



THE BOARD REPORT



2003-2004: Issue 3

January 7, 2004

The following is a summary of the January 7, 2004, meeting of the State Board of Education.

PRESENTATION BY THE BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

At its August 2003 retreat, the State Board of Education decided to invite representatives of each of the Education Reference Group (ERG) I districts to attend a board meeting in the 2003-04 school year to discuss their district's performance and needs. Representing the Bridgeport Public Schools at the January 2004 meeting were Superintendent of Schools Sonia Diaz-Salcedo, Associate Superintendent Clarence Tolbert and Board Member Alice Nealon. The presenters were asked to respond to a series of questions sent to them in advance and to summarize for the Board progress made and areas that continue to need improvement in the Bridgeport Public Schools. In addition, districts were asked to reflect on what assistance from the state would help them achieve their goals. Below are key points raised during the Bridgeport officials' presentation to the State Board of Education.

Superintendent Diaz-Salcedo told the Board that Bridgeport is very serious about improving academic achievement and the climate in its public schools. The local board's priorities include improving student achievement, increasing staff expectations for student achievement and increasing parental involvement in the education of their children. Each priority, she added, can be implemented in very specific, measurable ways. Dr. Diaz-Salcedo expressed concern that Bridgeport's CAPT scores declined this year. While participation increased, the district did not meet the 95 percent rate required by No Child Left Behind. To address this, principals have been charged with responsibility for ensuring that parents are aware of the importance of CAPT and that test results will become part of each student's portfolio. Incentives to pass the CAPT include earning a special tassel to wear at graduation and receiving cash awards from local businesses.

Dr. Tolbert discussed the school system's involvement with the University of Pittsburg, Institute for Learning, a national group of researchers and educators who promote the ideal that we must prepare all students to think critically. A districtwide literacy program was implemented, and the data derived from quarterly assessments is used to drive change within the school system. The school system regularly analyzes cohort trends to target specific areas of instruction.

In response to a question concerning district efforts to improve mathematics performance, Superintendent Diaz-Salcedo explained that the school system is using "connected math" to force students to think critically and understand the relevancy of their school work to their lives. In addition, literacy and numeracy coaches, trained by the Institute for Learning, work directly with teachers in implementing research-based methods and materials in the classroom.

One barrier to moving ahead is the lag in per pupil expenditures in Bridgeport, Dr. Diaz-Salcedo noted. Bridgeport ranks last in spending among districts in its Education Reference Group. She attributed this spending disparity to the cap placed on the poverty index calculation and said the state could assist by examining equity issues associated with this calculation.

Other initiatives to improve achievement in Bridgeport include attracting good teachers to the summer school program by nearly doubling the salary; reassigning administrators based on school needs and skills of principals; using Title I funds to support fully certified staff; offering a variety of programs to encourage students to read (e.g., Governor's Summer Reading Challenge and Superintendent's Literacy Campaign); standardizing mid-term and final exams at the high school level in required courses, to ensure consistency in the curriculum;

and implementation of a mentor program to assist new teachers.

Discussion ensued regarding how best to ensure that mobile students do not “lose ground” when transferring to another school within the district. Superintendent Diaz-Salcedo described efforts toward this goal, including the need to ensure that records are kept current and are transferred promptly. Additionally, a computerized skill-based student information system will provide information on each student’s progress in mastering skills expected of students systemwide at each grade level. The Board discussed with Bridgeport officials the potential advantages of using a uniform reading program in all Bridgeport schools. While Bridgeport uses a variety of texts, Dr. Diaz-Salcedo told the Board that the literacy skills learned at specific intervals during the school year at each grade remain consistent throughout the district.

The superintendent said she believes it would be beneficial for the K-12 school system to work more closely with higher education institutions in terms of preparing teachers to work in urban districts. The Board considered the rationale supporting higher education institutions offering special training to teachers who plan to work in urban districts. Urban students have different needs, and teachers would benefit by developing teaching strategies and classroom management skills geared specifically toward these unique needs, Superintendent Diaz-Salcedo commented. The advantages of using the Bridgeport public schools as a learning laboratory for area colleges were discussed.

