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Notes on the state board of education...

Feb. 2-3, 2006

Special Note: To review background materials on each item, please go to http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe_meetings/0602_sbagenda.html. Click on the appropriate agenda category, High Student Performance (HSP); Quality Teachers, Administrators and Staff (QP); Effective and Efficient Operations (EEO); Healthy Students in Safe, Orderly and Caring Schools (SS); or Strong Family, Community and Business Support (FCB).

Issues Session

- Reading/Literacy Programs and Issues in North Carolina Public Schools - Part III* – Board members continued their discussion of reading/literacy programs and issues by reviewing and discussing a proposed strategic plan for reading literacy that is organized around the State Board's strategic priorities for excellent schools. The overall goal for the plan is to have "all students possess the digital and literacy skills necessary to live and work successfully in a global economy." Possible benchmarks for program success include student performance on state end-of-grade tests and on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Five priority action steps were outlined for Board members: (1) curriculum revision process to include literacy strategies in each content area and a focus on digital reading; (2) student assessments that include open-ended and performance tasks; (3) leadership development for principals and central office staff; (4) preparation and professional development for elementary, middle and high school teachers; and (5) policy revision and development. Following Board discussion of goals and objectives, State Board Chairman Howard Lee suggested that State Superintendent June Atkinson convene a review panel representing a cross section of the state (including institutes of higher education and Board members) to review the proposed strategic plan for reading literacy. Statewide feedback and potential budget needs will be provided at a future meeting.

- Issues Session II: Charlotte-Mecklenburg High School Assistance Initiative* – State Superintendent Atkinson provided Board members with an overview of assistance that Department staff provide to districts and schools as a result of the ABCs of Public Education, No Child Left Behind and the Leandro case. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 10 high schools are receiving direct assistance through state assessment teams. Superintendent Atkinson said that over the past several months, the Board, NCDPI and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools have participated in several activities to develop a plan for improved student achievement with the goal of increasing the pass rate on end-of-course tests by an average of 10 percent at each of the 10 high priority high schools by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Common findings by the assessment teams focused on curriculum and instruction, professional development and avenues for extra help and assistance. Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools will use these findings to improve practices in these high schools. Model results will be used for possible replication in other large school districts and will be modified for use in small/medium schools. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Regional Assistant Superintendent for Quality Assurance Dr. Ann Clark told Board members that the school system appreciated the tremendous amount of support from the Board and Department and that they are committed to significant growth in student achievement, beyond the 10 percent outlined in the plan.

