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Annual Report

State Board

of Education

September 2005



Strategic Goals for 2004-2005:

- 1. Teacher Quality**
- 2. Board Policies & By-laws**
- 3. Revision of Chapter 61,
Major Capital
Improvements**
- 4. Early Childhood Education**

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Introduction



**State Board
of Education**

This report for the year 2004-2005 is presented by the Maine State Board of Education to acquaint our partners in Maine educa-

tion with the work of the State Board of Education this past year. The State Board hopes to improve the understanding of our work "on the ground" by educational stakeholders, particularly the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs of the Legislature, the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, and others in order to enhance the quality of our collaborative work many found.

This report is divided into three (3) parts. First, it addresses the strategic goals emerging from our annual retreat last September and discusses what progress, if any, we have made on that agenda. Secondly, it deals with the most salient discussion we conducted during our monthly workshop sessions. Finally, the report will describe the actions taken by the Board under our various responsibilities such as major capital improvements (new school construction), certification requirements, etc.

Again, the State Board of Education releases this first annual report in the hope that it will contribute to a better understanding of our work and enhance cooperation in the future.

Members

James Carignan, Chair
Harspwell

Philip Dionne, Vice
Chair
Brunswick

Weston L. Bonney
Portland

Jean Gulliver
Falmouth

Joyce McPhetres
Waterville

Jack Norris
Wallagrass

Elinor Multer
Orr's Island

Ann Weisleder
Bangor

Janet Tockman
Springvale

Strategic Goals for 2004 – 2005

Our annual retreat is a two-day affair. It is facilitated by a staff member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). The Executive Director of NASBE served as our capable facilitator. The agenda for the retreat is coordinated by Vice Chair, Phil Dionne, with input from all the members of the board. The strategic areas of concern identified at the retreat were: teacher quality, Board Policies and By-laws, revision of Chapter 61 (Board rules on Major Capital Improvements), and early childhood education.

Teacher Quality

Our efforts in this area included: certification rule changes in Chapters 115 and 13 and discussions

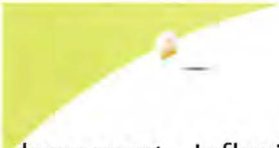
with the deans and directors of college and university teacher preparation programs. In addition, we are planed a Symposium of Teacher Preparation Programs on September 23. Finally, we having completed changes in Chapter 115, we are now working on changes in Chapters 114 and 118, which deals with the approval of teacher education programs and initial and continuing certification requirements. Teacher quality, the most important variable in student performance, is a matter of profound concern for the State Board and has occupied much of our time this year.

Our meetings with the education deans and direc-

tors were most informative. They were all quite forthcoming about the strengths of their programs and some weaknesses. The latter congregate around “stretched staff” and funding or resource issues. Our discussions demonstrated the Board’s concerns that the programs in the State continue to address issues of academic rigor and efforts to attract able students into the profession.

In the certification area, our standing committee on this subject was the busiest of our committees. Our actions will be discussed in more detail below, but suffice it to say we “finished” more than a decade of work on Chapter 115, set “cut” scores for Praxis I and Praxis II as part of Chapter 115, listened to concerns from art, music, dance, and theater teachers about certification and made adjustments for all except for

current theater teachers who wished to receive a “theater endorsement” on the basis of experience rather than a major or coursework. Subsequent to the resolve from the Legislature, we have made the requested adjustment for a theater endorsement as an emergency matter. We began work, which is near completion, with the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf on a special certification pathway for prelingually deaf teachers who have serious problems with the format of the Praxis I and Praxis II examinations. We also developed a separate certification pathway for teachers of native language for the Passamaquoddy tribe in Maine. In all of these efforts the Board sought to be consistent and fair in maintaining high standards for teachers while at the same time being flexible when the rigid applications of the rules would be counter productive. A good example would be the Native Language en-



dorsement. Inflexibility would have lead eventually to the loss of the language in Maine.

The Symposium on Teacher Preparation Programs was held on September 23. We are most pleased that the University of Maine, the University of Southern Maine, the University of New England, the Department of Education, and the University of Maine at Farmington were co-sponsors. The keynote speaker for the day was Professor Linda Darling-Hammond, one of the nation's foremost experts on teacher quality. The focus of the symposium was on improving Maine's teacher preparation programs.

