



# THE BOARD REPORT



**2005-2006: Issue 5**

**March and April 2006**

*The following is a summary of the March 1, 2006, and April 5, 2006, meetings of the State Board of Education.*

## EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN CONNECTICUT

The Board enjoyed a presentation on some of the technologically rich tools being used to enhance the learning experiences for Connecticut's students. The Board asserts in its Position Statement on Educational Technology and Information Literacy, "Connecticut schools must ensure that technology resources are integrated across the curriculum and become part of the fabric of instruction. Students must use appropriate technologies to access worldwide resources as part of their regular classroom routine in order to become more productive learners."

Demonstrating some of the various types of educational technologies available were faculty and students from Hall Memorial School in Willington and staff members of Two Rivers Magnet School in East Hartford. In addition, the curriculum and professional development coordinator for the East Haven Public School System described that district's involvement as one of the seven recipients of the Pilot Computer Assisted Writing and Testing grants.

## DISTRICT REFERENCE GROUPS

"Education Reference Group" (ERG) designations were replaced by "District Reference Groups" (DRG) in an action taken by the Board on April 5.

The DRG designations are based upon the 2000 Census data, and will be used for purposes of reporting data other than student performance. The Board's action followed a review of focus group discussions and how other agencies and organizations outside the education arena use such data in their work. The change to DRG reflects how the groupings are related to demographic characteristics and the size of districts, not to the performance of

students in the districts. Reporting information using DRG designations will serve as a mechanism for reporting data such as preschool attendance, Advanced Placement courses offered, staff to student ratios and financial resources.

The Department's Bureau of Research, Evaluation and Student Assessment will be publishing a Research Bulletin with a full explanation of the variables used to create DRGs, the characteristics of the districts ordered within each DRG, and the intended use of these designations.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LEARNING INITIATIVE

Dr. Douglas Reeves, CEO and founder of the Center for Performance Assessment, made a presentation to the Board titled, "Getting Accountability Right: Achievement, Professional Practices and School Leadership." His presentation served as a preface to the state's first "Data Showcase" at the Connecticut Grand Hotel in Waterbury.

Dr. Reeves emphasized the importance of focused professional development, internal capacity building, a comprehensive

accountability system and systematic forums for sharing effective practices.

The Center for Performance Assessment and the Stupski Foundation have partnered with the State Department of Education and have been instrumental in assisting educators and school leaders to improve student achievement through practical and constructive approaches to standards, assessment and accountability, particularly in school districts with the lowest-performing schools. *(continued on page 2)*

## **ACCOUNTABILITY** *(continued from page 1)*

Connecticut's Accountability for Learning Initiative has two main goals:

- 1) To develop and implement a systemic and sustainable initiative of district and school improvement that focuses on accountability for student learning to accelerate the closing of Connecticut's achievement gap through district-level reform; and
- 2) To meet certain requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Initial efforts were geared toward building capacity in the areas of data-driven decision making, aligning school and district instruction with assessment, looking at effective ways to improve teaching strategies, and creating an accountability framework. The state currently has 154 certified trainers in "Data-Driven Decision Making" and 108 in "Making Standards Work." By the end of this year, it is anticipated that there will be about 50 additional certified trainers in each of these areas as well as in "Effective Teaching Strategies."

Following Dr. Reeves' presentation, the Board enjoyed viewing the displays set up by school districts from across the state.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2006-2011**

Commissioner Sternberg gave an update on the work of the Board's Comprehensive Plan for Education Advisory Committee. The Committee developed a vision representing the long-term image for public education in Connecticut, "a superior education for Connecticut's 21<sup>st</sup> century learners." The draft mission statement developed by the Advisory Committee reads, "The Connecticut State Board of Education will provide leadership that promotes an educational system which supports all learners in reaching their full potential." The committee has been working on identifying strategies to achieve the statutory goals assigned to the Board, and will review a first draft of the Plan in the next month.

### **RACIAL IMBALANCE REPORT**

The Board accepted the April 2006 Report on Racial Imbalance, prepared in compliance with Section 10-226a of the General Statutes. No new schools were reported to be racially imbalanced. However, three schools previously cited remain on the list of racially imbalanced schools: Charter Oak School and Smith School in West Hartford, and Hamilton Avenue School in Greenwich. The Department continues to monitor the imbalance in these schools on an annual basis. A new Hamilton Avenue School, expected to open in September 2007, is expected to eliminate the racial imbalance at that school. The Department is providing assistance to West Hartford in improving their internal magnet school program.

### **POSITION STATEMENT ON ARTS EDUCATION**

The Board adopted the Position Statement on Arts Education, which presents goals and objectives that are consistent with the Arts Framework. The statement outlines the roles that the State Department of Education, local school districts, teachers and parents play in providing children with a high-quality education in the arts, including dance, music, theater and the visual arts. A copy of the statement is attached to this issue of The Board Report, and is on the Department's website ([www.state.ct.us/sde](http://www.state.ct.us/sde)).

