



THE BOARD REPORT



2004-2005: Issue 2 October-November 2004

The following is a summary of the October 6 and November 3, 2004, meetings of the State Board of Education.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S PRIORITIES *Educational Learning Initiatives for Excellence (ED-LIFE)*

On October 6, Commissioner Sternberg concluded her presentation on “Educational Learning Initiatives for Excellence in the 21st Century,” containing new program initiatives for the next state biennial budget. The ideas stemmed from the State Board’s discussion at its summer retreat and respond to Governor Rell’s challenge to be bold, while being mindful of fiscal realities.

At its September 2004 meeting the Board discussed two of the four initiatives – one focusing extensively on meeting the needs of preschool children and early childhood education, and the other focusing on what and how we are teaching (increased and more rigorous choices for high school students, improvements to the curriculum in priority school districts, use of technology in the classroom, and sharing best practices).

The October 6 discussion responded to the following two questions and initiatives proposed to address them:

Who is teaching?

- Encourage an exchange of ideas and techniques among teachers in urban, suburban and rural districts.
- Retain outstanding teachers in priority school districts who teach in designated shortage areas.
- Attract and retain outstanding teachers in priority school districts by revising legislation to allow reemployment of retired teachers and administrators.
- Provide support to new teachers in Education Reference Group I (ERG I) districts (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham).
- Reward teachers for serving as mentors or cooperating teachers.
- Attract teachers to serve as principals in priority school districts.
- Make recommendations about how to attract and retain high-quality educators to the teaching profession.

How well are we teaching?

- Expand and enhance the State Department’s use of technology to support student and teacher success.
- More adequately assess the achievement of special populations.

Priority Ranking

On November 3, the Board adopted the following priority order of initiatives, which will be presented to the Office of Policy and Management as budget options for 2005-07. The approved list contains the Commissioner’s recommendations to the Board based on its prior discussions and input received by the Commissioner from colleagues throughout the state, and additional priorities of the Board.

Priority 1:

- To serve more preschool children in ERG I districts;
- To provide facilities so that more preschool children can be served; and
- To provide high-quality services, instruction, assessment and evaluation to preschools;

\$17.2 million in 2005-06

Priority 2:

- To provide support for new teachers in ERG I districts.

\$4.2 million annually

Priority 3:

- To expand and enhance the State Department of Education's use of technology to support student and teacher success.

\$2.5 million in 2005-06 and \$4 million in 2006-07

Priority 4:

- To establish a pilot program in the priority school districts that provides Grade 9 and 10 English and social studies teachers and their students with laptop computers.

\$4.7 million in 2005-06 and \$6.5 million in 2006-07

Priority 5:

- To improve curriculum in priority school districts.

\$3.75 million annually

Priority 6:

- To develop a Teacher Leadership Exchange Corps and state incentive bonuses and local multiyear contracts for outstanding teachers in priority school districts. The first year would be used to develop selection criteria for the Exchange Corps option at no cost. The second year cost would be \$900,000. Year one would also be used to identify selection criteria and incentives to retain outstanding teachers in priority school districts. The cost in 2006-07 would be \$3 million.

\$3.9 million in 2006-07

Priority 7:

- To attract teachers to serve as principals in priority school districts by providing principal leadership incentive grants and offering tuition reimbursement for new administrators in priority school districts.

\$1,245,000 in FY 2005-06 and \$1,245,000 in FY 2006-07

Priority 8:

- To support school districts with schools designated "in need of improvement" by providing highly focused technical assistance (leadership coaches and content-area consultants).

\$1,160,000 in FY 2005-06 and \$1,160,000 in FY 2006-07

Priority 9:

- Funds would be used to (a) increase the per pupil allocation for existing charter schools, (b) increase the number of charter schools and (c) increase the enrollment caps on Connecticut's charter schools (Note: Items 9(a) and 9(c) are subject to State Board of Education review and approval on December 1, 2004).

\$6,972,500 in FY 2005-06 and \$11,250,000 in 2006-07

The Board's expansion options were forwarded to the Office of Policy and Management for its consideration.

TEN PERCENT BUDGET REDUCTION OPTIONS

In response to instructions received from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the Board was required to submit current-year budget reduction options amounting to 10 percent of its budget, without laying off staff members.

