



THE BOARD REPORT



2006-07: Issue 5

February and March 2007

The State Board of Education met on February 7, 2007, and March 7, 2007. Below are highlights of the meetings.

CONNECTICUT CONSORTIUM ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Connecticut Consortium on School Attendance is a project of Connecticut's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC), a Governor-appointed committee of volunteers responsible for overseeing the distribution and use of federal juvenile justice funding to Connecticut. It is comprised of an association of local school and statewide agency representatives focused on raising school attendance by improving the collection and use of information on attendance.

This past year, 27 Connecticut school districts participated in the Consortium, rendering them eligible for funding from the JJAC for use in student attendance improvement efforts (i.e., data collection, analysis and planning efforts; school building-level attendance task forces; program strategies geared toward specific student populations; and professional development for teachers). In 2007, the JJAC awarded 10 grants totaling \$403,916 to participating districts. Grant funds were used to support district efforts

to (1) make attendance a priority; (2) establish effective attendance policies; (3) collect data and monitor attendance; and (4) use data for program planning.

Addressing the Board at the February meeting were Valerie LaMotte of the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Unit of the Office of Policy and Management; Michael McKee, Superintendent of the Stonington Public Schools and a member of the Consortium; and Gary Hoachlander of MPR Associates, a research and development firm that has provided consultant services to the Consortium. Superintendent McKee spoke about the success in his district in improving attendance by creating an environment that makes students want to be in school. He noted that we must change the way we educate our students, recognizing their individual needs. The grant funds Stonington received have allowed the district to provide a social worker at the elementary, middle and high school levels to identify students most in need.

Mr. Hoachlander discussed two variables that have been found to largely influence attendance rates: whether a student is proficient in English and their socioeconomic status.

The Board discussed with the presenters the four policy recommendations contained in the report:

- 1) Attendance needs to be a much higher and more visible priority of education policy at the state and local levels in Connecticut.
- 2) The state should annually collect comparable student-level attendance data from each school district.

- 3) The state should publish annual attendance data and publicize state performance with respect to formally adopted performance targets.
- 4) Local school districts, with state assistance, should have attendance data-driven planning processes in place at the district and school building levels.

The Board discussed the positive impact the Department's data collection efforts and its ability to track individual students through SASI will have on its ability to study the impact of student attendance on academic achievement. The Board recognized the importance of a common statewide definition of "attendance," and will continue its focus on this topic in coming months.

REPORT ON 2000 VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE EDUCATION GRADUATES

The Board received a report on the activities of students who graduated from the vocational agriculture and aquaculture centers five years ago (Class of 2000). The vocational agriculture centers educate students in an interdistrict program that includes a classroom component, work experience and student leadership activities. The report concluded that:

- 87 percent of the respondents have participated in postsecondary and advanced learning;
- respondents felt that oral and written communication skills and mathematics skills were very important to their employment;
- 99 percent of the respondents would recommend the program to others;
- classroom and laboratory instruction, student leadership and work experiences were rated by the respondents as good or excellent;
- graduates are finding employment and remaining on the job; and
- over the last five years, an average of 94 percent of agricultural education survey respondents reported having been employed.

The enrollment in Connecticut agriculture education programs has increased from 2,550 in 2000 to 2,964 in 2005. Areas of program concentration include animal systems, aquaculture systems, marine and technology systems, food science and processing systems, natural resources and environmental systems, plant systems and power, and technical and structural systems.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM APPROVAL POLICIES

The Board discussed five new policy proposals governing educator preparation programs in Connecticut, three related to new programs and two others related to continuing accreditation. They are as follows:

- 1) Only Connecticut institutions offering educator preparation programs that are fully accredited will be allowed to submit proposals for new educator preparation programs. Institutions under provisional or probationary approval will not be allowed to pursue new program accreditation approval.
- 2) Connecticut institutions seeking first-time approval for educator preparation programs will not be allowed to seek approval for additional educator preparation programs until after the two-year initial program approval period and the institution has demonstrated sufficient progress relative to implementing the new program(s) initially approved, as indicated by the written report and, if required, the interim visit.
- 3) New educator preparation program proposal visits must be conducted separate from continuing accreditation visits.

