



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL

Room 411 South
State Capitol

August 20, 2012
10:00 a.m. – 3:20 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the August 20, 2012 meeting of the Special Committee on Improving Educational Opportunities in High School. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Olsen called the committee to order. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Luther Olsen, Chair; Rep. Paul Farrow, Vice Chair; Sens. Tim Cullen and Glenn Grothman; Rep. Sony Pope-Roberts; and Public Members Bill Fitzpatrick, Robert Hein, Patricia Hoben, William Hughes, Mark Kaiser, Suzanne Kelley, Jim Leef, Harry Muir, Patricia Neudecker, Sheila Ruhland, and S. Mark Tyler.

COMMITTEE MEMBER EXCUSED: Public Members Joni Burgin, Joe Garza, and Jeff Monday.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Jessica Karls-Ruplinger and Rachel Letzing, Senior Staff Attorneys.

APPEARANCES: Patricia Deklotz, Superintendent, Kettle Moraine School District; Stephanie Borowski, President, Second Chance Partners for Education; Michael Shiels, Dean, Industrial and Engineering Technologies Division, Waukesha County Technical College; Bill Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, New London School District; Tania Kilpatrick, Career and Technical Education Coordinator, CESA 6; Beth Lewis, Alternative Education and GED/HSED Administrator, Department of Public Instruction (DPI); and Sharon Wendt, Director, Career and Technical Education, DPI.

Approval of the Minutes of the Special Committee's July 16, 2012 Meeting

Mr. Hein moved, seconded by Representative Farrow, to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2012 meeting. The motion passed on a voice vote.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

Beth Lewis, Alternative Education and GED/HSED Administrator, DPI

Ms. Lewis began her presentation with a description of Wis. Const., art. X, s. 3, which provides that the “Legislature shall provide by law for the establishment of district schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable; and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years.” She also described the compulsory school attendance law, which generally requires regular school attendance by children between the ages of six and 18.

Ms. Lewis explained that state law requires that a student obtain at least the following number of credits to graduate from high school: four credits of English, three credits of social studies, two credits of mathematics, two credits of science, one and one-half credits of physical education, and one-half credit of health. In addition, she explained that school districts are encouraged to require additional credits. She noted that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver proposes increasing the number of mathematics and science credits to three.

Ms. Lewis explained several alternatives that are available to high school students. For children at risk of not graduating from high school, she noted that each school board is required to identify the children at risk and develop a plan to meet the needs of those children. She described the technical education diploma, which may be awarded to students who successfully complete a technical education program and other requirements and which allows students to obtain industry-recognized certifications.

Further, Ms. Lewis explained that a high school diploma may be granted based on a demonstration of competencies, which is usually accomplished through an alternative education program. She identified several types of alternative education, including school-to-work and work experience, employability skills certificate, youth apprenticeship, General Educational Development (GED) Option #2, and GED/High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). She explained that GED Option #2 uses GED tests and other requirements to demonstrate competency and that students who complete GED Option #2 receive traditional high school diplomas. She also explained the HSED is the GED tests plus career awareness, employability skills, civics, and health and that GED/HSED is not graduation from high school.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Lewis explained that local school boards decide what constitutes a credit, determine additional requirements for high school graduation, and manage alternative education programs. She also explained that DPI is working to make sure that youth who age out of foster care complete high school. She described the importance of the transcript and college entrance exams. Senator Cullen asked committee members about the possibility of school districts managing their graduation rates, to which Ms. Neudecker responded that schools are focused on getting students out of high school but should be focused on what students are doing following high school.

Sharon Wendt, Director, Career and Technical Education, DPI

Ms. Wendt explained the education for employment program, which she referred to as “E4E.” She stated that the program prepares elementary and secondary students for future employment and for a successful transition into adulthood. She noted that the program started in the 1980s and is intended for all students, not only at risk students. She explained that DPI reviews and approves E4E plans but does not oversee or audit implementation or evaluate outcomes of the plans. She also explained that technical

preparation councils review E4E plans annually and that the plans are revised every five years. She described technical preparation programs, which are a sequence of courses that lead to advanced standing in an associate degree program at a technical college.

Ms. Wendt shared the E4E plans for the New London School District and Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah School District as examples and pointed out key parts of those plans. She explained that the effectiveness of E4E plans varies; some provide a minimum plan, while others involve goals that are developed and reviewed on a regular basis to improve programming. Lastly, she noted that future considerations in the program include aligning plans to economic and workforce development regions and encouraging the development of the plans with industry and business partners.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Wendt explained that the E4E program was initially focused on career and technical education but is now used more as a platform for reform. She also noted that school districts evaluate outcomes under the plans and emphasized that the E4E program is targeted to all students.