The following options were approved for submission to OPM:

- a \$210 million reduction in the Education Cost Sharing Grant, which would result in a 13.4 percent reduction in ECS revenue;
- a \$210 million reduction applied proportionately to the state's categorical general fund grants; or
- a \$105 million reduction in ECS and a \$105 million reduction in the categorical general fund grants.

Commissioner Sternberg stated, "There is no logical or reasonable method for reducing the budget by 10 percent without significantly harming the education of Connecticut's children or impacting the municipal tax burden."

DR. ERIC J. COOPER

“POVERTY IS NOT DESTINY: CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP”

The Board launched its 2004-05 Speaker Series, featuring nationally recognized educators with expertise in closing the achievement gap. Dr. Eric J. Cooper, president of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education at the Council of Great City Schools in Washington, D.C., and the University of Georgia, focused his remarks on ways to overcome the impact of poverty on learning.

Dr. Cooper stated that the achievement gap is rooted in the following:

- o a belief that intelligence is innate and that educational disparity is a fact of nature;
- o a lack of will by stakeholders to close the gap;
- o disparities in how nonwhite children of poverty are raised compared to white middle- and upper-class children;
- o lack of opportunities for poor children of color to attend “good” preschools;
- o the existence of a cultural and economic gap between teachers and children of color, which causes missed opportunities for learning, and may result in teacher application of negative stereotypes;
- o unequal access to high-level courses and challenging curriculum (i.e., academic tracking);
- o negative peer pressure exerted by nonwhites on nonwhites about “acting white” or “too smart;”
- o inadequate professional development for teachers and principals;
- o lack of parental involvement in bridging the instructional gap between school and home; and
- o the misalignment of tests, standards and instruction and its impact on dropout rates.

Dr. Cooper said he regards sustained professional development as one of the key ways to help close the achievement gap, noting the importance of educators understanding how best to teach African American students. Teachers must understand students’ culture and apply cutting-edge research that focuses on the diverse learning and cultural needs of students in urban settings. He added that minority students respond to ritual, rhythm, recitation, repetition, and relationships built around “universal themes.” In addition, Dr. Cooper cited the benefits of differentiated instruction, including whole class, small group and independent activities geared to meet individual students’ learning styles. Dr. Cooper explained the necessity of conducting an “educational audit” and basing all initiatives to improve curriculum and instruction on data. “Data strips ideology of its power,” Dr. Cooper explained.

Lastly, Dr. Cooper stressed the importance of hope and confidence in our ability to make significant improvements in our public schools.

Dr. Cooper earned a master of arts degree in special education, an Ed.M. in educational administration and a doctorate in interdisciplinary studies from Teachers College, Columbia University.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)

The Board discussed the Commissioner’s report on adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB. More than 80 percent of Connecticut’s elementary and middle schools analyzed for AYP under the federal NCLB law achieved this standard, based on results of the 2003 Connecticut Mastery Test. Of 806 schools, 661 met the following standards:

- o 65 percent of student must be proficient in mathematics on the CMT;
- o 57 percent must be proficient in reading;
- o 70 percent must be at or above the basic performance level in writing; and
- o 95 percent must participate in the CMT testing.

18 percent of schools (145) did not make AYP, representing a slight decrease from the prior year. Of the 145, 97 have been identified as “in need of improvement,” which means that these schools have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years in the same content area. Of the 97 schools, 8 are now in their fourth year of identification as “in need of improvement.” As a result, they must plan for restructuring for the 2005-06 school year if they do not make AYP in the next testing cycle. In addition, 122 of the 145 schools identified as not making AYP and 81 of the 97 schools identified as in need of improvement are schools receiving Title 1 funds. NCLB prescribes consequences for Title I schools that are identified as in need of improvement, including the development of a rigorous two-year school improvement plan that is comprehensive and focuses primarily on the school’s instructional plan. Professional development for teachers, focused on core academic subjects and targeted to the school’s greatest areas of need. Schools must also provide to all eligible children the opportunity to transfer to another public school within the district that has not been identified as in need of improvement.

There are eight schools in Connecticut in the fourth year of identification as “in need of improvement.” These schools are required to plan for a major restructuring of the school in the event that they do not make adequate yearly progress this school year. The state will target \$2 million in school improvement funds to these districts and to the districts in which the 63 schools that are designated as in need of improvement at the whole school level are located.