Action Agenda

- Minimize Time Devoted to Standardized Testing (HSP1)* – State Board members approved a policy that limits the amount of time schools may devote to practice tests and restricts the timing and frequency of field tests.
- Options for Growth Models for Determining Adequate Yearly Progress (HSP2)* – At the recommendation of the Compliance Commission for Accountability, the Title I Committee of Practitioners, NCDPI's Accountability Advisory Committee and other groups, Board members approved a combination of growth model options to submit to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) as part of the state's proposal for calculating Adequate Yearly Progress. The option approved by the Board will continue the current model for calculating AYP and add two additional steps:
 - (1) Consideration of growth toward proficiency based on a four-year trajectory. If a group in a school does not meet its target proficiency goals, any student who is on a growth trajectory to be proficient within four years of entering the school district would be added to the number proficient to compare against the existing proficiency target goal.
 - (2) Consideration of cohort safe harbor. Under this measure, the percent proficient for a subgroup this year would be compared to the percent proficient for the same group of students in the previous year. An analysis of the outcome of implementing the recommendation would have changed the status of 122 schools (13.1 percent) from not met AYP to met AYP. To be considered for participation in the USED's pilot program, NCDPI must submit its proposal by Feb. 17.
- Exemption Requests Under the Innovative Education Initiatives Act (HSP 3)* – Exemption requests under the Innovative Education Initiatives Act were granted for five Learn and Earn Early College High Schools (Buncombe County Early/Middle College, Caldwell ACCEL, Catawba Valley CHALLENGER Early College High School, Middle College of Entertainment at GTCC, and Nash-Rocky Mount Early/Middle College High School) and three Middle College High Schools (Middle College High School at Durham Technical Community College, Johnston County Middle School College High School, and Wayne Early/Middle College High School) and seven State Board of Education exemption requests affecting students in Caldwell, Wayne, Guilford, Durham, Martin, Edgecombe, and Nash-Rocky Mount school systems.
- Appointment of Individuals to the State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education (QP3)* – Six committee members (Dr. John Fischetti, Tona Jacobs, Mamie Jay, Dr. Doris Jenkins, Dr. Wetonah Rice Parker and Dr. Mark Sidelnick) were reappointed and one new member (Dr. Jewell Cooper) was appointed to the State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education. The Committee meets three times annually to review the reports of on-site teacher education program approval visitation teams and to make recommendations to the State Board concerning program approval.
- No Child Left Behind HOUSSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) Components for Kindergarten, English as a Second Language, Physical Education, Health, Dance, Hearing Impaired, and Middle Grades Education Teachers (QP 2)* – HOUSSSE components that can be used by kindergarten, English as a second language, physical education, health, dance, hearing impaired, and middle grades teachers to be designated as "highly qualified" in compliance with No Child Left Behind were approved.
- Charter School Grade Changes and Enrollment Increase Requests Above 10% (EEO1)* – Enrollment increases were approved for The Central Park School for Children, Charter Day School, Kennedy Charter Public School, Union Academy and Torchlight Academy. Grade span changes and enrollment increases were approved for Children's Community School and Queen's Grant Community School.
- Report of the E-Learning Commission – Phase 2 (EEO2)* – Board members approved the "Report of the E-Learning Commission to the North Carolina State Board of Education," which sets forth the findings and initial recommendations of the Commission for phase two of its charge to "develop e-learning standards and infrastructures that provide virtual learning opportunities to students and other citizens through all North Carolina schools, universities and community colleges."

Action on First Reading

- Recommended Interim Academic Achievement Standards (Cut Scores) for the NCCLAS Alternate Assessment for the High School Comprehensive Test (HSP 4)* – The recommended interim academic achievement standards for the North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards (NCCLAS) for the High School Comprehensive Test at grade 10 in the areas of reading and mathematics were approved. The NCCLAS is a newly designed and implemented (2005-06) grade-level alternate assessment for eligible English Language Learners and eligible students with disabilities.
- Recommended Interim Academic Achievement Standards (Cut Scores) for the Social Studies EOC Tests (HSP 8)* – Interim academic achievement standards (cut scores) for the revised U.S. History and the new Civics and Economics EOC tests were approved for implementation effective with the 2005-06 school year. Final academic achievement standards for 2006-07 and beyond will be recommended for Board adoption at the end of the 2005-06 school year once the complete set of operational data is available and assessed.
- Final Decision in Contested Case – Susan E. Hebach vs. NCDPI (QP 3)* – Board members approved the final decision prepared by staff and presented during closed session. The Board did not grant a continuing license to Ms. Hebach based on the fact that she did not complete the three years' employment requirement under an initial license.
- Torchlight Academy Charter School (EEO3)* – Request approved under EEO1.
- Approval of LEAs' and Charter Schools' Technology Plans (EEO4)* – Technology plans for 89 school districts and nine charter schools were approved. Approval qualifies these school districts and charter schools for the School Technology Trust Fund, No Child Left Behind and federal e-Rate monies, as well as a variety of private technology grants.
- Recommendation for Charter School Advisory Committee Chair (EEO5)* – Sandy Carmany, a member of the Greensboro City Council, was approved as Chair of the Charter School Advisory Committee.
- Replacement of Compliance Commission Members (EEO 6)* – Dr. Kevin Brady, an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at North Carolina State University, was appointed to the Compliance Commission for Accountability to serve out Dr. Lisa Howley's term.

