

MINUTES OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Thursday
May 9, 2013

Maryland State Board of Education
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met in a special work session on Thursday, May 9, 2013 at 9 a.m. at the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building. The following members were in attendance: Dr. Charlene M. Dukes, President; Dr. Mary Kay Finan, Vice President; Mr. James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr.; Ms. Luisa Montero-Diaz; Ms. Linda Eberhart; Dr. James Gates, Jr.; Mrs. Madhu Sidhu; Mr. Guffrie M. Smith; Donna Hill Staton, Esq.; and Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Ebehireme Inegbenebor and Mr. Sayed Naved were absent.

Elizabeth Kameen, Esq., Assistant Attorney General, and the following staff members were also present: Mr. Steve Brooks, Deputy State Superintendent for Finance; Penelope Thornton Tally, Esq. Chief Performance Officer; and Anthony South, State Board Executive Director

TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION (TPE)

Dr. Lowery introduced David Volrath, RTTT Lead for Teacher/Principal Evaluation and said, "They do a tough job. I know why we are number one, because we have some very smart people. All of the data is grounded from the field."

Mr. Volrath said that the team is helping twenty-four local education agencies (LEAs) and discussed what the job has entailed. He reported that some items on the agenda today require a "change order" and that there are four primary questions on the table:

1. Can we measure student growth?
2. Can we attribute the growth of the student to the work of the teacher or principal?
3. Can we make it fair?
4. Will it make a difference in the performance of students, teachers, and principals?

He said, "We need to consider how to go forward." He introduced the new Teacher/Principal Action Team: Linda Burgee, Ilene Swirnow, and Ben Feldman and explained that Joe Fried, Laura Motel and Frank Stetson are serving on the Team as well.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt said, "Our role is sharpening the focus. What are the decisions we have to make and what is the timeline for those decisions? There are a lot of people who are confused about what is needed to be done."

Dr. Gates said that the *Washington Post* reported that there was a survey completed that reflected that one-third of teachers aren't ready for the TPE and asked Mr. Volrath to elaborate on the survey.

Mr. Volrath said that LEAs were given autonomy in creating their TPE models and they moved in a common track with the state model. He noted that with some changes in the structures, the state model would more closely align to the local models. He referred the Board to Decision Point 1 – The merit of the School Progress Index (SPI) in teacher evaluation and its maintenance in the Maryland State Teacher Evaluation Model. Mr. Volrath reported that the data shows that when the SPI is included in the measure, it diminishes the scores of teachers. He reported that when the Maryland Tiered Achievement Index (M-TAI) was used, teachers were rated fairly and effectively. He said, “The confidence in using the M-TAI has grown and that combined with the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) is a better measure of teacher performance.”

Dr. Lowery discussed the issue of attributing percentages of Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores, SLOs and including the SPI. Mr. Volrath provided sample grade level index trial findings using varying percentage points. Dr. Lowery reported that if the percentages are different than the original proposal made to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), it would require approval from the USDE to make the change.

Dr. Lowery explained that the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) convened a meeting with the Public School Superintendents of Maryland (PSSAM) to propose a ten percent classroom teacher level and ten percent SPI. She reported that twenty-two school districts agreed to this split and that the two LEAs that did not sign up for the Race To The Top (RTTT) project are included as well due to their inclusion in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver.

Dr. Lowery reported that the MSEA survey to which Dr. Gates alluded was given to the media prior to distribution to the Maryland Council on Educator Effectiveness (MCEE). She reported that there only 500 teachers included in the survey, a very small percentage of the more than 60,000 teachers in the state. She noted that state staff worked with local staff and other stakeholders to create an evaluation framework and that local staff was trained to deliver the knowledge to school personnel. She said, “Betty Weller and I agree this is a dynamic document.”

Mr. DeGraffenreidt asked for details about the survey including such elements as the survey design, the underlying methodology, the number of people surveyed and the statistical test used that enabled MSEA to generalize the responses of the survey responders to all teachers?

He also inquired as to how the 10-10 split proposal will be seen by the USDE. Dr. Lowery reported that the most salient point with the USDE is that the split does not drop below twenty percent.

Ms. Sidhu expressed concern that the survey reflects that teachers have not received adequate training.

Dr. Lowery explained that this session is to inform the Board on the decision points and that the Board has already made the decision to require twenty percent based on student performance as part of a teacher’s evaluation.

Mr. Volrath explained the results of using various percentages to determine teacher effectiveness and found that adequate measures can be captured by using SLOs since teachers created and own them.

Ms. Eberhart reported that the state of New York had a school wide indicator included in its evaluation system and eliminated it when they found it was not a valuable tool. She asked if there is any other research on this topic.

