

Education Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

2:45 PM in Room 2C of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chairman, Rep. Fleischmann A. 018.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Bye B. S05; Logan G. S17; Moore M. S22; Slossberg G. S14

Representatives: Cook M. 065; Currey J. 011; Dunsby A. 135; Ferguson M. 138; Fleischmann A. 018; Green R. 055; Hall C. 059; Kokoruda N. 101; Lavielle G. 143; Lemar R. 096; Lopes R. 024; McCarthy Vahey C. 133; McCarty K. 038; Simanski B. 062; Stokes G. 058

Absent were:

Senators: Boucher T. S26; Linares A. S33; Somers H. S18; Winfield G. S10

Representatives: Baker A. 124; Belsito S. 053; Bolinsky M. 106; Candelaria J. 095; Genga H. 010; Johnson S. 049; LeGeyt T. 017; McGee B. 005; Miller P. 145; Morris B. 140; Pavalock-D'Amato C. 077; Rosario C. 128; Sanchez R. 025

Representative Fleischmann convened the meeting, making his opening remarks, passing the floor to ranking member Representative Lavielle.

Representative Lavielle made her opening remarks.

Representative Fleischmann called the Superintendent of the State Technical School System, Jeffery Wihbey, to commence his presentation.

Superintendent Wihbey read from written testimony, in which he characterized his hundred-days entry plan, along with formulating a three-year long strategic plan for technical schools.

Representative Fleischmann opened the floor for questions from members.

Representative Fleischmann asked a question to the Superintendent in regards to the new shift of CTech schools operating as independent agencies, and whether or not they have staffed a consultant.

Superintendent Wihbey explained how the school system has begun the process, but has not yet staffed the consultant.

Representative Fleischmann proceeded to ask what the status of leadership was in the technical schools.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that he was the recommended candidate for the full time position of superintendent, that he would be accepting the position, and that they are in the finalizing stages.

Representative Fleischmann then asked if the Superintendent had plans to change the policy on governing admissions.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that a joint committee had been established, and that a decision should be agreed upon this coming spring.

Representative Fleischmann then inquired about the transition of financial accounts in the CTech schools. They had just been asked to have an account for all expenses on educational needs, as well as an account for all non-educational needs.

Superintendent Wihbey referred to CFO for the State Department of Education Kathy Dempcey. Dempcey explained that CTech began the year with a one-line item in the budget, and they are working to separate it into two separate entities. However, every expense from the new budget is being associated to its new line in the budget.

Representative Fleischmann then asked for clarification as to how things were sorted between the two line items in the budget.

Dempcey clarified that all staff salaries were paid for under the educational budget. Things such as day to day operations, fuel, utilities, and production work were filed under the non-educational budget.

Representative Fleischmann thanked Superintendent Wihbey and Dempcey for their answers and opened the floor for more questions.

Representative Lavielle began her questioning. She inquired about the time frame for the annual report, if there were barriers behind why it was late, and if it would be ready prior to the closing of session.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that they are diligently working on it. He explained that the data reporter was out on leave, which was slowing the process. He stated that it would be finished prior to the closing of session.

Representative Lavielle asked if the schools and teachers were working to meet business standards.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that they are having a staffing issue. The school system needs to work on a smarter hiring process. Teachers should be hired based on student enrollment, and student interests. There are 125 vacancies with certified staff. They have gaps consisting of 1 principal, 3 assistant principals, 5 nurse vacancies, also 4 nurses who are on fmla. Central office lacks managers. Superintendent Wihbey further explained that there are shortages in the area for certified works, as well as the pay scale has discrepancies.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to Senator Bye.

Senator Bye asked about vacancies in areas of nursing and special education, and wanted to know if there were any shortages that were as much of a concern.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that nothing was as high of a concern as special education and math. He also explained that those vacancies are disproportionately represented because everyone of the over 10,000 students must take classes like math. As opposed to classes related to electrical work, in which vacancies would only effect that program.

Senator Bye then asked if qualifications for teachers should be reduced in order to easily fill these vacancies.

Superintendent Wihbey believes that the baseline that teachers must fulfill is fair. He suggested that the schools could begin into finding alternative standards for students to learn specific skills.

