



# THE BOARD REPORT



2005-2006: Issue 2

November 2, 2005

*The following is a summary of the November 2, 2005, meeting of the State Board of Education.*

## BUDGET PROPOSALS EDUCATION LEARNING INITIATIVES FOR EXCELLENCE (EdLIFE)

Commissioner Betty J. Sternberg presented mid-term budget proposals to support the EdLIFE initiatives in the coming year. The program initiatives are itemized below, and were proposed after considering the Board's and the Governor's continuing priorities, including early childhood education and technology. The report contains information on the original request, the amount appropriated in fiscal year 2005-2006, and the amount requested for the second half of the biennium.

*Who are we teaching? (Early Childhood Education and Charter Schools initiatives)*

### **To serve more preschool children:**

- \$14.6 million to support an additional 2,207 slots for 3- and 4-year-old children in Education Reference Group I (ERG I) school districts; \$535,000 to support eligible districts in a competitive grant program to expand preschool access; and
- \$2.4 million to Expand Preschool Access and provide model pre-kindergarten and kindergarten public laboratory schools and programs.

### **To provide facilities to serve more preschool children:**

- Reimbursement be raised to 95 percent for preschool instruction and program space in the 19 school readiness priority school districts, and that all other school districts receive a 20 percentage point facility construction bonus for preschool facility development, with the total reimbursement not exceeding 80 percent total state support.

### **To provide high quality programs by increasing the skills of pre-service and in-service preschool teachers:**

- \$133,000 for an Alternate Route to Certification Program that would lead to cross-endorsement at the preschool level.

### **To provide high-quality services, instruction, assessment and evaluation to preschools:**

- \$1 million to develop and pilot the critical teacher-training component of young children's assessment.

### **To stimulate the provision of full-day kindergarten:**

- \$2 million to support the start-up of full-day kindergarten programs for students who need them (grants not to exceed \$20,000 per classroom for up to 100 classrooms); and capital budget funds, based on districts' requests, for kindergarten facilities.

### **To provide families in ERG I communities with the necessary services to support the success of their preschool-age children:**

- \$1 million to support a targeted program to improve the literacy skills of the parents of the children whose achievement we are trying to raise.

## **EdLIFE Proposals (continued from page 1)**

### **To increase the enrollment and service capacity of Connecticut's charter school effort:**

- \$5,304,000 to fund the four charter schools that have been approved by the State Board of Education and \$4,288,000 to increase the enrollment caps in existing charter schools.

*What and how are we teaching?*

### **To integrate the use of laptop computers in instruction in all Connecticut high schools and middle schools :**

- \$1,132,500 for Internet, computer-assisted writing tools and professional development for teachers in the effective use of these tools.

### **To provide increased and more rigorous choices for Connecticut high school students :**

- \$140,000 to pay the registration fees for all Grade 10 and 11 students in the ERG I towns and the Connecticut Technical High Schools serving ERG I towns to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) twice, beginning in 2006-2007.

### **To improve curriculum in priority school districts:**

- \$1 million for the review of mathematics, science and language arts curriculums for kindergarten through Grade 12 by a panel of experts. Those documents judged to be outstanding would be recommended for use in districts with schools designated "in corrective action" under the terms of the No Child Left Behind Act.

*Who is teaching?*

- \$0. The State Board of Education will not request funding for those initiatives that support teacher and administrator recruitment and retention, as were proposed in the first year of the biennium. Rather, it will establish a task force to examine all elements of attracting and retaining high-quality teachers. Proposals based on the task force's recommendations are expected to be included in requests for the next biennial budget.

*How well are we teaching?*

### **To expand and enhance the State Department of Education's use of technology to support student and teacher success:**

- \$2 million to integrate Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) with a Connecticut collection data warehouse to support the use of the new State Assigned Student ID (SASID) to develop decision support tools for Department staff members, teachers, administrators, policymakers, students, parents and researchers. \$500,000 of this amount will be used to develop a new system to manage the teacher certification process.

### **To more adequately assess the achievement of special populations :**

- \$1.5 million to develop a full set of separate tests for students with disabilities (Connecticut Mastery Test, Grades 3-8, and Connecticut Academic Performance Test, Grade 10), as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Federal funds do not cover the cost of developing these assessments.

The Board is expected to take action on the Commissioner's recommendations at its meeting on December 7, 2005.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER FRAMEWORK PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 12**

The Board approved the *2005 Connecticut English Language Learner Framework*. The framework reflects the recommendations and observations that were reviewed by the English Language Learner Framework Advisory Committee as a result of public input and comments and the field review process. This framework differs from those developed for other content areas in that grade-level performance is based upon the degree of English language proficiency in the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The overarching goals of the framework are to enable English language learners to use English (1) to communicate effectively in social settings; (2) to achieve in all academic settings; and (3) in culturally appropriate ways.

