

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Ad Hoc Committee on Secondary School Improvement
Meeting of September 24, 2008
Minutes

A. Call to Order and Welcome

Committee Co-Chair Jay Voss called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. The meeting was held in Room 307, State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. The following committee members were present:

Barbara Beaudin, SDE
Dennis Carrithers, CAS
Chris Clouet, CAUS
Mary Lou DiPaola, New Haven Public School Teacher
Janet Finneran, Committee Co-Chair, State Board of Education
Judith Greiman, CCIC
Shiela Hayes, NAACP
Robert Keating, OWC
Representative Robert Keeley
Yvette Melendez and Jill Ferraiolo, CSU
Jonas Zdanys, DHE
Michael Meotti, DHE
Mark McQuillan, Commissioner, SDE
Robert Hale, CABE
Allan Taylor, SBE
Marne Usher, CT PTA
Jay Voss, Committee Co-Chair, State Board of Education
Barbara Westwater, SDE
Michael Freeman, CEA
Sharon Palmer, AFT Connecticut

B. Approval of Minutes of September 15, 2008 Committee Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Hayes, seconded by Mr. Carrithers, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the September 15, 2008, committee meeting.

Commissioner McQuillan summarized Appendix D, "Projected Secondary School Reform State Cost Estimates: 2009-10 through 2016-17."

Associate Commissioner Barbara Beaudin summarized the six sections of "Secondary School Reform Cost Analysis: Part II; District Impact of Secondary School reform Initiatives," including Student Success Plan and Support System; Credit Requirements and Personnel; Curriculum; Assessment; Facilities; and Incentives.

Comments:

- Need to consider FTE requirement affiliated with success plan;
- Due to the multiple needs of schools with a large number of non-English-speaking students, additional support might be required;
- Consider need for additional funds to compensate teachers for additional work (Capstone oversight; Student Success Plans, etc.);
- CEA – prepared remarks;
- Consider the impact the 25-credit requirement has on other courses (e.g., music);

Consider better use of teacher time to dedicate to the plan (rather than supervising cafeterias, for example, a teacher could be mentoring a student);

Remove from the budget AP Support and College Tuition Incentives, as these are not factored into the total projected costs;

Discussion regarding middle school connectivity and whether DOIT could cover the costs; agreement reached to present the cost in this budget to demonstrate the need for funds to connect all schools.

The Connecticut Plan: Academic and Personal Success for Every Middle and High School Student

Mr. Voss noted the following edits to the plan:

Page 4, 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence, add “and teachers” after “Schools and, in particular, principals”;

Page 12, Section Two, 2nd paragraph, remove the asterisk after “English I”;

Page 14, rewrite to reflect that final exam will not be developed by the Department for English I;

Page 15, under “Open Electives,” note the opportunity to take a world language;

Page 21, under “Summary of Assessment and Accountability,” #2, end sentence after “make goal on one or more of the CAPT tests.”

Reference to Appendix F should read Appendix G.

Commissioner McQuillan summarized changes following the committee’s meeting on September 15. He called attention to page 19, describing the value assigned to overall course average and final examination score; the inclusion of parental involvement; what assumptions underlie the ‘phase-in’ model; the demonstrated impact of not moving forward with the reform proposals; and language pertaining to the role of community colleges and other higher education institutions. He noted that a table will be attached summarizing the state’s and the local district’s roles.

Discussion ensued. Suggestions included:

Expand use of the Alternate Route to Certification to address teacher shortages, especially in world languages;

Use the term “scholarship” instead of “voucher”;

Develop a printed public information plan;

Include the P-20 piece.

Question was raised as to whether students could test out of a required course and receive credit. Commissioner responded no, but we could include in the “alternatives’ section provisions to so in certain situations (world language, for example).

The message that the curriculum is no longer appropriate just for some, but is necessary for all students must come across. This is a major societal change, and the message must come across strongly. It would not be advisable to get too distracted by all the details at this point; that will take time.

Concern was raised regarding a drop in social studies credits from 3 to 2.5. This is a symbolic drop, and must be accompanied by a clear rationale. Commissioner explained it was done to 'balance' the total course load, not to detract from the importance of social studies. Alternative would be to keep the credit requirement here, and reduce the electives to 3.5

Substitute language was presented for the section titled "Community College and Other Higher Education Institutions." (copy of language in official file). There was some discussion of keeping reference to CAPT, but consensus was reached by the committee to substitute the language verbatim, with the removal of the words "admission and" from the last bullet.

Mr. Freeman moved, Ms. Hayes seconded, to increase the credit requirements in social studies to three and to reduce the open electives credit requirements to 3.5. Vote on motion: In favor: 7; opposed: 6. Motion carried.

Add language in section five to note that dollars for assessment have already been allocated, and funds will be reprogrammed to keep costs down.

Ms. Palmer noted that while she shares the concerns raised by the CEA, she is prepared to vote in favor of the plan. She questioned whether the committee could reconvene at a future date to assess the plan's progress and, if needed, to reprioritize components (based on funding availability).

State Board of Education Chairman Allan Taylor noted that the Board would welcome the continued advice by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Members shared final thoughts about the plan, including follow-up activities (public information campaign; emphasis on the student support services, drafting legislation and factoring into budget proposal; holding an information session for the General Assembly, etc.).

Dr. Voss moved, Mr. Hale seconded, that the Ad Hoc Committee on Secondary School Improvement adopt *The Connecticut Plan: Academic and Personal Success for Every Middle and High School Student*, and submit said report and its recommendations to the State Board of Education for inclusion in its legislative proposals to be presented to the Connecticut General Assembly.

Vote on motion:

In favor: 15

Abstained: 1

Motion carried.

Dr. Voss thanked the Committee for its hard work and contributions. Commissioner McQuillan thanked committee members and his staff members for their efforts. Ms. Finneran commended the leadership of Dr. Voss as Chair of the Committee, and Mr. Taylor acknowledged the extraordinary efforts of all, including the foresight of the Commissioner.