SCIENCE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Board approved revisions to the 2004 Connecticut Science Curriculum Framework. The framework was adopted by the Board in September 2004. The revisions include the relocation of a paragraph that states that district science curriculum development should not be limited to address only the “expected performances” outlined in the framework. Rather, they are intended to be used in tandem to ensure that students learning will be supported by a broad range of science learning experiences. The revised document also notes that less emphasis should be placed on implementing inquiry as a set of process skills and more emphasis should be placed on implementing inquiry as a thought process that uses evidence to develop or revise an explanation.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY STATEMENT

The Board adopted the State Department of Education’s Affirmative Action Policy Statement, in recognition of its responsibility to uphold the principles of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. The policy statement is based on both the spirit and the letter of state and federal antidiscrimination laws, regulations and executive orders and is intended to establish affirmative action and equal employment opportunity as immediate and necessary agency objectives.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDS: IMPROVING THE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMS

The Board approved the 2005-06 cooperative agreement application titled “Improving the Health, Education and Well-Being of Young People Through Coordinated School Health Programs”, for submission to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This continuation application is for the third year of a five-year funding period. Funds will be used to support the statewide infrastructure for building school, family and community partnerships to effectively implement HIV/STD prevention programs for youth in Connecticut, teacher training and monitoring the efficacy of HIV/STD Education.

GIFT FROM ING FINANCIAL ADVISORS

The Board received a gift from ING Financial Advisors to support the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Program. The \$19,000 grant allows the Department to sponsor the annual awards ceremony at the Bushnell Theater and support the Connecticut Teacher of the Year’s expenses incurred in the performance of his or her duties.

2005 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The Board adopted the following legislative proposals. This list does not include technical changes to grant statutes or legislative proposals that might be necessary to implement the Ed-Life initiatives or the Department’s budget.

Bilingual education certificate requirements: The proposal is to change the certification requirements so that the educator has to be certified in bilingual education and (1) to teach Grades K-8, has to have successfully completed the PRAXIS II assessment for elementary education; and (2) to teach at the secondary level, has to have successfully completed the PRAXIS II for the specific academic subject to be taught. This proposal was developed to increase the number of available candidates for bilingual educator positions.

Charter school renewals: This proposal is to allow for charter school renewals for up to 10 years, rather than for up to 5 years, providing that requirements relating to charter school accountability are met. Currently, some charter schools have had difficulty raising private funds and securing bank loans because charters cannot be granted for more than five years. It is believed that the longer approval period will assist schools in securing funds.

Charter school health services: This proposal would require towns to provide to state charter schools the same health services that they are required to provide to nonpublic schools in the state and make the towns eligible for reimbursement for a portion of the costs to provide these services. This proposal is to correct the existing inequity in providing health services to charter school students.

Local review of indoor air quality (IAQ) emergency projects: This proposal would make certified school IAQ emergency projects eligible for local design review rather than require that they go through the Department of Education plan review process. This proposal would expedite the consideration of certified school IAQ emergency projects.

Assistive technology for children requiring special education: This proposal would clarify that districts may include assistive technology devices in their rules and regulations about the care and use of material and equipment provided free of charge to students. This proposal will clarify that school districts may require families to assume reasonable costs for damage to assistive technology that is caused by abuse or neglect.

Arrest records: This proposal would require that school districts be provided with records concerning the arrest of a student, rather than just a notice that the student has been arrested. Police departments would be required to provide more detailed arrest information to school districts while, at the same time, addressing issues concerning the security and confidentiality of the arrest information.

Connecticut Technical High School (CTHS) Reporting Requirements: This proposal is to consolidate into a single report, to be submitted to the General Assembly on a biennial basis, CTHS data regarding demographic, enrollment and capacity information; the rolling five-year capital improvement and equipment plan; and trade program evaluations. This proposal is designed to make the reports more useful and to reduce the administrative burden on compiling this information every year.

Title Reversion for 95 percent Funded Projects: This proposal provides that if (1) state reimbursement for the acquisition, purchase or construction of a building was for 95 percent of the eligible costs of such acquisition, purchase or construction and (2) such building ceases to be used for the purposes for which the grant was provided within 20 years of the date of the approval of the project by the General Assembly, title to the building shall revert to the state unless the Commissioner of Education decides otherwise for good cause.

Advisory Committee on Connecticut's Technical High Schools: This proposal is to repeal the statewide advisory committee concerning the state's CTHS. This committee is no longer necessary because the General Assembly, in 2004, established an integrated system of statewide industry advisory committees for each career cluster offered as part of the state's technical high school and community college systems.