### **ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

The Board reviewed data on Connecticut's participation in the Advanced Placement (AP) Program, an intensive program of 34 college-level courses and examinations sponsored by The College Board. In 2005-06, Italian was offered, and Chinese, Japanese and Russian will be offered in 2006-07.

Connecticut ranked second nationally in participation of comprehensive public high schools in the AP program. The number of public school test takers has nearly tripled in the past ten years, from 4,928 to 14,148, while the percentage of public school seniors taking an AP exam has nearly doubled in the same timeframe (from 9.9 percent to 18.8 percent). Some schools had no students who took an AP exam, including seven comprehensive high schools, twelve technical high schools, three charter high schools and eight alternative high schools.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT *(continued from page 2)*

The traditional measure of performance has been the percentage of students tested who scored three or higher. Last year, however, two additional measures of performance were introduced: (1) the percentage of graduates who pass an AP exam; and (2) the percentage of graduates going to four-year colleges passing an AP exam. Data reveal that Connecticut public school AP test takers have had a consistently higher percentage of scores of three or better than their counterparts nationwide since the data were first available in 1983-84. Of the AP exams taken by our state's public school students, 71.7 percent received a score of three or more, compared with 57.6 percent of the exams taken by public school students nationwide. Connecticut ranked first in the nation with 72.9 percent of public school AP test-takers scoring three or more on at least one examination. Of public school graduates planning to attend four-year colleges, 27.0 percent earned a score of 3 or more on an AP test that they took during high school, compared to 25.6 percent the preceding year. An examination of five popular tests reveals that Connecticut non-public school students outperformed their public school students on four of five tests, the exception being the Spanish language test.

Commissioner Sternberg noted her continuing concerns about the "noticeable and persistent gaps that exist between the performance of males and females and among our racial/ethnic minority groups. While the number of public school low-income students taking an AP exam increased significantly in the past ten years (from 183 to 953), this group represented only 6.7 percent of AP test takers while accounting for 27.3 percent of all public school Grade 11 and 12 students.

Commissioner Sternberg described efforts being taken by the Department to address these gaps. The Department received an AP Incentive Grant, *Project Opening Doors*, to address the critical needs of high schools in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham. Grant funds will help increase the number of core AP courses offered, increase the participation by students, and increase the number of students who take an AP exam in the core areas. Further, the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) was offered at no cost to all Grade 10 students in these districts in 2004 and 2005. Teachers and guidance counselors can use the PSAT results to identify students who may be successful in AP courses.

## **CONNECTICUT-FRANCE PARTNERSHIP**

The Board received an update on the Department's partnership with schools in France. Since 2002, approximately 50 schools have been paired with school partners in the Academy of Toulouse, a region of France with similar economic and cultural interests, including the aeronautics and space industry, fine arts and cuisine.

Many elementary, middle and high schools are involved in on-line projects. The Bridgeport school system hosted a high school teacher from the Academy of Toulouse for an international conference in Stamford, while Hartland Elementary School participated in a student and teacher exchange program. In addition, Fulbright teaching assistants from France are serving in Litchfield, Region 19 and Ridgefield. The Department hopes to provide more opportunities for international student teaching and international internships for high school and college students in companies that do business in France and Connecticut (e.g., Pfizer, General Electric and United Technologies).

In 2003, the Department established through the Connecticut-France Partnership, the Resource Center for the Teaching of French at Yale University. The Resource Center provided resources and professional development workshops to more than 250 teachers in the 2004-2005 school year. Earlier this year, the Department signed a renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding that created the partnership. Attending the March Board meeting to discuss expanded collaboration between Connecticut and France under the new Memorandum was Rector Christian Merlin of the Academy of Toulouse and Chancellor of Universities.

## **UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD – MASTERS OF EDUCATION IN AURAL HABILITATION AND THE EDUCATION OF HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN**

The Board approved a new educator preparation program offered at the University of Hartford for the period March 2, 2006, through September 30, 2010. The graduate program will certify graduates to teach special education/hearing impaired in prekindergarten through Grade 12. Program participants will be taught how to help children who are deaf or hard of hearing develop listening skills and use spoken language to communicate and to learn. This training will focus on assisting children with cochlear implants or other hearing aids in mainstream school settings.

## **SCHOOL READINESS NEED AND COSTS TO SERVE ALL THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN**

The Board approved the *Report on School Readiness Need and Costs to Serve all 3- and 4-Year-Old Children in 19 Priority School Districts*, for submission to the General Assembly. The report provides estimates of the number of 3- and 4-year-old children who are not being served in a preschool program in priority school districts and the percentage of children whose parents do not seek preschool programs. It also reports the number of children who will need preschool programs and the operating costs and capital costs required to serve such children. Some of the highlights of the report include the following:

- Approximately 9,700 children in the 19 Priority School Districts are not being served.
- The State Department of Education projects that 10 percent of these children will not seek a traditional preschool setting due to family choice.
- The annual cost of operating early education services for the additional 8,731 children is approximately \$66,293,622, to be paid for by a combination of parent fees, state subsidies and other grant support.
- Approximately 8,731 children will need 7,777 new spaces split between community-based facilities and public school buildings.
- The total capital cost for these spaces, not adjusted for future inflation, will be \$264,662,899.
- The majority of the 19 school districts reported support from the local board of education.

