

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting
September 2, 2015

Minutes
(Approved 10/7/2015)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in Room 2600, Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut on September 2, 2015.

I. Call to Order

Chair Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Also present were committee members Erin Benham, Robert Trefry, Joseph Vrabely and Maria Mojica (via conference call). Mr. Terry Jones was absent.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following State Department of Education (SDE) members: Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell; Assistant to the Commissioner for Board Matters Pamela Charland; Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey; Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker; Chief of the Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services & Adult Education Services John Frassinelli; Chief Talent Officer Dr. Sarah Barzee; Legal Director Peter Haberlandt; and Attorney Louis Todisco. Also attending the committee meeting were Dr. Shuana Tucker, Talent & Professional Development Supervisor, and Ms. Jahana Hayes, History Teacher, Waterbury Public School District.

II. Approval of Minutes of the June 3, 2015, Meeting

Mr. Joseph Vrabely moved, Ms. Erin Benham seconded, that the Committee approve the minutes of the June 3, 2015, meeting of the Legislation and Policy Development Committee.

Vote:	In favor:	Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Erin Benham, Maria Mojica and Joseph Vrabely
	Opposed:	None
	Abstained:	None
	Absent:	Terry Jones

Motion carried unanimously.

III. Introduction of Legal Director

Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell introduced the new State Department of Education Legal Director, Attorney Peter Haberlandt, to the Committee members.

IV. Update on Implementation of 2015 Minority Teacher Recruitment Grant Awardees

SDE Chief Talent Officer Dr. Sarah Barzee provided an overview of SDE's efforts in regard to the recruitment, selection, placement and retention of minority educators in Connecticut schools. Dr. Barzee noted the formation of SDE's Minority Teacher Recruitment (MTR) Committee. Dr. Barzee provided an update regarding one of SDE's current initiatives to support minority teacher recruitment in school districts across Connecticut: SDE's program to provide grants of up to \$25,000 to selected school districts, for districts to use to develop, coordinate and strengthen strategies for increasing the diversity of the local educator workforce. Dr. Barzee explained that 10 districts applied for the grants in 2015, and eight received a grant. The grant recipients gave progress reports at a meeting hosted by SDE on July 27, 2015.

Dr. Barzee also reported on the efforts of one of the grant recipients, Waterbury Public Schools, and introduced two representatives from the district, who addressed the Committee.

Ms. Jahana Hayes and Dr. Shuana Tucker discussed the various activities undertaken by their district around the issue of minority teacher recruitment and retention as a result of the SDE grant. The presenters summarized the results of a survey administered to African-American and Latino teachers in the Waterbury Public Schools relating to minority teacher recruitment and retention. The presenters also shared their accounts of community discussions and engagement around these issues involving interested constituencies in Waterbury. Ms. Hayes and Dr. Tucker highlighted some of the concerns raised by minority teachers and prospective teachers, e.g.: barriers to entry arising from the need for out-of-state candidates to become "re-certified" in Connecticut (the Talent Office is currently researching this matter); salary and benefits; insufficient opportunities for recognition and advancement; teachers still having to take and pass a Civil Service exam; hiring practices and employment opportunities; the demand for greater resources and administrative support; the need for increased teacher training on diversity and cultural competency; and increased focus on professional development.

Dr. Barzee noted that Connecticut has an interstate reciprocity agreement with several other States whereby an out-of-State certified teacher may work in Connecticut for a year prior to being required to obtain separate certification in Connecticut. Dr. Barzee further noted that SDE is working to find ways to expand this program to facilitate recruitment of out-of-State minority educators.

Ms. Hayes and Dr. Tucker described efforts to reach out to students to generate interest in teaching as a potential career and as a means of expanding the pool of minority candidates for teaching jobs. Discussion ensued regarding the role of the church and community in efforts to assist with teacher recruitment. Committee members also spoke about the value of teachers as volunteers, retired teachers as mentors, and investing funds and resources to support minority teacher retention.

Mr. Vrabely recommended that minority teacher retention be placed on an upcoming State Board of Education meeting agenda, to more fully assess how resources can be provided to aid in these efforts.

V. Hearing Officer Search/Selection Process

Attorney Louis Todisco, Division of Legal & Governmental Affairs, presented information related to the selection of SDE hearing officers, the composition of the current pool of hearing officers, the work in which such hearing officers are engaged, and means to increase the diversity of such hearing officers. He noted ways to accomplish greater diversity, including by continuing SDE's efforts to diversify the candidate pool by reaching out to organizations representing the interests of minority lawyers. Chair Hopkins-Staten asked Attorney Todisco if a candidate for the hearing board needed to be an attorney, or could a non-lawyer candidate be trained to fill this role. Mr. Todisco stated that while it is very helpful if hearing board members are attorneys, it is not essential and persons who are not attorneys could receive training to be hearing officers. Chair Hopkins-Staten indicated that it is important to develop a process to reach out and "grow individuals" so they can be considered as hearing officers in the future. She added that a process be established for a discussion at a future State Board meeting.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

Recorder:

Lisa Carta Corriveau

Lisa Carta Corriveau, Office Supervisor