

September 2011 Board of Regents Report

Submitted by: Neil Johanning, NYS PTA Education Coordinator
Rick Longhurst, NYS PTA Executive Administrator

To view who the current Board of Regent members are and to see who represents your area, go to:
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/members/>.

The Board of Regents has webcasts available each month. If you cannot attend in person, you can participate via webcast. Simply click on the webcast. You can participate live or view archived webcasts of previous meetings. Agendas and other materials are kept on-line for about a year. Webcasts of meetings are kept on-line for a few months. If the links no longer work, SED probably took them off their web site. Go to: <http://usny.nysed.gov/webcasts.html>.

Webcast for September 12, 2011

http://pointers.audiovideoweb.com/stcasx/va91win1520/SED_09122011_edit.wmv/play.aspx

Webcast for September 13, 2011

http://pointers.audiovideoweb.com/stcasx/va91win1520/SED_09132011edit.wmv/play.aspx

Agendas and Materials for the September Meeting:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2011Meetings/September2011/911monthmat.html>

September Meeting Summary:

Early Learning Challenge Grant

The Regents discussed a new \$100 million Early Learning Challenge grant. Race to the Top (RTTT) did not specifically address pre-K. This federal grant, which contains the same goals, attempts to address that. It is to address high need populations at the 0-5 age level. It is for up to \$100 million over four years. It includes goals paralleling the NYS RTTT initiatives of standards and assessments, data systems, professional preparation and turning around low performing providers.

The governor will have final signoff and has asked that SED coordinate the multi-agency (SED, DOH, OCFS, OPWDD, and OTDA) application. The application requires that a family engagement component be described. It is due to the U.S. Department of Education by October 19.

A number of suggestions were made regarding how to proceed and what the emphasis should be. There were proposals for pilots, for taking programs that work and bringing them to scale (Regent Bennett), training for parents to support learning (Regent Cashin), and for some new directions. Valerie Grey, Chief Operating Officer and liaison to the Governor's office, explained that the emphasis was to be on integrating policy and practice among agencies that work with pre-K populations. Regent Jackson pointed out that many schools are turning back pre-K money available from the state. At the same time, many schools are reducing or eliminating kindergarten programs. Even though \$25 million a year isn't a lot in the bigger picture, why not use it to support mandatory kindergarten? Others expressed concern with the tight timeframe and the yielding of education policy considerations to the governor. SED staff will proceed in

working on this but there will be little time between the October Regents meeting and submission deadline to make large changes.

Exiting Credentials for IEP Students

SED staff introduced draft regulations to replace IEP diploma with a skills summary. Chancellor Tisch commented that the IEP diploma isn't worth the paper it's written on. No good for college, military or a job. She prefers a skills-based document, even though it doesn't count as a "real" diploma. She is also concerned that if schools cannot deliver on IEPs, how can schools deliver a skills-based program? As such, she believes a skills-based description could be an implementation disaster. Others commented that we need to first deal with the issue of local diploma and RCT based diploma that will no longer be available to students entering the ninth grade this year. The Regents will go ahead with a public comment period that will extend to early January and then consider this issue again at their January meeting.

January Regents Exams

Because of a \$1.5 million contribution from two non-profits (NYC Mayor Bloomberg), January Regents exams will be funded. Chancellor Tisch raised the concern that outside groups should not be able to pick and choose which Regents priorities they would like to fund. The Regents will go ahead with the funding plan for this year but lobby the governor to include full test funding in his 2012-13 budget.

Introduction of Deputy Secretary for Education

David Wakelyn was introduced as the Governor's new Deputy Secretary for Education. He will be the primary contact between the Governor's office and SED, especially during budget development season.

Teacher of the Year (TOTY)

Kathleen Ferguson, a second grade teacher in the Schenectady School District, was introduced as the 2012 NYS Teacher of the Year. 2011 TOTY, Jeff Peneston, was also recognized and thanked for his year of service. There may be a restructuring of the TOTY program in NYS. SED is looking to model its program after the one in Connecticut.

Test Integrity

Commissioner John King and Valerie Grey described staff efforts at improving test integrity in light of cheating scandals around the country in the past year. As tests become more high stakes and contribute directly to APPR (teacher/principal evaluation), such incidents can be expected to increase. Among their recommendations are:

- Schedule grade 3-8 exams all on the same day
- Require test administration training for 3-8 tests
- Require that teachers not score tests that they have a vested interest in
- Have someone other than the regular teacher proctor
- Retain state tests for longer than one year
- Centralize scoring
- Do erasure analysis to examine for tampering
- Do data forensics for answer analysis

- Scan tests and have people at other locations score them
- Long term: All tests on computer

Chancellor Tisch expressed the concern that these recommendations will present problems for Regents scoring turn around. Deputy Chancellor Coffield opined that it would be wrong to completely separate the testing process from the instruction process. Regent Cottrell asked if we really need tests that include open ended responses. Regent Cashin (who is a former superintendent) suggested that, at least for elementary kids, you should not have strangers administering the tests. Regent Rosa suggested asking the field what they think. Commissioner King was open to this but suggested that solution may ultimately need to be top down. SED staff will take these comments and will attempt to get some pro bono analysis assistance from outside testing groups and present additional information in October.

Report on Network Team Institute Training

Ken Slentz reported on the summer training of network teams (required of all school districts using RTTT and Title I money). Focus will be on implementing common core state standards. Network teams are expected to take information back to school districts. SED staff considered the week of training to be very successful.

School Improvement Status

Assistant Commissioner Ira Schwartz reported on school improvement status. Schools labeled as persistently poor performing have to select one of four turn around strategies. They can also apply for grants to assist in this process. Currently, there are 72 school districts receiving \$105 million in such grants. This year, an additional 68 schools have become eligible for these grants, and about two thirds of these will be funded. Next year it is expected that there will be still another 70 schools on the list. The discussion centered on what to do with the schools that do not meet expectations. Several Regents were adamant that the registration of such schools be withdrawn. Then what? In New York City, the plan is to place these schools under private contract. Will staff certification be required? No. This is a discussion that will certainly come up again.

Fiscal

Valerie Grey reported:

- \$1.5M was expected to be received to fund the January Regents exams.
- A \$500k two year grant was received from the Tiger Foundation aimed at helping NYC non-profits.
- There were still shortfalls in the budget line items for Cultural Education, Assessments and Tenured Teacher Hearings.

Appointments

- Ken Slentz was appointed Deputy Commissioner for P-12 Education.
- Anita Murphy was appointed as Associate Commissioner for Curriculum, Instruction and Field Services.