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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Twenty - Third District



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
LEGISLATIVE HALL
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

COMMITTEES
Education, Chair
Capital Infrastructure
Health & Human Development
Veterans Affairs

Joint Education Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2010

Senator Sokola called the meeting to order at 2:47 pm. Members present included Senators Ennis, Henry, Cloutier, Bunting, Hall-Long, Sorenson and Representatives Barbieri, Jaques, Q. Johnson, Kovach, Miro, Briggs-King, and Vice Chair Scott. Lt. Governor Denn was also in attendance. For a list of guests present, please see attached.

Chairman Sokola began the meeting by introducing the PTA members present and then asked for all Representatives and Senators to introduce themselves. He then introduced Sylvia Gillpatrick, of the Delaware Department of Education, who then gave a presentation on new computer assessment programs for students.

Ms. Gillpatrick started by introducing herself and her background. She then stated that the Delaware DOE is working to implement a new system of assessment based on computer adaptive programs for schools. She explained the different features of the new adaptive systems, stating that the questions asked actually adapt to how students answer. If students answer questions correctly they will be asked more difficult questions, and if they answer them incorrectly they will be asked less difficult questions. She then said that the questionnaire's flexibility helps to receive a more precise measurement for students, especially if they are at the higher-end of a reading level or the lower-end of a reading level.

Ms. Gillpatrick then went over some of the requirements of the computer system and when it will be used. She stated that the assessments will have to meet a certain number of federal requirements, and the assessments will take place in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. She then brought up that there are new benchmarks in reading and math for grades 2-10 and there will be more assessments intended to inform teachers and others on each student's performance.

Chairman Sokola then brought up how he found that students who were way above the reading curve were bored in school and students that were way below were frustrated. He stated how this computer assessment program will help assess students for the intent of growth and progress.

Rep. Kovach then asked Ms. Gillpatrick how quickly the results will be presented. Ms. Gillpatrick stated that the results will appear right away on the screens after the test is taken and will be recorded within 48 hours.

A member from the PTA asked if students can take these tests at any programming time. Ms. Gillpatrick responded by saying that there will be a lot of flexibility for districts to schedule these tests when they would like, but there must be logical progression for their scheduling. She then brought up how these computer programs are up and coming and many states have had a lot of success using them in their assessment process. She brought up how there are many notional standards for student assessment that will be introduced in May.

Chairman Sokola then stated that there are a lot of costs surrounding the standard for student assessment and using these computer assessment programs will help the state cut costs.

A concerned parent from the audience then asked how parents will be involved and informed throughout the assessment process. Ms. Gillpatrick stated that the information will come to the parents similarly to how they are presented. Another parent from the audience then asked if there will be scholarships available for students who receive high marks on the assessment tests. Susan Haberstroh, of the State DOE, responded by saying that the state is not sure how this assessment procedure will play out. She stated that there is money available for a possible scholarship program, but the DOE is not sure of where the assessments will go.

A question was brought up by a parent in the audience about writing assessments. Chairman Sokola then stated how there aren't any writing assessments right now. He stated that they are too expensive to score, and they are not mandated by No Child Left Behind. The parent then followed up by saying that the new SAT has a writing portion and questioned whether the assessments have them as well.

Ms. Gillpatrick stated that it is their goal to re-implement a writing portion for student assessments. She said that the technology is not there yet, but they are working on new writing assessments. Chairman Sokola then stated how there are testing measures out there for writing assessment, but they are very complex. He then stated that schools cannot improve on what they do not test and there is a definite need for a writing assessment test.

Chairman Sokola then thanked everyone for coming. A representative from the PTA then thanked Chairs Sokola and Schooley for having them at Legislative Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Trevor Felix