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The Monitor

a summary of the monthly
Maryland State Board of Education Meeting

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Race to the Top Update

Jim Foran, MSDE, provided an update on the status of the Race to the Top grant program. He stated that he was continuing in the process of visiting all the LEAs.

Race to the Top Focus Area: Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Mary Carey, MSDE, provided an update to the board concerning the status of the transition to the Maryland Common Core curriculum, and the new assessment system under development by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Board Member Donna Hill Staton requested clarification on when the assessments would be given, and Dr. Carey stated they were end of year summative assessments. Dr. Staton also asked if there was a focus on how to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Dr. Carey explained that the principles and guidelines for UDL would be all up front, rather than a retro-fit as had happened in the past.

Board Member Gates asked about students being ready for college level math courses. Dr. Carey stated that higher education had a seat on the PARCC board, and that the board was having a discussion about where the bar should be set for college and career readiness. She also said PARCC had a website with information regarding higher education.

Dr. Sadusky clarified that PARCC needs to set the bar first, and then the state board will discuss if that bar is set appropriately for Maryland. The board then engaged in a discussion of PARCC standards for college and career readiness, and how those fit with standards and requirements set by the state board. Dr. Sadusky stressed that tests are indicators and the issue for the LEAs is to ensure students have the supports and interventions, and that teachers have the professional development necessary as they transition to PARCC assessments.

The board then engaged in a discussion of the term "college and career ready." Dr. Carey related that Dr. Kathy Oliver, MSDE, used the phrase "post secondary education", meaning an array of education options, not necessarily only a four year college.

Dr. Wood discussed the issue of technology with testing, and stated that PARCC is committed to using state of the art technology in assessments. She added that PARCC had developed a Technical Readiness

survey that will be given several times over the next two years to assess which LEAs are ready for piloting online assessments. She added that they do not want assessments to drive technology and don't want LEAs buying technology for the sole purpose of assessments.

Dr. Sadusky advised that at the next board meeting, timelines, possibilities with testing, and the amount of testing would have to be discussed. He added that as MSDE learned more, they would be able to put more on the table for the board's consideration.

Online Learning and Maryland Public Education

Dr. Mary Carey, MSDE, introduced Valerie Emrick, Instructional Technology & School Library Media Services, who provided the board with an overview of the Office of Instructional Technology's responsibilities and its role in setting the course for online learning in Maryland Public Schools. Dr. Carey stated there are no plans right now but Maryland does have a Virtual School Advisory Council that is looking at opportunities, what is in COMAR, and what supports would be needed for an online school.

Board President DeGraffenreidt stated that not all 24 LEAs have a chief information officer who would build the alignment around technology objectives and the policy that would drive them. He added that no technology will save money unless there is a strategy that replaces old technologies. Dr. Carey agreed that there needed to be a coherent departmental approach that addresses policy issues. She added that teachers need professional development to expand their use of technology.

Board Member Walsh questioned why Maryland does not have plans at this time for a virtual school. She stated this needed to be investigated as some virtual schools had very promising results. Dr. Carey stated that according to research, it would be a costly investment. She added that there had been and continues to be legislation but the cost was prohibitive. Dr. Carey stated that MSDE brokers online courses but had not been very successful with those, and nothing had been approved since 2009.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt and Ms. Walsh stated that the cost may not be as steep now as it once was. Ms. Walsh stated that some hybrid models were very successful, such as Rocketship and School of One. She stated it would be instructive for the board to learn the regulatory obstacles to having these models in Maryland. Board Member Montero-Diaz added those types of models may be beneficial for students on long-term suspension or home-hospital teaching.

MSDE Website Enhancement Progress Report

Dr. Sadusky and Dr. Carey updated the board on plans to update and strengthen the MSDE website. Dr. Sadusky shared that through an offer from Prince George's Community College, MSDE is able to look at new ideas and designs. Michael Smith, an associate professor at PGCC, and his web design students have met with MSDE staff, and will be providing the department with proposals. Dr. Carey added that their purpose is to make it more useful for MSDE staff, the LEAs, and general visitors.

