerns about the costs associated with making substantial changes (e.g., providing additional space; continuous professional development opportunities, etc.), referring to available resources as touching only the "tip of the iceberg."

Bridgeport Interim Superintendent Clarence Tolbert stated that the Commissioner's proposals are in line with what helps urban education. Commenting on the marked difference in urban students' language skills, Superintendent Tolbert emphasized the need to begin urban children's formal education at a much earlier age. He noted that the importance of involving parents and addressing the medical needs of students; the school system alone should not assume total responsibility. New teachers often arrive in urban schools ill-equipped to meet the needs of urban students and communities and, therefore, we need to ensure that they are well-trained and supported. Board member Inicia Jitter concurred with Mr. Tolbert, adding that family resource centers are key in teaching parenting skills.

Frances DiFiore, Hartford Public School System, noted that a comprehensive effort to improve achievement in the Hartford school system was underway. At Kinsella School, for example, three-quarters of the staff members were changed, a character education program has been implemented, and disciplinary action procedures have been changed from out-of-school suspension to an in-school suspension, thereby keeping students engaged in learning. She stressed the need for preschool programs and more family resource centers. Board Chairman Robert Long stressed the need to develop language skills (verbal and computer) at an early age, and expressed his support for preschool and additional instructional time. He also noted that additional space is needed, which could be met by the use of portable classrooms. Hartford, too, is moving to a K-8 model, Mr. Long stated, which equates to "one less transition and one less chance of vulnerability," encouraging students to remain in school. Mr. Long stated that Hartford is soliciting additional support from non-profit organizations.

RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS

The Board recognized the following educators and schools for their significant accomplishments.

- Joseph R. Castagnola, Superintendent of Schools in New Fairfield, formerly in Portland, was named Connecticut's 2005 Superintendent of the Year.
- Donna Goyette, H.H. Ellis Connecticut Technical High School, was named the 2004-2005 Teacher of the Year for the Connecticut Technical High School System.
- Thomas G. Alcorn School, Enfield, was named a 2004 Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education for its dramatic improvement in the Connecticut Mastery Test scores over the past three years.
- Edith E. Mackrille Magnet School, West Haven, was named a 2004 Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education for its dramatic improvement in the Connecticut Mastery Test scores over the past three years.
- Old Greenwich School, Old Greenwich, was named a 2004 Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education for placing in the top ten percent of elementary schools based on the 2002-2003 Connecticut Mastery Test scores.
- Nancy Harris, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Westport Public Schools, was named 2004 School Business Official of the Year by the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials.
- Burt Saxon, social studies teacher at Hillhouse High School, New Haven, was named 2005 Connecticut Teacher of the Year.
- Patty Pursell, a physical education and health teacher at Highland School, Wallingford, was selected as a finalist in the 2005 Connecticut Teacher of the Year competition.
- Gerald E. Kuroghlian, an English teacher at Staples High School, Westport, was selected as a finalist in the 2005 Connecticut Teacher of the Year competition.
- Anne McKernan, a social studies teacher at the Metropolitan Learning Center Magnet School, Bloomfield, was selected as a finalist in the 2005 Connecticut Teacher of the Year competition.
- Michael Galluzzo, Principal of East Farms Elementary School, Farmington, was chosen by his peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 Elementary School Principal of the Year/National Distinguished Principal.
- Diane DiPietro, Assistant Principal of Highland Elementary School, Cheshire, was chosen by her peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 Elementary School Assistant Principal of the Year.
- Carol Janssen, Principal of Catherine McGee Middle School, Berlin, was chosen by her peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 Middle School Principal of the Year.
- Brian Czapla, Assistant Principal of Smith Middle School, Glastonbury, was chosen by his peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year.
- Jerome Auclair, Principal of Darien High School, Darien, who was chosen by his peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 High School Principal of the Year.
- Sally Biggs, Assistant Principal of South Windsor High School, South Windsor, was chosen by her peers at the Connecticut Association of Schools as Connecticut's 2004 High School Assistant Principal of the Year.
- Frances M. Rabinowitz, Associate Commissioner for the Division of Teaching, Learning and Assessment at the State Department of Education, was chosen by her peers at the Connecticut Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as Connecticut's 2004 Education Leader of the Year.