## 2006 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The Board adopted legislative proposals for the 2006 session of the Connecticut General Assembly. A brief summary of the proposals follows:

- Consolidate the Connecticut Technical High School System's (CTHSS) reporting requirements to the General Assembly (reports on enrollment; trade reauthorization, articulation agreements) and incorporate long-term planning for the CTHSS into the Department's long-term planning procedures and reporting.
- Repeal the Vocational-Technical Advisory Committee that was established in 1988. Trade advisory committees and districtwide focus groups serve the CTHSS. In addition, the 2004 General Assembly established a system of statewide industry advisory committees for each career cluster.
- Make the CTHSS eligible for funding to upgrade or install wiring to support telecommunications and other information transmission equipment to be used for educational purposes.
- Apply the redirection of use provisions to all school construction projects except projects exclusively to remedy damage from fire and catastrophe or certified indoor air quality emergencies or to correct code violations.
- Specify rules for turn-key school construction projects by defining "turn-key purchase," requiring that the Department of Education conduct architectural code reviews of turn-key projects as with any other construction project for which state grant assistance is sought, and requiring the application of school construction space standards to turn-key construction.
- Limit school construction grant eligibility of construction change orders or other change directives to a maximum of 5 percent of the authorized total project costs.
- Reduce the requirement that districts report to the Department of Education on the condition of school facilities and the action taken to implement their long-term school building program and indoor air quality program, from every year to every two years; and provide that the Department report to the General Assembly on these issues every two years rather than every year.
- Amend statutes concerning reading instruction for priority school district students with reading difficulties to shift the focus from assisting students in Grades 4 and 6 to those in Grades 1-3; and strengthen the provisions concerning personal reading plans.
- Add to the provisions of policies to address bullying in schools, required of local and regional boards of education, bullying that takes place on the school bus or outside the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on the student's academic performance or safety in school.
- Allow students enrolled in Connecticut teacher preparation programs to do their required student teaching in approved foreign schools, pursuant to written cooperative agreements between institutions of higher education in Connecticut and such institutions in other countries, with the agreement of state authorities.
- Make the state statutes concerning the provision of special education, special education due process hearings and evaluations, the State Special Education Advisory Council, and medications in schools comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Require that for a new school facility or school renovation to be eligible for state school construction reimbursement it must comply with such energy efficiency standards as may be established by state authorities.

## REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR THE APPROVAL OF CONNECTICUT EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The Board appointed Dr. James M. Granfield, Dr. Lynne W. Clark, Mary J. Pittoni and Brian V. Beaudin to serve on the Review Committee for the Approval of Connecticut Educator Preparation Programs, from November 2, 2005, through September 30, 2008. This committee is responsible for studying the institutional report submitted by the institution seeking accreditation, the visiting team report, and the institution's response to the visiting team report. It also interviews representatives of the institution and, based on all information considered, makes recommendations to the Commissioner concerning the accreditation of the educator preparation program.

**“HIGH PERFORMING/HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS”  
A PRESENTATION BY ALEX JOHNSTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CONNECTICUT COALITION FOR ACHIEVEMENT NOW**

Alex Johnston, Executive Director of the Coalition for Achievement Now, attributed high achievement in high poverty, urban schools to (1) high expectations; (2) a curriculum aligned to state assessments; and (3) ongoing internal assessments to ensure that students have learned what has been taught. It is possible to replicate success, Mr. Johnston asserted. Two options exist: (1) create new high performing schools and (2) focus on transforming existing schools. The latter option, he explained, often has more political support, but not as much sustained success. We must increase the awareness of the need to change, increase the pressure to change and provide a greater level of support to those involved in effecting change. Mr. Johnston continued, stating that charter schools such as Amistad Academy have a proven record of success and can be replicated elsewhere. It is important for the staff members to be part of a team effort to support the school’s mission and participate in a collaborative decision making process, he added. To support charter schools in their efforts to become high performing/high poverty schools, Mr. Johnston proposed that the Board lift enrollment caps, fund charter schools on a per pupil basis consistent with that for students in local school systems, and provide support for facilities for the charter schools. Further, the State Board could help generate public support for making necessary changes to improve student achievement by helping shape the public’s discussion and by adopting goals that would lead to such change. He added, “I would encourage you to work with the legislature – those who set policy – and inform them of the broader vision for public education. We have solutions that are within our grasp,” Mr. Johnston said, “and we can do this. If we don’t, we all need to take responsibility for the outcome.”

Dacia Toll, President of Achievement First, and former Director of Amistad Academy, stated that she is “extremely optimistic” that successful models can be replicated within urban schools. She continued, “School leaders must take on a new role. They must be serious about transformation, in order for change to occur. A lot rests on presenting the right attitude, making it clear to the stakeholders that they are partners in the process, and providing ample time and support (professional development; conversations with teachers about curriculum and instruction, etc.).”

**CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATING REPORT**

The Board received the Report on the Operation of the Charter Schools in Connecticut, as required by state statute. The report makes the following recommendations to the General Assembly:

- Funding structure option 1: Require that the Task Force charged to review the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula consider the positive and negative effects of the ECS grant following a student to a charter school and revise the charter school per pupil state grant accordingly.
- Funding structure option 2: Absent such a draft recommendation from the ECS Task Force, revise the current funding structure of the charter school per pupil state grant and revise the current funding to more adequately cover the operation and facility needs of charter schools.
- Provide charter schools access to and funding for interdistrict transportation to assist in the reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation.
- Encourage expansion of the geographic reach of charter schools by giving more weight to the scoring criteria of the application that identifies students underserved by the traditional school structure.
- Expand the provision for school construction grants for charter schools based on the recommendations made by the task force charged with studying state charter schools’ long-term capital needs.
- Increase enrollment cap to 500.
- Allow charter schools to be eligible for renewal up to ten years, subject to a charter school complying with specific requirements.
- Provide a mechanism in the funding formula that offers additional bonus grants to high performing charter schools that exceed the progress made by their host districts for three consecutive years in all content areas of the Connecticut Mastery Test.

**HIGH SCHOOL REFORM EFFORTS**

The Department summarized efforts in Connecticut to address the educational needs of our high school students. High school reform efforts in Connecticut began in 2000 with the release of *“Reconceptualizing Connecticut’s High Schools: A Blueprint for Continuous Change.”* This was followed by the passage of legislation requiring

## **High School Reform Efforts (continued from page 4)**

graduates (Class of 2006) to meet specific basic skills requirements in order to graduate. Other initiatives related to improving secondary education, a result of joint efforts by the State Department of Education, Connecticut Association of Schools and the Department of Higher Education, include the development of academically challenging courses in career and technology education, Project Lead the Way, and dual enrollment programs (high school and college). Governor Rell convened a one-day “Call to Action” summit this fall, which placed a critical focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Connecticut also submitted a grant application to the National Governors Association that will support strategies to improve high school graduation and college readiness rates.

This past spring, a committee was formed to review best practices and research related to secondary schools. This, in turn, led to the establishment of the High School Framework Committee, which includes representatives of many education-interest groups. This group will establish a vision, beliefs and recommended components including strong leadership, rigorous curriculum choices related to real world experiences, high expectations, rich professional development, data-based decision making, personalized learning environment and global consciousness. The committee will prepare a draft framework by mid-January 2006, and will then develop a transition model for implementation, to be shared at a fall 2006 high school conference.

### **HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS UNDER THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT (NCLB)**

NCLB requires that all teachers who teach core academic subjects be determined to be “highly qualified” by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. Every teacher must demonstrate subject matter competency through at least one of four processes to be considered “highly qualified.” These include (1) passing a state level assessment of academic content; (2) holding a major in the core academic subject(s) being taught; (3) holding a master’s degree (or attaining National Board Certification) in the core academic subject(s) being taught; or (4) demonstrating subject matter competency through the district’s High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) plan.

Under NCLB, core academics include English, reading/language arts, science, mathematics, world languages, the arts, history, civics and government, geography and economics. Teachers new to the profession after July 1, 2006, must hold full state certification, a Bachelor’s degree, and demonstrate competency in the core academic subject area.

Paraprofessionals who provide instructional assistance in Title I funded programs must be determined to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This requirement does not apply to paraprofessionals who only provide personal care services. To be determined as “highly qualified,” a paraprofessional must have completed the equivalent of two years of college or hold an Associate’s degree, or have successfully passed a state level assessment (i.e., Parapro examination).

### **SUPPORT FOR INTEL CONNECTICUT AS HOST SITE FOR 2012 INTEL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR**

The Board adopted a resolution in support of a proposal by a broad-based consortium of Connecticut science and education organizations to host the 2012 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair at the Connecticut Convention Center. This science fair is the world’s largest pre-college science competition. It provides an opportunity for the world’s best young scientists and inventors to come together to share ideas, showcase cutting edge science projects and compete for monetary awards and scholarships.

### **IMPROVING THE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMS**

The Board approved the Department’s application for a grant titled, “Improving the Health, Education and Well-Being of Young People Through Coordinated School Health Programs,” for submission to the Centers for Disease Control. Funds will be used to strengthen the infrastructure for building school, family and community partnerships to implement HIV/STD prevention programs and provide professional development for teachers.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GRANT**

The Board approved the Department’s application for a grant in the amount of \$200,000 to the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation. Funds will be used to establish a system of recognition and responsive intervention to four-year-old children who may be at risk for or experiencing pre-reading or learning difficulties.

**2005 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) RESULTS**

The Board discussed the results of the 2005 NAEP Grades 4 and 8 mathematics and reading assessments. Connecticut results on the NAEP show that the percentage of Grade 4 and 8 students scoring at or above the NAEP proficient level in mathematics and reading continues to remain consistently above the national average, and the percentage of students excluded from the assessment is lower than the national average. Although Connecticut students continue to score above the national average, there are persistent gaps in the performance of gender, racial/ethnic and economic subgroups. “These unacceptable gaps in achievement between wealthy students and their less-wealthy counterparts, minority and nonminority students, and male and female students, must be addressed,” Commissioner Sternberg noted. The national report is available on the web at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

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**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
(effective July 1, 2005)

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