



THE BOARD REPORT



2000-01: Issue 8

April 2001

The State Board of Education met on Wednesday, April 4, 2001. Below are highlights of the meeting.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT RESULTS

Commissioner Sergi reported Connecticut's results on the 2000 administration of the Advanced Placement (AP) program of The College Board. The AP program is an intensive program of college-level courses and examinations that is sponsored by The College Board. Currently, 31 AP courses are offered. AP examinations are offered worldwide in May each year in participating schools.

The American Council on Education has established that a score of at least three (on a scale of one to five) be required in order for a college to award credit. Individual colleges, however, may set higher standards. Almost all colleges have AP policies; 1400, including most in Connecticut, allow sophomore standing if sufficient AP credits have been earned. This allows students to save money, move more rapidly to advanced courses, or gain additional time for other college opportunities.

Major findings of the 2000 AP results include:

- Connecticut ranked second nationally in participation of comprehensive public high schools. Students from 138 of 145 comprehensive public and charter high schools took an AP exam.
- Connecticut students have had a consistently higher percentage of students with scores of three or better than students nationwide since the data were first available in 1978-79.
- Connecticut nonpublic school students have scored slightly better than public school students since the reporting of these data began in 1983-84. However, in 3 of the past 10 years, Connecticut public school students had a higher percentage of three or better scores than their nonpublic school peers.
- The top participation rates (candidates per 1000 Grade 11 and 12 students) were found in Hall High School (West Hartford), Weston High School, Conard High School (West Hartford), Farmington High School and Pomperaug High School (Region 15).
- The percentage of public school juniors taking an exam almost tripled in the past 10 years, from 3.3 percent to 8.8 percent.
- The percentage of public school seniors taking an exam more than doubled in the past 10 years, from 6.8 percent to 14.4 percent.
- A total of 18,777 students were enrolled in AP courses in 1999-2000, representing an increase of more than 8,000 students from the count five years ago.

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CONDITION OF EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT 1999-2000

The Board received the report *Profile of Our Schools: Condition of Education in Connecticut 1999-2000*. This report, prepared in compliance with state statute, contains an extensive amount of information about public education in our state.

Major highlights of this year's report include:

- Public school enrollment will continue to increase, at least through 2004-05.
- Average class size has remained relatively stable since 1991-92.
- The average hours of instruction per year has increased steadily since 1991-92.
- The drop-out rate (preliminary figures) has declined by 2.2 percentage points.
- The special education prevalence rate has declined for the fifth consecutive year.
- The number of students per computer has decreased significantly since 1993-94.

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RECOGNITION OF PETER C. YOUNG

The Board recognized Peter C. Young, Executive Director of Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), for receiving the Justus A. Prentice Award from the Association of Educational Service Agencies. This award is given to an individual for contributions to the advancement of regional educational service agency programs. Mr. Young has served as Executive Director of ACES for the past 30 years.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (continued from page 1)

AP data are published in the April 2001 *Profiles of Our Schools: Condition of Education in Connecticut 1999-2000*. This data is also reported on the High School Strategic School Profiles. Commissioner Sergi noted, "Increased AP program participation represents one clear indication of raising expectations for Connecticut's students," and he encouraged school districts to explore what can be done to initiate or expand AP offerings to students.

CONDITION OF EDUCATION (continued from page 1)

The *Condition of Education* is intended to assist local officials, educators and parents in reviewing progress and making decisions that will build on growth and address weaknesses. This year the report included a section on "The Arts in Connecticut." Each year the report will include a section on a featured curriculum area. Physical education will be highlighted in the 2000-01 report.

Upon the Board's receipt of *The Condition of Education*, the report was forwarded to Governor Rowland and the Education Committee of the General Assembly.

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT ON HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Commissioner Sergi presented a progress report on the Hartford Public Schools, summarizing accomplishments and continuing needs to be addressed within the school system. He informed the Board that the new State Board of Trustees for the Hartford Public Schools, chaired by Thomas Ritter, began its duties on November 1, 2000, and has been meeting regularly. A primary focus of the board is the 2001-02 budget and the adequacy and availability of local and state resources for the next few years.

Commissioner Sergi stated that the areas of continuing concern include:

- the need for the Hartford school administration to better and more regularly report to the full Hartford community on specific examples of progress and new initiatives;
- the need to improve special education and bilingual programs;
- consideration of the benefits and costs of a continuing state role with the school system after June 2002; and
- the need to strengthen the city's capacity and the city-school system partnership in fiscal management and facility planning.

