

Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – July 11, 2016

Date: July 11, 2016
Time: 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Location: MSDE, 8th Floor, Conference Room #6

Board Members:

Present: Matt Gallagher, Linda Eberhart, Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, Elizabeth A. Green (via teleconference) Esquire, Beth Sandbower Harbinson, Dr. A. Skipp Sanders

Absent: Michael McLeese

MSDE Staff Present: Monica Kearns, Jim Clark, Debbie Lichter, Donna Gunning, James Klarman, Kenya DeCosta

Attorney General's Staff Present: Elizabeth Kameen, Esquire, Alan Dunklow, Esquire

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 9:03 am by Chair, Matt Gallagher

Welcome, Introduction, and Opening Remarks

Speaker: Matt Gallagher

Mr. Gallagher asked if there was anyone who wanted to speak in public comment. There was no response.

Assessments:

Ms. Kameen explained the basis for her legal advice on the meaning of the assessment requirement in the Budget Bill. She had provided a copy of that advice to all Board members prior to the meeting.

The Board members discussed the advice from a practical perspective noting that implementing an assessment program like the public schools have within the short statutory timeframe would be so expensive that most non-public schools would not be able to participate in the BOOST Program. Ms. Eberhart advocated for increased accountability of the non-public schools due to the fact that public funds were being dispersed. She asked that MSDE collect assessment data, graduation data, and names of assessments from the participating schools. Ms. Eberhart asked to review the assurance page that the eligible schools would complete. Ms. Kearns agreed to forward it to all Board members.

Award Criteria

The discussion turned to families with more than one student applicant. Mr. Clark stated that there are 322 families with multiple applications. Ms. Green noted that the BOOST

allocation is much smaller than in other states. If families with multiple applications could only get one award she expressed discomfort with the possibility of putting parents in a position to choose which child should receive the scholarship. Mr. Gallagher presented the possibility of implementing a cap for multi-applicant families so that more families could benefit from the scholarships.

Ms. Eberhart asked whether there was a sliding scale in schools based on the number of children attending from one family. She asked whether a sliding scale approach to awarding BOOST scholarships to multi-applicant families would be a good approach. Other members disagreed. Dr. Grasmick asked whether the data showed if multi-applicant families choose different schools for their children. Mr. Clark stated that the numbers were “all over the board.”

A discussion of using underperforming public schools as a criterion ensued. Ms. Eberhart defined “underperforming schools” as any school performing beneath the State average. Dr. Grasmick noted the complications of determining underperforming schools because MSDE has only one year of PARCC results. She recommended using five year longitudinal data rather than one year of PARCC data. Mr. Gallagher suggested that the Board decide whether underperforming schools should be a criterion before asking MSDE to analyze the data. Dr. Grasmick recommended asking the Assessment Branch their view of whether underperforming schools could be a criterion. Other Board members agreed.

Ms. Eberhart presented a weighted spreadsheet to the Board and explained how data could be dropped into the spreadsheet to compare the effect of different variables, including estimates of the percentage of scholarship dollars that would be accepted by applicants; and priorities given to certain criteria. Dr. Grasmick proposed using 6th grade as most critical grade for an award. She said that non-public high schools often have development offices that raise funds for financial aid for their students. The Board agreed, indicating that the spreadsheet should keep preferred weights for students entering grades K/1, 6 and 9. Mr. Gallagher suggested adding underperforming schools as a priority criterion and keeping the decision about how to deal with multi-applicant families on hold for the time being. Ms. Kearns explained the need for continuing data cleanup and validation before the criteria is dropped into the data set. To allow staff time to do the data cleanup work, Ms. Eberhart proposed cancelling the next meeting date. The Board agreed.

Recap

During the meeting and at wrap-up, the Board asked staff to produce an updated data table with the following elements;

- Free vs. reduced-price meals.
- Public vs. private schools (have in two separate columns).
- Single vs. multi-applicant families (add # of schools).
- Grades students will enter.
- Underperforming public schools.
- County of residence.

They asked MSDE to report on the total number of applications to the Board at the next meeting, and to send the Board an update later in the week on progress in cleaning and validating data with a best estimate of completion time.

Next meeting – July 21, 2016.

The Meeting adjourned at 10:58 a.m.