

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Legislation and Bylaws Committee

July 1, 2009
8:30 a.m.
State Office Building
Hartford, CT

MINUTES

Members Present

Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Beverly Bobroske, Janet Finneran, John Voss

Staff Present

Mark McQuillan, George Coleman, Pamela Bergin, Jennifer Widness and Janice Dinnall

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:28 a.m.

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes from the June 3, 2009 meeting were approved with no changes.

Legislative Update

Jennifer Widness updated the Committee on the passage of H.B. 6901, An Act Concerning Educator Certification and Professional Development and Other Education Issues, during the June 19th Special Session of the General Assembly. Ms. Widness explained the close similarity of H.B. 6901 and S.B. 939, highlighting that the only difference between both bills was the exclusion of the provision to allow the Granby Board of Education to waive the 180 day requirement due to the H1N1 virus in H.B. 6901.

Ms. Widness informed the Committee that no agreement had been reached on the biennium budget but negotiations appeared to be ongoing.

Revised Timeline for Approval of SBE Legislative Proposals for 2010 Legislative Session

Ms. Widness then reviewed the draft revised timeline relating to the State Board's approval of the 2010 legislative proposals. She explained that the changes made to the timeline would allow for the State Board to get involved earlier in the process. Theresa Hopkins-Staten noted that the changes to the timeline would allow the Department to be more strategic in its approach and to conduct some outreach on the Board's top priorities prior to the commencement of the 2010 legislative session.

Draft Framework of Legislative Proposals for 2010

Commissioner McQuillan reviewed a draft framework of legislative priorities for the 2010 legislative session with Committee members. Items on this list included requiring full-day kindergarten in priority school districts and phasing in a change to the admission policy for kindergartners to eventually require that children must be five years old by September 1 of that school year, in order to enroll. The Commissioner noted that many families enroll their children in kindergarten too early to avoid having to pay for day care and the Connecticut Mastery Test results shows that it takes a number of years for these children to catch up. Mrs. Hopkins-Staten noted that if high quality pre-school was more accessible, families would be less likely to enroll their children in kindergarten at the age of four-and-a-half.

Commissioner McQuillan also suggested requiring a longer school day or a longer school year for those districts in their fourth year of improvement or corrective action and adjusting factors in the education cost sharing grant to aid priority school districts which have a larger percentage of ELL students and special education students. Mr. Voss suggested that it was important to share the data which shows the effectiveness of a longer school day or school year as well as for all of the legislative priorities that are pursued in 2010.

The Commissioner noted that Secondary School Reform remains a legislative priority. Ms. Widness shared that members of the Senate expressed their support for the proposal during the debate on H.B. 6901 on June 19th. Mr. Voss inquired as to the concerns of legislators in the House, which removed the provision from S.B. 939, and suggested that the Department create a document that describes the proposal in full and addresses those concerns.

The Commissioner stated that a handful of legislative proposals which were not approved in the 2009 regular session will be resubmitted for 2010, including the online learning proposal. The Commissioner noted that this proposal continues to be important due to the likelihood that the entire educational program will eventually be embedded in technology. Mr. Voss reiterated that it would be very helpful if the

Department had data available to support its position relating to the online learning proposal. Mrs. Hopkins-Staten agreed and requested that a document which answers frequently-asked questions be created for all of the new legislative proposals, in order to help Board members and legislators be more knowledgeable. The Commissioner suggested that Tom Murphy and Barbara Beaudin attend the Legislation and Bylaws Committee meetings moving forward.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,