Discussion Agenda

- Middle and High School Mathematics Recommendations (HSP 5)* – In the context of high school reform and enhancing rigor at the middle grades, three recommendations affecting middle and high school mathematics were presented to the Board for discussion. The first high school recommendation addressed counting non-Advanced Placement courses used to fulfill mathematics graduation requirements as earning one unit of credit regardless of the duration of the course. If the course is taught over two block semesters, the student would receive .5 units of credit for each block. The second high school recommendation clarified which mathematics courses meet the fourth-year math requirement. For middle grades, staff recommended that only developmentally and academically prepared students be allowed to take Algebra I in middle school. In addition, Algebra I-A should not be offered at the middle grades level.
- 2006-2007 Supplemental Budget Request (EEO 7)* – NCDPI's Associate Superintendent for Financial and Business Services Phillip Price reviewed with Board members their 2006-07 proposed Supplemental Budget Request. He began by discussing the budget outlook for next year and education budget priorities of the Governor. State Board budget requirements are grouped in three key areas: funds to improve capacity – funds to enable a school system or the NCDPI to maintain the basic level of services for students and organizations they serve; expand/new education programs – funds to enable the expansion or implementation of programs that enlarge the capacity of public schools to meet the diverse/ changing needs of its student populations; and teacher/employee retention – funds to address the needs of public school employees. Discussion will continue in March, especially concerning options to meet budget priorities and areas where budget costs could be phased in.
- Recommendations for Final Approval of 2005 Charter School Applications (EEO 8)* – Staff recommended that Roxboro Community School's charter application be given final approval to begin operation during the 2006-07 school year. Roxboro Community School brings the total number of charter schools to 97.

Information Agenda

- Implementation Timeline for the Default Course of Study in the Academic Rigor Policy (HSP 6)* – The State Board of Education's Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Rigor, Relevance and Relationships presented for information a timeline and accompanying activities for starting full implementation of the Rigor Policy and the default course of study that it requires.
- NCVirtual Report (HSP7)* – NCVirtual Interim Director Bruce Friend provided Board members with a program update on NCVirtual. Friend said his activities focused on four priorities: getting the lay of the land, identifying courses that will be offered this fall, identifying back-end systems needed, and networking. Next month he would like to share with the Board course decisions and answers to architectural questions (Web location and how students will register).

Good News

2005 Milken Award Winner – 2005 Milken Award Winner and 8th Grade West Millbrook Middle School teacher (Wake County Schools) Aimee Niebauer was recognized before the Board and presented with the Milken Award obelisk from the Milken Family Foundation and a plaque and mug from the State Board of Education in honor of her accomplishments.

Special Recognitions

Outgoing Charter Schools Advisory Committee Chair – Dr. Michael Fedewa, outgoing chairman of the NC Charter Schools Advisory Committee, was recognized for his service as the first director of the NC Charter Schools Advisory Committee. The Board presented Fedewa, who is Superintendent of the Diocese of Raleigh (Catholic Schools), with a plaque and mug.

Chairman's Remarks

- Under the Chairman's Remarks, State Board of Education member John Tate provided board members with a reflection of his recent 10-day trip to India. The Public School Forum helped arrange the trip with the assistance of the Center for International Understanding and Cisco Systems and Wachovia provided funding. Tate said India is a country of contrasts and a land of opportunity. A strong emphasis on science and mathematics has benefited its technology industry. He visited both K-12 and university level schools and was greatly impressed by the emphasis that families and students place on education and, in particular, the science and mathematics fields. Graduating engineers are highly recruited in the global economy. Families' meager resources tend to be geared toward the academic success of their children. From his visit he learned the value of rigor (we must push our children academically – we owe it to them), the need for high expectations and the importance of math and science. We need to raise the sense of urgency in these fields and the K-20 school community and industry must partner on this front. It is critical that we graduate globally competitive students as India does.
- Sixth Strategic Board Priority* – Chairman Lee said that he plans to come back to the State Board in June with a draft sixth strategic priority on global interdependence. Over the next two months, Deputy State Superintendent Janice Davis will be devoting a third of her time to develop this priority. Monthly reports will be provided to the Board noting progress to date.

State Superintendent's Report

Resolution Establishing a Relationship with Jiangsu Province – Board members approved a resolution establishing a mutual relationship for educational purposes with Jiangsu Province, China, for the purpose of furthering educational opportunities for North Carolina public school students and Jiangsu students.

Special Presentations

Resolutions Honoring Retiring State Board of Education Staff – Board members presented resolutions honoring the dedicated service and contributions of retiring State Board of Education Executive Director Jane Worsham and State Board of Education Legislative Liaison Linda Suggs. Board and audience members were invited to a reception in their honor following adjournment of the Board meeting.

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