Dr. Lowery said that there was litigation in Florida since teachers were being held accountable for data over which they had no control. She said she will provide the Board with more information on the survey and this whole issue.

Ms. Diaz suggested that the Department consider surveying teachers. Mr. Volrath reported that WestEd, an independent partner in the schools doing random sampling to judge how everything is working, will be surveying teachers.

Dr. Lowery said, "The field test year worked. When we say, 'it works,' we mean what is fair to the teachers." In response to a question by Dr. Dukes, Dr. Lowery said that Decision Point #1 has already been made and that these points are for the Board's information rather than Board action.

In response to a question by Ms. Sidhu, Dr. Lowery said that SLOs will be used for teachers who do not administer MSAs.

Dr. Lowery said that the change made by LEAs will require the state to gain approval by the USDE.

Regarding Decision Point #2 – The standardizing of three SLOs in the state model to include one SLO that is based on the emerging protocols for incorporating HSAs into evaluation, Ms. Eberhart discussed the SLO process noting that master teachers already do SLOs.

Dr. Lowery reported that USDE indicated in December that High School Assessment (HSA) data needs to be included in the evaluation in some form and that including that information in the SLO process made sense. She recommended flexibility on Decision Point #2.

In response to a question by Ms. Eberhart, Ms. Burgee said that this decision means including HSAs as well as PARCC test scores. Ms. Burgee assured the Board that the state model will reflect "best practices."

In response to a question by Mr. DeGraffenreidt, Dr. Lowery assured the Board that if an LEA opts for a local model, it must be approved by the MSDE. She said that Mr. Volrath is working with LEAs and getting very positive feedback on the state model.

Mr. Smith said, "This whole process is about being open and transparent. I applaud you for getting this out."

Mr. Feldman said that the state model has been vetted throughout the state.

Dr. Gates applauded the great work that has been done and urged, "We have to tell the story better."

Dr. Lowery reported that the MSDE is working with the Governor's office on a communication plan. Mr. Volrath said that the communication document goes directly to teachers in some LEAs and in some does not. Dr. Dukes said, "Communication is two-way."

Mr. Volrath reported that data from the three pilot school districts will be in on June 1st and that Decision Point #3 – The determination of Effectiveness Ratings for the state models using a standards setting that is based upon results from the three state pilot experiences will be decided after analyzing the data.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt said it is extremely important that teacher ratings are evidence-based to ensure fidelity since the belief by many is this will be used to get rid of certain teachers.

Dr. Lowery said that that issue was raised at the MCEE meeting and that Maryland is not tying this to promotion or salary but rather using the data to assist in teacher performance.

In response to a comment by Ms. Eberhart, Mr. Volrath said that all LEAs must report to the MSDE and USDE using three levels of measure of teacher performance -- ineffective, effective and highly effective.

Mr. Volrath discussed the following Decision Points:

- Decision Point 4 – The distribution of mini-grants that require decentralized quality control assurances on the part of LEAs should be provided to support local implementation needs.
- Decision Point 5 – The determination of a method for monitoring and validating local quality controls must be designed.
- Decision Point 6 – A plan that articulates TPE with the concurrent initiatives of the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC Assessments must be finalized and communicated.
- Decision Point 7 – Determinations regarding either approved local models or defaulting to the state models must be rendered as quickly as possible after the June 7, 2013, submission date.

Dr. Finan, a member of the MCEE, reported that there was a lot of good news reported from other counties about the work that is being done throughout the state and the positive role of the SLOs. She said, "This is bringing good conversation and best practice sharing."

Ms. Eberhart expressed her concern about a sentence in Dr. Dolan's Report that noted that LEA evaluation ratings for teachers and principals may not represent meaningful reflection and professional growth across the board. Dr. Lowery said, "What we have now isn't working. The conversation about evaluation is taking place. It's going to be a dynamic process."

Ms. Burgee explained that many districts are not sharing information because many decisions have not been made yet. She also reported that there will be a vast amount of professional development conducted throughout the summer.

Dr. Dukes thanked the presenters for their excellent presentation.

PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS (PARCC)

Dr. Lowery asked Dr. Johnson to discuss the activities surrounding the administration of PARCC.

Dr. Johnson introduced Judy Jenkins and Janet Bagsby of MSDE who are part of the PARCC team.

Dr. Johnson reported that master teachers are being trained in all LEAs to serve as trainers at the Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEAs) this summer. He said that this summer EEAs will provide more involvement for teachers in professional development. He reported that four teachers from every school as well as every principal will have been trained over the last three years. He noted that Dr. Lowery has found excellent work being done at the elementary school level but that there are some challenges to be addressed at the middle and high school levels.

