

reflective of the recommendations contained in the Council's 2003 study **Public Postsecondary Centers and Institutes**.

State Board of Education Report/Board of Governors' Report

Dr. Nancy McKee reported that the primary item on the State Board of Education agenda will be approval of the legislative budget request. The Board of Governors' legislative budget request was adopted last month. Items on the legislative agenda for the BOG will be the governance issue, the major gifts program, and changing some of the requirements for major gifts and classroom utilization. The System will ask the universities to identify how they can contribute to goals of the strategic plan. Mr. Taylor stated that CEPRI responded to the legislature, created the study, submitted it, and would like to know what happened. Dr. Proctor said, "We would encourage the BOG during this legislative session to seek the enabling legislation mentioned in the contract study so we can move forward." A motion was made and seconded by the Council.

Master Plan – Major Initiatives

Early Learning - Dr. Rabby reviewed the draft report and recommendations on the Early Education (PreK-3) Master Plan Initiative and presented a PowerPoint presentation summarizing those findings.

The report's first section focused on pre-kindergarten and included the council's draft recommendations for creating a constitutionally mandated program by 2005-06. The second section focused on grades K-3 and identified issues and concerns the Council will discuss over the coming months. Both sections of the report will eventually be one component of the Master Plan. Dr. Rabby reviewed highlights of the extensive literature on early learning as well as the Council's previous discussions on aspects of Florida's past and present readiness programs. She stressed that research reveals that disadvantaged children start kindergarten significantly behind wealthier classmates and rarely catch up, yet low income children are less likely to be enrolled in pre-kindergarten than their more affluent peers. While program availability is crucial, experts agree that program quality significantly affects children's readiness for school.

Quality pre-kindergartens are not the norm throughout the nation. According to experts, quality programs must contain strong health and safety standards; low student/teacher ratios; small classes, qualified well-compensated teachers; proven curricula and learning processes; significant involvement by parents; and meaningful assessment and accountability measures. Dr. Rabby reviewed Florida's early learning system (ages 0-5) which is governed by the Partnership for School Readiness and housed in the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). Last year approximately 62,000 at-risk four-year-olds (29% of all 4 year olds) received pre-school readiness services. The total budget for all readiness programs was \$698 million. Priority is given to children whose parents are enrolled in welfare-to-work programs.

In 2002, Florida citizens voted to provide voluntary, universal pre-kindergarten (VUPK) to the state's 4 year olds. Dr. Rabby reviewed several documents related to the implementation of the program including the highlights of the VUPK Advisory Council and State Board of Education reports, Pre-K legislation that was vetoed by Governor Bush, and other data and information previously discussed by the Council. She then reviewed the updated CEPRI recommendations for implementing the program. The recommendations were divided into six broad areas: Program

Access; Teacher Standards/Provider Eligibility; Program Standards; State Governance; Local Governance; and Funding. Key recommendations include: creating a diverse provider system for the VUPK program, supporting and encouraging parental involvement through a variety of initiatives, providing for and retaining high quality teachers; maintaining small class size with adequate staffing; funding a year-round program at a minimum of four hours per day; establishing minimum standards for ensuring accountability; ensuring that all Pre-K programs use DOE approved high quality, literacy-focused curricula, transferring all readiness programs including VUPK to the Department of Education; and providing adequate funding commensurate with K-3 FTE allocations.

Dr. Rabby summarized the findings and issues related to Early Childhood Education K-3 in Florida. She noted that Florida's reform efforts (the A Plus Plan) had resulted in some notable successes, but that the continued achievement gap between white and minority students remained an area of critical concern. Dr. Rabby discussed several issues related to early education including standards and assessment, class size, school size, literacy, and pupil progression. She noted that improving the reading and comprehension skills of Florida students, particularly those in the early grades, is at the center of much of the state's recent educational reforms. Florida was one of the first states to receive a Reading First grant from the U.S. Department of Education as part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Despite progress in some areas, twenty-percent of third graders (45,000 students) failed the FCAT (scored at level 1) in 2004. Those students will be automatically retained in third grade unless they meet one of the state's six "Good Cause Exemptions." Although Dr. Rabby noted that research is divided over whether retaining students in the early grades is beneficial or detrimental to long-term student success, Florida has instituted a variety of initiatives and intervention services to help retained third graders move on to fourth grade as quickly as possible. Fifty-nine percent of the original third graders retained after 2002-03 passed the FCAT in 2004 and will move on to fourth grade. Council members noted that Florida's mandatory retention policy for third graders offers more than just a repeat of the same grade. Pupil Progression Strategies mandate that schools provide help to failing students to remedy their deficiencies and prepare to move on to more challenging work. Failing schools are also provided with resources through the SBOE's Assistance Plus Plan. Dr. Rabby noted that Florida schools mirror the social and economic realities that continue to challenge efforts to improve educational opportunities for all children. After a lengthy discussion of these issues, the chairman directed Dr. Rabby to prepare a final version of the Pre-K recommendations to be considered by the Legislature in the up-coming session. Council members will continue to discuss the larger Master Plan Initiative for Early Education.

