

WCRP  
Minutes of the Meeting  
March 13, 2009

*Attendees:*

|                   |                |              |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Lourdes Iglesias  | Dennis Wittman | Wendy Nilsen |
| Stefan Perkowski  | Ellen Kennedy  | Paula Mazur  |
| Christine Schnars |                |              |

*SCAA Staff:* Diane Mastin

*Guests:* Robert M. Bennett                      Karen Carroll                      Mary Aufluger

*Handouts:*

Agenda

2009 Meeting Dates and topics

2009 CRP Grant

2009-10 Executive Budget

2009 Child Welfare Legislation chart

CRP Budget Letter to Senate and Assembly leaders

Vera Institute Memorandum: Preliminary Assessment of New York State's Approach to Educational Neglect and Options for Moving Forward

Center for New York City Affairs, The New School: Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families, October 2008 report.

Minutes of the November 14, 2008 meeting

Mr. Bennett, former Chancellor and member of the Board of Regents from the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, gave an overview of the opportunities and challenges at this time for the State Education Department. He talked about the need to help parents understand what to expect of school and what it means for children to be ready for kindergarten. Legislators must also understand how important Pre-K is to success in school. In fact, pre-k may be too late to begin to overcome socio-economic class differences. He explained that the Regents will look at measures for education standards and will hold school districts accountable. He lamented that there are no standards for school boards to follow. Issues of importance include performance, suspensions, and standards of achievement. Schools need to know how students are doing by age, race, gender, economic status, etc.

He referred to the State Board of Regents Parent Engagement Policy and asked for feedback on that policy. The Regents asked EPIC and the NYS PTA to engage other agencies to give their recommendations as to how school districts should be measured on parent engagement. He stated the model they are looking at is the Westminster Community Charter School. Schools need to communicate regularly and consistently with parents about their child's education and parents must link with schools. His new role with the Board of Regents will be to work with systems of care to identify funding to make it happen. Schools will never close the achievement gap unless school personnel understand how to work with community-based agencies. Educators are not intervention specialists or counselors. Schools need to link to those professionals in their community with these skills. A new Commissioner for the State Board of

Education will be hired this year and candidates for the position will be asked about cross-systems issues in the interview process. The goal for the education system is one of achievement. What the State Education Department can bring to the table is a willingness to work with others.

He is encouraged that education received additional dollars in the budget and with President Obama's early education emphases. In response to a question about model practices for reporting of child maltreatment and educational neglect in particular, he will take the panel's concerns back to the Department of Education. He suggested that any major change to child welfare laws on educational neglect would have to be done through the Governor's office by convening several agency representatives to address what is not working in the system.

He referenced Schools of Education and the need for leadership courses in college. One program just began at St. John Fischer with foundation support. The Gates Foundation is funding a study of State Education Department, both what and how it is doing. He stated that too many people in the field have too little authority. State Ed does grant teacher certification and can make reforms in the system through changes in the requirements to become a teacher. He referenced the absence of customer service in education and the need to incorporate these practices into what schools do. He also stated his lack of understanding in awarding tenure to those who are in management positions in school districts.

One standards model suggested by the panel can be found in Illinois, a model which includes social/emotional measures in their learning standards. The inclusion of these items has forced collaborations and Illinois is now seeing performance improvements. Another panel member suggested that State Ed could do more through mandates such as requiring a parent engagement policy, something that does not require funding. Panel members expressed their frustration that districts are not held more accountable for low graduation rates. They are given entirely too much time to turn things around and the process of approving charter schools is too slow. He responded by saying that currently school districts are allowed to extend the school day and year but have chosen not to do so. Such a change would lead to improved performance. Suggestions were made about engaging parents at places of worship where they are more comfortable. Also, schools can learn much from immigrant populations about surviving and growing up in this country. Mr. Bennett stated his strong support for community schools which are open to 9 at night and incorporate health care centers. He also believes that career education must be integrated into the curriculum. Students must see the relevance of their education.

Karen Carroll, Deputy Statewide Project Manager, and Mary Aufluger, Project Liaison, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of the Court Improvement Project (CIP), gave an overview of their work. The project began as a pilot in Erie County and Manhattan and is now a statewide process to bring understanding of child development and children's services to court personnel to improve outcomes for children. Judges are now using data to enhance judicial decision-making and collaborating with interdependent systems. Babies Can't Wait and Teens Won't Wait are two of the local initiatives out of this project. CIP also offers intensive training for judges through a child abuse and neglect institute and provides further information through Sharing Success conferences and best practice bulletins. They are now working with Chapin Hall to establish a Child Welfare Data Metrics and Standards of Practice that is targeted for release in the spring of

2010. This will allow judges to use an executive dashboard to access case information. This work is designed to change the culture, to give judges the tools they need to address the children that come before them, and to make better decisions. Panel members are asked to come to CIP staff if they see gaps which need to be addressed. They were encouraged to go to the CIP website to see the video Hear Me, Hear Me, Hear Me (link: [http://www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/justiceforchildren/digitalstories\\_REMAKE/index.shtml](http://www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/justiceforchildren/digitalstories_REMAKE/index.shtml))

SCAA staff provided the following updates. The feedback received on the panels' 2008 Report and Recommendations has been positive. Given the fiscal crisis and economic downturn the report's focus on cost-saving ideas to maintain support for important preventive programs was timely. The recommendation addressing anonymous reports is very progressive. Currently all states accept anonymous reports. An analysis of data is needed to further inform this recommendation.

Progress on the budget negotiations was discussed. The Federal Stimulus package will help New York State and is likely to allow some restoration of funds to important services. Panel members reviewed a list of child welfare bills under consideration this legislative session and discussed advocacy efforts that are needed at this time.