Board Procedures and By-Laws

The State Board of Education Procedures and By-laws were in need of a thorough, systematic review. Amended sporadi-

cally over time, they lacked coherency, consistency, and in some cases were quite removed from practice. No significant policy changes were made; it was more of a case of removing redundancies and bringing policy and practice into alignment. With the work on the procedures and by-laws complete, the Board will revise its handbook in the coming year — again, largely a process of reflecting effective current practice in our written materials.

Chapter 61

The revision of Chapter 61 is underway at this writing. It is being completed with the Department of Education (DOE) and in collaboration with the Bureau of General Services (BGS). We expect the drafting to be completed by the early fall then we will begin the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process for rule changes in this chapter.

The most significant part of the review, perhaps, is the development of criteria for what is considered an “adequate education program” for high schools with populations under 300. Statute requires the State Board to authorize new major capital improvements for high schools under 300 only if we have determined that they have an “adequate education program.” Confronted with a decision of the nature this past year in connection with an application from MSAD #31, the Board realized that no criteria existed. This effort will address that deficiency. The proposal focuses on student outcomes data and the capacity of the school administrative unit (SAU) to sustain a new facility in the future with sufficient fiscal resources.

Less progress has been made in the area of early childhood education. Board members partici-

pated in the Governor’s Task Force on Pre K-16 Education and the report, currently being printed, addresses this issue in a robust way. In addition, the Certification Committee has an agenda item for its fall meeting, the question of certification for pre-k teachers.

The State Board feels it has made good progress on the strategic focal points that emerged from our September 2004 retreat. The Board looks forward to completing much of its work on these issues in the next few weeks.

Workshop Discussions

The workshop part of our monthly meeting, which usually occupy the morning of a full day meeting, provide time for rich reflection and discussion of a broad array of educational issues. It is also a time for vigorous debate around some of the more complicated and ever contentious issues we



must act upon. What follows is only a sample of the many issues we address in this format.

1. The Board reviewed its responsibilities with regard to its oversight of the Career and Technical (CTE) Centers. This review raised serious questions about the fiduciary responsibilities of the State Board, particularly with regard to federal funds received by the State. A subsequent meeting with the Commissioner, members of the Department, the chair and the vice chair led to some changes in practice and the formation of a new standing committee of the Board, the CTE committee, chaired by the vice chair of the Board. The committee will report to the full Board at least quarterly in order to allow the Board to fulfill its fiduciary and

other responsibilities in law.

2. Essential Programs and Services (EPS). The Board had a series of discussions with the Commissioner of Education, David Silvernail and Walter McIntyre, and members of their staffs. These discussions focused especially on the technology, transportation, and special education. We continue to work to have good data to make decisions that advance equity for ALL students in Maine relative to national data (CA 17% in Maine, 12% nationally) and the significant number of geographically expansive districts in the State, these areas proved very challenging to the Board and the Department in developing a fair formula for all. Progress has been made, the Board be-

lieves, and the appeals option built into the procedures serves as a safety valve for SAUs that are “unique” and need special consideration.

3. We visited and had tours of the CTE facilities in Lewiston and Bangor. They are impressive, integrated applied learning models present in these facilities. They make it clear that we need to work to achieve greater integration of the traditional and the applied. The Board continues to wonder how we can achieve seamless integration with 40 sites of varying capacity across the state. We have no easy answer to that logistical quandary.
4. The Board received on two occasions presentations from Brud Maxcy and John Kennedy on the performance of Maine schools on the MEA and NAEP assessments. The Board noted some slippage in the NAEP results and basically unchanged results of the MEA. Both indicators caused the Board some significant concern from student performance in the State.
5. The Board received the CTE Strategic Visioning Report from the deputy commissioner. There is a clear vision of integration of the academic and applied dichotomies that current characterize the structure and operation of the CTE system. The goals are ambitious and appropriate, but the Board, to repeat from above, is concerned by the logistical infrastructure challenge in the way of achieving it on a broad scale.

