

Minutes  
State Board of Education  
November 19, 2001

The State Board of Education met via telephone conference call on Monday, November 19, 2001. At 9:00 a.m., Dr. Charles Watson called roll and verified that a quorum was present. Mr. Hackler called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

The following Board members reported present: Robert Hackler, Chairman; Shelby Hillman, Vice-Chairman; JoNell Caldwell; Luke Gordy; Peggy Jeffries; Calvin King; and Betty Pickett.

The following were not present: Claiborne Deming and Lewis Thompson, Jr.

**Budget Adjustment for 2001-2002**

Mr. Simon indicated that in anticipation of budget reductions, Department staff members have been working on budget revisions for some time. He stated that he was pleased to present a budget in keeping with published revenue reductions that does not cut incentive funding, preschool programs, support for poverty programs, and funding for special needs students.

Mr. Hackler noted that \$10 million was being absorbed from fund balances. Ms. Pickett inquired how reductions in the Public School Fund compared to reductions in the Department operating budget. Mr. Simon reported that the amount of projected cuts for the Department operating budget would be absorbed in salary savings and it would not be necessary to amend the Operating Budget at this time. Ms. Pickett asked for a copy of the Operating Budget to verify how programs are aligned with spending in the Public School Fund. There were similar requests from Ms. Jeffries and Dr. King.

Ms. Pickett stated that she was concerned at the recommendation for further reductions in the budget for public libraries. She indicated that she would like to cut funds from some category other than public library funds.

Mr. Gordy supported Ms. Pickett's position. He observed that there is no statutory obligation to support libraries, nor is there such support for school transportation. He suggested decreases in transportation funds would be more appropriate than further decreasing library funding.

Mr. Gordy moved a \$1 million reduction in Transportation Aid/Safety Training funds and restoration of \$1 million in the library funding. Ms. Hillman seconded the motion.

Ms. Jeffries inquired as to how the library system had been funded in previous years. Mr. Hackler responded that for many years, the funding for public libraries across the state has been a line item in the Department of Education budget. He noted that those funds go

to support county libraries. Some counties provide additional support from county revenues. Mr. Hackler indicated that attempts have been made to shift funding from the Department of Education budget totally.

Mr. King asked how the reduction of transportation aid would impact school districts. Mr. Simon responded that these funds are known by school districts as high-cost transportation funds. These funds help support the transportation program, which is a major expense in some districts.

The motion to amend the budget proposal was approved by a 6 to 1 vote. (King voted no.)

Ms. Hillman moved adoption of the amended budget. Mr. Gordy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Gordy stated that the Board should encourage school districts to honor teacher raises that the Legislature, the Department staff, the Governor and the Board worked so hard to get passed during the session. Hopefully, local district administrators will work through the budget reductions and perhaps dedicate some surplus funds from previous years to teacher salaries. Ms. Hillman supported this idea. Mr. Hackler reported meeting with administrators recently and most were committed to providing teacher raises. Mr. Simon also confirmed the intent of local district administrators to meet previously adopted raises for teachers.

Ms. Pickett suggested that Department staff track or monitor the extent to which teacher raises are given this year. Mr. Simon indicated that this could be done and would work with staff to track raises given this year. Mr. Hackler stated that a number of districts were losing additional funds due to a decrease in enrollment. It was his opinion that many districts are waiting until near the end of the year to commit to raises.

Ms. Jeffries requested that should further budget cuts be necessary, that the review of any proposal be studied in a work session, not during a phone session. Mr. Hackler indicated that due to the holidays and travel plans of some board members, he had determined that a meeting in Little Rock would not be well attended. He also noted that it is imperative that a decision on the budget be made before the next regular meeting.

Ms. Jeffries asked to clarify the extent to which budget reductions impacted operation of the Department. Mr. Simon responded that these reductions only impacted the Public School Fund. He noted earlier that the Operating Budget cuts would be absorbed through salary savings. Ms. Pickett expressed concern for the appearance that the Public School Fund reductions were greater percentage wise than the Operating Budget. Mr. Simon responded that cuts were made based on funds in Category B and a very small amount of Category A. The Department Operating Budget has almost no funds in Category B, so that budget received fewer cuts.

**Adopt Proposed Rules and Regulations Governing Eligibility and Financial Incentives for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

Dr. Charity Smith and Barbara Patty presented background information for this item. Dr. Smith indicated these rules and regulations were previously adopted for public comment, comments were received and considered in preparing the final draft as presented.

Ms. Pickett expressed concern that teachers who have completed National Board Certification might opt to move out of the classroom and into an administration position. Mr. Simon stated that the principal was key to leadership in the school. But, this program did not address administrative positions, only classroom teachers. Ms. Patty noted that since the program began, only one of 27 teachers who completed the certification has moved from the classroom into administration. Mr. Gordy observed that National Board is working on an administrator's certification.

