

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

**Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting
January 7, 2015**

**Minutes
(Approved 2/4/2015)**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in Room 117, State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut on January 7, 2015.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. Also present were committee members Robert Trefry, Joseph Vrabely and Erin Benham.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following Department of Education staff members: Turnaround Office Division Director Morgan Barth, Academic Office Division Director Ellen Cohn, Bureau Chief John Frassinelli, Chief of Staff Adam Goldfarb, Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Bureau Chief Mark Linabury, Internal Audit Director Gloria McCree, Regional School Choice & Sheff Office Division Director Glen Peterson, Education Staff Assistant Sergio Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker, English Language Learner/Bilingual Consultant Marie Salazar-Glowski, Associate Education Consultant Kari Sullivan and Paralegal Mark Shepherd.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

On a motion made by Mr. Vrabely and seconded by Ms. Hopkins-Staten, the Committee unanimously approved the December 3, 2014 Legislation and Policy Development Committee meeting minutes.

III. Addressing Chronic Absenteeism with a Focus on Alliance Districts

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten recognized Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker who reviewed a report prepared by her office on chronic absenteeism. Ms. Russell-Tucker noted that her office and the Turnaround Office will coordinate their efforts to develop a "Best Practices" approach on combatting chronic absenteeism based on identifying chronically absent students and implementing intervention techniques in a timely manner to reduce the total number of chronically absent students in Alliance Districts.

She stated that a chronic absentee student threshold of 10% will now be observed as a catalyst for requiring any given Alliance District to include an intervention plan in its annual Consolidated Alliance and Priority School District Application or renewal, and that a revision to the application is also planned to allow districts to prepare customized strategies to address chronic absenteeism including specific interventions that will be implemented.

Ms. Russell-Tucker also reported that her office and the Turnaround Office will continue to work together to track and process data received from the individual districts so that all districts may be supported in their implementation.

A detailed discussion ensued, and Committee members offered their comments and asked questions. Mr. Vrabely asked whether this proposal will be placed before the full board as a resolution. Ms. Russell-Tucker stated that it would with the Committee's approval at a time so designated. [No direct action was taken at this time.]

IV. Charter School Renewal Standards

Turnaround Office District Division Director Morgan Barth continued the discussion on chronic absenteeism in the context of the Alliance Districts and affirmed the 10% threshold as an automatic requirement for all districts to include specific plans for reducing chronic absenteeism in their renewal applications.

A discussion ensued and Committee members commented and asked questions. Mr. Vrabely asked if this model might be exportable and expanded beyond the Alliance Districts. Ms. Russell-Tucker replied that work on this had in fact begun and that this is an attainable goal. Ms. Hopkins-Staten then suggested that the recommendations regarding chronic absenteeism be brought before the full board in its scheduled February meeting.

Mr. Barth then directed Committee members to the printed handouts prepared by his office regarding Charter School Accountability & 2015 Renewal and the Charter School Renewal Process and began a point-by-point review of each, including:

- Charter School renewal will operate on a 5-year cycle;
- 6 charters are scheduled for renewal this year, which consists of approximately 33% of the existing charters;
- A full accountability standard to be observed during the renewal process including, but not limited to:
 - Financial control;
 - Governance;
 - Transparency; and
 - Performance Accountability.

Mr. Barth also noted that the Board would make determinations regarding charter schools by evaluating their fiscal stability, as well as their overall compliance and the assignment of probationary status when certain required standards are not met.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Trefry questioned whether an external audit will be required in all cases. Mr. Barth referred this question to Director of Internal Audit Gloria McCree who provided details regarding her office's involvement with Application Renewal components for charter schools and the charter school management organizations.

Mr. Barth continued the discussion, citing the effectiveness of his office's "rubric" model for assessing and evaluating renewal applications and their ultimate granting or denial.

V. English Language Learner Program Update

Academic Office Division Director Ellen Cohn advised Committee members that workshops are presently planned to address recommendations made by the Governor's office on the Common Core and then introduced English Language Learner/Bilingual Consultant Marie Salazar Glowski who updated members on legislative proposals regarding bilingual education.

Ms. Glowski noted the coordination of the Talent Office and the Certification Office in addressing the issue of customizing, while maintaining the core integrity of, certification standards for bilingual education teachers. Bilingual Grant funding, which is declined by districts, is being re-targeted to address the bilingual teacher shortage. Ms. Glowski reported that a new draft legislative proposal by the Talent Office will be submitted to the legislature.

Ms. Glowski also reported to committee members that schools with 20 or more ELs reported to the state in October who speak the same native language must provide a bilingual education program the following September. The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission will be presenting their proposal for legislative changes on the bilingual education statute. She then pointed out that the Connecticut State Department of Education may face challenges in meeting changes to the statute if they are impractical to implement. She expressed her intention to follow the progress of legislative proposals and changes closely.

Other topics covered by Ms. Glowski included:

- Review of the Achievement Gap Task Force recommendations regarding the English Language Learner program;
- Review of the Connecticut English Language Learner framework;
- Review of ELPA 21 Standards as a foundation for the revision of the CT ELL Framework by a committee of ESL and bilingual practitioners; and
- Review of "Newcomers Programs" emphasizing the advantages of intense immersion with the challenge of not achieving the expected four year graduation

cohort timeline when districts allow an extra year or two for some English Learners to graduate.

Discussion ensued and committee members asked questions and offered comments. Chair Hopkins-Staten inquired how students will fare once the new standards and assessments are implemented to which Ms. Glowski replied, initially low, but the establishment of a baseline will allow the CSDE to concentrate on areas to improve. Mr. Vrabely, noting the graduation and college readiness component of this program, asked if any of Connecticut's higher education representatives would have input on how our high school students will meet these qualifications. Ms. Glowski noted her involvement with the University of Connecticut and other universities throughout the state to specifically address this. Mr. Trefry commented on the importance of graduation rates and the implementation of a Best Practices approach to improve chances of success for our bilingual students. Ms. Hopkins-Staten concurred, reminding Committee members, staff and guests of the cost to us all when graduation rates decline.

VI. Eligibility of Local or Regional Boards of Education to Receive Open Choice Supplemental Payments

At this time, Bureau Chief Mark Linabury directed members to the Eligibility of Local or Regional Boards of Education to Receive Open Choice Supplemental Payments item as noted on the agenda. Mr. Linabury noted to committee members that RESC schools are currently eligible for supplemental payments while local and regional school districts are not. This technical legislative amendment would effectively expand eligibility as described.

Mr. Vrabely moved, and Ms. Hopkins-Staten seconded approval of this standing agenda item. The committee then unanimously approved the motion.

Chair Hopkins-Staten and committee members thanked department staff members for their preparations and presentations.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.

Prepared by:

Mark Shepherd, Paralegal