

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

**Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting
October 1, 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 2E, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut on October 1, 2014.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. Also present were committee members Robert Trefry and Joseph Vrabely.

Also present for all or part of the meeting were the following Department of Education staff members: Turnaround Division Director Morgan Barth, Assistant to the Commissioner Pamela Charland, Education Staff Assistant Martha Deeds, Director of Communications and Community Partnerships Kelly Donnelly, Bureau Chief John Frassinelli, Chief of Staff Adam Goldfarb, Bureau Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Bureau Chief Mark Linabury, Education Staff Assistant Sergio Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer Charlene Russell-Tucker and Mark Shepherd.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

On a motion made by Mr. Vrabely and seconded by Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten, the committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes of the September 3, 2014, Legislation and Policy Development Committee Meeting.

III. Review and Discussion of Alternate School Programs in Connecticut

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten recognized Bureau Chief Mark Linabury who began the presentation. In an outline of the Department's approach to implementing Connecticut's Alternate School Programs, Mr. Linabury acknowledged the committee is receiving a range of definitions concerning Alternate Schools, including those from other states, the federal government and a proposed Connecticut definition from the 2013 legislative session which ultimately failed to become state law. After noting that 43 states have implemented Alternate Schools Programs, Mr. Linabury identified and reviewed some of the most common definition categories and their key components:

- Target Population;
- Setting;
- Services; and
- Structure.

After identifying the individual components of each category, Mr. Linabury also noted that these might comprise a general framework that could be further tailored to better meet the needs of Connecticut students.

Discussion ensued. Committee members asked questions about the sources of funding and the role of data coding to better focus program implementation, the identification and targeting of student sub-populations and the establishment of program goals.

Bureau Chief Gopalakrishnan reminded members that the task of customized coding is underway and that data currently being collected should be integrated and available for review in a report due out on January 31, 2014. Districts are presently submitting data.

Mr. Linabury replied to the funding question and noted the progress of Massachusetts and other states in the area of Alternate School Programs, conveying to members that there is considerable ground yet to be covered in their design and effectiveness.

IV. Review and Discussion of Charter School Accountability

Division Director Morgan Barth presented to the Committee a review of progress in the area of Charter School Accountability. Two handouts were made available to members and staff. One, a PowerPoint presentation utilizing bar charts and point graphs to provide a general overview and the second, a fact sheet on Charter School oversight and improvement detailing the Department's efforts and progress in meeting the goals set forth by the Governor in July 2014.

Mr. Barth's review offered members greater detail as to how the Department is preparing to measure and maintain accountability standards per this request.

He reviewed the Department's efforts to better identify potential problems and implement standards that would strengthen Connecticut's Charter School Programs. Among these new expectations, as presented in a memo to the charter school directors, were:

- mandatory background checks for all charter school board members and all staff;
- a stated anti-nepotism policy;
- required training for all Board members without exception; and
- open board meetings where public input is reviewed, considered and where possible, acted upon.

Mr. Barth emphasized the critical component of renewal, noting that in complying with these new standards, Connecticut's charter schools are, at the same time, meeting their renewal criteria even though formal renewal is required once every four to five years. Contract renewal is an ongoing operational process and consequently, problems can be identified and addressed well before the actual renewal process begins.

Other areas covered in Mr. Barth's charter school presentation were the latest CMT and CAPT performance data, high needs student data results (i.e. English Language Learners, free lunch students, ethnic minority students, etc.) and the lottery process.

Discussion followed and members voiced both their satisfaction and concerns. Among the noted concerns were:

- the need for improved regulation of the charter school management organizations;
- whether or not the charter school management organizations were also subject to Freedom of Information Act compliance;
- the need for further clarification of the charter school audit process; and
- attrition data, i.e. graduation rates and the need for complete and accurate tracking of how our charter school students fare upon completion of their academic programs.

Both Mr. Barth and Mr. Linabury addressed these concerns and assured members that more reporting is being prepared.

Committee Chair Hopkins-Staten thanked the presenters for their reports and requested that Chief Operating Officer Russell-Tucker begin the discussion in the November meeting with a review of the latest chronic absenteeism data. Ms. Russell-Tucker agreed and offered a brief preliminary summary of areas to be covered at that time.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Prepared by:

Mark Shepherd