

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Minutes
State Board of Education Meeting
September 2, 2020
(Approved October 7, 2020)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's Web site, the members of State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") met on Wednesday, September 2, 2020, in Plaza North Meeting Room C and D of the State Office Building, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut, and via GoToWebinar. A GoToWebinar registration link was provided to allow for public attendance to the virtual meeting. This virtual meeting was livestreamed (<https://youtu.be/aIJ-FH5Flzs>.) to allow for public access.

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Allan Taylor called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m.

Present: Allan B. Taylor, Chairperson
Estela López, Vice Chairperson
Erin D. Benham
Bonnie E. Burr
Erik M. Clemons (via GoToWebinar)
Karen DuBois-Walton
Elwood Exley, Jr. (via GoToWebinar)
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Dr. Jane Gates for Mark Ojakian, Ex Officio (via GoToWebinar)
Martha Paluch Prou
Awilda Reasco (via GoToWebinar)
Malia K. Sieve

Absent: Robert J. Trefry, Ex Officio

Motion to Modify the Agenda

Vice Chairperson López moved a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Benham to open and modify the agenda to add an Action item to the meeting agenda that would approve the appointment of three new board members to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board (V.A., Appointments to Connecticut Technical Education and Career System). There were no objections.

II. Public Participation

Chairperson Taylor stated that no public participation had been received.

V. Report of the Commissioner

Commissioner Cardona thanked everyone for attendance both in-person and virtual at the meeting. The Commissioner shared that the SDE was doing their best to resume activity that mirrors normalcy and some of the activities are starting to look like some of the activities of the past.

Commissioner Cardona provided an updated summary of some of the August activities at the agency. He highlighted the following:

- He was able to visit several districts and meet with teachers. On September 1st, he visited classes in Vernon.
- Weekly educational partnership meetings with CABE, CAPSS, CAS, AFT-CT, and CEA.
- Media Event: New Social and Emotional Learning Course to Support Connecticut School Staff in collaboration with the Dalio Education Foundation, CAPSS, Teachers' Unions and Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.
- Joint Statement from CSDE Commissioner, CAPSS Executive Director and CABE Executive Director on the Importance of Strong Board-Superintendent Relationship to the Safe and Effective Delivery of Education this Fall.
- CSDE's Professional Support Series for Districts to help build capacity and spread information regularly:
 - Optimizing Ventilation for School Reopening – CSDE, DPH, Yale School of Public Health (YSPH)
 - Cleaning and Disinfection Strategies for School Reopening – CSDE, DPH, YSPH
 - Reopening Conversation for School Nutrition – CSDE School Nutrition Programs Unit
 - COVID-19 and Schools — Mitigation Strategies, Community Spread, and Decision-Making - CSDE, DPH, YSPH
 - Preparing School Water Systems for Fall Reopening - CSDE, DPH, YSPH
 - COVID-19 and Schools — Case Management, Testing, and Assisting with Contact Tracing - CSDE, DPH, YSPH
- *Social and Emotional Learning in Times of Uncertainty and Stress: Research-Based Strategies* is a new SEL course developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence under the direction of Dr. Marc Brackett. The course is innovative and a great opportunity for educators in Connecticut to develop SEL learning capacity and prepare PK-12 school staff to handle emotional challenges that come with teaching during a pandemic. The course has the universal collaboration and support from the CSDE, the American Federation of Teachers - Connecticut, the Connecticut Education Association, and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.

Updates for September:

- The CT Reopen Plan that was shared in June now includes 11 additional addendums that provide updates and new information. The infection thresholds and scenarios for closing schools are shared in Addendums 4 and 5.
- Opening/Closing Decisions: Metrics of per 100,000 people is the starting point for conversations. Districts are encouraged to have conversations with local health directors and these systems are now stronger than three or four months ago. There are also nonmetric related facts that have an influence such as staff availability. Districts are working hard to make sure that there are people in the buildings who can promote mitigation strategies to ensure that health and safety is still guiding every decision.
- Update on District Status. Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan reported that CSDE conducted a survey that asked districts their reopening plans. In general 58% of the districts were preparing to go in-person either immediately or within four weeks. 41% were considering a hybrid model. Just a handful envisioned that they would be remote for the foreseeable future.
 - There will be a weekly collection from districts at a school level that will tell us what the learning model for the school is for that week and the extent of student engagement.
 - We will be setting up a monthly student level collection that will give us a sense of attendance whether remote or in-person.
- Five Year Goal-Setting. After the capacity review with Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the CSDE worked with Dr. Richard Lemons from the Connecticut Center for School Change and has asked Dr. Lemons to reach out to board members for one-on-one communication. A five-year plan will be developed that takes into account (i) the collective beliefs and values of the Board, (ii) direction of the Agency, and the needs of the State of Connecticut.
- Update on New Haven. The Commissioner stated that CSDE staff has spent a lot of time over the past month working with New Haven Public Schools to support, problem solve, and remove obstacles that exist. Deputy Commissioner Nesmith reported that there are ongoing conversations regarding reopening with the New Haven Public Schools leadership, Dr. Tracy and her Central Office team. There are expectations for students around areas such as technology and access, family and student support, academics, special education, and bilingual. Deputy Secretary Kosta Diamantis of the Office of Policy and Management has visited a number of New Haven schools. Commissioner Cardona indicated that there is a School Reopening Support Team within CSDE. He shared with the Board that approximately 12 districts have reached out to the CSDE to talk about reopening.
- Update on Danbury. The Commissioner reported that Danbury Public School was an example of how things can work. The local public health department and the Danbury Public School system worked very well together. He shared that he had received a communication from the superintendent about a potential spike in cases and that the

district may move forward with a full remote plan based on the recommendations of the local health department.

Weather-related School Days

A question was raised regarding closing and opening guidelines for weather-related school days. Discussion was held on weather-related days being counted as a Board flexibility so that remote learning could be used for a weather-related day instead of losing school days that were tacked on to the end of the school year.

With the support of the Board, Commissioner Cardona proposed a statement concerning the next couple of weeks and the concern with health and safety if high temperatures and humidity caused students to be sent home early or school is closed. It was unanimously agreed by the Board that closing school for heat was considered health related.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Appointments to Connecticut Technical Education and Career System

At the start of this meeting the agenda was modified to add this resolution to the meeting agenda.

Dr. López moved, Dr. DuBois-Walton seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-95(a)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the appointments of Ms. Christine Benz, Mr. Eric J. Brown, and Dr. G. Duncan Harris as members of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board, effective immediately, for a term coterminous with the term of the Governor or until a successor is appointed and has qualified, whichever is longer, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action..

VOTE ON

MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Clemons, DuBois-Walton, Exley, Harris, López, Prou, Reasco, Sieve, Taylor
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Report of the Chair

Chairperson Taylor did not provide a report.

VIII. Financial Matters

A. Current Services Budget Request

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey reported that the Current Services Budget is the first part in the budget process and is designed to continue existing services through the biennium. She highlighted that: (i) municipal aid is funded at the statutory level for formula-based aid; (ii) Education Cost Sharing is funded as if there were no caps; (iii) the Central Office line item does not include any additional staff; (iv) CTECS is seeking an increase in its personal services line item to add World Language teachers in order for graduates to meet the statutory one credit of World Language for graduation; (v) the magnet schools have been funded subject to enrollment caps; and (vi) the charter school negative adjustment is due to the closure of Trailblazers and Stamford Academy.

Dr. López moved, Mrs. Sieve seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the Current Services Budget Request for Fiscal Years 2021-22 and 2022-23, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action..

VOTE ON

MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Clemons, DuBois-Walton, Exley, Harris, López, Prou, Reasco, Sieve, Taylor
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Capital Budget Request

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey reported that the Department's request comprised of three programs based on the type of capital improvement and the funding recipients of:

- Connecticut Technical Education and Career Systems (CTECS)
- Charter Schools
- Low-Performing Schools

Dr. López moved, Mrs. Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the Capital Budget Request for Fiscal Years 2021-22 and 2022-23, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Clemons, DuBois-Walton, Exley, Harris, López, Prou, Reasco, Sieve, Taylor
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

IX. Consent Agenda

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion for the Consent agenda.