## **CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION: BRIDGEPORT INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY**

The Board issued a one-year Certificate of Exemption to the Bridgeport International Academy (BIA). A Certificate of Exemption permits the operation of a non-special education residential facility and is not equivalent to school approval. The certificate must be renewed annually unless the institution has been exempt for at least three consecutive years. This is the first exemption issued to BIA.

BIA was approved by the State Department of Education as a nonpublic day school for the period June 2001 to June 2006. Because it is changing its status to that of a nonpublic boarding school and because it will not be able to obtain its accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges prior to June 2006, the Department required BIA to apply for the exemption.

## **STATE PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY**

The Board approved the revised State Plan for Adult Education and Family Literacy for fiscal year 2006-2007. The one-year revisions were submitted to the United States Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, pending the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. Revisions include changes to performance targets for adult education and literacy activities under Title II.

## **LOCAL WELLNESS STATE AGENCY GRANT**

The Board approved the Department's application to the United States Department of Agriculture for \$32,649. The grant funds are being provided to allow state agencies to provide training and technical assistance to help school districts adopt, implement and evaluate local wellness policies. Activities for Connecticut's grant include a School Wellness Policy Needs Assessment Survey and two statewide one-day conferences.

## **CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM (CTHSS)**

### **Language Arts and Mathematics Labs**

The CTHSS provides students with a coordinated school-wide approach to improving content literacy by extending instructional time in each of the two content areas (language arts and mathematics). Specific instructional strategies, based on research conducted by the University of Kansas' Strategic Instructional Model, are used to assist students in becoming independent and self-motivated learners. Students assume a greater responsibility for their education and are able to apply their learning skills and strategies to all classrooms – both academic and technology-related. The labs allow students to develop skills at their own pace as a means to access critical content.

Platt Technical High School representatives Penny Finalyson, Department Head of Special Education, and Sharon Stockel, Language Arts Lab Teacher, described to the Board how the Strategic Learning Initiative at Platt is used in the classroom, trade/technology areas, and in a laboratory setting. The initiative is all-inclusive, involving the entire faculty, parents, strategic learning teams and students. The lab setting is characterized by collaborative support teams, differentiated instruction and instructional roles, and opportunities for pre-teaching, reinforcement and enrichment. Ms. Finalyson and Ms. Stockel emphasized the importance of this approach to preparing students for the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, helping them to stay focused, be organized and solve problems.

### **Adult Education**

A total of 3,797 adults are enrolled in the CTHSS adult programs, including 586 in full-time and 3,211 in part-time programs (apprentice, extension, and adult bilingual). Full-time programs include the following: aviation mechanic, certified nurse assistant, dental assistant, dental lab technician, medical assistant, licensed practical nurse, and surgical technician. Further, full-time secondary programs are available to the adult learner on a space-available basis. Eighty-one post graduates are currently enrolled in 14 of the technical high schools. Many programs, especially those in the health care occupations, have waiting lists of qualified students who cannot be accommodated due to space and resource limitations. The Department of Labor projects that the healthcare industry will have a net increase of 9,400 jobs from 2006 to 2012. Other areas that anticipate a great need for qualified workers include the construction industry (2,900 jobs) and manufacturing (8,300 jobs).

Tuition for full-time programs is currently \$1,250 per semester. Apprentice tuition is set by legislation at \$100 per course. Extension and bilingual programs charge \$275 or \$50, depending on program duration.

Adult education programs yield high job placement rates for completers, relatively low tuition rates and availability of Pell grants. They also have established strong networks with area business and industry. The greatest challenge faced by the programs is maintaining state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, and staffing capacity. Program retention rates are another area in need of improvement to satisfy both student and workforce needs.

# CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b>	<b>STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS</b>
<p><b>Address:</b> 165 Capitol Avenue Room 301 Hartford, CT 06106</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (860) 713-6510</p> <p><b>Facsimile:</b> (860) 713-7002</p> <p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="mailto:pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us">pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us</a></p>	<p><i>Allan B. Taylor, Chairperson</i> <i>Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson</i> <i>Beverly R. Bobroske</i> <i>Donald J. Coolican</i> <i>Rebecca Crosswaith</i> <i>Lynne S. Farrell</i> <i>Theresa Hopkins-Staten</i> <i>Patricia B. Luke</i> <i>Aine McCarthy</i> <i>Timothy J. McDonald</i></p> <p><i>Betty J. Sternberg, Secretary</i></p> <p><i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i></p>
<p>To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Communications at 860-713-6526.</p>	

The May 3 and June 7 meetings of the State Board of Education will be held at Rensselaer @ Hartford, 275 Windsor Street, Hartford. The agendas for these meetings will be posted on the department's website on the Friday preceding the meeting.