

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

**Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting
December 3, 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 December 3, 2014.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Also present were committee members Robert Trefry, Joseph Vrabely and Terry Jones.* State Board of Education member Erin Benham was also present.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following Department of Education staff members: Staff Attorney Laura Anastasio, Assistant to the Commissioner Pamela Charland, Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey, Communications Director Kelly Donnelly, Bureau Chief John Frassinelli, Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Education Consultant Dr. William A. Howe, Regional School Choice & Sheff Office Division Director Glen Peterson, Education Staff Assistant Sergio Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker and Mark Shepherd, Paralegal.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Vrabely moved that the November 5, 2014 Legislative and Policy Development Committee meeting minutes be approved. Ms. Hopkins-Staten seconded this motion and the Committee unanimously approved the motion.

III. Discussion of Potential Revisions to the Guidelines for Policymakers Regarding Culturally Responsive Education

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten recognized Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker who introduced Division Director Glen Peterson to begin this discussion. Mr. Peterson was joined by Education Consultant William Howe and they began their review. Committee members, aware of a pending 2013 CHRO matter brought by parents of a student following a school field trip, had questions and comments regarding the implementation of a viable culturally responsive plan to prevent similar future occurrences. Mr. Peterson and Dr. Howe

recommended changes to the Board Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education to include protocols for educational simulations as well as incorporating information from the outcome of the CHRO matter. Currently, school trip policies are at the discretion of the local school districts.

Discussion ensued. Members expressed their concerns about the existing Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education and stated the need for more parental information regarding field trips, the inclusion of opt-out provisions and the need to emphasize the inherent importance of Culturally Responsive Education beyond its role in closing the achievement gap.

The State Department of Education will respond to these concerns by forwarding the 2011 Policy Statement to all local school districts to be returned with a signed acknowledgment by each district superintendent. Simultaneously, the current Position Statement will be revised to include protocols for simulations and details regarding field trip notification, including opt-out provisions for parents and students. Committee Members expressed their desire for an update on this matter once more information is available.

IV. Review and Discussion of Technical Legislative Proposals

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten recognized Chief Financial Officer and Acting Legal Director Kathy Demsey who began the discussion by referring members to their individual packets and the technical legislative proposals itemized therein. She noted that these would be the last submitted for the year 2014. The proposals included the following:

- An Act to Facilitate the Timeliness of District/School Accountability Calculations;
- Amendment to the Requirement for an annual rolling Capital Improvement and Equipment Plan for the Connecticut Technical High Schools;
- An Amendment Requiring all reports and requests for actions of cognizance required by statute will come before the CTHSS Board for final approval;
- Technical Fix to the Agricultural Science and Technology Education grant calculation;
- Technical Fix to the Agricultural Science and Technology Education grant forbidding local supplanting of funds;
- Technical Fix to Magnet School Statutes to change a reference from the Department of Social Services to the Office of Early Childhood;
- Technical Fix to change date upon which the Open Choice Transportation Grant is calculated;
- An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Reform Act of 2012; and
- Technical Fix to Supplemental Magnet Transportation

An Act to Facilitate the Timeliness of District/School Accountability Calculations. Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan added that adoption of this proposal would make results from state assessments available for use in accountability calculations in a timelier manner going forward.

Amendment to the requirement for an annual rolling Capital Improvement and Equipment Plan for the Connecticut Technical High Schools. Ms. Demsey confirmed with Mr. Trefry that the CTHSS Board approved the proposed plan modification as submitted which allows for the annual Capital Improvement and Equipment plan to cover a three year instead of a five year period.

An Amendment Requiring all reports and requests for actions of cognizance required by statute will come before the CTHSS Board for final approval. Ms. Hopkins-Staten questioned whether the Committee needs to act on this now and Mr. Vrabely asked what the protocol for this might be. Ms. Demsey suggested that this proposal might be held over until the January meeting. Ms. Hopkins-Staten concurred.

Technical Fix to VOAG Program Grant Calculation. Ms. Demsey identified a minor revision in language.

A Technical Fix to the VOAG Program regarding supplanting of local funds. Ms. Demsey proposed legislative language that would ensure there is no local supplanting of new state grant funds in this program.

A Technical Fix to the Magnet School Statutes. Ms. Demsey noted that currently the statute requires the Department to consult with the Department of Social Services when setting the sliding scale for pre-k magnet school tuition. The consultation should be with the Office of Early Childhood which has assumed responsibility for this work.

An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Reform Act of 2012. Ms. Demsey noted the proposed change would affect the timing of teacher evaluation submissions by the superintendent to local and regional school boards and the Commissioner.

Technical Fix to Supplemental Magnet Transportation. Ms. Demsey noted that there was an error in the legislation regarding the timing of paying the supplemental magnet school transportation grant. The legislation required payment by June 30, 2014 but the legislation did not become effective until July 1, 2014.

Discussion ensued following each proposed technical legislative revision with Committee Members offering comments and suggestions.

*Mr. Jones arrived at 8:49 a.m.

V. Approval of Technical Legislative Proposals

At 9:02 a.m., Mr. Jones moved and Mr. Vrabely seconded, that the Committee move to adopt the Technical Legislative Proposals as presented. The Committee Members approved unanimously.

VI. Continued Review of Chronic Absenteeism

Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker began this discussion by noting how discipline and transportation can impact chronic absenteeism. Bureau Chief John Frassinelli noted the recent meeting between the Department of Education, the Connecticut Commission on Children and Center for Children's Advocacy regarding proposed legislation. Included in this discussion was the issue of thresholds that would trigger intervention and individualized plans to lower chronic absenteeism rates.

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten concurred noting that a distinction should be made based on grade level and other variables to qualify intervention approaches based on reasons for absences.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan reminded members of the standard formula for identifying absenteeism as "chronic" as 10% of days enrolled or 18 days of absence from school over the course of a year, presuming a 180 day school year, whether excused or unexcused.

Ms. Russell-Tucker went further stating that the available numbers show a total chronic absenteeism number at approximately 57,000, down from over 60,000, and noted the improved results the district of New Britain has achieved as a result of direct intervention with students. Staff are planning to gather best practices that can be shared with all districts.

Discussion continued and Committee members commented on availability and utilization of free lunch and breakfast programs and how they might contribute to lowering chronic absenteeism. The Committee also questioned whether any proposals adopted in this regard would be more effective as legislation or policy and asked that a recommendation be prepared for the next meeting that members can approve. Mr. Vrabely requested a recommendation that the Committee can act upon now and the staff agreed to this request.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 a.m.

Prepared by:

Mark Shepherd, Paralegal