APPROVAL OF PLAN OF REPRESENTATION – REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 15

As recommended by the Commissioner, the Board established a Plan of Representation for Regional School District Number 15 consistent with the 2000 Census, providing weighted voting for Middlebury and Southbury. The plan provides for voting power weighted in the exact proportion that the population of each town bears to the population of the entire regional school district. The votes of the four members from Middlebury would be weighted at .66 votes per member while the votes of the six members from Southbury would be weighted at 1.23 votes per member.

REPORT OF SCHOOL READINESS NEEDS AND COSTS TO SERVE ALL THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN PRIORITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Board received a report summarizing the school readiness needs and estimated operating costs in the 17 priority school districts and one former priority school district, pursuant to Section 10-266p of the Connecticut General Statutes. The school readiness councils of these 18 school districts provided or verified the following information:

- the number of children not being served;
- the percentage of children who will not seek preschool programs;
- the number of children who will need preschool programs;
- the number of classrooms required to serve these children;
- the cost associated with serving all children needing school readiness programs; and
- the local commitment and financial support to these programs over a period of two years.

Highlights of the report include the following:

- Of the 35,402 3- and 4-year-olds in the priority school districts, 9,138 are not being served.
- The State Department of Education's projected participation level of children who need preschool programs is 8,308, including 5,293 who would enroll in full-day, full-year programs, 1,328 who would enroll in school-day, school-year programs and 1,687 who would enroll in part-day, part-year programs.
- The estimated total operational cost to serve these children is \$99,399,203.
- 304 classrooms would be needed to accommodate the full-day, full-year children; 80 classrooms would be needed to accommodate the 1,328 school-day, school-year children; and 55 classrooms would be required to serve a total of 1,687 part-day, part-time children.

Consistent with its Position Statement on Preschool Programs and Services, the State Board of Education is committed to ensuring that every child whose family cannot afford preschool will have the opportunity to attend a high quality program. Because children without preschool education are educationally behind their peers with this benefit, and because Connecticut's economic success requires a fully participating labor force, the State Departments of Education and Social Services, in collaboration with local communities, are resolved to establish preschool for all children who need it, beginning in the most impacted communities.

REVISIONS TO BUDGET OPTIONS IN SUPPORT OF EDUCATION LEARNING INITIATIVES FOR EXCELLENCE

The Board approved revisions to the budget options submitted to the Office of Policy and Management in November in support of the Education Learning Initiatives for Excellence (Ed-LIFE) that address the per pupil allocation for existing charter schools and the enrollment caps on Connecticut's charter schools. The Board supported a \$750 increase in the per pupil allocation, to \$8,000 per pupil. In addition, the Board supported an increase in the enrollment caps on Connecticut's charter schools. The cap would increase to 500 for all charter schools. This proposal would limit enrollment expansion, with the exception of new schools, in any given year to 10 percent of the overall charter school enrollment.

ADDITIONAL 2005 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

The Board adopted a legislative proposal to allow retired teachers and administrators with successful records in raising student achievement or demonstrated ability to successfully lead educators to be reemployed at full salary in priority school districts for up to two school years. This proposal was developed in response to the difficulty Connecticut is experiencing in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers and administrators in priority school districts.

GOVERNOR'S JOBS CABINET WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Commissioner Sternberg shared with the Board proposals to the Governor's Jobs Cabinet Workforce Development Committee, "Targeting Strategic Investments in Urban Schools." The Commissioner has served on the Workforce Development Group, and recommended to the committee several proposals designed to assist the schools identified as "in need of improvement" under the No Child Left Behind Act. The proposals resemble the budget options adopted by the State Board of Education in November, yet are more closely targeted at those schools that have been identified "as in need of improvement" for the past four years. Proposals address preschool needs; family resource centers and school-based health centers; incentives to retain outstanding teachers, support staff and administrators; securing additional space; and instituting a longer school day and school year. The recommendations supporting each of these areas will be discussed at the Connecticut Jobs Summit to be held at the University of Hartford on January 31, 2005. Governor Rell is hosting the summit and has invited policy leaders and economic professionals from around the state to discuss Connecticut's economic and workforce competitiveness.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION (NASDTEC) INTERSTATE CERTIFICATION AGREEMENT

The Board approved the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Certification Agreement for the period October 1, 2005, through September 30, 2010. Connecticut has been a long-standing member of NASDTEC and has been a participant in the NASDTEC agreement since 1970. The Interstate Agreement facilitates the movement of certified educators among the various states and jurisdictions which sign the agreement. Approved out-of-state educator preparation programs, or a combination of professional experience, licensure and course work are considered equivalent to Connecticut certification requirements. In some cases, out-of-state applicants may be required to pass a subject-area assessment or take an additional academic content course (e.g., special education) prior to receiving a full teaching certificate in Connecticut. Therefore, Connecticut currently issues nonrenewable interim educator certificates which provide the certificate holder one year to successfully complete the assessment and course work requirements.