- 4) Connecticut institutions offering any educator preparation program that has not accepted new candidates during a consecutive three-year period, due to lack of resources needed to sufficiently prepare and ensure the quality of candidates in the program area, will be required to close down the program. Programs identified as such will be allowed a grace period for current candidates to complete the program. Should an institution wish to reinstate a closed program at a later date, it will be required to prepare for and successfully complete a new program proposal accreditation visit.
- 5) Alternate route to certification programs will be allowed to continue to collect candidate performance data for the purpose of meeting state accreditation requirements during the 90-day temporary certification period.

The Board was in agreement with 1, 3, 4 and 5. The Board asked the Department to modify proposal #2 and to resubmit to the board for approval at the April board meeting.

DESIGNATION OF CERTIFICATION SHORTAGE AREAS, 2006-2007

The Board received a report on the subject shortage areas for the 2006-07 school year, based on 2005-2006 data. The findings of this data collection follow.

- The state-identified shortage areas for the 2006-07 school year are bilingual education (PK-Grade 12), comprehensive special education (Grades 1-12), English (Grades 7-12), Intermediate Administrator, mathematics (Grades 7-12), music (Grades PK-12), remedial reading (PK-Grade 12), science (Grades 7-12), speech and language pathology, and world languages (Grades 7-12).
- While the number of positions to fill decreased from last year, the number of positions remaining vacant after the start of the school year because no qualified applicant could be found has increased for the last three years, from 201 (3.9 percent of all positions) in 2004 to 292 (5.7 percent of all positions) in 2006.
- Connecticut's large urban districts continue to struggle with the hiring of qualified staff members. The vacancy rate in these districts due to a lack of qualified applicants is 15.1 percent, compared with 5.7 percent at the state level.
- The largest numbers of durational shortage area permits were issued in mathematics, science and special education.

The Department recommended that the Board consider the findings of Dr. Robert Reichardt, contained in his report "In Search of Quality: Recruiting, Hiring, and Supporting Teachers." The Department also suggested that the Board consider providing additional funds for mentoring programs for beginning teachers in urban districts and an expansion of the Alternate Route to Certification program to allow for program enhancements and increased enrollment. Other recommendations included supporting programs at higher education institutions that help paraprofessionals transition to certified positions and promoting existing programs that serve as incentives to attract teachers to shortage areas or to a priority school district (e.g., Teacher Mortgage Assistance Program).

REPORT OF SCHOOL READINESS NEED AND THE COSTS TO SERVE ALL 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN 19 PRIORITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Section 10-4(d) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the State Board of Education to submit to the General Assembly a summary of school readiness need and the costs to serve all 3- and 4-year-old children in each of the eligible school readiness Priority School Districts. The data in the report becomes pertinent information for budget and policy decisions affecting the capacity to support quality preschool program. Below are highlights of the report.

- The 19 priority school districts report that 10,273 children are without preschool service.
- The State Department of Education projects that nearly 1,416 of the children will not seek a traditional preschool setting, due to family choice.
- It is estimated that, to accommodate children in need of a preschool program, 5,698 full-day, full-year slots, 1,310 school-day, school-year slots, and 1,849 part-day, part-year slots will be needed.
- The annual cost of operating early education services to accommodate these 8,857 children is \$70,443,634, presumably to be paid for by a combination of family fees, state subsidies and other grant support.
- Total capital costs, not adjusted for inflation, to develop space for these students is estimated to be \$360,368,955, with \$197,329,151 for community-based spaces and \$163,039,804 for public school spaces.
- Most priority school districts reported support from the local board of education.

The report concludes, "Children without preschool education are educationally behind their peers with this benefit and Connecticut's economic success requires children prepared to succeed in their school experience. The State Departments of Education and Social Services, in collaboration with the local communities, are resolved to establish preschool for all children who need it, beginning in the most impacted communities."

PROGRAMS FOR REDUCING THE DROPOUT AND SUSPENSION RATES

The Board approved the report titled A Review of Programs for Reducing the Dropout and Suspension Rates of Those Students at Risk of Dropping Out or Being Suspended from School, required by Connecticut General Statutes. Legislation requires the Department to review model programs throughout the country and summarizes information about the current problem in Connecticut.

