Minutes
State Board of Education Meeting
Friday, August 15, 2014

The State Board of Education met Friday, August 15, 2014, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Vice Chair Toyce Newton called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Present: Toyce Newton, Vice-Chair; Alice Mahony; Dr. Jay Barth; Diane Zook; Mireya Reith; Joe Black; Jonathan Crossley, Teacher of the Year; and Tony Wood, Commissioner.

Absent: Sam Ledbetter, Chairman; and Vicki Saviers

Reports

Dyslexia Resource Guide

Ms. Zook said the Dyslexia Resource Guide is now available on the ADE website at http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/curriculum-and-instruction/dyslexia.

Ms. Zook applauded the work of the contributors and the ADE team for the development of the Dyslexia Resource Guide.

Date for Speaker

Dr. Barth said on Wednesday, December 10, 2014, Dr. James Gates would speak at the Clinton School of Public Service at 6:00 pm. He encouraged all Board members to attend. The speaking engagement is part of the NASBE grant for Science that Dr. Barth submitted on behalf of the Board and the Department.

Dr. Barth said the NASBE Conference would be held October 15-18 in Denver, CO. He said some of the Arkansas Board members would attend.

Special Board Meeting – August 21

Department General Counsel Mr. Jeremy Lasiter said the Board would need to hold a Special Board meeting to hear additional school choice appeals. He suggested that due to the school choice timeline the Board may consider meeting on Thursday, August 21 at 9:00 a.m.

Report-4 Public School Choice Survey Data Report

Research and Technology Specialist Mr. Arijit Sarkar said Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-1901 required the Department to collect data from school districts on the number of applications for student transfers under the Public School Choice Act of 2013. He said this report is produced annually by October 1 and findings are presented to the House and Senate Committees on Education.

Department General Counsel Mr. Jeremy Lasiter said the statute will sunset June 2015. Commissioner Wood said the data collection was important for addressing the subject of school choice in the next legislative session.

Report-6 Broadband Update

Director of Policy and Special Projects Ms. Susan Harriman said Governor Beebe announced on Monday, August 11, 2014, that the Arkansas Department of Education has partnered with the EducationSuperHighway, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving Internet access to schools. The partnership will examine ways to move from outdated copper networks to fiber and utilize existing funding more efficiently.

Report-7 Update on Content Standards and Assessment

Assistant Commissioner of Learning Services Dr. Debbie Jones said the agency is on schedule to provide state assessments. The Department approved online assessment hardship waivers for sixteen (16) districts for the 2014-2015 school year. She said the districts that received the waiver include: Bentonville (11th Grade only), Blevins, Camden-Fairview, Centerville, Hermitage, Hughes, Jasper, Lee County, Lighthouse Academies of Arkansas, Lighthouse Academies of Pine Bluff, Little Rock, Norfork, Ouachita, Ozark Mountain, Pine Bluff and Texarkana.

Dr. Jones said seven (7) applications were submitted for open-enrollment charters while six (6) districts submitted letters of intent for conversion schools.

Dr. Jones said the Department approved Schools of Innovation applications for a four-year period for the following schools: Leverett Elementary School, Fayetteville School District; Flippin High School , Flippin School District; Weiner Elementary School, Harrisburg School District; Russellville Junior High School, Russellville School District; Westwood Elementary School, Springdale School District; and Central Junior High School, George Junior High School, Har-Ber High School, Lakeside Junior High School, Southwest Junior High School, and Springdale High School, Springdale School District.

Report-8 Update on School Improvement

Assistant Commissioner of Public School Accountability Ms. Annette Barnes said Indistar® is a web-based tool that guides a state educational agency, school district or school team in creating its improvement plan, monitoring its plan, and managing the continuous improvement process. She said the agency is working to focus more on the improvement process.

Ms. Zook requested monthly updates on schools in academic distress.

Public School Accountability and School Improvement Coordinator Mr. Elbert Harvey said due to the timeline for identifying schools in academic distress, schools would not have been able to replace leadership. He said some of the schools have already made leadership changes. Ms. Barnes said the School Improvement Specialists are working very closely with these schools.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.

Sam Ledbetter, Chair

Tony Wood, Commissioner of Education