

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

**Minutes**  
**State Board of Education Meeting**  
**March 3, 2021**  
(Approved April 7, 2021)

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, March 3, 2021, 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/91KTTS6Onlo>) to allow for public access.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Allan Taylor called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m.

Present: Allan B. Taylor, Chairperson  
Estela López, Vice Chairperson  
Erin D. Benham  
Erik M. Clemons (via GoToWebinar)  
Dr. Karen DuBois-Walton (via GoToWebinar)  
Elwood Exley, Jr. (via GoToWebinar)  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Martha Paluch Prou  
Awilda Reasco (via GoToWebinar)  
Malia K. Sieve  
Robert J. Trefry, Ex Officio

Absent: Bonnie E. Burr  
Dr. Jane Gates, Ex Officio

**II. Public Participation**

Chairperson Taylor stated that two written submissions were received for Public Participation via (i) e-mail communication submitted to [SDE.StateBoard@ct.gov](mailto:SDE.StateBoard@ct.gov), and (ii) three webinar registrations as a speaker at the meeting. All written communication received was shared with the Board and will be posted on the Board's Web site.

1. Dr. Stephen J. Hegedus, President, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, (AACTE-CT Chapter) and Dean, College of Education, Southern Connecticut State University, spoke on the continued impact of COVID-19 and AACTE-CT's collective

commitment to preparing undergraduate and graduate students and expressed AACTE-CT's support for two pieces of legislation that the Board and State Department of Education proposed to the Education Committee of the General Assembly.

2. Christina Kettle, Sterling, CT resident, spoke on the actions of her local board of education and its Ad Hoc committee's recommendation of high school choice.
3. Sophia Chin, former Student Board Member, shared her continued work on student representation and student voice.

### III. Executive Session

Chairperson Taylor requested a motion to go into Executive Session for the consideration and recommendation of agenda item VI.B., Appointment of Acting Commissioner.

[Jane Gates arrived at approximately 1:22 p.m.]

On a motion by Board Member Benham, seconded by Vice Chair López, the Board voted unanimously to move into executive session at 1:22 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. Present in executive session were Board members Erin Benham, Karen DuBois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Donald Harris, Estela López, Jane Gates, Martha Prou, Awilda Reasco, Malia Sieve, Allan Taylor, and Robert Trefry. Also, present for executive session was Legal Director Jessa Mirtle and Chief of Staff Laura Stefon.

On a motion by Board Member Benham, seconded by Board Member Sieve, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn its executive session and reconvene in public session at 1:50 p.m.

The Board reconvened its regular meeting at 1:50 p.m.

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

Absent:       None

Chairperson Taylor requested the permission of the Board to consider agenda item VI.B., Appointment of Acting Commissioner, out of agenda order. The Board members unanimously agreed.

## **VI. Items Requiring Action**

### **B. Appointment of Acting Commissioner**

Vice Chair López moved, Board Member Benham seconded, the motion for agenda item VI.B., Appointment of Acting Commissioner.

**RESOLVED**, that the State Board of Education, recommends to the Governor the appointment of Deputy Commissioner Charlene M. Russell Tucker as Acting Commissioner of Education, effective March 3, 2021, until such time as a permanent Commissioner is appointed.

#### **VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously. The members of the Board voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the resolution.

[Karen DuBois-Walton left the meeting at approximately 2:00 p.m.]

## **IV. Consideration of Minutes**

### **A. February 3, 2021, State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Benham seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the February 3, 2021, State Board of Education Meeting.

#### **VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**V. Report of the Commissioner**

No report was presented.

**VI. Items Requiring Action** (continued)

**A. The Condition of Education in Connecticut 2019-20**

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented an overview and key highlights of the report to the Board. The report presents indicators that describe the progress of the public education system, the characteristics of its students and educators, and student performance on key indicators of student engagement and student readiness for college and careers. This report is required by CGA Section 10-4(b).

In the 2019-20 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person classes were cancelled in mid-March and all districts switched to fully remote instruction for the remainder of the school year. Additionally, all state academic assessment and the Next Generation Accountability System reports were cancelled for the 2019-20 school year.

The Board engaged in questions and answers.

Vice Chair López moved, Board Member Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-4(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes, receives *The Condition of Education in Connecticut* (2019-20) and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**VI. Report of the Chair**

Chairperson Taylor did not provide a report.

**VII. Financial Matters**

Chief Financial Officer Demsey reported that the Governor had announced his proposed Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Biennial Budget. She reported that the Department's budget would remain relatively flat over the biennium. She highlighted three key points of the

budget: (i) the education funding formulas have been level funded to the current fiscal year amount; (ii) there was an increase in funding of the per pupil amount for charter schools; and (iii) the separation of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) from the CSDE will be delayed until Fiscal 2024.

### **VIII. Consent Agenda**

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion for the Consent agenda.

Board Member Benham moved, Board Member Harris seconded, that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: VIII.A., Approval of the 2021-22 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches; VIII.B., Approval of New Educator Preparation Program: Sacred Heart University, Music Education Program; VIII.C., Approval of New Educator Preparation Program: Capitol Region Education Council, Teachers of the Visually Impaired Program; and VIII.D., Acceptance of Surrender of the Charter of Stamford Academy, Inc.

