**Report on December 3, 2013 SBoE Meeting**

This meeting was one of the most interesting and perhaps most significant that I have attended yet. It began with a sense of mystery. We had a number of agenda changes leading up to the meeting. The AWD details were not added until very late in the week leading up to the meeting. The days of the meeting changed from Dec 2 and 3 to just the 3rd and then suddenly back to an evening meeting on the 2nd with the superintendents who are proposing new ideas on failing districts and transfer policies. Unfortunately I did not get that final change until it was too late and so I missed that presentation. I did get to hang around the Capitol while the first moves in the special session to lure Boeing's 777x work to the state were executed. There was a lot of maneuvering going on. As far as we can tell, right now there will be no huge impacts on education funding one way or another. But that could all change by the end of the day tomorrow. All in all it was pretty dull, But there were plenty of action on Tuesday morning to keep me busy. Oh, if you are impatient, the good stuff happens starting on page 4.

Tuesday, December 3rd
The meeting was called to order and the usual initial series of pro forma motions were dispensed with. All board members were present this month. BTW, the board actually should have 8 members but the governor has not made new appointments. Whether that is because he is just behind or because he is waiting because the people he wants to appoint won’t make it through the senate confirmation process, I don’t know.

Board member Still reports that the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has a common core session on Jan 23. He is checking to see if he can go. Herschend notes that conflicts with Harlem Globe Trotters in Springfield. There is an extended discussion about the Washington Gemerals and their abysmal record against the Globetrotters. It is noted this has nothing to do with Board business. Everyone laughs.

Herschend notes art in the room is from Blue Springs and compliments the teaching and learning going on. It is nice that this is a part of every meeting, keeping art education continuously in the Board's minds

Lenz, Jones, and Demien report on meetings in Riverview Gardens and Normandy about loss of accreditation and steps being taken to solve the problem. They feel the meetings were well attended and valuable give and take occurred. Demien notes that the main problem with meeting in Normandy was lack of parking. Jones concurs. Everyone laughs.

Herschend talks about the meeting last night that discussed the superintendents plan to deal with failing districts. He praises the thoughtfulness of the proposal and notes DESE will present one as well. Then he waxes philosophical about the nature of failure and what that does to us. Demien notes that she attended a Francis Howell meeting with the superintendent and some state reps about the plan. She then notes with concern that the perception is there is no plan. No one laughs. Nicastro steps in to talk about the process of collecting information before a final plan can be created. Herschend talks about how this is all about student academic improvement and the need to make sure students in failing districts are served well.
Consent agenda is approved quickly on a voice vote

Sheltered workshop presentation—the presenter says he'll give a brief overview of the history of SW. If that was his goal he failed miserably. But we did learn that SWs started through the efforts of concerned parents in the 1950s and resulted in the 1965 passage of SB 52 which established the sheltered workshops. The presenter discussed the purposes of program, who was eligible in terms of both employees and corporations, and the role of the department. He talked about the model of the structure of the workshops which basically is that each workshop is a nonprofit corporation built on an industrial model. He talked about how people are hired. He discussed cooperation with the school districts. He pointed out that SWs are facility based but more flexibility is appearing with crews going out into the community. State provides 24 million dollars each year and each worker makes about $3.17 an hour. He further pointed out that there 90 workshops currently operating in the state. About 60% of their funding comes from the work they do, with about 20% coming from the state. He finally runs out of things to say. Actually it was interesting, but just took too long. Shields asks about the other models out there since it seems that other states are moving away from the industrial model. Rehabilitation seems to be where other states are going and employment is the model we continue to use. The Rehab model seems to be ending up with a lot of formerly employed workers now staying home unable to work. They use Medicaid money because they see it as a rehab program. There is strong feeling that the industrial employment model better serves our interests. Disability advocacy groups seem to be opposed to that, but not as much here in Mo. Herschend asks what percentage the 7,000 people employed represent of eligible potential employees. The numbers seem to indicate there are at least twice as many people who could be employed. The main problem is getting contracts from corporations and businesses to keep the SW employees busy.

Larry Leek then talks about the Springfield workshop that he manages and the challenges they face. He's very proud of his workers. To try to keep his workers employed after cuts in contracts were made they began Starting their own business called Sunny Bunny Easter Eggs because other companies are outsourcing work away from SWs. Herschend asked about basketballs he saw being worked on there in the past. Leek says that was one of the contracts cut. Jones talks about shaming corporations into bringing work back. Nicastro notes the need to go see a workshop in action. I would echo her sentiment. They are amazing places and arts businesses might be able to pick up some of the slack, too. I specifically remember the workers in the workshop I visited packing greeting cards.

