

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
Legislation and Bylaws Committee

**Workshop**  
**November 4, 2010**  
State Office Building, Room 307  
165 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

**MINUTES**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Hopkins-Staten called the meeting order at 2:10 p.m. Present were Board members Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Janet Finneran and Allan Taylor. Committee member John Voss was absent. Also present were staff members Mark K. McQuillan, George Coleman, Brian Mahoney, Daniel Murphy, Kathy Demsey, Jennifer Widness, Harriet Feldlaufer.

**II. Discussion of 2011 Legislative Proposals**

**Sheff Settlement**

Commissioner McQuillan summarized the legislative proposal concerning the Sheff settlement, noting that the related budget request proposes a significant increase to accommodate additional seats. He explained the proposal to create Crandall Innovation Schools, which would provide districts in the Sheff region financial incentives to help meet the goals of the court settlement, using existing school buildings that otherwise would be closed due to lower enrollments and budget reductions. See proposal #4 in the Commissioner's November 3, 2010, memorandum to the State Board of Education for further details.

Discussion ensued.

The committee then discussed and agreed to resubmit a proposal that had been submitted to the 2010 General Assembly, whereby the Commissioner would be granted authority to require districts to accept choice students. See proposal #5 in the Commissioner's November 3, 2010, memorandum to the State Board of Education for further details.

Committee members agreed with a proposal to revise funding provisions for Open Choice students to provide financial incentives for increased participation by local districts and for districts to commit to offering seats earlier in the year. See proposal #6 in the Commissioner's November 3, 2010, memorandum to the State Board of Education for further details.

The last proposal under the "Sheff Settlement" pertained to implementing one level of transportation reimbursement for school choice in the Sheff region for all providers.

**Admission Date to Kindergarten**

Jennifer Widness distributed to committee members a revised "Alternative Proposal for Adjusting the Admission Age to Kindergarten." Commissioner McQuillan summarized the phase-in of an adjustment to the starting age for kindergarteners over a four-year period, resulting in only those students who are five years of age on or before September 1 being admitted, with certain conditions for waiver. He explained

the concurrent proposal to expand school readiness funds for those students in priority school districts who are 5 years of age between September 1 and January 1. Discussion ensued regarding the large age difference currently in kindergarten classrooms as a result of allowing parents the option to wait to enroll their children in kindergarten until age 6 or 7. Members discussed the importance of quality preschool programs, and asked where we stand with the initiative to implement a quality rating system. Commissioner McQuillan replied that due to the lack of funding, we no longer have the capacity to pursue that initiative. Harriet Feldlaufer added that at some point we anticipate having national standards for preschool which will drive the quality rating system. Mr. Taylor emphasized the importance of the Department of Education having access to the data on preschoolers, as eventually they will become "our" students. See revised proposal #1 in the Commissioner's November 3, 2010, memorandum to the State Board of Education for further details.

Mrs. Hopkins-Staten suggested that the proposed entry date be set at October 1, rather than September 1.

### **Raising Age for Child to Withdraw from School to be Consistent with New Drop-out Provision**

Committee members discussed the above proposal. Comments made included the importance of tracking students who are expelled and what course they take at the conclusion of the expulsion period; the importance of providing more avenues for students to pursue, rather than creating additional barriers (i.e., options for a 16-year-old pregnant student). Committee members asked that Dr. Paul Flinter be invited to the next meeting to provide additional data and rationale for this proposal.

### **Other**

With regard to the proposal concerning educational services provided to children in community juvenile detention centers (proposal #25), committee members urged that the approach be comprehensive and holistic – addressing both the emotional and educational needs of the students.

With regard to proposal #34 to amend the Campaign Finance Law to exclude members of the State Board of Education from restrictions on political activity, the committee concurred.

A request was made to review the statute concerning the racial imbalance law. Commissioner McQuillan stated that we will not have time to do this for the 2011 session, but will begin the review process.

A request was made to determine whether the RESC Annual Reports were required under state statute.

Mr. Taylor requested that the "educational interests of the state" prevail in the event of binding arbitration, and the ability of a board of education being able to argue under that premise.

Committee members discussed home schooled children and their lack of entitlement to public school services (e.g., special education). Committee members requested that Attorney Theresa DeFrancis address the committee on this proposal at the December meeting.

Commissioner McQuillan described the cost benefits associated with a proposal to implement a common calendar across the state. Committee members did not wish to submit a proposal concerning a common school calendar, but suggested that the Ad Hoc Committee on ECS and Funding consider this.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.