Mrs. Benham moved, Dr. López seconded, that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: IX.A., Recognition of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education Student Award Winners.

A. Recognition of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education Student Award Winners

WHEREAS, Adult education exemplifies the concept of lifelong learning with nearly ten thousand Connecticut residents in adult basic education/secondary school completion programs and nearly twelve thousand Connecticut residents in English as a Second Language (ESL) and U.S. citizenship preparation programs; and

WHEREAS, The Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE), through its CAACE Student Award, recognized six individuals who have overcome numerous obstacles and hardships to persist and succeed in adult education; and

WHEREAS, These individuals exemplify the spirit and determination necessary to achieve a goal and serve as role models to all adult and young learners in our communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Connecticut State Board of Education recognizes the following individuals for their accomplishments in this major adult education endeavor:

Ashia Cash	Waterbury Adult Education
Ella Sharie Evans	Valley Regional Adult Education
Tony Jackson	East Hartford Adult Education
Stacey Muszynski	Manchester Adult Education
Olger Arias Paguay	Bridgeport Adult Education
Esther Vivier	Norwich Adult Education

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION:

In favor:	Benham, Burr, Clemons, DuBois-Walton, Exley, Harris, López, Prou, Reasco, Sieve, Taylor
Opposed:	0
Abstained:	0
Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

X. Items for Discussion

A. November State Board of Education

Vice Chairperson López presented on the November meeting scheduled to be held on November 4, 2020. She shared concerns of the meeting being the day after Election Day and proposed that the meeting be held in the evening and remotely. Mrs. Benham raised the issue of the November 4th meeting being held in the evening, in-person and with public accessibility. Discussion was held regarding changing the date of the November meeting. The Board agreed to hold the November meeting in the evening on the 4th in a publicly accessible facility.

Waterbury Public Schools

Dr. López raised the issue of newspaper articles concerning Waterbury Public Schools calling police officers to handle behavioral issues of students in elementary schools in 2018 and 2019. Commissioner Cardona responded that Sarah Eagan, Office of the Child Advocate, had contacted the Department prior to the report and CSDE staff met with Attorney Eagan. The OCA report highlights some concerns specifically in Waterbury around exclusionary practices and the use of police officers when student behavior was questionable or problematic.

The Commissioner reported that communications and meeting with Attorney Eagan have been positive and open and that Waterbury has been open and supportive to this work of exclusionary practices.

Deputy Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker reported that OCA had met with agencies with the draft report. Our cross-divisional team with member Kim Traverso has been part of the effort.

XI. Committee Reports

A. Academic Standards and Assessment

Mr. Clemons reported that the committee would meet on September 14, 2020. He requested that a meeting reminder be sent to the members.

B. Accountability and Support

Deputy Commissioner Nesmith informed Dr. López that the committee would meet on September 17, 2020.

C. Finance, Audit, and Budget

Chairperson Taylor reported that the committee would be mid-September.

D. Legislation and Policy Development

Mrs. Benham reported that the committee met this morning. The committee reviewed three items: (i) Remote Learning Guidance presented by Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, (ii) update on Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Framework Position Statement that should come to the Board next month, and (iii) discussion re Firearm Safety Guide that should also come to the Board next month.

E. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board

Superintendent Jeffrey Wihbey reported that school opened today with the 9th graders. He visited A.I. Prince Tech and will visit Cheney Tech this afternoon. The preliminary numbers show another year of positive growth. Chairman Trefry and Mr. Wihbey will have a full enrollment at the October meeting.

F. NASBE

Mrs. Benham raised the question if there was going to be a liaison for NASBE. Dr. López reported that Elwood Exley was asked to be the editor of publications. Mr. Exley confirmed.

G. SERC

Mrs. Benham presented a report. SERC is a quasi-public agency established under statute to serve the CT State Board of Education in supporting educational equity and excellence. A SERC board meeting was held on August 25, 2020 and discussion was held regarding the numerous webinars and professional development provided for educators and parents. The timeline for the African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies was reviewed.

Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Prepared by: _____
Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Secretary
State Board of Education