

# Connecticut State Board of Education

## *Hartford*

Minutes of the **Academic Standards and Assessment Committee Meeting**  
Tuesday, February 9, 2021  
(Approved April 13, 2021)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's website, the Academic Standards and Assessment Committee (hereinafter "Committee") met virtually on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 via GoToMeeting. This virtual meeting was [livestreamed](#).

Erik M. Clemons, Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Present: Board Members  
Erik Clemons, Chair  
Estela López  
Martha Paluch Prou  
Awilda Reasco  
Malia K. Sieve

CSDE Staff  
Ajit Gopalakrishnan  
Irene Parisi  
Chris Soto

Guests  
David Basile, Waterbury School District  
Tara Battistoni, Waterbury School District  
Janice Epperson, Waterbury School District  
Courtney Prendergast, Putnam School District

Members introduced themselves at start of meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Approval of Minutes from November 16, 2020 Meeting. Martha Paluch Prou, motioned to move, Estela López second; 1 abstained. Motion carried.

### **FAFSA Completion**

Chris Soto reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) completion efforts and the need to offer resources to districts. He spoke about Connecticut's FAFSA Challenge, the monetary stipend offered to districts to support the effort, as well as other resources such as a community of practice and the Signal Vine messaging platform. Multiple board members spoke to the importance of coordinated efforts between schools and colleges because higher education and the state as a whole benefit when students fill out the FAFSA and avail of the federal financial aid.

Janice Epperson spoke about Waterbury's college and career readiness efforts and their commitment to equity, while Tara Battistoni reported about her specific efforts to leverage the EdSight Secure data to support school- and district-level staff. David Basile shared some of the districts efforts to support FAFSA completions; while blanket emails and text messages are needed, he emphasized the importance and effectiveness of personal communication outreach to families.

Courtney Prendergast, Putnam District noted the best way to encourage kids to complete the FAFSA was reaching out through radio stations and creating incentives such as a \$250.00 scholarship. She hopes to reach at least a 90% completion of FAFSA applications.

Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted that the FAFSA data received from the Office of Higher Education has no financial information but only the completion status. Data are being matched weekly to provide districts with the most current student-level information available.

### **School and District Accountability**

Ajit Gopalakrishnan gave an update on the School and District Accountability. He mentioned that Connecticut has submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education to seek flexibility from the accountability requirements for the 2020-21 school year. This application, referred to as an addendum, seeks to assess students, but not use those results for accountability purposes (e.g., no accountability index, no school categories). The state is recommending that assessments be done in person as much as possible though a remote option is available. A third of English learners have taken at least one subtest already on the LAS Links assessment. The state will have results for its academic assessments in June. High school juniors are also able to take the SATs, which are currently scheduled to be given on multiple dates between March and May.

Irene Parisi shared some initial thinking around the state's efforts to provide guidance, resources, and technical assistance around learning acceleration that is practical and that guides and targets unfinished learning. Board members expressed an interest in working with the CSDE through this process.

In closing Dr. Estela López expressed great pleasure with the progress being made with regard to promoting and supporting FAFSA completion. She stressed that completing the FAFSA early makes it an incredibly powerful lever. Data are critical and she thanked Ajit and the Performance Office staff for making these data readily available to districts and schools.

Dr. Estela López adjourned meeting at 10:38 a.m.

Prepared by Shondel Edwards