Committee Discussion of High School Diplomas

Chair Olsen suggested that the committee members discuss what a high school diploma means now and what it should mean.

Mr. Kaiser stated that a high school diploma is geared towards credits, not towards skill sets, and that there is no alignment between the credits and skills.

Mr. Tyler stated that school districts are focused on post-secondary education and if a student is not headed for post-secondary education, the student is classified as not capable. He suggested that the educational system needs to create paths for hands-on learners.

Ms. Neudecker explained that a high school diploma should reflect a core of citizenship, which relates to employment, participation, and ethics. She stated that what employment means now is vastly different than previously thought. She also suggested that the system focus on how to get kids into the next step following high school.

Mr. Leef stated that a high school diploma should be a fundamental baseline that includes basic math and interpersonal skills. He also indicated that businesses change jobs to accommodate the lack of basic skills.

Mr. Fitzpatrick noted that the workplace and its demands have changed and that a high school diploma should be a passport to the next stage of learning. He stated that high school should set pathways for future learning.

Ms. Kelley stated that a high school diploma should mean a basic level of proficiency in core requirements. She agreed that a transcript is more important than the diploma and suggested that the requirements in math and science should be increased.

Senator Grothman stated that a high school diploma has degenerated into a certificate of attendance. He indicated that a high school graduate should have basic reading and writing skills.

Representative Farrow stated that although the next step after high school has changed, the education has not changed. He suggested that the E4E program be ingrained into curriculum. He also stated that high school is not teaching students how to stay engaged in the community.

Chair Olsen stated that everyone looks at a high school diploma differently. He indicated that getting a diploma is not enough for most students and that a diploma has to demonstrate that a student can live independently and move forward onto the next step. He stated that high schools should not be diploma factories but the standards also should not be raised in a way that makes diplomas inaccessible.

Representative Pope-Roberts stated that a high school diploma should mean that a student has reached certain competencies. She also commented that improving educational opportunities may mean something different than focusing on what a diploma means and getting students into the workplace.

Ms. Ruhland indicated that a high school diploma should be a tangible document that demonstrates competencies and credits. She also commented that all transcripts have different information and that it is important to understand what a transcript says.

Senator Cullen stated that a high school diploma means less than the public thinks it means. He suggested that it could mean that a student is reasonably informed about what it means to be a good citizen.

Ms. Hoben indicated that the college-ready and career-ready tracks in Milwaukee are not integrated. She stated that A and B diplomas are as equally unmeaningful as D diplomas and that the definitions of 21st Century skills differ.

Mr. Muir stated that a high school diploma should mean that the student is a productive citizen and should include global preparation. He explained that Arizona has more regulation at the state level in K-12 than does Wisconsin and that the same discussion about high school diplomas is occurring in both states.

Mr. Hughes suggested that students should have an action plan when graduating from high school. He also noted that the civic mission of schools is critical.

Mr. Hein stated that a high school diploma should be a level of achievement that does not require remedial education. He commented that it is difficult to pick one path for everyone and that the E4E program seems like basic education, in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Ms. Neudecker commented that the standards that attach to a high school diploma are important and that a diploma is seen as a right.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

Patricia Deklotz, Superintendent, Kettle Moraine School District; Stephanie Borowski, President, Second Chance Partners for Education; and Michael Shiels, Dean, Industrial and Engineering Technologies Division, Waukesha County Technical College

Ms. Deklotz began her presentation with information about the Kettle Moraine School District. She explained that the purpose of the district is to “cultivate academic excellence, citizenship, and personal development.” She described Harvard’s *Pathways to Prosperity* report, which described the educational demand to 2018 as approximately 1/3 high school degree or less, 1/3 some college or

associate's degree, and 1/3 bachelor's degree or more. She explained how the district became involved with a pilot program with Second Chance Partners and Waukesha County Technical College.

Ms. Borowski described the pilot program, in which 16 students from the Kettle Moraine School District participate in a program that leads to a diploma with associate degree credits, workforce readiness skills, and a transcript with a manufacturing focus. She explained that the program involves curriculum plus hands-on learning at Generac and GE facilities, with four hours of class and four hours of production each day, and provides scholarships to fund post-secondary education and compensation. She also explained that the program is an integrated learning experience, with core academics, information technology, workforce readiness, manufacturing skills, and character development. She noted that students who participate in the program can also participate in extra-curricular activities at the high school.