#### **A. Approval of the 2021-22 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Subsection (b)(2) of Section 10-149b of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the 2021-22 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches, and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

#### **B. Approval of New Educator Preparation Program: Sacred Heart University, Music Education Program**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(3)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, grants full approval for the period March 3, 2021, through November 30, 2025, to Sacred Heart University (SHU), with annual progress monitoring conducted using program data from the Connecticut Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Data Dashboard until SHU's next Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) visit, for the purpose of certifying graduates from SHU in the following new certification area:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Program Level</b>	<b>Program Type</b>
Music Education	PreK-12	Initial	Graduate

and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**C. Approval of New Educator Preparation Program: Capitol Region Education Council, Teachers of the Visually Impaired Program**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(3)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, grants full approval for the period March 3, 2021, through September 30, 2026, to Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), with annual progress monitoring conducted using program data from the Connecticut Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Data Dashboard until CREC's next state program approval review, for the purpose of certifying graduates from CREC in the following new certification area:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Program Level</b>	<b>Program Type</b>
Teachers of the Visually Impaired	PK-12	Initial	Alternate Route to Certification

and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**D. Acceptance of Surrender of the Charter of Stamford Academy, Inc.**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes and the Charter Contract with Stamford Academy, Inc., accepts Stamford Academy Inc.'s surrender of its Charter and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**VOTE ON**

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

Motions carried unanimously.

**X. Items for Discussion**

**A. Agency Update**

Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker introduced the subject matters that would be presented under the Agency Updates.

#### Connecticut State Board of Education Five-Year Plan: Introduction

- Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton updated the Board on the process for the next Five-Year Plan. Mr. Norton reported that the Department has contracted with the Connecticut Center for School Change (CCSC) led by Executive Director Dr. Richard Lemons, to assist the SBE in developing the next Five-Year Plan. Mr. Norton delineated the timeline commencing with the March 2021, Retreat and ending with the final plan being presented for adoption at the June 2022, SBE meeting.

#### 2021 Accountability and Assessment

- Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented on the 2021 Accountability and Assessment. Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that since his February 3, 2021, update, Connecticut was seeking flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education. He highlighted that flexibilities suggested by the U.S. Department of Education were already being used in Connecticut: (i) shorter test; (ii) remote testing; (iii) extended testing windows for districts to complete their testing.

#### CT Recognized for Student Performance in Advanced Coursework

- Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan reported that Connecticut was recognized by the College Board for having the highest percentage among all states for the percentage of graduates scoring 3 percent or better on at least one AP exam in 2020. He noted there was an increase in the number of graduates for students of color and students from low-income families.

#### Learning Models

- Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan reported that 57.9 percent of districts were in a predominately full in-person learning model and another 36.5 percent of districts are offering the hybrid model; noting that almost 95 percent of districts are offering some sort of in-person learning opportunity.

#### ESSER II Update

- Commissioner Russell-Tucker provided an ESSER II update on development of the application to be sent to districts and the process by which the applications will be reviewed by the Department.

#### Student Voice -Thought Exchange

- Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan reported on the Thought Exchange run by the Department in December and January. 8,000 students statewide responded to the following question: *As you are learning through the Pandemic, what can Connecticut Schools do to make students feel even more connected, energized and enthusiastic about learning this year?* The responses had themes that centered on relationships, teaching and learning, and communication and flexibility.

#### Vaccination Update

- Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker stated that since the Governor made the announcement that educators and child-care providers are now eligible to receive

vaccinations, the Department reached out to learn from districts on how to support them.

- Division Director John Frassinelli spoke on the work that ensued, working closely with the Office of Early Childhood, the Department of Public Health, the Office of the Governor and CAPSS to make connections with districts that did not have a vaccine partner.

Discussion ensued.

#### Professional Learning Opportunities for Families and Districts

- Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker reported that the Department has been offering professional learning opportunities by hosting a series of virtual conversations for families, highlighting a webinar held on March 2, 2021: *Special Education during COVID-19: Resources, Supports, and Best Practice Strategies*, at which over 160 parents participated.

#### CCSSO Winter Collaborative Presentation

- Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker shared that SDE colleagues were asked by CCSSO to present on work happening in Connecticut at the CCSSO Winter Collaborative: School and District Improvement Collaborative. CSDE Division Director Lisa Lamenzo, CSDE Education Consultant Jennifer Webb, and Hartford High School Principal Kiaundra Smith presented on the following topic: Supporting Districts and Schools in Virtual Environments.

## **XI. Committee Reports**

### **A. Academic Standards and Assessment**

Board Member Clemons reported that the committee met on February 9, 2021. The next meeting will be held on April 13, 2021.

### **B. Accountability and Support**

Vice Chair López reported that the committee met on February 18, 2021 and had two charters present. Also, in attendance was the Office of the Child Advocate to support its advocacy that schools and children with disabilities are provided educational opportunities. The next meeting will be held on April 15, 2021.

### **C. Finance, Audit, and Budget**

Chairperson Taylor reported that the committee did not meet.



#### **D. Legislation and Policy Development**

Board Member Benham reported that the committee met prior to this board meeting. The committee had a presentation by Andrea Brinnel on Preschool Oversight Roles.

#### **E. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board**

Board Chair Trefry reported that CTECS is currently in a hybrid learning model and working to get all student back to in-person learning by April. Superintendent Wihbey is working with 17 the local health departments on returning to school fully in-person as well as on the matter of teacher vaccinations. Mr. Trefry reported that the admission process had migrated to an on-line process, and the application submissions are robust. CTECS is addressing staffing matters.

#### **F. NASBE**

Board Member Benham reported that the Whole Child Policy group of NASBE met last month. She stated that Connecticut was immediately recognized for our Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education. There was a presentation on assessment and grading. There are four areas that are going to be major concerns for boards of education: (i) shortages and layoffs; (ii) the toll of the workforce; (iii) teaching preparatory; and (iv) diversity of the teaching workforce.

#### **G. SERC**

Board Member Benham highlighted that Marjorie Davis has been appointed as the Associate Director of SERC. SERC's professional development continues to be busy with racial equity.

Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary  
State Board of Education