Connecticut applies the U.S. Department of Education's definition of school dropouts and reports it on annual and cumulative basis. The annual dropout rate is the total dropouts divided by total October 1 enrollment of Grades 9-12. The cumulative dropout rate is total dropouts of the class divided by Grade 9 October 1 enrollment of the class. The rates for subgroups—especially urban center minorities, students with special needs and students with limited English speaking skills—are much higher. For example, the annual dropout rate among the state's Hispanic youth (4.3 percent) is more than twice that of the state's overall annual rate (1.8 percent), while African American students are dropping out at the rate of 3 percent. Also of importance is to consider the degree to which Hispanic and African American students are dropping out in individual districts. Data from 1999 to 2004 show that while African American and Hispanic students constituted 34-39 percent of the student population, they accounted for nearly 50 percent of the total dropouts. Despite decreasing dropout rates in Connecticut over the past seven years, the need for addressing dropout and suspension rate gaps between subgroup populations remains critical.

Research indicates that the complexity of the dropout problem necessitates a comprehensive, collaborative approach. However, the National Dropout Prevention Center reports that, at this time, no state is instituting a statewide initiative to address this matter.

The report recommends the following:

- Complete an in-depth analysis of the problem of dropouts and suspensions in Connecticut to inform future actions;
- Identify a bureau within the Department to assume responsibility for dropout prevention services, with appropriate staffing and programming;
- Develop an intra- and inter-agency collaborative advisory committee to develop and implement programs;
- Identify experts in dropout prevention within the state and reach out to national consultants for advice on how to meet Connecticut's needs;
- Complete an analysis of local programs in Connecticut to identify exemplary programs for replication purposes;
- Use the Public School Information System (PSIS) and its unique student identification numbers as a framework for identifying and monitoring student data longitudinally, to better understand the impact of individual and collective dropout prevention strategies; and
- Promote the use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach in our primary school grades to identify our youngest students who are at some risk of academic failure.

SPECIAL EDUCATION REGULATIONS

The Board declared its intent to amend regulations concerning special education to align the Connecticut regulations with requirements of the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA sets the standard of the provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to children with disabilities. In order to remain eligible for federal financial assistance under the IDEA, the state must assure that it provides programs and services to children with disabilities consistent with the IDEA.

A 30-day comment period follows the Board's action. Public hearings will be held throughout the state, and comments made at those public hearings will be reviewed and the regulations modified, if appropriate. The proposed regulations will then be resubmitted to the Board for its consideration. Upon adoption by the Board, the regulations will be forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for a determination of legal sufficiency and, if approved, to the Regulations Review Committee. If approved by the Regulations Review Committee, the regulations will become effective upon filing with the Secretary of the State.

OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN CONNECTICUT

Section 10-66hh of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the Commissioner to report to the General Assembly on the operation of charter schools. State charter schools served an estimated 3,664 students in 2006-07, an increase of 743 students over the previous school year. There continues to be a long waiting list of students who wish to enroll in the charter schools.

The report presented to the Board includes an assessment of the adequacy of funding for charter schools; an analysis of the adequacy and availability of suitable facilities; recommendations for any statutory changes that would facilitate increasing the number of charter schools; and a compilation of school profiles. Following are the recommendations contained in the report:

Adequacy of Funding:

- Implement the recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Education Finance, Other Grants Subcommittee Report. The Commission recommended that the state fund the per-pupil grant at the level of the two years prior statewide average Net Current Expenditure per Pupil. This would amount to a per pupil grant of \$10,596 for fiscal year 2007, an increased cost to the state of approximately \$10.9 million.
- Provide an annual cost of living increase in the charter school grant to accommodate growth in operating costs (teacher salaries and benefits, heating and cooling; building maintenance and repair, and school textbooks and supplies). The state budget provided an appropriation of \$29,832,500 for fiscal year 2007, an increase of \$7,384,500 over the prior fiscal year, including two new schools. The budget provided 743 additional seats over the prior year.
- Provide charter schools access to and funding for interdistrict transportation to assist in the reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation.

