

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**Minutes**  
**of the**  
**August 7, 2013, State Board of Education Retreat**  
*(approved September 4, 2013)*

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") met on Wednesday, August 7, 2013, at Gateway Community College, Room 302N, New Haven, Connecticut.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Taylor called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

Present: Allan Taylor, Chairperson  
Jake Colavolpe, student member  
Andrea Comer  
Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Vice Chairperson  
Charles Jaskiewicz  
Terry Jones\*  
Patricia Keavney-Maruca  
Estela Lopez  
Clayton Potter, student member  
Robert Trefry, ex-officio  
Joseph Vrabely  
Stephen Wright

Absent: None

**II. Five-Year Comprehensive Plan for Education**

Chairperson Taylor welcomed members to the retreat and summarized the objectives for the Board's retreat.

Commissioner Pryor and Chief of Staff Adam Goldfarb gave a PowerPoint presentation (copy in official file of this meeting), which provided the Board with background and contextual information regarding the five-year plan process (including statutory charge; NAEP data; exemplar plans from other states; the status of the current Comprehensive Plan for Education; and work to date) and proposed a framework for the 2013-18 plan. They noted that the Plan will include a mission and goal statement, which have been discussed previously by the Board's Policy Development Committee. It will include three top-level priorities: 1) to improve overall student achievement; 2) to prepare college- and career-ready high school graduates; and 3) to produce well-rounded students prepared for fulfilling, civically engaged lives, to be assessed by specific metrics. Core strategies to support the three priority areas will be organized around the Department's divisional structure: Academic; Talent; Student Supports and Organizational

**Connecticut State Board of Education Retreat**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**August 7, 2013**  
**Page 2**

Effectiveness; Performance; and Turnaround. Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer; Kathy Demsey, Interim Chief Financial Officer; Kelly Donnelly, Director of Communications and Strategic Partnerships; and Emily Byrne, Director of Strategic Initiatives, each also presented content to the Board.

Discussion ensued. Board members raised several questions and offered feedback for the continued development of the plan, including:

Communication with the general public regarding state goals and key initiatives, including the Common Core, in a clear and understandable fashion is of high importance. Communications should be part of the State Board plan.

When assessing achievement gaps, the absolute level of achievement of Connecticut's minority populations, relative to the achievement levels of these groups in other states, should be considered.

The connections between the Common Core and personalized learning – which may be seen to pull in opposite directions – should be addressed.

The plan should include benchmarks and should enable periodic progress reports through careful presentation of information to the State Board. Public access to data should also be emphasized.

The plan should include initiatives to promote educator diversity and cultural competency as strategies for closing the achievement gap.

How do we bring those students who are not performing well up to grade level, in a systemic way, particularly in light of the Common Core standards and higher expectations?

How do we ensure that students are ready for college, and how do we ensure that they complete college?

The relative strengths of the strategic plans of Delaware, Tennessee, and Rhode Island were discussed.

The presentation's inclusion of student support services and family and community engagement as means for closing the achievement gap is important.

How can we encourage and increase parent involvement beyond the elementary school years?

The jargon level of many strategies' draft descriptions should be reduced.

[The Board recessed the meeting at 12:25 p.m. and reconvened in public session at 2:05 p.m.]

**Connecticut State Board of Education Retreat  
Minutes of Meeting  
August 7, 2013  
Page 3**

Commissioner Pryor and Emily Byrne summarized plans and progress to date with regard to providing professional learning opportunities for educators statewide on the Common Core and Smarter Balanced Assessments. \$8.3 million has been allocated to the Academic Office to support districts in their implementation of the Common Core, Smarter Balanced assessments, and other Academic Office initiatives. With regard to technology readiness, Ms. Byrne summarized results of a technology readiness tool that indicated that the majority of LEAs are well-positioned to administer the Smarter Balanced assessments and that a \$10 million Request for Proposals has been issued to provide technology upgrades for LEAs to ensure readiness.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed Common Core communications campaign and the need to explain clearly to parents, students, teachers and the general public the educational shifts in the Common Core, how it will improve students' preparation for college and career, and what to expect in terms of the new tests. Board members stated that they are eager to be trained as Common Core ambassadors. Engaging various Connecticut organizations to help the communication effort is essential, including educators, chambers of commerce, faith-based groups, school governance councils, companies, and other state agencies.

**III. Next Steps**

Mr. Goldfarb summarized next steps in terms of the Comprehensive Plan development process, including convening the Advisory Committee, work with the Board's Policy Committee, soliciting further staff input, and bringing the draft Plan to the full board for feedback, followed by presenting the proposed Plan for adoption.

Board members reflected on today's retreat and expressed various views regarding the meeting schedule and length of Board meetings; Board members' preference regarding receiving information (electronic vs. paper), a preference for receiving more data to substantiate recommended actions; allowing the Board to be more directive rather than responsive; and ways to enhance communication between the Department and the Board. One member expressed an interest in enhancing communication with the Education Committee of the Connecticut legislature. A request was made to review how other state boards of education organize their meetings (one- vs. two-day meetings, etc.).

**IV. Adjourn**

By unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stefan Pryor, Secretary  
State Board of Education

