

REGENTS EMSC COMMITTEE

February 10, 2009

Critical Improvements to the K-12 Data System – The Regents discussed an update on improvements to the Department's K-12 data system in three areas: 1) leadership and organization (reorganization in EMSC); 2) redesign of data infrastructure (to prevent problems and data errors before they occur); and 3) long term plans to re-engineer the data system. Some of the short-term actions include: providing school district access to the data that they enter quickly so they can correct errors; making data reports available to school districts outside of the nySTART system so that they can access data more easily when verifying and certifying their data; coordination data collection with special education so that there is one data calendar; and providing support and training for school districts and the creation of regional data advisory groups. The Department has applied for a three-year \$7.8 million grant from USDOE. These funds would be used to streamline the data system, increase data quality and accuracy, make local reporting easier, support Regents policy and school district practice to improve student achievement, and reduce the cycletime for reporting to the public.

Grades 3-8 Testing Policy Overview – The Regents continued their policy discussion on issues related to Grades 3-8 testing: possible rescheduling of the examinations to a different time of year as well as how the tests should be used and what types of questions should be on the tests (all multiple choice questions versus a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions). The Regents heard about the field survey that is underway to get input on these issues. The survey asks questions about preferences for which month the Grades 3-8 mathematics and English Language Arts examinations should be administered as well as preferences for scoring models (school, district, regional or vendor scoring) and for test format (multiple-choice vs. open-ended questions). It also asks respondents to identify other relevant issues such as availability of sufficient room and staffing for the examinations. The survey was posted on-line on February 6th and 5,000 responses had been received at the time of the Regents meeting. In March the survey results will be provided to the Regents to help inform their policy decisions.

The Committee also discussed the problem experienced in January related to the cancellation of the second part of the Regents Comprehensive English Examination due to the weather. The Senior Deputy asked the Board for their endorsement to pursue two policy directions that would create more flexibility. The first is to redesign the Comprehensive Examination in English to be a one-part examination versus the current format which is a 6-hour two part examination, and endorsement to explore alternative options for the test administration and release policy to provide greater flexibility for student needs and to reduce the expense associated with the release of the questions and answers for each Regents examination. The current policy has not permitted

“make-up” administrations when an examination is cancelled. The Committee endorsed these two policy directions. The Committee also requested that staff look for immediate solutions to the problem associated with students who took the first part of the January 2009 Regents English examination being required to retake that part because the second part was cancelled.

Economic Stimulus Plan – The Senior Deputy Commissioner provided a detailed overview of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Stimulus Package). This included a description of actions the Department is now taking to position itself to move these funds expeditiously once enacted. Among the many actions, staff is assessing the dollar amounts in both bills (competitive and formula driven); creating a master calendar for implementation; looking at process issues and accountability; and preparing a plan for communications with the field. The Senior Deputy also provided projected education dollar amounts in both the Senate and House bills.

Policy Activity Follow-up – Each month the Senior Deputy will be providing the Board of Regents with an update on the status of various policies that require follow-up. Examples for this month’s report include off-line work on English Language Learners; strengthening urban teachers (forum follow-up); networks; completion of C4E cycle for this year and work to follow; credit recovery; streamlining of regulations/regulatory reform/consolidated monitoring; etc. Due to time constraints, this topic was not discussed this month.

REGENTS HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 10, 2009

Professional Development Standards. The Committee discussed the recommendations of the State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching on New York State Professional Development Standards. The discussion included feedback and comments concerning the amount of time teachers spend on professional development and the value of test scoring as a means of professional development. The Committee recommends that the Regents endorse the proposed New York State Professional Development Standards and that Department staff proceed with implementation as appropriate. The Department will disseminate the Professional Development Standards widely and will develop a guidance document to accompany the Standards. In addition, the Department will propose amendments to pertinent sections of Commissioner’s Regulations to add reference to the Professional Development Standards in district professional development and annual professional performance review processes.

Overview of Higher Education in New York State: Looking at the Data – Staff provided an overview of higher education data (enrollment, performance, faculty, degrees earned and student financial aid). The Committee members asked staff to bring this information back for a full Board discussion, taking into consideration the latest developments associated with the down-turn in the economy and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Stimulus Package).

