

## **Scott likens standardized testing industry to military-industrial complex**

At the State Board of Education meeting Jan. 25-27, Education Commissioner Robert Scott likened the standardized testing industry to the military-industrial complex. In a sometimes charged conversation with SBOE members on the STAAR assessment, Scott commented that, while he believes that standardized tests serve a purpose as part of the accountability system, they have become the be-all and end-all of accountability. He called the assessment process a perversion of what its intent was.

Members complained about the overemphasis many districts are placing on the state assessment and the amount of benchmark testing that is going on. George Clayton commented that all they do in his district (Dallas) is give the benchmarks, score the benchmarks, analyze the benchmarks, rewrite the benchmarks, and give the benchmarks again. Pressure created by linking principals' evaluations to school performance was also raised, as well as instructional time lost to benchmark testing and test preparation.

## **Not exactly the new math, but. . .**

The SBOE approved, on first reading and filing for public comment, new TEKS for the Math curriculum. Several people testifying expressed concern about the standards and the process, including:

1. Lack of time to vertically align the standards.
2. Lack of time to align the standards with the Science TEKS.
3. "Pushing down" of the curriculum into lower grade levels, even if students are not yet cognitively ready to comprehend them.
4. More rigorous standards in grades 6-8 without requiring math certification for middle school teachers (currently, teachers in grades 6-8 are required to have only a generalist certificate to teach middle school). SBOE previously has asked the State Board for Educator Certification to address this issue.
5. Gaps in instruction as the new TEKS are implemented, i.e., students going from fourth grade math in the current TEKS to the higher standards in the fifth grade without benefit of instruction in those areas.

The board postponed implementation of the new TEKS, pending the availability of instructional materials by Aug. 31, 2013.

## **$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \neq 1$**

SBOE approved, on first reading and filing for public comment, new graduation requirements that include:  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit in an EOC course cannot be combined with  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit in a non-EOC course

to earn the fourth graduation credit in the core content areas. It must be an EOC class to satisfy graduation requirements.

**Other action taken (all committee actions were approved by SBOE at its Jan. 27 meeting)**

***Committee on Instruction***

- Approved two innovative courses (in Del Valle ISD and Plano ISD) for a period of one year and three innovative courses (in Irving ISD, Intercultural Development Research Association, and Klein ISD) for a period of three years.

***Committee on School Initiatives***

- Postponed rescinding the charter for the Pro-Vision Academy, which has failed to provide necessary IRS information to TEA. Pro-Vision has until March 16 to provide the information.
- Began the review of 19 TAC Chapter 100 governing charter schools, as required by the Texas Government Code every four years.

***Committee on School Finance***

Approved, on first reading and filing for public comment, proposed amendments to 19 TAC Chapter 33, Statement of Investment Objectives, Policies, and Guidelines of the Texas Permanent School Fund.

SBOE approved amendments to Chapter 33 with the most contentious debate coming over proposed rules to strengthen the SBOE's Code of Ethics. SBOE members Thomas Ratliff and David Bradley offered several amendments to the proposed rule, which included:

- A change in language from a third degree of affinity or consanguinity to a second degree between an SBOE member and a party interested in doing business relative to the Permanent School Fund (PSF). This motion was approved, and it establishes a higher standard governing relationships for the purpose of board fiduciary responsibilities. (Consanguinity refers to relationships by blood, and affinity refers to relationships by marriage.)
- A change in language requiring that SBOE members report to the Chair and Vice-Chair of SBOE and the Commissioner of Education any knowledge about another member having a conflict of interest with PSF providers. The original rule provided that the member with such knowledge report it to all members of SBOE; however, a concern was raised that this might violate the Open Meetings requirement. This provided the most interesting drama of the day as Bradley offered an amendment to delete the proposed language – which passed on an 8-6 vote. Craig offered an amendment to reinsert the “just-deleted” language, causing an explanation of the parliamentary rules in place. The motion to reconsider the Bradley amendment passed and Craig's motion was inserted into the language of the proposed rule.

- The board then eliminated language referencing the acceptance of a campaign contribution from a person the SBOE member knows to be interested, or to possibly be interested, in a charter, contract, payment, claim, or other pecuniary transaction over which SBOE has discretion. TEA General Counsel commented that language relative to campaign contributions was covered by the Texas Ethics Commission.

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