Leadership – Dr. Jon Rogers provided an update of research activities regarding the school leadership project. Demographic data are being compiled by Dr. Simmie Raiford in order to develop a profile of our state's school leader workforce. Enrollment data on Florida's education leadership graduate and certificate programs has also been requested from the universities. Staff is also conducting a review of national and Florida research on best practices of training and professional development programs for school leaders. Dr. Rogers reported on plans to bring together panels of current principals and superintendents at future Council meetings in order to seek direct input on issues of school governance, operation and accountability. Mr. Taylor reiterated his interest in identifying optimum conditions and structures that will allow school leaders to be most effective in their jobs.

Panel Discussion Participating Principals

Dr. Carol Chanter
Pine Crest Elementary

Mr. Frank Casillo
Lyman High School

Mr. Patrick Galatowitsch
Rolling Hills Elementary

Dr. Shaune Storch
Lake Howell High School

Dr. Van Mitchell
Colonial High

Dr. Janice Cover
Palm Beach County

Special Guest: Dr. Bill Vogel, Superintendent, Seminole County School District.

Minutes of Panel Discussion

At the August 11th CEPRI Council Meeting six high-performing elementary and secondary principals from Seminole, Orange, and Palm Beach Counties were members of a roundtable discussion on issues facing school principals in Florida. Among the challenges echoed by the panelists were the “24/7” time demands, particularly for high school principals who are expected to attend in a variety of extra-curricular evening activities, and the pressure to improve their school’s accountability grade and the continuing pressure to maintain a high grade. The principals also spoke of how dramatically the role of the principal has changed and expanded over the last twenty years, and how that expansion has created the need for effective principals to build leadership capacity throughout the school.

Each of the principals either was or is currently leading schools with challenges in terms of student achievement, but that under their leadership, have significantly improved their performance. When asked about factors that led to the improvement, each cited the importance of hiring and retaining high quality teachers. Teacher turnover is a challenge for each of the principals, with each stating the importance of building a support network at their schools in which to induct and nurture new teachers and enhance their professional practice.

Secondary principals on the panel were asked to share their views on the improvement gap between elementary and high schools. While the six-year trend in school grades has shown a steady improvement in the grades earned by elementary schools, high schools as a group have failed to show a similar pattern of achievement, with the majority of high schools seemingly “stuck” at a “C” grade. The high school principals expressed concerns about the way in which grades are calculated for high schools, with the main areas being:

- The lack of time available to high schools to remediate low achieving and non-English speaking students in reading and math. Elementary and middle schools each have at least two years to work with their students prior to the high-stakes test, where as high schools only have a year and a half with the FCAT being administered in the spring of students’ sophomore year.
- The unreasonably high bar that has been set for students to show gains in reading in order to earn the schools an “A” or “B” grade. Principals of schools with high ESOL or LEP populations stated that these students are often illiterate in their native languages as well as English; and while they also may struggle in math, the disparity between these students and the native English speakers is significantly less in math than reading. While the students may

make great improvements in their reading ability, their overall scores are still too low for the school's grade to improve.

- The failure of the accountability system to weight learning gains in a way that allows schools that have made significant improvements in their challenged student populations to be recognized for this achievement. This third concern reflects the same issue of the first two concerns—time and language barriers—but is one that could reasonably be remedied by a re-engineering of the current grade calculation system.

A controversy arose over the issue of the state's new policy on retention in the third grade. Principal Galatowitsch is a proponent of the policy as a means of preventing students who lack basic skills from being socially promoted and ultimately failing out of school. Several of the high school principals were in strong opposition to the practice of retention, having seen the negative impact on both the probability of affected students ever graduating and on their self-esteem once they reach the higher grades. Dr. Cover spoke of concerns at her middle school that parents had for having their 12 year-old daughters at school with 16 and 17 year-old males as a result of retention policies. The high school principals echoed this sentiment, sharing stories of over-aged students with insufficient skills to graduate and who often exhibited their frustrations in highly disruptive behavior. While there was not a consensus reached on this issue, principals did agree that it was a hot topic.

The panelists also spoke about the challenges districts face in recruiting high quality candidates into the principalship. The principals agreed that in their districts, the salary gap that exists between the veteran teacher pay and beginning assistant principal or principal pay serves as a disincentive for teachers to enter administration. Principal Galatowitsch stated that he has several teachers in his school whose annual salary is more than his. The principals felt that reducing this pay disparity would help improve the attractiveness of the principalship to high performing teachers.

