The State Board of Education held a conference call meeting on Nov. 22 to handle some action items that otherwise would have been on its December meeting. This conference call meeting expedited the December agenda to enable members to attend the Action Plan for High School Innovation Conference on Thursday, Dec. 2.

Action Agenda

- Evaluation of High Priority Schools Initiative: Second Annual Report (HSP 2) — This evaluation report was approved by the Board. It reports findings from the second year of the efforts to provide 25 high priority schools with funds to reduce class size in K-3, to extend teacher contracts by five days for professional development and to add five additional days to the school calendar. The report, prepared by Metis Associates, provided three recommendations:
  - Consider using a K-2 assessment to help measure the extent to which the reduced class size component is impacting academic growth for students in these grade levels;
  - Offer guidance on best practices for implementing the four components of the HP Initiative;
  - Consider using the HP districts and schools with more flexibility to design the extended school year component in a way that best meets local needs.

- Evaluation of Teacher Recruitment and Retention Initiative (HSP 2) — This legislative required evaluation was approved this month of a program that provided $1,200 salary bonuses to mathematics, science and special education teachers in extended middle and high schools who were teaching in-field and were fully certified in those fields. The evaluation of this program noted that it had a positive effect on the ability of eligible middle and high schools to retain math and science teachers. However, the report noted that the program’s design caused some difficulties because of its complexity and timing of implementation. This program has been discontinued. The Board requested that the cover letter to the General Assembly accompanying this report should include statements regarding the facts that the Board believed the program was discontinued prematurely and provided information as to why the bonuses should be reinstated.

- Revision of the North Carolina Second Language Standard Course of Study (HSP 3) — Revisions of the Second Language Standard Course of Study were approved. Major revisions were not recommended to the 1999 Second Language Standard Course of Study. However, the revisions do include 12 foreign language courses that have been approved by the Latin Speakers Curriculum Committee. The Latin Speakers curriculum was developed as a result of a three-year federal Foreign Language Assistance Program grant. The Latin document, developed by a group of Latin educators, provides a 7-12 grade –by-grade Foreign Language Assistance Program grant. The Latin document, developed by a group of Latin educators, provides a 7-12 grade –by-grade Standards for Advanced Placement courses (English Literature and Composition and English Language and Composition) also are included with this version of the Standard Course of Study.

- English Language Arts Standard Course of Study Clarification (HSP 4) — Major clarifications of goals and objectives of the North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study were approved. These minor changes are designed to allow for more understanding of the intent of the standards. Standards for Advanced Placement courses (English Literature and Composition and English Language and Composition) also are included with this version of the Standard Course of Study.

- Report on Diversity Training in Teacher Preparation Programs (QP 1) — Session Law 2004-116 directed the State Board to determine whether teacher preparation programs should require courses in diversity training and Composition and English Language and Composition) also are included with this version of the Standard Course of Study.

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