2001-2004 CONNECTICUT ADMINISTRATOR TEST (CAT) RESULTS

The Board discussed a report on the eight administrations of the CAT from November 2001 through November 2004. The CAT testing program is a component of the State Department of Education's commitment to the principle that well-trained school leaders are central to improving student achievement. The CAT program fulfills the statutory mandate that applicants shall achieve a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate State Board of Education approved subject-area assessment.

Key findings of the report include the following:

- Overall candidate performance increased over the period 2001-2004; the first-time pass rate of those who took the test between November 2001 and November 2002 was 77 percent, while the pass rate for first-time test-takers between March 2003 and March 2004 was 80 percent.
- The cumulative pass rate for candidates for the period 2001-2004 is 93 percent.
- First-time pass rates for all universities improved over the period 2001-2004; however, performance of first-time test takers varies among the six Connecticut universities that provide administrator preparation, with statistically significant lower pass rates for Sacred Heart and Southern Connecticut State University students.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM (CTHSS)

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL SYSTEM

Superintendent of Schools Abigail L. Hughes presented a report on the CTHSS, including student and staff demographic data. The CTHSS consists of 17 schools and enrolls 10,877 students in Grades 9-12 and 5,000 adult students. 59.5 percent of students are white; 15 percent are black; 24 percent are Hispanic; and 1.5 percent are classified as "other." 64 percent of the student population are males; 36 percent are females. 37 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and 13 percent receive special education services. The number of English language learners has risen from 430 in 2000-01 to 844 in 2003-04. Several initiatives are underway to support the school system's mission statement, including a focus on active instruction, development and use of a curriculum and lesson plan format, heterogeneous grouping, and mathematics and English labs in Grades 9 and 10. Hughes described a learning environment based on respect and the role of students in assuming responsibility for their learning. Superintendent Hughes expressed her commitment to ensuring that graduates of CTHSS will be prepared to continue in a higher education institution, enter a four-year apprenticeship, or be employed in their trade/technology area or a related area.

BUDGET OPTIONS FOR 2005-2007 BIENNIUM

The Board approved the priority order of the following expansion option requests for the 2005-07 biennium:

1. 11 additional full-time Data Processing Technical Analyst positions to support the existing local area network infrastructure (\$440,000 FY 2006; \$453,000 FY 2007);
2. 2 full-time social workers to support the student population at Howell Cheney and Windham technical high schools (\$80,000 FY 2006; \$83,000 FY 2007);
3. 500 computers for library and media centers (\$345,000).

The Department submitted the Board's priority list to the Office of Policy and Management. In turn, the Governor and General Assembly will consider the proposals in the context of the state's overall needs and available resources.

POLICY CONCERNING VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The State Board of Education supports the use of volunteers in the technical high schools. Volunteers lend support to teachers and students, and provide talents and expertise to CTHSS students under professional guidance. The Board amended the policy concerning volunteers by designating the superintendent of schools as the individual authorized to approve volunteers. Volunteers must meet criteria pertaining to their skills, character, fitness and understanding of the legal parameters of volunteer status in the CTHSS.

POLICY CONCERNING SUPERVISION OF IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS

The Board approved the Policy Concerning Supervision of Immediate Family Members in the CTHSS. The policy states that no CTHSS staff member should supervise another staff person who is an immediate family member. If hired before October 6, 2004, staff members may remain in their current positions, but shall be evaluated by a person other than an immediate family member.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2004)

<p style="text-align: center;">ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</p> <p>Address: 165 Capitol Avenue 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 Communications, 860-713-6526.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Craig E. Toensing, Chairperson</i> <i>Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson</i> <i>Donald J. Coolican</i> <i>Tori Hendrix</i> <i>Lynne S. Farrell</i> <i>Patricia B. Luke</i> <i>Terri L. Masters</i> <i>Timothy J. McDonald</i> <i>Allan B. Taylor</i> <i>Callan Walsh</i> <i>Annika L. Warren</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Betty J. Sternberg, Secretary</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i></p>
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NOTE: The next State Board of Education meeting will be held on December 1, 2004. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. at Choate-Rosemary Hall, Carl C. Icahn Center for Science, Getz Auditorium, Wallingford, CT 06492.

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.