Adequacy and Availability of Suitable Facilities

- Extend the grant program for capital expenses beyond the period provided by state statute, which assists state charter schools in financing school building projects, general improvements to school buildings and repayment of debt incurred for prior school building projects.
- Extend beyond the period provided in Section 10-285h of the General Statutes, which allows a grant to one state charter school to buy and renovate buildings for use as charter school facilities.

Statutory Changes

- Allow charter schools initially renewed by the State Board of Education to be eligible for renewal for up to ten years, subject to accountability requirements under current law, the Department's accountability requirements, and recommendation by the Commissioner.
- Provide a mechanism in the charter school funding formula that offers additional bonus grants to high performing charter schools that exceed the progress made by their host districts for three consecutive years in all content areas of the Connecticut Mastery Test, using the proficiency index as the standard of measurement.

REPORT ON DISTRICT EFFORTS TO REDUCE RACIAL, ETHNIC AND ECONOMIC ISOLATION OF CONNECTICUT'S STUDENTS

School district data for this report was collected by the regional educational service centers from the state's 166 school districts and the 14 charter schools in operation from 2004-2006. The State of Connecticut funds five programs that offer parents and their children a choice of educational programs and schools, as well as the opportunity to interact with students from other districts. These include interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools, Open Choice, vocational agriculture centers, and the Connecticut Technical High Schools.

The report includes information on state funding and student enrollments for the choice programs. School districts also support a wide range of interdistrict and intradistrict programs with state and federal grant funds, as well as professional development programs for educators designed to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, or to increase sensitivity and awareness of issues involved in teaching a diverse student population.

The report also discusses efforts to recruit minority educators, as required by state

law. Of the 166 districts that reported they had actively recruited minority educators, 72 reported having hired at least one minority educator. Three large urban districts (New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport) employ 42.3 percent of all minority teachers.

The Board discussed the policy implications of the report in the context of its goal of ensuring that all students have multiple and substantial opportunities to learn with students and staff from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. In order to achieve this goal, a collaborative effort among all stakeholders is needed to assure (1) continued growth of urban magnet schools, (2) continued growth of the number of interdistrict magnet and charter schools enrolling students from several districts; (3) expanded opportunities to participate in after-school, weekend and summer programs designed to reduce racial

isolation; (4) continued growth of the Open Choice Program; (5) continued efforts to increase the presence of minority teachers across Connecticut; and (6) continued expansion of state initiatives that improve the quality of urban education and close the achievement gaps among racial, ethnic and economic groups.

Two legislative changes would be needed to implement these policies. The first would require districts to allow students to attend magnet schools where all vacancies were not filled after exhausting the list of students admitted via the lottery process. Districts would be required to pay any costs associated with magnet school attendance. The second legislative action would provide a transportation grant to charter schools for interdistrict transportation, modeled on the transportation grant currently given to magnet schools.

TEACH FOR AMERICA ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Board approved Teach for America's (TFA) Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) Program for the period March 1, 2007, through September 30, 2009. Graduation from the program will lead to the recommendation for a temporary Connecticut 90-day teaching certificate in the following endorsement areas offered by the program: elementary education (K-6); general science, biology, chemistry, physics, English, history/social studies, mathematics, French and Spanish in Grades 7-12. An interim report will be submitted and a spring 2008 visit will be conducted to evaluate the oversight plan to ensure program compliance with the standards of the Alternate Route to Certification.

CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Board approved the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) Program for the period March 1, 2007, through September 30, 2009. Graduation from the program will lead to a cross endorsement in the area of special education for Connecticut educators currently holding a teaching certificate. An interim report will be submitted and host an on-site visit in the spring of 2008.

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING PROGRAM

The Board approved for the period March 1, 2007, through September 30, 2010, the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program at Central Connecticut State University. Graduates of the program will be certified at the initial certification level in the following graduate program endorsement areas in Grades 7-12: English/language arts, mathematics, general science,

biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, and Spanish; and technology education (PK-Grade 12). An interim report will be submitted and an interim visit will take place during the fall of 2008.