The State Board of Education expressed its concerns about the findings in the quarterly report and asked Commissioner Sergi to communicate its concerns to the Board of Trustees and the Mayor of the City of Hartford.

CAPT STANDARD SETTING

The Board discussed a proposed standard-setting procedure for the second generation of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT-2), as well as weighting the two Reading Across the Disciplines tests and the three Writing Across the Disciplines tests. The CAPT-2 assesses how well each student is performing by the spring of Grade 10 on those skills identified by content experts and practicing educators as important for students to have mastered. A recommended state goal level, as well as two additional standards of performance below the goal level, will be proposed for each CAPT-2 content area (mathematics; Reading Across the Disciplines; Writing Across the Disciplines; science), thereby establishing four score bands. The Board will adopt CAPT-2 standards at an upcoming meeting.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM (RVTSS) MATTERS

DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board reviewed the Regional Vocational-Technical School System's response to the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Report and recommendations. The Committee made the following recommendations to the RVTSS:

- to study the relationship between admissions scores and performance in the RVTSS;
- to investigate using faculty and graduate students from public and private colleges and universities in Connecticut to conduct research projects that will analyze existing system data and new data, where appropriate;
- to define specific achievement goals for secondary RVTSS students at each grade level, which will be the basis for allocating additional resources; and
- to identify measures that will be used to create an index reflecting the performance of each school.

In addition, the Committee recommended that the RVTSS (1) make outreach to the business community a top priority, and enhance communication with local legislators by inviting them to tour the schools in their districts, and (2) ensure that the Citizens Consulting Committees at each vocational-technical school include representatives of area school districts as participating members.

The Department's response was supportive of each recommendation.

EARLY CHILD CARE CAREER PROGRAM

The Board discussed a proposal for an Early Child Care Career Program at Bullard Havens Regional Vocational-Technical School in Bridgeport. The program, a collaborative effort of the State Department of Education, Division of Educational Programs and Services, and the Bridgeport Readiness Council, is designed to address the critical need in Connecticut for qualified child-care professionals and for quality school readiness programs. High school students would be given the opportunity to learn, model, practice and develop critical child-care skills, and put into practice the theories and methods necessary for a successful career in child care. Upon completion of the proposed program, vocational-technical students will have the opportunity to earn the nationally recognized Child Development Associate credential through the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition.

The Department will consider operational issues related to the proposed program before making a recommendation to the Board at an upcoming meeting.

PRESIDENT OF STATE OF CONNECTICUT CHAPTER OF NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Congratulations to **Jessica Carlson, a student at W.F. Kaynor Regional Vocational-Technical School** in Waterbury, who has served as President of the State of Connecticut Chapter of the National Honor Society this year. The State Board of Education was pleased to honor Miss Carlson at the April 4 meeting for being the first student from the RVTSS to be elected to this prestigious office.

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS

Representatives of the state's six regional educational service centers (RESCs) summarized the services they provide within their respective regions and what they perceive as their role in the future. RESCs are operated and managed by boards, comprised of at least one member from each participating local board of education. While many common services are provided, each RESC provides services tailored to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

Peter Young, Executive Director of Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), described RESCs as "entrepreneurial." State funds constitute less than one percent of their funding. A substantial amount of funding is derived from the provision of special education services, staff development and magnet schools. Recently ACES has been developing and providing services to accommodate the educational needs of incarcerated youth at locations such as the Alternative Incarceration Center, Cliff House and the New Haven Detention Center.

David Calchera, Executive Director of Eastern Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (EASTCONN), stated that his member towns are typically small, rural districts. As such, they are governed by very small administrative bodies, and EASTCONN is often asked to provide staff services (staff evaluation plans; technology plans) to these districts. Unique needs of the EASTCONN area include addressing high poverty and pregnancy rates and the lack of cultural opportunities available in eastern Connecticut.

Marcia Yulo, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), and Cal Heminway, Council Chairperson, discussed the use of technology in providing services to its member districts. Two examples Ms. Yulo cited include the provision of a "virtual classroom" and "School Notes," a two-way communication system between schools and parents. Mr. Heminway stated that CREC operates seven magnet schools, and stressed the need to place the focus on the unique educational qualities of a magnet before the economic factors.