In response to a question by Ms. Staton, Dr. Johnson said that all of the materials are available online and that online webinars are available as well. Ms. Staton urged the importance of getting the materials out to all teachers. Dr. Lowery explained that the data is owned by local jurisdictions and that it is important to define what is the responsibility of the state and the local jurisdictions.

In response to a question by Ms. Sidhu, Dr. Johnson said they are about to launch a virtual training program.

Ms. Eberhart said, "What you are doing is only hitting the top level, not hitting high school teachers. We need opportunities for hundreds of teachers to get training."

Ms. Jenkins reported that in terms of future academies, Algebra I professional development is being piloted online. Ms. Eberhart said, "It's not as good as face to face. If it is a money issue, let us know." Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Eberhart for her input.

Dr. Gates expressed his concern for math. He said, "Math is going to be challenge."

Dr. Johnson reported that his staff is working with institutions of higher education (IHE) which are interested in partnering to provide opportunities to meet with elementary school teachers as well as revising pre-service teacher education programs. He said some IHE staff may be involved in the EEAs this summer. Dr. Gates commended the Department staff for involving higher education personnel in this process.

Dr. Johnson provided graphs depicting High School Assessment Requirements for students entering 9th grade in school year 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 and provided an overview of the graphs.

In response to a question by Ms. Staton, Dr. Johnson said that advanced students can take the PARCC early following completion of the course.

Dr. Gates urged that students who are deemed not college or career ready in eleventh grade should be described as the school system failing the student rather than the student failing.

In response to a concern raised by Ms. Sidhu about what can be done to mitigate the high number of students who must retake the Algebra HSAs, Dr. Lowery said, "We still have to make those decisions. We need to look at the data."

In response to a question by Ms. Diaz about the transition courses addressing the students who are deemed not college or career ready, Dr. Lowery said that those courses merely help students improve their test scores but there needs to be more conversation about the bridge projects showing up as a failure on the student's transcript.

Dr. Johnson reported that a student cannot do a bridge project without passing the course but not necessarily passing the assessment. He offered to provide the Board with information on LEA procedures regarding the bridge projects.

In response to a concern expressed by Ms. Eberhart about Algebra II being a graduation requirement, Dr. Lowery said that Maryland signed up as a collaborator in the PARCC consortium and that the decisions are being made by the whole group of states. Ms. Bagsby said that the Algebra II requirement was agreed upon with the input of representatives of higher education to deem a student college ready.

Dr. Johnson reminded Board members that not being college and career ready does not preclude a student from graduating from high school.

Ms. Eberhart expressed her concern about teachers not being ready for the changes that are coming next year.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt said, "The reality is that this is a continuous process improvement. We will have meaningful information coming back to us to make improvements. I don't believe we should delay."

Dr. Lowery said, "I am afraid there are people who don't want to see this happen. We should not be rolling back on some of this work."

Dr. Johnson provided information and timelines for amendments to COMAR regarding graduation requirements for high schools, state assessments, mandated transition courses, mathematics requirements and college and career determination. He agreed to provide the Board with a list of the courses mandated in S.B. 740.

Dr. Johnson reported that the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is looking at the transition courses and that some have already been drafted.

Dr. Dukes suggested that MSDE staff meet with all stakeholders to determine what transition courses need to be offered in Maryland schools.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt suggested that students could be deemed college ready when they are accepted into a college or university.

Ms. Bagsby said that these suggestions were made to higher education personnel and that there is much research being done in this area.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt said that PARCC is going to put out a press release showing the rating system. Ms. Staton urged that PARCC be made aware of the Board's concerns about the rating system. Dr. Lowery agreed to send that message to PARCC. She said that IHEs will still use their own admission standards.

Mr. DeGraffenreidt said, "The outcome score is meaningless for the purpose that it was meant."

Dr. Dukes noted that higher education leaders have had concerns as well.

Dr. Lowery said, "To get federal funding, we need to have an assessment. I can have a conversation with the national consortium but this is the result of working in a consortium. We will take the talking points and put them on the table."

In response to a question by Ms. Staton about whether Maryland is compelled to all agreements in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PARCC, Ms. Kameen said she will review the MOU and asked for specific items from the Board that outline their concerns. Dr. Dukes suggested that the Department send out a written communiqué to PARCC with its concerns.

Dr. Johnson reported that the legislation allows for some flexibility in the type of test to determine a student's college readiness in English Language Arts, Literacy and Mathematics. He provided a PARCC Transition Plan being used by the state of Arizona.

Dr. Gates said, "Thank you. The longer I am associated with this organization, the more impressed I am. This was very informative."

Ms. Staton said, "Kudos to you."

Dr. Dukes thanked Dr. Johnson and all of the presenters. She said she will meet with Ms. Kameen to discuss some of the Board's concerns.

With no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian M. Lowery

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
Secretary/Treasurer

Date: *May 21, 2013*