M.O.R.E

Board of Education Sub-Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

10:30 AM in Room 1D of the Legislative Office Building

Those present:

Rep. Ryan, Rep. Case, Rep. Cook, Rep. Davis, Rep. Demicco, Rep. Hoydick, Rep. Johnson, Brian Anderson, Conor Casey, Craig Edmondson, Tom Frattaroli, Jennifer Herz, Stephen McKeever, George Rafael.

Those absent:

Gary Buzzell, Leo Canty, Rich Carmelich, Paula Clarke, Carol Clifford, Garrett Eucalitto, Paul Formica, Eric George, Matt Knickerbocker, Mark LaPlaca, David Lenihan, Vin Loffredo, Patrice McCarthy, Sheila McKay, Lon Seidman, Connie Stewart, Don Stein, Joyce Stille, Patricia Walters, Gayle Weinstein, Christopher Wilson, Rep. Alexander, Rep. Carpino, Rep. D’Agostino, Rep. Fleischman, Rep. Lopes, Rep. Maroney, Rep. McGee, Rep. Morris, Rep. Srinivasan.

The meeting was called to order by Board of Education Sub-Committee Chair Rep. Kevin Ryan at 10:44 a.m. Representative Ryan offered some opening remarks and invited working groups to present their recommendations.

**Rep. Michelle Cook** – reported that the Transportation Working Group considered the opportunities of propane, and other alternative fuels for busses, and increased regional and special education shared services. She noted that the implementation of a Common Calendar was tied to the success of any transportation initiatives. Ultimately she expressed that conversion to propane is a decision made on an individual basis between local boards and their community as is the purchase of busses.

**Rep. Laura Hoydick** – Do you support a statewide calendar?

**Rep. Mike Demicco** – We’re supportive of a regional calendar. There was a task force set up from last lesion that developed recommendations and is moving forward with the RESCs, who will come up with the calendars and submit the proposal to the Education Committee.

**Rep. Michelle Cook** – That was a previous conversation that we did not readdress as a working group.

**Rep. Laura Hoydick** – Consensus on the calendar will be hard.

**Tom Frattaroli** – One of the issues is with transportation contracts and combining schools with declining enrollment. Those groups are a challenge; do you know how that will be dealt with?

**Rep. Michelle Cook** – I understand the situation and concern but that was not addressed by the working group.

**Rep. Kevin Ryan** - I was going to ask for update from the Common Calendar Task Force. Since Rep. Demicco did a nice job summarizing it, is there anything you would like to add?

**Rep. Mike Demicco** – The Task Force came up with the guidelines and forwarded them to the RESCs. The guidelines were not too different from current practices and flexibility was built in for each RESC.

**Craig Edmondson** – There are 5 Flex Days built into the recommendations. It’s important to honor communities’ traditions. ACES will look at closing schools on Election Day and coordination of professional development days. The start and end of the school calendar will still need to be negotiated but it will be recommended next year and then mandated the following.

**Rep. Paul Davis** – How will you address cancellations and delays?

**Rep. Mike Demicco** – There are no recommendations for snow fays. The goal is to allow for flexibility and leave it up to the individual regions.

**Stephen McKeever** – Are the districts in the region involved in this conversation and how far down to the teacher level does it go?

**Craig Edmondson** – Each RESC facilitated conversations with their council which is made up of 25 representatives from the various districts. Discussion will move to the board level next then follow usual protocol. ACES will convene its district representatives, who are selected by superintendents, and come to a consensus that is reported back to ACES. EASTCONN and LEARN have already vetted their calendars so we’re following their lead.

Rep. Kevin Ryan invited the MBR working group to report next.

**Rep. Jay Case** – Our group did not come up with a conclusive report but we are still working. I’ve found that one size does not fit all. There are 31 Alliance Districts that cannot be touched because of achievement goals. Communities should conserve where they can and the Department of Education should revisit this issue.

**George Rafael** – There is definitely a problem with the allotment for lowered enrollments. They should change and be tied to expenditures. We should keep the 1% floor and not touch Alliance Districts.

**Brian Anderson** – Districts are all so different. At times the MBR acts as a safety net. Rather than seek legislative change, the Department of Education should more frequently approve waivers but we did not find consensus to do so.

Rep. Kevin Ryan invited the Health Insurance working group to report next.

**Rep. Susan Johnson** – The group came up with a bill recommendation to require insurance brokers that approach municipalities to adopt a code of ethics in the interest of transparency. Brokers will tie their fees to the policies and there is some interest in this from the Public Health Committee. OLR also provide information on ethics training that could be tied to this. Looking at prior MORE legislation, 10-174, EASTCONN created and coordinated self-insured plans for Northeastern Connecticut. This addresses unregulated plans as well so coordination can occur on both fronts.

**Rep. Laura Hoydick** – Have boards and towns requested this premium information in the past?

**Rep. Susan Johnson** – The purpose would be to have that information included.

**Rep. Laura Hoydick** – It has been my experience that when we interviewed brokers, that was an important part of the RFQ.

**Rep. Susan Johnson** – The proposal would help with that.

**Tom Frattaroli** – Tolland is self-insured. Our representative can’t negotiate with the insurance company. Is that the broker’s job? I think there’s less latitude for negotiating but the costs have decreased.

**Rep. Susan Johnson** – A broker can help with self-insured policies or you could go through the RESC like Tolland. Costs will continue to be controlled.

Rep. Kevin Ryan invited the Teacher Evaluation group to report next.

**Rep. Paul Davis** – We looked at grade flexibility. New options were presented as of last week. We looked at the status of new teachers and the number of observations required. RESCs are training evaluators to support administrators. Lengthening the time frame is also a good idea given the Common Core ties. Curriculum should be developed through RESCs or even statewide to reduce costs. Professional development needs to be connected to needs. RESCs are in a better position to monitor the success of local programs. We need uniform training models. Evaluations vary but there are more similarities than differences. Uniform models would mean more standards across districts. Finally there are concerns will data management. There are currently too many redundancies.

**Rep. Kevin Ryan** – What might need legislative approval?

**Rep. Paul Davis** – Issues that focus on current statutes would require changes: the timeframe, for example, but not for professional development. We might develop a training model to require more uniform training. Data management and changes to that requirement would require legislative approval.

**Rep. Susan Johnson** – We don’t all have the same resources yet we use the same test. Is there a way to make materials consistent or test that relate to existing materials?

**Rep. Paul Davis** – Assuming Common Core is used, the curriculum should address this. The issue, as you said, is left with each district but there is no quality control. RESCs could be an area to develop this curriculum. Testing was not the focus of the working group.

**Rep. Laura Hoydick** – We need to decouple testing and recommend slowing this down to get the data and curriculum set.

**Rep. Paul Davis** – The standards aren’t in place to measure students or teachers.

**Stephen McKeever** – A uniform curriculum might decrease flexibility. Standards need to be developmentally appropriate.

**Craid Edmondson** – MORE has looked for ways to incentivize groups working together and sharing resources. We do that through RESCs and put together legitimate resources. If there’s a way to legislatively encourage this, I think it’s worthwhile. Each school district is responsible for data collection next year. We should consider a single repository of data but it’s up to individual boards of education and the cost is theirs.

**Rep. Paul Davis** – We agreed on the concept of uniform data collection. It would be helpful to both the Department of Education and school districts. Evaluations should be encouraged through incentives on a regional model.

Representative Kevin Ryan invited the working groups to continue their work and adjourned the meeting 11:30 AM.