INTERDISTRICT SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (ISAAC)

The Board renewed the charter of the Interdistrict School for the Arts and Communications (ISAAC) for the period July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2010. The State Department of Education will conduct interim visits in the spring of 2008 and 2009 to monitor ISAAC's continued progress to improve student achievement.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PLAN

The Board approved the fiscal year 2007 Summer Food Service State Plan. This plan provides for a total of approximately 350,000 meals to be served to eligible children during the summer of 2007. The projected cost of the program is \$939,841. Connecticut's plan was submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture for approval.

ADULT EDUCATION PLAN

The Board approved the fiscal year 2008 State Plan for Adult Education for submission to the United States Department of Education (USDE). The USDE Office of Vocational and Adult Education has instructed all states to submit a revision to the existing state plans for the period July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008. The revisions include changes to the levels of performance for adult education and literacy activities and a description of how the eligible agency will fund local activities in accordance with Title II.

NASBE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board nominated State Board of Education Chairperson Allan B. Taylor as Northeast Area Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Area directors of the national organization are elected by a majority vote of the voting states of a particular region, and serve two-year staggered terms. Mr. Taylor has been actively involved with NASBE since 1994, most recently serving on the Governmental Affairs Committee.

REPORT REGARDING REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4

The Board accepted the Report of the Study Committee Regarding the Addition of Grades to Regional School District No. 4. Inasmuch as the committee was unable to render a recommendation concerning the advisability or inadvisability for the addition of grades, the State Board accepted the report as filed.

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The Board received the 2006 Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards. The Council focused its work on developing strategies to strengthen the state's educational leadership. Council members served on the Educator Continuum Steering Committee, which has been examining teacher and administrator preparation, certification, induction and professional development. A second major initiative of the Council was the revision of the Code of Professional Responsibility for School Administrators. The Council continued to discuss the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act and strategies to address funding issues, particularly with respect to the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding education adequacy lawsuit.

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The Board received the 2006 Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards. The Council focused its attention on the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers. The Code was established as a set of principles and a code of ethics for the teaching profession. The Council decided to review the Code in the context of its review of the Educator Continuum. The Council also met with the Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards to discuss proposed certification requirements that were drafted as a result of committee review of the Educator Continuum, and to discuss the proposed changes to the Code.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM (CTHSS)

School-Based Health Centers

The Board approved a Policy on School-Based Health Centers at Connecticut Technical High Schools and the Charter Oak Health Center at A.I. Prince Technical High School. Such centers expand the provision of health services to students in the CTHSS. With parental permission, comprehensive school-based health services will be available to students where available. Authorized services include primary health care, physical examinations, immunizations, reproductive health services (excluding contraceptive distribution), diagnoses and treatment of minor illnesses and injuries, and individual and group health education. School-based health centers will refer students to community-based health providers for services outside its scope.

Rolling Capital Improvement and Capital Equipment Plan - 2008-2012

The Board adopted the 2008-2012 Rolling Capital Improvement and Capital Equipment Plan for the CTHSS. The plan addresses the system's needs to maintain its facilities and equipment in order to provide a school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. As required by state statute, the proposed plan was submitted to the General Assembly.

Tuition and Fees for Adult Programs and Facility Use

The Board approved the tuition and fees for the 2008-09 school year. The fees will remain at the 2007-08 rates. The tuition for the Aviation Mechanics Program, which has changed from a three-year to a two-year program, was reduced from \$7,800 to \$5,400. The fees will be posted on the CTHSS website and in adult program brochures. The Board will consider the school lunch fees at a future meeting.

Reauthorization of Trades

The Board reauthorized for the period January 2007 to January 2012 the following trades in the Retail, Tourism Cluster: baking, culinary arts, fashion technology, and hairdressing/barbering. The Board will consider the hotel/hospitality trade at a future meeting.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(as of March 7, 2007)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS
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<p>To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Communications, 860-713-6526.</p>	<i>George A. Coleman, Secretary</i> <i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i>

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled on Thursday, April 5, 2007. The meeting will be held in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut 06106.

The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.sde.ct.gov/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@ct.gov.