

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting  
July 9, 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 July 9, 2014.

**I. Call to Order**

Committee Chair Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. Also, present were committee members Robert Trefry, Joseph Vrabely and \*Terry Jones.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following Department staff members: Staff Attorney Laura Anastasio, Bureau Chief John Frassinelli, Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Legislative Liaison Sarah Hemingway, Commissioner Stefan Pryor, Education Staff Assistant Sergio Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker and Mark Shepherd.

[\*Mr. Jones arrived at 8:45 a.m.]

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Mr. Vrabely, seconded by Chair Hopkins-Staten, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2014, Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting.

**III. Review and Discussion of Chronic Absenteeism and Community Partnership Data**

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten called on Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker to begin the discussion on Chronic Absenteeism. Ms. Russell-Tucker noted that new data is now available and offered general suggestions as to how it might be useful. At this time, a report entitled "Chronic Absenteeism: A Closer Look At Connecticut Data," prepared by the Bureau of Data Collection, Research and Evaluation was distributed to committee members. Ms. Russell-Tucker then introduced Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan who began a review of said report.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan offered a detailed review of the data covered by the Chronic Absenteeism report, including:

- a review of illustrated linear, bar graph and pie chart data;
- his conclusion that the correct data was collected;
- the significance of focusing on the percentage of children missing 18 days or more;
- the value of data targeting where chronic absenteeism occurs most frequently; and
- the resulting relationship between attendance and school performance.

Discussion ensued.

Committee members offered comments and posed questions addressing topic areas covered by the report. Among these were:

- whether Alliance District data has also been requested;
- possible selection of an at-risk school as a test subject for targeted incentives to improve attendance;
- identification of preventive measures that might deter chronic absenteeism before it becomes acute;
- approaches to early intervention that might address the causes of chronic absenteeism; and
- possible utilization of attendance mentors.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan and Ms. Russell-Tucker responded by explaining in greater detail the data presented in the report concluding that chronic absenteeism (whether excused or unexcused) is a major contributor to lack of academic achievement and lower high school graduation rates throughout Connecticut.

Bureau Chief John Frassinelli presented a report to committee members entitled, "CSDE Alliance District Workshop: Connecting Schools with Community Partners, May 1, 2014." The report quantified the Alliance District responses to a variety of survey questions by region and Mr. Frassinelli reviewed these responses with committee members, explaining the results in greater detail. Commissioner Pryor also commented on the report's statistical results, noting how a lack of community partnership with the districts in key areas, particularly health, welfare and safety, can place the children of these districts at risk.

Discussion ensued resulting in suggestions and comments by committee members. Among these were:

- expanding partnerships to include more organizations, e.g., the Urban League;
- faculty and administrators developing more personal relationships with students, where at least someone knows everyone's name;
- development of an approach to acting on these data; and
- more detailed explanations of some of the terminology, particularly what constitutes "mental health" as noted in the report.

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten thanked the staff for their work on these reports and noted each as an agenda item for the next meeting.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

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

Prepared by:

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Mark Shepherd

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