

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting  
June 4, 2014**

**Draft Minutes**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in Room 2600, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut on June 4, 2014.

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Present were committee members, Robert Trefry, Andrea Comer, Joseph Vrabely and \*Terry Jones.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following Department staff members: Pamela Charland, Assistant to the Commissioner; Bureau Chief John Frassinelli; Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan; Sarah Hemingway, Legislative Liaison; Bureau Chief Mark Linabury; Mildred Pagán, Administrative Assistant; Education Staff Assistant Sergio Rodriguez; Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker; and Mark Shepherd, Temporary Legal Secretary.

[\*Mr. Jones arrived at 9:10 a.m.]

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Mr. Vrabely, seconded by Ms. Comer, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2014, Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting.

**III. Legislative Update**

Ms. Hemingway informed the Committee that neither the Alternative Schools nor the Chronic Absence bills passed. She noted that Jason Rojas, State Representative, is assembling a working group to focus on the alternative schools issue and of his intention to include the State Department of Education. The Committee is aware that the 2013-2014 Legislative Session concluded on May 7, 2014.

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**IV. Further Review of Educational Services for Vulnerable Students Data**

Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker continued the discussion from the committee's May meeting, noting that she has set up a process to facilitate a working group on alternative schools. CHOICE Program Bureau Chief Mark Linabury reported that he completed an introductory analysis and is preparing a key stakeholder's List to be presented to the Commissioner and offered details.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten and Ms. Comer both expressed interest to serve on the working group.

Ms. Russell-Tucker introduced Data Collection Research and Evaluation Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan, who distributed copies of a memorandum from the Commissioner entitled, "Data Collection Updates" along with the "Vulnerable" Students report. Mr. Gopalakrishnan then began a review of the Alternate School Programs Study section of the memo and the "Vulnerable" Students report. Among the topic areas covered were:

- a review of illustrated graph data;
- expected availability of quantified data once facility data is received from the districts;
- use of data to identify the most vulnerable students;
- an overview of chronic absenteeism in Connecticut; and
- the development of targeted responses to the most pressing problems.

Ms. Russell-Tucker endorsed this approach, recognizing that the benefits of the proposed ID profile along with input from school staff and faculty would allow for greater customization of services.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked how the data will be evaluated. Mr. Linabury affirmed that the infrastructure currently exists to achieve this objective.

Mr. Vrabely asked how this plan will affect the CHOICE programs. He inquired what we will do with the cumulative data once it is all in, and how it might directly influence legislation.

Ms. Russell-Tucker pointed out that continuous input from district school officials and personnel will allow us to maintain momentum. Ms. Hopkins-Staten noted the importance of this. Ms. Comer noted that students of color are graduated before they are academically prepared. Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that his experience in adult education revealed that since 2011 the age to withdraw from school was raised to 17, which would explain why a higher percentage of students are graduating.

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Ms. Russell-Tucker added that she is co-chairing the Strategic Action Group on Chronic Absenteeism , noting that New York has a similar approach using attendance mentors as a component of their mentorship program and considered how it might work in Connecticut.

In response, the Committee members offered comments. Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked if our data suggested a focused qualitative breakdown of issues to better customize responses. Noting a recent Hartford Courant article on chronic teacher absenteeism, Mr. Vrabely reminded the committee that students follow the examples of teachers. Ms. Comer added that a mental health component should be considered as well. A definition of chronic absenteeism was recognized as missing 10% of days enrolled for any reason. Both Ms. Russell-Tucker and Mr. Gopalakrishnan then confirmed that their current data indicated a rate in Connecticut above 11%.

Discussion and commentary continued on the various topic areas covered in the "Vulnerable" Students report. Ms. Russell-Tucker and Mr. Gopalakrishnan responded to various concerns raised by committee members, primarily regarding the use of this data to identify problem areas and develop targeted solutions.

**IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Prepared by:

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Mark Shepherd, Temporary Legal Secretary