Ms. Pickett referred to Section 3.03 in which the statement "as sufficient funds are available," was added. She inquired as to the need for this statement. She observed that the entire program is based on the level of funding and without the supplemental funds, few, if any, teachers would enter into the program. Ms. Pickett moved elimination of that phrase. Mr. King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Pickett referred to Section 3.05.05 in which examples of unique instructional settings were cited. She inquired as to why such descriptions were necessary. Ms. Patty noted that this was in response to comments from candidates from northwest Arkansas in which specialist teachers who are employed through a regional service cooperative provide some of their instruction in settings other than the traditional classroom. She stated that this wording was included to ensure the eligibility of those teachers. Ms. Pickett contended that the wording "other instructional settings," was adequate without the examples. She moved that the examples be eliminated. Ms. Jeffries seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Gordy moved approval of the rules and regulations as amended. Ms. Caldwell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Request of Approval for Public Comment, Permanent Rules and Regulations Governing Parental Notification of an Assignment of a Non Certified Teacher to Teach a Class for More Than Thirty Consecutive Days and for the Granting of Waivers.**

Dr. Charity Smith informed the Board that these rules and regulations being submitted for public comment are the same as previously approved under emergency conditions. Ms. Hillman moved approval. Mr. King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Performance Levels for the Intermediate (Grade 6) Benchmark, End-of-Course Algebra Exam, End of Course Geometry Exam, End-of-Course Literacy Exam, Limited English Proficiency Alternate Portfolio (Grades 4, 6, and 8), and Special Education Alternate Portfolio (Grades 4, 6, 8 and 11)**

Dr. Gayle Potter provided background information for this item. Dr. Potter noted that the information presented was the culmination of the work of many individuals including a committee of teachers for each of the Benchmark exams under consideration. She noted that a representative panel of teachers was present to respond to any questions that arose from Board members concerning the work of the committees.

Mr. Hackler noted that these exams, like the other Benchmark exams, are designed to test the content that teachers have determined is important for all students to learn. He asked if all teachers at the grade levels included in these reports had been trained to teach consistent with content covered on these exams. Dr. Potter assured him that all teachers have had the opportunity for such training.

Ms. Pickett was concerned that the score reports seemed to be skewed toward the lower end of the scale – that there seemed to be a disproportionate number of students performing at the lower end of the scale. Dr. Potter indicated that this test was a performance exam, not a norm-referenced test. She stated that one would expect a normal distribution of scores on a norm-referenced test, but on a performance test such as these the ideal was that 100% of the students would perform at proficient or above.

Mr. Gordy inquired about the source of the data presented. Dr. Potter indicated that the charts reflect the percentage of students who performed at the various categories as defined by the teacher committees. Mr. Gordy asked for clarification on the issue of piloting the tests and scoring standards. Dr. Potter assured him that the only component of these different tests that would be considered a pilot would be the two types of portfolios. In both instances, the number of students submitting data was small. She noted that additional information and additional administrations of the portfolios would be necessary to have reliable scores on the portfolio parts of the Benchmarks. Mr. Gordy expressed his opinion that one of the major flaws of the accountability system was the length of time that it takes to get a system in place. Mr. Simon assured him that this was not a pilot and that the Grade 6 Benchmarks and the end-of-course test data are based on the first administration of those tests.

Ms. Pickett reiterated her concern that so many students were scoring below proficient and that it seemed as if the Standards as recommended were setting low standards. Dr. Potter assured her that this was merely a starting point and that in the future, the Board could raise the scoring standards.

Ms. Hillman moved adoption of the standards for each test as recommended. Mr. Gordy seconded the motion. The motion passed with six yes votes and one abstention. (Jeffries abstained)

**Adopt Praxis II Test Cut Scores for thirteen (13) licensure areas**

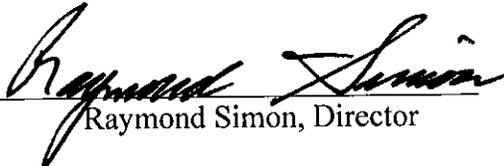
Donna Zornes and Barbara Patty were present to introduce this item. Ms. Zornes indicated that these recommendations were based on the work of committees of practitioners under the leadership of Education Testing Service. Ms. Pickett noted that the recommended cut scores are well below other national scores. She stated her opinion that student scores cannot be expected to rise as long as the expectation for teachers is set so low.

Ms. JoNell Caldwell moved adoption of the cut scores as recommended. Ms. Shelby Hillman seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 yes, 1 no and 2 abstained. (Pickett voted no. Jeffries and King abstained.)

Ms. Pickett voiced her preference for on-site meetings rather than telephone conference calls. Mr. Gordy stated these are exceptional times and timely responses are necessary and conference calls become more efficient at times. Mr. Hackler confirmed it was his decision to meet via conference call given the circumstances. He stated that such sessions would be reserved for times when decisions are needed with relatively short notice. Ms. Jeffries suggested work sessions would be helpful for her to understand the volume and complexity of material provided in the packet.

Ms. Hillman moved adjournment. Dr. King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

The minutes were recorded and reported by Dr. Charles Watson.

  
Raymond Simon, Director

  
Robert Hackler, Chairman