State Board of Education Chairperson Craig Toensing stated that he is encouraged by the approach the Bridgeport Public School System is taking to improve student achievement, describing it as “intelligent and logical.”

2003 CONNECTICUT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE TEST (CAPT) RESULTS

Highlights of the report on the 2003 CAPT results include:

- ✍ 41,439 Grade 10 students were assessed in reading, writing, mathematics and science, an increase of 1,897;
- ✍ the overall percentage of students scoring at the state goal level increased in mathematics, reading and writing and remained the same in science;
- ✍ the percentage of students reaching the statewide goals on all four subtests rose from 11.8 percent in 1995 to 26.6 percent in 1992;
- ✍ the overall percentages of students scoring at proficient or above declined slightly in all four categories;
- ✍ 94 of the state’s 175 public high schools have achieved the standards for adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act, based on performance on the 2003 CAPT results; and
- ✍ 81 public high schools did not make AYP due to a variety of reasons: whole school reading and math achievement (5 schools), whole school math achievement (20 schools), whole school reading achievement (1 school), subgroup math or reading achievement (20 schools), participation rate lower than 95 percent (34 schools) and graduation rate (1 school).

SCHOOLS MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Results of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) serve as the basis for determining whether high schools have made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in accordance with the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Based on 2003 CAPT results, 94 of 175 Connecticut public high schools have achieved the standards for AYP. The remaining 81 Connecticut high schools did not make AYP for reasons including overall achievement, participation or performance by a

particular student subgroup on one portion of the CAPT. The results will be used at the school and district levels to address the reason(s) for not making AYP.

Commissioner Sternberg noted that the 2003 CAPT results show an overall increase in the percentage of students reaching the statewide goals on all four CAPT subtests from 11.8 percent in 1995 to 26.6 percent in 2003. Participation, too, has increased, she stated.

Six of the 81 schools, including four Title 1 schools, that did not make AYP have been identified for the second consecutive year as not making AYP and have been identified as "in need of improvement." Under NCLB, Title I schools that have been identified as in need of improvement must offer a choice option to the parents of students within those schools to attend another public school in the district that made AYP, or another program (e.g., school within a school).

Commissioner Sternberg noted that 34 of the 81 schools that did not make AYP were placed in that category because they did not meet the federal 95 percent participation standard on the CAPT, either for the whole school or for one or more subgroups. With regard to improving the participation rate, she added, "More needs to be done. We're confident that the efforts being made by Connecticut's school districts will lead to significant improvement in the spring 2004 administration of the test."

CAPT data is available via the Internet at www.captreports.com.

FALL HIRING REPORT

A report summarizing an analysis of fall hiring data from the fall of 2000 through the fall of 2003 stated that 4,300 positions needed to be filled in 2003, compared with 5,457 in 2000. While the number has decreased, the report warns that, "The relative good news does not eliminate the concern that 19,000 certified staff—approximately 40 percent of all teachers and administrators—are predicted to retire in the next decade. Urban, priority and poor rural school districts continue to struggle in the hiring and, particularly, the retention of staff." Education Reference Group I (ERG I) districts had the greatest percentage of vacancies on October 1 (18.5), a 5.2 percent increase compared to 2002.

Areas such as special education, mathematics (Grades 7-12), bilingual education, music, speech and language pathology, world

languages and the sciences continue to have shortages. Designated shortage areas for any given school year are determined by the sum of (1) the number of vacancies because no qualified person was found, plus (2) the weighted sum of the number of durational shortage area permits and the number of minor assignments; plus (3) median applications weighted 25 percent; plus (4) the number of first Connecticut certificates issued or renewed per position, weighted 25 percent.

The report also notes that, based on the 2002-03 Educator Staff File data, 2.4 percent of Connecticut's teachers teaching core academic subjects are not "highly qualified" based on the federal definition. This will have implications for districts to find and hire fully certified teachers.

APPOINTMENT TO CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The Board appointed Ellen V. Whitford, Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Central Connecticut State University, to serve on the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards for a term ending September 30, 2005. Dr. Whitford will fill the unexpired term of Rodney A. Lane, Dean of the School of Education at Southern Connecticut State University. The Council advises the Governor, State Board of Education and Education Committee of the General Assembly on matters relating to teacher preparation, recruitment, certification, professional development, assessment and evaluation, and teacher professional discipline.