Senator Bye then asked about how the vo-tech schools are creating a balance between teaching liberal arts skills for future jobs, and narrow skill sets for today's market.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that teaching the soft skills is a recent priority for them. During the school year students at vo-tech schools are learning technical skills, academics, and the career success skills. Students are tested on these career success skills during their senior projects especially.

Senator Bye yielded the floor to Representative Staneski.

Representative Staneski referred to a survey around needs for good manufacturing skills and asked how the Superintendent is going to work with community colleges.

Superintendent Wihbey answered that they are planning on working with community colleges giving credits to community colleges manufacturing certificate programs. Students can learn manufacturing credentials at their schools from the community colleges. Superintendent Wihbey further elaborated giving example of community colleges using manufacturing machines. He argues that there is definitely room to expand and to find some pathways for students.

Representative Staneski said that there needs to be more marketing as to what your system provides and thanked Superintendent Wihbey's agenda and efforts.

Representative Cook asked if nurses paralleled teaching.

Superintendent Wihbey replied negatively saying that nurses do not do both, either they work as school's nurse or teach in the educational health field.

Representative Cook asked if out of those vacancies we are looking for school nurses rather than teacher nurses.

Superintendent Wihbey replied that there is a need for teacher nurses but the need for school nurses is much stronger.

Representative Cook further inquired if there is a regional breakdown of those vacancies to determine if as legislators there are ideas on how to fill these positions.

Superintendent Wihbey replied that Bridgeport and Fairfield County are the areas where such vacancies are the hardest to fill yet mentioned that it may be subject to change next year.

Representative Cook asked whether they were envisioning to revision their admission policies as regards to special education students and how they were going to fill the gaps between special education students and tech schools.

Superintendent Wihbey replied that they are trying to form a diverse enrolling class of students every year composed of special education students, English learners' students etc. Their aim is to be reflective of the diverse population of the state of Connecticut by proceeding with a more inclusive enrollment process managed by a joint committee. Students will never not be able to get in because of a disability. At the same time, it is important for them to do a great job of outreach in communities that have not yet been successful and to show that they have the keys to make those communities earn a living.

The floor was then yielded to Representative Tweedie by Representative Lavielle. Representative Tweedie asked about the State Technical High School System's mission on college readiness to success and earn a living, wondering if there were aptitude tests that will give some students with a lesser college experience a greater chance than another. Representative Tweedie inquired if there were any partnerships with local high schools for night classes.

Superintendent Wihbey answered that discussions are to be held within the enrollment community. He argued that what a teenager wants to do for the rest of his life may differ from one another, making aptitude tests hard to conduct. Superintendent Wihbey further explained that they have seventeen existing comprehensive high schools and one tech center that serves for upperclassmen only. The idea is to have alternative models to comprehensive high schools, to develop a system where students could take classes in the form of electives.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to Representative Ackert who was concerned about the enrollment numbers.

Superintendent Wihbey answered that enrollment this year was higher than last year's and that it is important that staff follows with enrollment. He further detailed the areas knowing enrollment growth, showing that there are regional nuances.

Representative Ackert questioned if there were areas of labor that failed to follow this enrollment.

Superintendent Wihbey replied that they were focusing in two specific sectors of activity notably that of the manufacturing cluster and the information systems technology sector based on the Department of Labor forecasting. They are not only adding programming; they are also changing the curriculum to fit the needs, such as hard warring, computer programming etc.

Representative Ackert wondered where children went after such tech education.

Superintendent Wihbey replied that he could provide greater information on this subject matter later.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to Representative McCarthy.

Representative McCarthy recommended that the committees solve the problems of filling the teaching positions to meet the needs and address personalized learning with the students and personal development for the teachers.

Superintendent Wihbey conquered. The idea is to get the right staff on board to meet the right needs, not necessarily by hiring more but rather by hiring the right people. A strategic plan based on a comprehensive audit of the needs—students and industries in Connecticut—ought to be conducted.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to the Department of Labor, Commissioner Jackson.