Janet Robinson, Learning Services Director of Cooperative Educational Services (CES), stated that her RESC provides information to its 14 member districts on a regular basis. Staff members meet regularly with curriculum directors, assistant superintendents, superintendents and special education personnel and provide a variety of workshops and professional development opportunities. CES also provides professional development to the vocational-technical schools in its region in areas such as technology and teacher evaluation.

Virginia Seccombe, Executive Director of LEARN, and Board Chairperson Joseph Sheffey, Jr., described the resources LEARN provides to its constituents. Many districts have found that students are arriving at their doorstep at a younger age and with more serious educational needs. LEARN provides speech and occupational therapy on an as-needed basis to assist these youngsters. Dr. Seccombe stated that LEARN's website has been an effective resource in terms of information sharing and efficiency. LEARN has developed a program involving a student from each member district who is highly skilled in technology. These students enhance their skills and, at the same time, provide useful services to area organizations and businesses.

Jane Tedder, Executive Director of Education Connection, said that Education Connection has increased its capacity to deliver school-related programs, citing a focus on the continuum of services in early childhood, coordination of services with providers such as Birth-to-Three, Department of Mental Retardation, Connecticut Charts a Course, Head Start and day-care providers. Education Connection is developing a catalogue of training programs for day-care providers to address the learning needs of this population. Adult learning opportunities, too, are a priority of Education Connection, Dr. Tedder stated.

RACIAL IMBALANCE REPORT

The Board accepted the Racial Imbalance Report and directed the Commissioner to notify certain local boards of education as needed. The boards of education for Smith School in West Hartford and Washington School in Manchester will be notified that the racial imbalance in these schools must be addressed. These districts will be required to file plans to correct the racial imbalance. Three other schools were racially imbalanced, but are exempt from filing a plan to correct racial imbalance due to their status as "unique schools." These include Charter Oak School in West Hartford, Briggs High School in Norwalk and Hamilton Avenue School in Greenwich. The Greenwich Board of Education filed a plan to correct the racial imbalance at Hamilton Avenue School in December 2000. The State Department of Education will continue to monitor these unique schools on an annual basis. Several other schools were listed as having "impending racial imbalance," and will be notified of this status.

EDUCATOR BACKGROUND CHECKS

Discussion of proposed legislation concerning comprehensive educator screening continued at the Board's April meeting. Legislation will be proposed to require that, prior to issuance of a certificate, permit or authorization, all applicants will undergo a State Police criminal conviction database check. Additionally, the entire State Department of Education certification database will be cross-checked against this database on a periodic basis. The existing requirement that new employees be fingerprinted at hiring will continue, but the time within which this must occur will be shortened to 30 days. The legislation will require local and regional boards of education to make good faith efforts to obtain information and recommendations on job applicants, and provide qualified immunity from liability to previously employing boards of education, to encourage honest and frank references. Further, the proposed legislation will expand the provision requiring the state's attorneys to report criminal convictions of certificate holders to include classified and unclassified felonies and Class A misdemeanors, and the automatic revocation of an educator certificate to include additional criminal convictions that are the statutory basis for the automatic denial of a certificate.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Board approved the following:

- ❑ a long-term regional plan for special education for the Bethany Board of Education, to be administered by Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES). The program will provide services for children with multiple disabilities who are between the ages 2 years, 8 months and 7 years. The program will be constructed and equipped in the new Bethany Pre-kindergarten Through Grade 2 Elementary School;
- ❑ the appointment of Gail K. Mangs and Christine B. Spak as members of the impartial hearing board for special education due process hearings for four-year terms beginning May 8, 2001;
- ❑ an application for funds (\$200,000) for the Team Nutrition Training Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. Funds will be used to improve schools' ability to impact children's healthy eating and physical activity habits through a statewide *Healthy School Nutrition Environment* initiative; and
- ❑ a continuation grant application to the United States Department of Health and Human Services for the Refugee School Impact Program. These funds (\$387,706) will be used to address the educational needs of refugee children and families in the Waterbury school district.

WITH APPRECIATION

The Board extended its sincere appreciation to Michael Helfgott and Beverly Greenberg for their years of service on the Connecticut State Board of Education. Chairman Toensing noted, "Mr. Helfgott, who has served on the Board since 1991, and Mrs. Greenberg, who has served on the Board since 1989, are to be commended for their years of service and significant contributions to public education in the State of Connecticut. They surely will be missed."

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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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