DRAFT POSITION STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE ARTS

The Board discussed a draft Position Statement on Language Arts, developed by the Board's Policy Development Committee. The statement reads in part, "The language arts are unique among the subjects because the underlying domains – reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing – include skills and competencies that are applied to learning in all of the disciplines." The statement describes the roles that teachers, schools, parents and educator preparation programs play in ensuring a quality language arts education.

The statement will be disseminated statewide upon adoption by the Board, which is scheduled to take place at its February meeting.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN 2004

The Board approved Commissioner Sternberg's proposed organization plan. Commissioner Sternberg presented her plan after inviting suggestions from within and outside the Department. The plan sets forth the structure of the State Department of Education and is designed to enhance both internal and external communication. It establishes a structure to support two overriding functions of the Department: (1) educational programs and (2) finance and internal operations. The overall goal of the plan is to improve achievement of all Connecticut students and to close the achievement gaps among them.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDS: AFTER SCHOOL PROJECT GRANT

The Board approved the submission of the Department's application for funds (\$225,000) to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for the "After School Project Grant." The funds would be used to establish an intermediary to support the collaborative work of the After School Committee, a state committee created by Public Act No. 03-206. The intermediary will work to increase the quality and capacity of current programs, raise public awareness and increase opportunities for investment of additional public and private resources to expand and sustain quality after-school opportunities.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDS: CHANGING CHINA – A GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

The Board approved the submission of the Department's application for funds to the United States Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program for the "Changing China: A Geographic Perspective" project. Funds would be used to support the Department's initiative in international studies and exchange by allowing 17 teachers and the project director to conduct a field experience in several locations in China. Participants will document their experiences while traveling through diaries, ethnographies, reports, photographs and lesson plans.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDS: STATE ACTION FOR EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Board approved the Department's application for a State Action for Education Leadership Project II (SAELP II) grant (\$600,000 - \$200,000 in each of three years) part of the Wallace Foundation Grants to States to Strengthen School and District Leadership. The application expands on current initiatives and will be used to enhance initiatives to support administrator induction, urban leadership and distributed leadership, with the overall goal of increasing student achievement.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM (RVTSS)

School Construction Project

The Board approved a request for additional funding for the Vocational-Technical School System Long-Range Comprehensive Strategic Educational Physical Plan Master Plan Project at Norwich Regional Vocational-Technical School, Mohegan Campus. The request for an additional \$10,349,000 will be submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education for inclusion in the 2003-2004 school construction priority list. Additional funds are needed to support the relocation of the Norwich RVTSS at the Mohegan Campus of the Thames Valley Community College, which is being consolidated and relocated to the Thames Valley Campus.

Parent Involvement Policy

The Board approved the RVTSS Parent Involvement Policy, required by the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The policy was designed to ensure the participation of parents in their child's academic learning and other school activities and acknowledges the role they play in their child's success in school. The policy addresses in particular the active involvement of parents of students in Title I schools on a district-level advisory committee charged with reviewing the annual school evaluations for the content and effectiveness of parent involvement activities. It also sets forth support that will be provided to schools and parents to strengthen parental involvement in the Regional Vocational-Technical School System.

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CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2003)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS
<p>Address: 165 Capitol Ave. Room 301 Hartford, CT 06106</p> <p>Telephone: (860) 713-6510</p> <p>Facsimile: (860) 713-7002</p> <p>E-Mail: pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us</p> <p>To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Public Information, 860-713-6526.</p>	<p><i>Craig E. Toensing, Chairperson</i> <i>Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson</i> <i>Amparo Adib-Samii</i> <i>Donald J. Coolican</i> <i>Patricia B. Luke</i> <i>Daniel Martinez</i> <i>Terri L. Masters</i> <i>Timothy J. McDonald</i> <i>Allan B. Taylor</i> <i>Yi-Mei Truxes</i> <i>Annika L. Warren</i></p> <p><i>Betty J. Sternberg, Secretary</i></p> <p><i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i></p>

NOTE: The Board will meet on Wednesday, February 4, 2004. 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

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