6. The Board received on a number of occasions updates on the status of the Maine Learning Results (MLR). The Board expressed significant concern around the local assessment superstructure that seems to be smothering the intent of the MLR. We supported the notion that the legislatively mandated review of the MLR should seek greater focus, simplicity, a reduction in the number of standards, and a far less cumbersome assessment system. The Board supported the Commissioner's proposed "mid-course correction" with some reservations or, at least sadness. One of the more troubling discussions surrounded a presentation by Francis Eberle, Director of the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance. He presented disturbing self-reported data for a number of Maine schools that showed that there was significant disparity between what is taught in the classrooms in these schools and the Maine Learning Results. The lack of alignment and the repetitiveness in the curriculum, if these schools are indicative for the State, suggests we are seriously lagging in providing an "opportunity to learn" for all students.
7. The deputy commissioner provided the Board with a report on the Public Information Stakeholders Group — a coalition working to create greater awareness of the significance of the MLR's for Maine's future. The State Board contributed \$2,000 to fund a focus group work to establish a baseline and develop some consensus around some key messages of a coordinated

campaign.; A report on the results of some focus groups conducted under the auspices of the Public Information Stakeholder Group produced some disturbing news. For students in the middle and lower socioeconomic groups a far too large number have effectively taken post-secondary work "off the table" as an option. While the data is based on small numbers of participants, the degree to which it is indicative is disturbing. What was perhaps most disturbing was the facility participants also removed post-secondary education as a possibility for these students.

8. The Board considered a resolution concerning the removal of hazardous waste from Maine's schools

in the interest of school safety. Without setting firm deadlines, the Board later adopted a revise resolution urging prompt attention to this serious matter.

9. We had several discussions about the setting of "cut scores" for the Praxis I and Praxis II examinations as part of the revision of rules in Chapter 13. Our goal was to set high standards and to meet the tests of validity and reliability. After much discussion a divided Board voted to approve a composite score for Praxis I with the condition that no single area (math, reading, or writing) could fall below one standard deviation from the suggested scores. The debate on the Praxis II scores was also lively and extended. We agreed

unanimously to the “cut” scores recommended by the stakeholder groups created to determine fairness. Our primary concern was that in some areas, for example, mathematics, the stakeholder groups recommended lower scores than the panels’ because of difficulty in finding teachers to fill vacant positions. Some members believed that issues of shortages should be addressed in other ways than reducing the cut scores. As part of the revision of Chapter 13, we set cut scores for certification testing for administrative positions. These took effect August 1. As part of our year-long work on Chapter 115, which we completed in July, we made arrangements for endorsements in music and art, requiring that 40% of the coursework be in the-

ory and/or history in these fields. We rejected a request for a blanket endorsement for theater for those who had extensive experience, but no formal training in coursework. Subsequently, the Legislature directed the Board to extend the endorsement in spite of the Board’s concerns about this as precedent setting in counter-productive ways. We have done so.

10. We received data and a proposal to make program review for teacher certification programs coincide with the NCATE seven-year cycle. There was some concern around this initiative, but the Board agreed to accept this recommendation from the Department of Education for those programs with NCATE certification.

11. The Gender Equity Task Force provided us with an interim report. They are uncovering some important data that demonstrates Maine must address gender disparity that persists in Maine schools.

The workshop portion of our meetings provide us with an opportunity to engage diverse groups across the State in important discussions. We are grateful for the learning and the stimulation that these opportunities afford. It is the time when Board members have an opportunity for the in-depth analysis so critical to sound policy development.

Construction Actions

We are now in the early stages of a new two-year construction cycle. As part of that cycle, we received the priority list. Appeals were heard from

three (3) districts, and a change was made in the rank assigned to the Durham Application. We received the recommendation for the Special Priority School Construction List and approved it in August. In the meantime, we have been acting on proposals for site approvals, concept approval, and design and funding approvals. The list for this year thus far is as follows:

- ♦ September
 - Site Approval, Lewiston School Dept., Farwell School
- ♦ October
 - Concept Approval, MSAD #55, New Middle School
 - Concept Approval, Lewiston School Dept., Farwell School

- ♦ November
 - Concept Approval, MSAD #40, Middle School Consolidation
 - Retain MSAD #31 on Special Priority List in spite of projected enrollment below 300
- ♦ December
 - Concept Approval, MSAD #68, Pre K-8 Dover-Foxcroft
 - Design & Funding Approval, MSAD #57, Massabesic Middle School Project
- ♦ April
 - Design & Funding Approval, MSAD #17, Paris Elementary School
- ♦ May
 - Design & Funding Approval, Pre K-6 Project, New Elementary School
- ♦ July
 - Site Approval Consideration, MSAD #21, Elementary School
 - Design & Funding Approval, MSAD #55, New Middle School Project
- ♦ August
 - Concept Approval, MSAD #3



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