RECEIPT OF GRANT: EMILY TREMAINE FOUNDATION

The Board approved receipt of a \$25,000 planning grant from the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation. The funds will be used to plan an early childhood initiative focused on establishing a system of identification of and intervention for 4-year-old children who may be at risk for or experiencing reading and learning difficulties.

POSITION STATEMENT ON EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION LITERACY

The Board adopted a Position Statement on Educational Technology and Information Literacy. The statement describes specific roles the Department of Education, school districts, educators, teacher preparation programs and families play in ensuring that every student develops the tools, competencies and level of sophistication necessary to be successfully employed in an ever-changing global economy. The Board asserted its belief that all students must develop strong technological skills and use them regularly in order to function successfully in the 21st century. A copy of the statement is attached to this issue of The Board Report and has been posted on the website (www.state.ct.us.sde/).

POSITION STATEMENT ON INFANTS, TODDLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Board adopted a position statement recognizing three principles in guiding the development and implementation of programs and services for infants, toddlers and their families, including (1) an infrastructure that supports the development and maintenance of a comprehensive service delivery structure; (2) services that support families and foster positive and healthy relationships between parents and children; and (3) high-quality programs and services delivered by knowledgeable and trained personnel. A copy of the statement is attached to this edition of The Board Report, and has been posted on the Department's website (www.state.ct.us/sde).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Board adopted a Statement of Commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity. The statement describes the Board's commitment to ensuring that the Department provides all persons equal employment opportunities, actively recruits from protected groups and identifies individuals for employment and advancement opportunities. The statement also addresses the Board's and Department's commitment to prohibiting harassment.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

The Board approved an application for funds available from the United States Department of Education for an Advanced Placement Incentive Grant for the period 2005-2007. The three-year grant will support the Advanced Placement test fees for all low-income students in the state. It is anticipated the grant award for each year of the grant will be \$108,008, \$132,093, and \$179,631. Students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program are eligible to participate.

PLAN TO ADDRESS RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE EASTERN POINT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Board approved the plan submitted by the Groton Board of Education to address racial imbalance in the Eastern Point Elementary School. The plan involves a long-range, three-phase construction plan for the district which calls for the building of three new schools, two of which will be elementary schools. It also includes the renovation of several elementary schools and the closing of others. Phase 1 addresses the existing imbalance at Eastern Point and calls for a new facility, to open in 2007, to serve students in the southwestern part of the district. While racial imbalance at Eastern Point will not be corrected this year, the planned all-day kindergarten program at that school will recruit students from other parts of town, thereby addressing the imbalance issue.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM (CTHSS)

Biennial Report to the Connecticut General Assembly

The Board approved the CTHSS Biennial Report to the Connecticut General Assembly, as required by Section 10-95k of the General Statutes. The report includes demographic information for the preceding two school years on applicants for admission, students enrolled and graduates of the CTHSS, and a summary of the capital and operating expenditures.

Letter of Support from the Governor's Competitiveness Council

The Board received a letter from the co-chairs of the Governor's Competitiveness Council, Carol P. Wallace and Nathaniel D. Woodson, in support of the CTHSS' progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Governor's Task Force on the Connecticut Technical High School System. They wrote, "In her short time as Superintendent, Dr. Hughes has embraced her leadership position as evidenced by the number of initiatives undertaken to improve the CTHSS. She has demonstrated her receptivity to the Task Force recommendations and her willingness to partner with us and other industry representatives to make the vision of a premier technical education high school system a reality." They cited the following examples of significant accomplishments under Dr. Hughes' leadership: improved communication, plans to implement the new mission for the school system, implementation of standardized admission policies, efforts to strengthen the partnership between the community colleges and the CTHSS, and cooperative efforts between the Office for Workforce Competitiveness and the CTHSS to identify resources, evaluate gaps and identify solutions that are responsive to industry needs.