Commissioner Jackson said that he is more than willing to answer questions as to systems of outcomes and systems of inputs. Commissioner Jackson referred to the 2016 joint publication produced between the Department of Labor and the EECD presenting a ten-year forecast of jobs. He stated that manufacturing is going to be a critical driver of the economy of the state of Connecticut. Connecticut has amazing opportunities because of its demography. Supporting the state's education and especially that of technical schools is key and a fantastic investment in the state's young people. Commissioner Jackson yielded the floor to Andy Condon, the Director of the Office of Research and Information at the Department of Labor.

Director Condon referred to the report, and explained that they had the ability to link the level of education of students to the jobs that they found later on and their corresponding labor field. The charter showed average earnings six years after entering into the labor force for students that did not go to college. In light of such charter, Director Condon argued that the state of Connecticut produces students that are ready for the labor force. In addition, Director Condon offered an overview of the report.

Representative Lavielle wanted to know the disciplines and the jobs that have the highest filling potential.

Director Condon asserted that the living wage for those not part of the technical high school system will be scarcely small compared to students educated by tech schools. He said that if you have the necessary skills within a certain area, there is potential to grow in that area.

Representative Lavielle further asked if students were getting jobs in the area in which they have acquired expertise through tech schools.

Director Condon referred back to the charter saying that they did not have yet asserted that analysis.

Commissioner Jackson weighted in narrating his personal story to answer Representative Lavielle. The essence of hi was that students have to consistently be willing to advance their skills to achieve success. There are other ways to achieve success and earn a living than necessarily by going to college.

Representative Lavielle agreed and yielded the floor to Representative Bets.

Representative Bets questioned Commissioner Jackson and Director Condon about the status of the bio-science industry to know whether are not it is a growing, wondering about the future of the industry in terms of jobs and opportunities.

Commissioner Jackson answered that an essential element of the bio-science industry relies on the ownership of patents delivered by federal agencies. As such, Connecticut is extremely well-placed as a center of bio-science learning, where someone with an idea has the available place to grow it into a business. Yet, ways to translate academic successes into business successes are still to be found.

Representative Bets asked if there are going to be fundamental meeting points between students and industries in the future in light of the thirty-years investment that Connecticut has made.

Director Condon replied that so far they are unable to provide such information.

Representative Bets asked for further information and detail as to whether or not tech schools are going to meet such demand.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to Representative Porter.

Representative Porter asked about the apprenticeship programs for women that cannot afford college.

Commissioner Jackson replied that there exists an apprenticeship program that works with the U.S. Department of Labor that has a grant program to introduce women into non-traditional field called the “partnership program”. Yet, there is still progress to be done and in order do so, there needs to be a defining of manufacturing.

Representative Lavielle yielded the floor to Representative Cheeseman.

Representative Cheeseman argued that the state revenue needs to grow by encouraging good paying jobs. She thanked the Commissioner and the Director for their

initiatives saying that any investment will lead to huge dividends. The endeavor of producing skilled young individuals to fill jobs in need of workforce is remarkable.

Representative McLachlan wondered if there is an oversupply of electricians. Electrical contractors are asking for licenses, at least in western Connecticut, and automobile dealers always want to hire more automobile contractors. He asked if the green P as an electrician is not ready for the modern times explaining the low supply for home constructions.

Director Condon replied that this indicator does not mean that Connecticut is producing too much electricians, yet it is a trend to look out. Home constructions and the demand for home construction has been slow. The immediate demand for electricians may have been a contributory factor as well as the need to produce high demand jobs.

Senator Gomes was given the floor. He asked how the apprenticeship programs would be financed without federal grants.

Commissioner Jackson replied that the apprenticeship is now of about \$700 000. Yet, it is of their desire to continue these programs. Apprenticeship has been the best way to have highly skilled employee. They are currently working to push the footprints of apprenticeship that is to work with skilled mentors while still going to school. Nevertheless, the minute federal funds disappear, they would have to come before the Connecticut State Capital Education Committee and ask for funding.

Senator Gomes manifested his wish that apprenticeships will be plentiful in the future.

Representative Lavielle thanked all members present at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:41 PM.

1:00PM

Administrator

Committee Clerk