Dr. Carey introduced Bill Reinhardt and Beth Pearlman who discussed the history of the website, the current challenges and the progress to date. Board Member Walsh suggested looking at other state education websites for ideas and models. Board Member Donna Hill Staton asked about streaming

capability. Board Member Gates suggested discussing website needs with staff in the building, and teachers in the LEAs. He also suggested talking with current and former Teachers of the Year.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation Regulations (Permission to Publish)

Dr. Sadusky began by reminding the board that Race to the Top calls for the State Board to adopt regulations to establish standards for performance evaluations for teachers and principals which include model performance evaluation criteria. He also reminded the board that 22 LEAs signed onto RTTT; 2 did not. Therefore, the standards of both groups would have to be incorporated, and that is reflected in two different sections of the regulations (2 and 3).

Dr. Sadusky stated that in his last meeting with superintendents, he learned that no LEA is taking the state model as a whole, and that all understood it was more advantageous to craft an instrument that was mutually agreed upon with their employee groups. He added that 22 school systems will be tied to basing 50% of teacher and principal evaluations on the new student growth standard, and two will be tied to 'significant' growth, and that next year every LEA will be piloting the model. Dr. Sadusky stated that the criteria still has to be approved by the federal government, but he believes all will meet the 'acid test'.

Board President DeGraffenreidt asked if there was any discussion about the difference between evaluating teachers and principals versus evaluation of the performance of teachers and principals. Dr. Sadusky answered that the discussion is about where the link is, and that the scope has to be larger to be able to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Dr. Finan, a member of the committee, added that the committee discussed all the factors involved when evaluating a teacher, not just one test at one point in time. She added that the problem was all LEAs evaluated differently, and there was much anecdotal information.

Board Member Walsh stated she was concerned about observation and if only minimal standards were being required. She added that studies showed four observations by a highly trained observer were optimal. Ms. Walsh also questioned why no LEA was taking the model as a whole, and questioned how MSDE felt about LEAs 'picking and choosing'. She asked if what was agreed to in RTTT was being compromised. Dr. Sadusky said the LEAs understood they had to meet the criteria but MSDE did not want to present them with the model and require them to use it. He added that all local models still had to be approved by MSDE.

Universal Design for Learning (Permission to Publish)

Dr. Mary Carey updated the board on regulations for Universal Design for Learning (UDL). She advised that the adoption of the Common Core State Standards has resulted in revisions to curriculum and assessments. She stated that UDL principles and guidelines are being incorporated into the revision and development process from the outset. Dr. Carey added that it is important MSDE send the message that UDL is for all teachers and students, not just the special education population.

Board Member Donna Hill Staton stated she has no sense that there is follow through, and no way of knowing that LEAs are being conscientious, and doing what they say they are doing. She added that she is

not concerned about MSDE's commitment but rather ensuring UDL is implemented in schools, and wondered if regulations were enough. She stated that she wanted accountability in the process to ensure teachers are using UDL principles.

Dr. Carey stated that UDL is a sea change and has to happen over time. She added it must involve certification, professional development and curriculum work. Dr. Carey stated that fully developed curriculum and model lessons must be available. She added that they could not be in the classrooms day to day but can create models for LEAs. She added that MSDE is anxious to get UDL into classrooms and was doing so as a part of Common Core.

The board voted unanimously to publish the regulations.

PSTEB Proposed Regulatory Action

Dr. Margaret Trader, chair of the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) presented to the state board regarding the proposed changes to COMAR13A.12.01, General Provisions, which were a result of recommendations cited in the Final Report of the Work Group on Certification Restructuring. Dr. Trader referenced a report from PSTEB to the State Board which accepted the recommendation of differentiating the credential for those required to hold certification and those not required to hold certification but agreed to maintain the Advanced Professional Certificate as mandatory, but rejected the recommendation to eliminate the master's degree.

