

Connecticut Association for Reading Research

Legislative Report

February, 2022

Ann Marie Mulready, Government Chair

For the past two “pandemic years” government entities serving education have focused—rightly so—on the health, safety, and the remediation of learning loss by students. But there have also been government actions in Connecticut that will impact teaching and learning conditions for Language Arts in the coming years.

General Assembly. In June, the Legislature passed the *Act Concerning the Right to Read and Addressing Opportunity Gaps*. The Bill extends the requirements for teaching and testing in the K-3 curriculum through Grade 5. Also included in the Act is the establishment of the Center for Literacy.

Center for Literacy(CFL). The CFL has been operationalized at the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). The Center is overseen by a Board that was established in the statute. Its members are appointed by the Governor, specified members of the Legislature, and the Commissioner of Education. The Bill also charges the Connecticut State Board of Education to develop testing requirements and model curricula for the additional grade levels. (It is not well known that *districts may apply for waivers from using prescribed resources*).

Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE). The focus of action by the CSBE has been tracking attendance and the learning models employed (in person, hybrid, remote) by all districts across the state. In addition, the Board receives in depth reports on the distribution and uses of state and national pandemic grants.

Since reopening meetings to the general public, the Public Participation segment of the monthly meetings has been dominated by testimony objecting to mask mandates in schools.

The CSBE, as required in statute, is also beginning the process for developing its next *Five-Year Plan*, to be completed over the course of the next year.

And, the Governor has appointed Karen DuBois-Walton as the next chair of the CSBE, replacing Allan Taylor who continues to serve as a member.

CARR Board. In response to the passage of the *Act Concerning the Right to Read*, the CARR Board made arrangements to provide a Professional Development session with the CSDE, for which many of you registered. Unfortunately, the initial presentation was abruptly cancelled by the State Department with a vague explanation regarding a conflict of interest. After multiple requests, there was no Department response to requests for an explanation. As Legislative Chair, I addressed the CSBE at the January meeting regarding this lack a response and requesting that the Department inform us as to why our request was deemed a conflict of interest for the Department. To support our standing, I included a short history of CARR which dates back to the 1950's with a charter signed in the 1970's by literary giants such as Walter McGinitie and Dorothy Strickland. Fortunately, Dr. Rachael Gabriel from UConn stepped up to present an analysis of the Bill as written and how to read such legislation with a critical eye.

In closing, the Legislature reconvened on February 1st, and I will review all Bills submitted to the Education Committee and examine each for impact on the Language Arts and Teacher Preparation and Certification.

If you have any questions about this report, feel free to email me at amm_msn@outlook.com