

Home Education Advisory Council

Minutes – September 8, 2009

The regular meeting of the Home Education Advisory Council commenced at 3:40 pm on September 8, 2009 in Room 15 of the Department of Education. Chairman Abbey Lawrence presided. A member of the audience made an audio recording of the meeting.

Members Present: Michael Compitello, Mike Benik, Barrett Christina, Neil Nevins, Abbey Lawrence, Molly Kelly, Roberta Tenney, Emma Rous, Chris Hamilton

Members Absent: Paul Ingretson, Dennis Wyman, Marc Boyd

Visitors present: Keith Pfeifer, George D’Orazio, Jane Grady, Angela Lawrence-Hurt, Kristine Bolstridge, Greg Bolstridge, Gordon Shaw, Daniel Faiella, Mary Faiella

Organization of the Council: The terms of George D’Orazio, Keith Pfeifer and Chris Hamilton expired June 30. Chris Hamilton’s nomination was approved by the State Board of Education in August. Board action on the nominations of George and Keith by their respective organizations is expected in October.–George and Keith participated in council discussions although their membership status was pending.

Chris nominated Abbey to serve as council chairman, and Roberta seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Keith moved to cast a single ballot electing Mike C. as council vice-chairman. Due to the pending nature of Keith’s council membership, however, such a motion was deemed out of order. Roberta moved to cast a single ballot electing Mike C. to serve as HEAC vice-chairman. Barrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: Chris had several suggestions for changes to the minutes for the June 9, 2009 minutes. These suggestions were discussed but not approved.

Spelling corrections: Angie LeBel, Neil Nevins, and Honey Puterbaugh.

“The initial proposal to the State Board may be on the August agenda.”

“Possible steps: BOE will approve the initial proposal which will then move to rule-making”

“The council discussed the availability of driver’s ed for homeschooled students. Barrett commented that, depending on how a driver’s ed program is administered, it could be a co-curricular program. In a recent case, it appeared that the Salem school district policy might be more restrictive for four homeschoolers who had difficulty enrolling in the driver’s ed program. After reviewing RSA 193:1-c, the Salem school district enrolled the four homeschoolers in the driver’s ed class.”

“Emma described the superintendent survey subcommittee’s progress;”

“The committee work must be done by November 1, 2009. [Factual correction: Retained bills must be reported out of the House Education Committee by December 2, 2009, and therefore the subcommittees must finish their work by the end of November.]”

HB154 concerning truancy was retained by the Senate Education Committee.”

“Abbey will try to set up a meeting to meet the new commissioner for anyone who can come.”

It was decided to defer a vote on accepting the June minutes until October when a version incorporating suggested changes would be brought before the council.

Chairman’s Report: E-mail changes for members were noted.

The council discussed the request by a BOE member for HEAC nominee biographical information.

DOE Report: At Abbey’s request, the DOE posted the policy pertaining to homeschooler high school completion at the DOE website. The council discussed adding a requirement for the DOE to acknowledge receipt of the certification to the rules. This requirement would be in addition to the existing requirement for parents to retain a copy of the submitted certification. Roberta agreed to the proposal. If the change does not appear in the initial proposal for Ed315, interested parties can suggest it during the comment period.

Over the summer, a question arose about public schools requiring immunization records of homeschooled students who took classes at school. Barrett stated that parents were required to immunize children unless they had a religious or medical exemption.

Barrett asked if a school can request a physical examination of a child before allowing the child to participate in sports even when a parent objected on religious grounds. Abbey commented that conditions required for program participation must be met by homeschooled students, as would be the case for all resident students.

Roberta stated that the department is very understaffed at this point.

Commissioner Barry wants a homeschooling representative to participate in a committee formed by the legislature to study accountability. She wants homeschoolers to understand the issues surrounding the education of public school students.

There is a legislative committee studying the funding issues for VLACS, the New Hampshire virtual charter school.

HEAC members met with incoming Commissioner Barry in June. Abbey invited the Commissioner to attend a Council meeting when Commissioner Barry’s schedule allows.

Roberta did not know when the vacant position of Deputy Commissioner would be filled.

H1N1 information is available at the DOE, CDC, and New Hampshire Health and Human Services websites.

Legislative report: The superintendent survey subcommittee will meet at 10:00 AM on September 29 in Room 207.

The subcommittees and their chairs are:

Definitions – Representative Rachel Burke

Notification – Representative Charles Yeaton

Evaluation and Records – Representative Philip Harvey

Probation and Appeals – Representative Judith Reeve

Superintendent Survey – Representative James O’Neil

The superintendent survey subcommittee met once in June, and scheduled the September 29 meeting; none of the other subcommittees have met. The subcommittees should have their work completed sometime in November, because the HEC has to meet as a whole to decide what to do about the bill, and issue its report by December 2. During that meeting, the HEC will take reports from the subcommittee and discuss any proposed amendments to the retained bill. The hearing for the bill has already taken place, and the report of the committee would be acted on by the House during its first meeting in January, as is customary for retained bills.

HB154, pertaining to truancy, was retained by the Senate Education Committee, because there were significant disagreements between committee members over some provisions of the bill. The SEC wanted to ask questions of the house study committee that proposed the legislation. Decisions about how to proceed will be made at an SEC meeting on October 8.

Emma asked about the effectiveness of the grievance conference process. She suggested it might be a useful tool for solving problems superintendents bring forward.

Emma asked the council about two proposed changes to RSA 193-A: Requiring that every subject be taught every year (with the exception of New Hampshire history), and adding Internet safety to the list of required subjects. Council members discussed the following:

RSA 193-A addresses multi-year programs providing instruction in mandated subjects without requiring annual instruction in each subject listed;

The integrated nature of homeschooling programs may make equitably assessing instruction adequacy unfeasible; and

The block scheduling used in some New Hampshire public schools often results in a year-long subject gap for students.

Rules: Roberta believes the State Board of Education will discuss the initial proposal for changes to Ed315 at its October 14 meeting. The agenda typically appears on the DOE website approximately 8 days before the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Hamilton