Susan Lickard manages the Bethany shop. Because they are in a small town they have a different kind of impact. They are actually a large employer for their community. It has become more than just a shop, but a social service for workers and their families. Many non employment issues are now being served for the employees and their families. Lack of industry in the area is a problem and they just lost the Energizer battery contract when the plant in Maryville closed. I guess it didn’t keep going and going and . . . Sorry. They find themselves doing a lot more work out in the community. Janitorial at rest stops, schools, churches and a thrift store are just a few examples. Oddly enough document destruction is a growing business. They turn IRS documents into toilet paper. Everyone laughs nervously. Lickard is especially passionate about her employees.
She talks about attacks on the workshop idea by advocacy groups and the end result being the loss of purpose and employment among the people they serve and their families.

Board praises the work being done. Universal in nature is the praise. Susan says the biggest need they face right now is the lack of business contracts to give them work. Still asks about qualification guidelines for workers. The question is answered to his satisfaction.

Rep Cookson the chair of the House Committee on Education. reports on the work of the committee and the hearings around the state that have been conducted by the committee this fall. He says they heard a variety of concerns. He uses the term Summize? My spell check doesn't like that word. He summarized the testimony and came up with a recommendations framework that includes failing schools, and especially, early childhood. Shields asks about the recommendation he lists about communications between DESE and the average Missouri parent, especially about the common core roll out. No one laughs and they not-laugh in a tense and nervous fashion. they are tentative around Cookson because he can have a huge impact on funding recommendations. Shields praises Cookson's qualifications. Uh, maybe laid on a little thick. I do get a chance to meet him briefly and have Margie VanDeven praise my work and the importance of the arts in schools. Why do I get the feeling she is steering me away from any kind of in depth conversation with Cookson. Ok, so I've read his bio and even so I'm not sure I'd be so effusive in praise as Shields was. Wait and see is more my attitude.

Back to the planned agenda.

Agenda E--This segment is about vocational rehab and Centers for Independent Living. Tonya Fambro is the director. Background--the program was authorized by US Fed legislation, Mo actually received 4 of the first 10 fed grants. According to Fambro we remain one of the national leaders. CFIL are nonresidential, nonprofit, consumer driven. They are run by boards comprised of at least 51% members with disabilities. Missouri branches are regularly recognized nationally for their excellence. There are lots of online resources. They've done workshops with special education teachers around the state. MOSILC, the governing board, is governor appointed. H'mm, I wonder if it is fully staffed? A CFIL local director talks about her program, PARAQUAD, and she talks about the services they offer. It was one of the first centers in the nation.

Gary Maddox from Springfield is next to report. Here's a real character. This is definitely a sales pitch about CFIL’s. He talks about Day At The Range an outdoor recreational program for his clients. Collaboration is important as they offer a Firearms program, Archery program, an all disability Boy Scout troop. They get a lot of help from the Mo Dept of Conservation. They offer fishing, crafts, seasonal hunts, and use adaptive technology. It opens the door for many to enjoy an outdoor activity, and takes lots of work to put this on. He then goes on to describe transitions program called Your Life and youth prom. He points out that they work on a very cost effective basis. He uses the word micro schism? My spell check really doesn't like that word, either. Still asks about number served and whether these are group homes. Maddox reminds that CFILs are nonresidential. Herschend asks how do you measure success. Each center does consumer surveys, they say.
Agenda item F--It's the big one for us today! The AWD presentation by Dr Cooper. He begins by referring to the original rule establishing levels of accreditation and then thanks those who worked on it. You're welcome. He presents the comments results and then the actual proposal. H'mm, he spends very little time spent on those comment totals. And then what was going pretty smoothly suddenly falls apart. Shields asks what exactly the comments mean. Shields notes that there were far more positive comments for the arts. Questions that it was not included. Cooper tries to explain that no reliable way to quantify arts instruction exists. He notes that the arts and PE will now be on the Items Not Waived Checklist and that all districts will have to certify they have adequate instruction in these areas, as required in the Resource Standards, as part of their annual report to DESE. Nicastro notes that actually puts the arts in a stronger position. Shields notes that a large number of arts advocates seem to feel differently. Suddenly he says he'd like to hear from one of those advocates. Lots of people are suddenly looking at me.