When asked about their own professional preparation, each thought that their university and district preparation programs had done an admirable job, but that training did not supplant the actual learning experience of being a first-year principal. In other words, the on-the-job training was equal to or greater than their preparation training in terms of equipping them with the skills necessary to be high performing principals.

In terms of on-going professional development on the job, the most important activity cited by principals in improving their performance was having a coach/mentor. Each principal expressed the positive impact of having a mentor as a means of enhancing their professional practice. When asked whether the mentoring relationship had been facilitated by a formal system in their districts or through informal networks, they all stated that the mentoring relationship was an informal one that they had sought out and maintained on their own. As a part of building leadership capacity in their schools, they in turn attempt to mentor teachers who exhibit leadership qualities that make them attractive prospects for the principalship.

A final question centered on the challenge of leading a traditionally low-performing school. A majority of the panelists were principals of academically challenged schools and had turned the schools' performance around to make them high achieving. Each principal had been assigned to their schools because of the district's confidence in their ability to make a difference at the school. Several of these principals had worked in similar school settings when they were assistant principals

and felt this familiarity with the conditions that typify low-performing schools was invaluable to their being effective principals in such schools. Dr. Janice Cover from Palm Beach County indicated that her district had a differentiated administrative pay scale for principals at challenged schools and had a system of “complexity raises” that principals could attain if they met pre-established standards for school conditions and performance.

Career Education/Workforce Needs - Ms. Tara Goodman and Mr. Juan Copa presented the revised version of the report on career and professional education for the K-20 Master Plan. Public testimony was provided by the following education and industry representatives: Mr. Terry Miller, Ms. Pam Cunningham, Mr. Dave Barnes, Ms. Kathy Schmidt, Ms. Marsan Carr, Ms. Lori Blake, and Ms. Sharon Crow. The members directed Council staff to revise the introduction and make minor changes in wording based on the Council’s input and the public testimony. A conference call was scheduled for August 24, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. for final adoption.

Funding – Mr. Bob Cox presented an analysis of trends in school scores under the A Plus programs. The discussion focused on differences in performance based on socioeconomic grades of schools. The Council asked that an alternative school grading scheme that is based on one grade for high student achievement and one for learning gains be presented at the October 2004 meeting.

Teaching Profession – No report given at this time.

Community College Baccalaureate Review Process

Ms. Stacey Webb, from the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education, said the division takes authority straight from statute and tries to follow that statute as literally as possible. The Division believes the State Board has the authority to approve the baccalaureate programs upon review from CEPRI. The Division is reacting to community colleges that request it from the Division. The Division takes very seriously the beginning of the statute that talks about programs and partnerships. The baccalaureate degrees in community colleges are strictly for critical demand areas that relate to the workforce or access issues in the area and where partnerships have not worked out or are not available. The Division follows the law literally and strictly and sees this as a limited approach to solving what is a much greater access need and also for critical workforce areas.

Ms. Emoryette McDonald, from the Division of Colleges and Universities said the Board of Governors (BOG) is in the process of doing its strategic planning for the public universities. The BOG efforts are very much aligned with the State Board of Education’s strategic planning approach also for the component of bachelor degree production access of the research component. The BOG is looking at access with bachelor degree production with the understanding we all need to be looking at the good for the state of Florida with the resource investments they have for that. On the issue of bachelor degrees, they are looking at numbers and trying to meet a need through access. In Florida there are several ways of receiving bachelor degrees through the independent schools and community colleges: The BOG sees the need to address degrees within the state universities based on is there a real need for them. Division of Community Colleges staff has asked Division of Colleges and Universities to assist in the review of community college degree offerings.

Study Assignments

Medical Education Needs Analysis - Medical Education Needs Analysis Committee met to gather information about alternatives to a new medical school versus expanding the openings at the existing medical schools. Expanding the residency training openings for Florida is in a very preliminary state. The committee will continue to gather information before they have a recommendation.

Public Broadcasting – No report given at this time.

Florida Virtual School

Ms. Julie Young, President and CEO of the Florida Virtual School, provided information on the school. The school was funded in 1996 through a DOE grant. It exists to provide students with additional and unique learning opportunities to maximize their educational success. Most students are not full-time virtual school students. The school serves students who need additional opportunities and do not have certain courses available to them in their traditional schools. Students are self selected – 50,000 Floridians registered in one week. Courses are free because it is public education. All courses were developed by Florida certified teachers. School offers all courses required to graduate from high school. Curriculum has been built upon the Sunshine State Standards. The quality of the content is exceptional. There is a high level of interactivity between students, teachers and parents. Students work at their own pace. The school is a national leader in online K-12 education.

Other Items of Interest

There were no items of interest at this time.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, September 7 & 8, 2004, at Pensacola Junior College.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m., Wednesday, August 11, 2004.



William B. Proctor
Executive Director