Tuition and Fee Schedule: 2005-2006 and 2006-2007

The Board approved a proposal to set tuition rates for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years, including a recommendation to charge tuition for adult bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. The tuition rates are necessary to offset costs that were once supported by federal funds. Rates for the full-time adult program, apprentice program, extension course, adult bilingual training courses, ESL and computer skills courses, and the breakfast and lunch program were adopted by the Board and will take effect in the 2005-2006 school year.

Awards Recipients – 2004 National SkillsUSA Championships

Congratulations to the following CTHSS students for earning awards at the 2004 National SkillsUSA Championships. SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and representatives of industry working together to ensure that America has a skilled workforce. In order to compete at the national level, students must have achieved first place at the state competition. The following students represented the CTHSS:

- Colleen Gantneir, a graduate of Abbott Technical High School, who earned fourth place in the culinary arts contest;
- Amanda Fairclough, a graduate of Abbott Technical High School, who earned fourth place in the sheet metal contest;
- Derick Rosw, a graduate of Platt Technical High School, who earned fifth place in the electronics technology contest;
- Thomas Hinman, Jr., a graduate of Wilcox Technical High School, who earned fifth place in the graphic communications contest;
- Jason Tartaris, a student at Grasso Technical High School, who earned fifth place in the plumbing contest;
- Bill Deak, a graduate of Abbott Technical High School, who earned fifth place in the residential wiring contest;
- Nicholas Labonne, a graduate of Ellis Technical High School, who earned sixth place in the masonry contest;
- Nalani Wood, a graduate of Vinal Technical High School, who earned seventh place in the technical drafting contest;
- Katherine Carlson, Tina Cowee, Rebecca Engel, Ashley Martin, Ashley Platt, Kathleen Cirillo and Katie Vanadestine, students at Vinal Technical High School, who earned eighth place in the opening and closing contest;

- Vanessa LaFlamme, a student at Vinal Technical High School, who earned ninth place in the job skill demonstration contest; and
- Andrew Bifolck, a student at Cheney Technical High School, who earned ninth place in the technical computer applications contest.

Reauthorization of Trades

The Board approved the following trades offered in the Connecticut Technical High School System.

For the period January 2005 to January 2010:

- automotive collision, repair and refinishing; automotive technology; aviation mechanics; diesel and heavy duty equipment repair; drafting technology; electromechanical technology; manufacturing technology; and welding and metal fabrication.

For the period January 2005 to January 2007:

- information support and services; interactive media; network systems; and programming and software technician. {Note: These four trade areas were part of a pilot program at J.M. Wright and were initially authorized for one year due to insufficient performance data. They will be phased out over the next two years and replaced with other information technology cluster shops that have proven successful.}

Applications for Funds

The Board approved the following applications for funds to support programs or initiatives in the CTHSS:

- System-wide Evaluation of Strategic Instructional Model: The Institute of Education Sciences funds (\$1.5 million over three years) will be used to assess the student achievement, strategic learning strategies and students who have been exposed to the Strategic Instructional Model (SIM) versus those not exposed to the SIM within the CTHSS.
- Jordan Fundamentals Grant Program: This three-year grant in the amount of \$2,500 will facilitate A.I. Prince Technical High School students' understanding of physics and its relationship to heating, ventilation and air conditioning.
- PHOTON2/Electronics Grant: This grant (\$2,000) is available from the New England Board of Higher Education Project, in support of teacher training in photonic theory and practice. Trained teachers will expose the Ella Grasso Technical High School students enrolled in physics and electronics courses to the newest technology in light energy.
- Olga Sipolin Children's Fund: Funds will be used to purchase books for a book club discussion group at Eli Whitney Technical High School. Up to 60 students participating in the program would have the opportunity to read and discuss literature. The grant request was in the amount of \$5,000.
- Olga Sipolin Children's Fund – Eli Whitney Tools for Income-Eligible Students: This \$5,000 grant will allow for the purchase of tools, uniforms and other required technology trade educational items for income-eligible students at Eli Whitney Technical High School.
- Toyota Tapestry Grant: This \$10,000 grant will allow for the development of an inquiry-based science project at Ellis Technical High School. The program will incorporate effective strategies for the development of language arts and reading literacy through an interdisciplinary study of personal fitness, human body systems, and experimental design and data analysis.
- AutoZone Incorporated Community Grant: This \$1,000 grant will enable Grasso Technical High School to purchase up-to-date informational and instructional materials in automechanics technology.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective December 2004)

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NOTE: The Board will meet on Wednesday, February 2, 2005. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of ***The Board Report***. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us.