

Legislative Youth Advisory Council

Established in 2002 • Codified at 3 MRSA, §168-A

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August 9th, 2007

Dear Mr. Carignan,

On behalf of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), we would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with us to discuss the Board's challenge in developing the criteria and process for selecting youth members to serve on the State Board of Education. In acceptance of your invitation to contribute towards this challenge, we are enthusiastic about sending several Council members and one staff member to attend your conference next week and to share the following thoughts and suggestions for the Board's consideration.

Flexibility in the application process. The Legislative Youth Advisory Council strongly encourages the Board to build flexibility into the application process to avoid the inadvertent exclusion of highly qualified candidates who may not meet a set of fixed criteria. While the Council recognizes the selected candidates must ultimately meet high standards, we suggest using the criteria as guidelines rather than strict standards would allow more flexibility in the selection process.

Qualities of the selected candidate. The Council believes that the selected candidates should demonstrate the following qualities:

- Experience in community service;
- Strong leadership skills and independent student voice;
- Understanding of the commitment level and ability to prioritize; and
- Dedication to the responsibilities of the State Board

The Council further suggests that the teacher references, as required by 20-A MRSA §401, sub-§1-C, provide specific examples of how the candidate has demonstrated the above qualities.

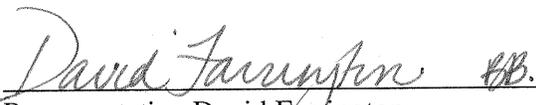
Require personal written statement. The Council strongly encourages the Board to consider requiring applicants to submit, in addition to the three required teacher references, a written personal statement describing his/her willingness, dedication and qualifications to take on the challenges of the appointment. The Council further suggests that the Board provide applicants with specific instructions for writing the personal statement based on the qualities and characteristics it seeks in a candidate.

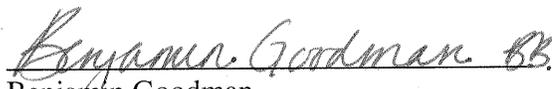
Optional peer and community member recommendations. The Council also encourages the Board to consider providing applicants with the option to submit a recommendation from a peer or member of the community as part of his/her application. The Council recognizes the reality of peers having knowledge about a candidate's character and qualifications that adults may lack. In the same vein the Council recognizes that teachers may not be the only adults with valuable and applicable information to share about a candidate's experience and qualifications. We encourage the Board to allow for such information to be considered when applicable.

Minimum GPA requirement. The Council did not reach consensus on the issue of requiring a minimum GPA. Some Council members believe that GPA is a good indicator of a student's work ethic and dedication to high quality work and should be considered. Other members believe that GPA does not fully reflect a student's level of effort or dedication to hard work and requiring a minimum GPA may exclude candidates with outstanding qualities in other relevant areas of expertise. Council members caution against comparing GPA across students as they are typically enrolled in courses with varying levels of difficulty. Members who do not support the use of a minimum GPA requirement felt that the statutory requirement of being "enrolled in good standing in a public high school in the State" (20-A MRSA §401, sub-§1-C) is sufficient to satisfy academic qualifications of the selected candidate.

The Legislative Youth Advisory Council is grateful for this opportunity to contribute towards what we view as an integral part of Maine's public policy process. We look forward to sharing these thoughts and suggestions at the conference.

Sincerely,


Representative David Farrington
Legislative Co-Chair


Benjamin Goodman
Youth Co-Chair

cc: Members, Legislative Youth Advisory Council
Rhonda Casey, Secretary of the State Board of Education