Mr. Shiels explained that the School of Applied Technologies at Waukesha County Technical College has 20 degree/diploma programs, including engineering, manufacturing, and construction. He also described the technical college's transcribed credit and dual enrollments programs, which is available to 14 high schools and involves 15 sections, such as manufacturing, auto, and electronics.

Lastly, Ms. Deklotz explained that less regulation, more autonomy, research and development support, and incentives for business partnerships are needed for success in programs such as the pilot program at the Kettle Moraine School District.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Deklotz indicated that less regulation includes reconsidering seat time and using alternative education based on competency and performance. She also noted that the pilot program follows a business calendar, not a school calendar. She explained that the school is marketing the program by meeting with parents and students and with communications at school registration. In addition, she indicated that, instead of referring to the program as a technical diploma, she refers to it as a Kettle Moraine high school diploma with certifications.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Borowski explained that the scholarships provided to students in the program are up to \$2,000, which is paid by the employer. She also explained that transportation is provided by the student or parent and that selection follows a four-step process, involving an application, interview, and drug screening. She noted that the students are covered by worker's compensation during the program.

Tania Kilpatrick, Career and Technical Education Coordinator, CESA 6

Ms. Kilpatrick explained the core principles of career and technical education (CTE), including its importance in ensuring global competitiveness and preparing students to succeed in careers and further education. She described the career pathway initiative, which involves career clusters, career pathways, programs of study, and individual learning plans. She explained that the foundational knowledge and skills in the career pathway initiative are embedded into all courses in high school. She also noted that career interests do not tend to change between fourth and eighth grade.

Ms. Kilpatrick stated that schools must redesign CTE courses and equip students with 21st Century skills. She emphasized the importance of workplace experience, as well as entrepreneurship and intreprenurship. In addition, she described the following CTE programs available in CESA 6: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Math-in-CTE; Fox Cities Fostering Our Communities' Understanding of STEM (F.O.C.U.S.); Engineering is Elementary; and Project Lead the

Way. She also explained the four design keys for the next generation of CTE: (1) a new student learning experience; (2) new structures; (3) a sustainable business model; and (4) a new model of assessment, data, and personalized planning.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Kilpatrick stated that in order to provide opportunities for students, scheduling flexibility and incentives for mentors are important. She also noted that consistency in career pathways could come from a state advisory board. Lastly, she explained that the funding for events for students comes from grants and business partners.

Bill Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, New London School District

Mr. Fitzpatrick explained the career cluster framework at the New London School District. He explained that the biggest change with the new framework was the change in culture, including the changes in the math, science, and social studies departments. He described the career cluster framework as a career-focused strategy that supports lifelong preparation for the workforce, economic development, and seamless transitions between education and training. He explained that the framework involves 16 clusters of occupations and 81 pathways within the clusters.

Mr. Fitzpatrick described the Gateway Academy, in which seventh and eighth grade students are involved in problem-solving, creative thinking, and hands-on activities. He also described the career academy that is available to freshman that allows the student to connect with an advisor and create a career portfolio. He explained that students are committed to an academy for one year and can change academies after the year. He described the career academies as personalized learning and noted that career development is a lifelong process. He also indicated that students should have a certification in addition to the high school diploma.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Fitzpatrick explained that the career cluster framework allows a student to go where he or she wants to and creates on and off ramps to allow students to change paths. He also noted that courses are integrated; for example, an American literature and U.S. history course may be taught together. He indicated that professional development of staff is important in the transition to the new framework.

Committee Discussion of Programs and Options Available to High School Pupils

Chair Olsen stated that, based on the earlier committee discussion, it appeared that the committee believed a high school diploma should demonstrate a level of competency in content and interpersonal skills. He asked how competency should be assessed and what impediments school districts encounter in implementing new programs. He suggested that additional topics of committee conversation may include technology in schools, students with disabilities, remedial education, and Tim Sullivan's report to Governor Walker.

Ms. Kelley suggested that the committee focus on barriers, impediments, and incentives and recommended that the committee hear from employers about their experiences with apprenticeships and other programs.

Ms. Neudecker suggested that the common core standards might be a pathway to rethink how credits are granted. She and Mr. Tyler suggested that the committee discuss teacher credentialing.

Senator Grothman requested that the committee hear from employers about the youth apprenticeship program and its requirements on employers.

Mr. Muir suggested that the committee explore issues related to home schooling. He stated that he has seen an increase in home schooling in his area.

Mr. Hughes asked whether a list of the rules and regulations that apply to school districts exists.

Other Business

Chair Olsen announced that the next meeting of the committee is scheduled for *Thursday, September 13, 2012, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 411 South.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

JKR:ty