

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**Ad Hoc Committee to Study Education Cost Sharing  
and Choice Funding**

**Work Group to Develop Proposal Regarding Committee Priorities**

**Minutes of Meeting of August 25, 2010**

Present: David Calchera, Kathy Demsey, Bruce Douglas, Alex Johnston, Lauren Kaufman, Brian Mahoney, Mark McQuillan, Allan Taylor, Kachina Walsh-Weaver and Dudley Williams

Absent: George Coleman, Kathy Guay

**Welcome**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of State, Commissioner McQuillan called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. The meeting was held in room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. Commissioner McQuillan stated that Alex Johnson and Lauren Kaufman will be meeting with the Rhode Island Department of Education to assist in determining ways to change the funding formula to better serve the needs of all Connecticut students. They will make a presentation at the October 18 meeting of the full Ad Hoc Committee to Study ECS and Choice.

**Minutes**

On a motion by Mr. Johnston, seconded by Ms. Walsh-Weaver, the work group voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2010, work group meeting.

**Role of RESCs and Preliminary Proposals for Regionalism/Regionalization**

Commissioner McQuillan asked the work group members to share ideas about regionalism. Members commented as follows:

- Recognition of potential benefits, but concerned with how RESCs would be held accountable to local taxpayers and reducing the tax burden to local taxpayers;
- Local districts can purchase services from the RESCs, and each has the control as to where the money is spent;
- More beneficial to provide incentives than requiring participation in regionalism;
- Governor's Commission is reviewing proposals that would provide more direct funding and incentives to school districts;
- Important to communicate with families regarding how regionalism will benefit their children;
- The following areas were suggested as ones to review in terms of cost savings: energy conservation; special education; informational technology services; healthcare, transportation, food services and facilities management. It was noted that regionalizing these functions would allow educators to focus on teaching and learning.
- Opportunities could be built around choice and by regionalizing certain programs (arts, technology).

- Begin with “services” and then expand to educational programs. Cost savings from regional approach to services could result in extra dollars available for programs that had been eliminated from local budgets or new services.

Dr. Douglas noted that the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission had a similar discussion last year regarding the cost effectiveness and the need to work toward student achievement. However, the findings of the MORE Commission were not finalized, as attention was turned to the budget deficit. Commissioner McQuillan asked Dr. Douglas to provide copies of the MORE report to the Ad Hoc Committee.

The work group reviewed reasons why regionalism has not been well-received in the past. Discussion ensued regarding local politics, preservation of local control, and reluctance to participate with urban districts (Sheff v. O’Neill). It was noted that we must identify efficiencies to build trust, and then to expand upon regionalization initiatives after towns realize that they benefit by doing so. For example, can CREC demonstrate the cost savings to districts by a regional transportation system?

Discussion continued about a good starting point (e.g., information technology; maximizing on CREC’s existing data warehouse to allow districts to do benchmark assessments) and the necessity of training for districts.

Commissioner McQuillan noted that the State would have to invest money to get this program started.

Commissioner McQuillan stated that there is not a formally designated unit within the SDE that oversees, manages, and coordinates RESC Alliance work with the Department. This need should be addressed as a new position or the repurposing of existing personnel. The full committee needs to consider how organizational changes can be made within the existing leadership councils of the RESC. Such changes should include: revisions to the leadership councils that preside over RESCs in order to expand governance responsibilities to municipal leaders who are not part of the make-up of the councils.

The full committee also needs to endorse the importance of using the regional infrastructure we currently have in place with the RESC Alliance and not build something new or separate from the Alliance. Finally, the committee must be prepared to show how the cost savings derived from regional collaboration will and must benefit local instructional programs served by RESCs.

Commissioner McQuillan noted that transportation may be a good start but it is very complicated. Mr. Calchera stated that five of the six RESCs already have transportation services.

Discussion continued about the need to appeal to districts to do things differently, and demonstrate the cost savings potential (i.e., IT and transportation).

Dr. Douglas told the committee that the Alliance has some estimates, but a good source would be Blum/Shapiro since that firm audits almost all of the districts in Connecticut.

Commissioner McQuillan stated that we would need legislation to look at the State’s investment in transportation and put to bid.

### **Next Meeting**

September 7, 2010, 9:30 a.m., Room 307, State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford.  
Topics to be covered include:

- A. Overview of MORE Commission Report;
- B. RESC Service Delivery and Role in Carrying out Initiatives in Phase II application; Potential Cost Savings: Transportation, Information Technology; and
- C. Discussion of Recommendations to Full Committee (*Use of existing regional structure; public relations – demonstrate cost savings; redirecting savings to educational programs, reducing burden on local taxpayers*).

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.