Dr. Trader stated that recognizing the state board may not be in agreement with PSTEB's recommendations, they were requesting a Joint Conference Committee.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt asked how the recommendations interacted with Race to the Top commitments stating they would restructure the credentialing system, i.e. an alternative to the master's degree. He added that the work group agreed job embedded professional development was very important. Mr. DeGraffenreidt stated that the board wished to vote on this issue at their April meeting and have it resolved.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt requested the board attorney's opinions as to whether there was a requirement that the board convene a conference committee. Board Attorney Elizabeth Kameen stated there is no mandate to have a conference committee but the purpose is to give PSTEB and the state board a chance to discuss matters with a limited number from each group. Ms. Kareem added that absent a conference committee, PSTEB could present to the state board for publication, the state board may deny that publication, and then the state board would propose their own version of the regulations.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt clarified that he was asking about procedure because what PSTEB is proposing is in conflict with the RTTT grant.

Dr. Trader clarified that one purpose of the conference committee would be for the state board to have an opportunity to present their positions on the issue and have a meaningful board to board discussion. Mr. DeGraffenreidt responded that the state board had been unambiguous on the issue but PSTEB seemed to be moving in the opposite direction.

Board Members Gates moved that the state board convene the conference committee with PSTEB, and that motion passed with Mr. DeGraffenreidt and Ms. Walsh voting against. Dr. Trader clarified that both

board presidents must participate; Dr. Dukes, Ms. Walsh, and Mr. Smith volunteered to serve on the committee.

State Legislative Update

Renee Spence and Steve Brooks, MSDE, presented an update to the board on current education legislation, including education budget issues. Ms. Spence stated there was no handout as so many pieces of legislation were in flux with the final outcomes yet to be seen.

Mr. Brooks updated the board on the current status of Maintenance of Effort legislation and the proposed shift of teacher pension costs to the local governments.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt asked for clarification on counties that didn't meet MOE and had their penalties deferred.

Ms. Walsh asked about the local governments' reaction to the teacher pension shift, whether the state, the county or the local boards are responsible for payment; and whether or not Baltimore City or Prince George's County had taken positions on the issue.

Ms. Spence updated the board on various bills pertaining to education such as virtual learning, funding of preschool, and other policy bills. She advised there were many work groups, study groups, and task forces being proposed, some staffed by MSDE and some not.

Ms. Spence also reported on legislation addressing local issues such as athletics in Talbot County and redistricting in Allegany County.

Interim State Superintendent's Update

Dr. Sadusky reported on the status of an agreement on Towson State University regarding UTeach. He also advised the board that Cecil County requested a calendar modification because days lost due to the earthquake resulted in their last day of school falling on a Monday. The board approved this calendar modification.

Public Comment

Robert Tollison, principal in Carroll County, commented on the state board report, *A Safe School, Successful Students, and a Fair and Equitable Disciplinary Process Go Hand in Hand*, and explained the benefits of alternative schools.

Dana Falls, Director of Student Services in Carroll County, commended the board for changes proposed in *A Safe School, Successful Students, and a Fair and Equitable Disciplinary Process Go Hand in Hand*, but suggested there may be some data missing in the report because of the use of 'in-school' and 'out-of-school' terminology that does not account for the array of other education services provided that are considered 'out-of-school'.

Emerald Mitchell and Jewell Leonard, students at Elizabeth Seaton High School, stated their concern with childhood obesity and stressed the need for schools to address the issue.

Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions in the following cases:

- Dawn and Michael H. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education, affirming the local board's early kindergarten entry decision
- James and Joanie Herron, et al. v. Harford County Board of Education, affirming the local board's bus stop relocation decision
- George and Sharon K. v. Montgomery County Board of Education, affirming the local board's student placement decision
- In Re: Waiver Request COMAR 13A.06.07.11, the state board denied the waiver request to allow two Prince George's County charter schools to transport students on buses not meeting Maryland's standards.