He asks me to come forward to speak on behalf of the requirement. Yay, Charlie! But I would have appreciated some warning. Gulp! I say something remotely intelligible after introducing myself and thank them for the opportunity to address the board. (Actually it is a quick summary of our position that having the arts on the AWD not only encourages districts to keep them if they have them, but also to aspire to AWD status by strengthening their programs. I also acknowledge our appreciation of being included on the checklist. Charlie Shields has a big grin on his face. I grin back. Obviously, someone told him I like improvisation. I am released to go back to my seat and wonder if I made sense at all. I am told later that I did.

Shields continues to press his advantage. He asks if the new requirement satisfies the concern that the rule not impact by the amount of resources available to districts. He asks about how many districts made AWD before. There is a lot of discussion about the old system being very different than this new one. Demien talks about the name distinction as a real catch point. This is a very perceptive insight. She is right. That gets lots of agreement. There is a lot of discussion about what the name change would mean in the rule making process. The Board Attorney seems to think that means starting over an entire two year process. Nicastro says they'll work something out. There is more discussion about the goal of AWD. Herschend goes into a Cardinals coming in first and being honored for it mode. Being a Cards fan I appreciate that, but it is the wrong analogy. No one loses here, they just don't achieve. The better analogy would be music contest ratings. Still he expresses the Boards feeling that AWD, or whatever it is going to be called, should be a high bar to clear. Ah, there's another good analogy. Then suddenly, 'Whoa!', Victor Lenz talks about awards for individual programs. Arts, gifted etc. No one laughs and all seem intrigued. The discussion begins to wind down and then Still says he has a couple of further concerns. Oh, brother, it just gets deeper.

He asks about each demographic group having to achieve proficient and above. He says it is possible for only a few within subgroups to achieve proficient and that a district could still get AWD. Margie VanDeven comes up and tries to clarify how the subgroups are calculated. Margie says there must be at least 30 in the group for it to count in the score? Still continues to ask about subgroups not achieving and the impact on the scores. He does not want to award AWD if a school district can win the award while still having an underperforming subgroup.
There is more discussion of the name issue. Herschend says we won’t take action today. Nicastro says the districts need to know the criteria and then they can work on name change. She wants to encourage other groups in the state not to recognize districts with their own awards, and then she’d like to explore other areas for awards as well. She asks them to approve criteria. Shields says he is not comfortable voting today. Still agrees. Jones moves and shields seconds to table. Passed

What a lively discussion that was. No action came about at this meeting but lots of good issues raised. One thing that became clear is that arts advocates can wield a lot of clout when aroused and that action will result. The move to put us on the Items Not Waived Checklist was a direct result of our comment numbers. I think we also approached this issue in a way that won't result in any pushback or resentment as well. However, we will stay vigilant about our place in the conversation.

Bottomline—at the very least Fine Arts (and PE) will be on the Items Not Waived Checklist and that may, in a roundabout way, almost meet our original goal from last year of having districts graded upon meeting the Resource Standards

The rest of the meeting passed quickly and without controversy. Below is a list of the items.

Agenda G. Individuals with disabilities. Various amendments to procedures. Passed without comment

Agenda H. Special education amendments. No discussion and it passes.

Agenda I. Sheltered workshops given permission to expand charter beyond employment, and other items. Passed

Agenda J. Rule to realign the organization of the department

Agenda K. Rescind rule of rebuild schools since it is not funded

Agenda L. Changing rules of certification appeals.

Adjourn for lunch

Licensure issues

Follow up notes—
1. I did not have a chance to talk to DESE personnel about teacher certification issues. The MNEA Vice President, Brent Fullington, and I had an extended conversation about the issue. They are feeling the same frustration and concern as we are. I am going to ask Kyna to set up another one of our meetings with Peter Katnik, Ass’t Commissioner for Educator Quality to see what we can do.
2. I did have a chance to briefly talk with Sharon Helwig about the Fine Arts Content Specialist. She is taking a number of ideas about possible funding mixes to the leadership team tomorrow. I’m not sure I’d call her ‘hopeful’ about the prospects but there is at least active discussion going on. I told her about our discovery that the original position had been partially funded by MAC and that leaders in MAC were considering the possibility of such an arrangement again.

3. I intend to send Thank You cards to Charlie Shields, Vic Lenz and Dennis Cooper. Dr. Cooper actually is trying to bring arts education a little more to the forefront, but had to respond to the influence of administrators on the committee. He took a lot of punishment today and I want him to know we still appreciate his efforts on our behalf as well.

4. All in all, I feel hopeful about future prospects. I can’t guarantee success and I’m hesitant to get too positive yet, but the arts seem to be very much in conversation around DESE and the Board, which is a situation that has not always existed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Martin, Executive Director
MAAE