

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

State Board of Education Retreat
March 26, 2021, Retreat
(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") held a Retreat virtually on Friday, March 26, 2021, via Microsoft Teams. This virtual Retreat was livestreamed (<https://youtu.be/2lZcwEfwBYs>) to allow for public access.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Estela López, called the Retreat to order at 1:09 p.m.

Staff Assistant to the Board, Aldith Dewar, took an attendance roll call.

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

Absent: Allan Taylor was not present at the time of roll call.

II. Opening Comments

Acting Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker welcomed the Board to the Retreat. She stated that although the Board was meeting virtually, they were taking the first official step to embark on the process to develop the next Five-year Plan.

Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker recognized Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton, Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships. She thanked him for setting the framework under which the plan would be developed.

Introduction of Facilitator

Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker introduced Dr. Richard Lemons, Executive Director of the Connecticut Center for School Change (CCSC), who will serve as the facilitator to the board in developing the SBE plan.

Deputy Commissioner Desi Nesmith

Deputy Commissioner Desi Nesmith stated that it was a pleasure to work with this Board and looked forward to putting together the next five-year plan and also thanked and recognized Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton for his valuable work.

Dr. Richard Lemons, Executive Director, Connecticut Center for School Change

Dr. Lemons stated that it was an honor to partner with the State Board of Education, to develop a multi-year plan that creates the direction, the focus, and clarity to build on. He thanked Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton for being an exceptional partner in providing behind the scenes coaching to ensure a coherent process. Dr. Lemons provided an introduction of CCSC.

Strategic Planning Overview

Dr. Lemons introduced targeted objectives for the Retreat, including:

- Develop a shared understanding of the strategic planning process.
- Surface initial ideas and begin developing a shared understanding about assets and areas of development.
- Begin a visioning process.
Identify next steps for stakeholder engagement.
- Forms of capacity to deliver on aspirations of a Plan.
- Articulate and understand the capacities that will be needed.

- CCSC Guiding Beliefs
 - Teaching and Learning in Classrooms (improving the quality of the instructional core)
 - Attend to Equity (consequences and lens for equity)
 - Articulate a clear chain of causation (linking leadership action to improved opportunities)
 - Build the capacity necessary to implement strategy
 - Design systems and routines to simultaneously the work to the vision

- Process Proposals
 - Phase I – Process Development
 - Phase II – March Retreat (soliciting input)
 - Phase III- Data Collection (with heavy stakeholder input) – administer statewide surveys; conduct numerous focus groups; analyze all feedback

- Phase IV – August Goal-Setting Retreat (analyze the perspectives of the state)
- Phase V - Identify small goals that can become the skeleton of strategic plan

- What I Heard from You – Common Interview Themes:
 - Plan not in a vacuum.
 - Challenge to continue and look back.
 - Be in alignment with other visions.
 - Plan should be big – visionary with direction and flexibility.
 - Produce energy, passion and purpose.
 - Language should be understood by all.
 - Should be informed by all people – voice is important.
 - Wonderful opportunity for strategic planning.
 - Teambuilding, goals and function.

Vice Chair López thanked Dr. Lemons for the summary and noted it is a good foundation for today's discussion. Mr. Lemons led the Board into a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis to present what he had captured from the interviews.

The Board discussed aspects of balancing local control, equity in education spending, poverty and racial divide of students, the status quo and pushing back against all threats, diversity, the notion that college is only for the middle class, continuing to align standards with work and college, housing patterns and how they contribute to the segregation of schools, the need to address broader policy, and the question of what needs to be done in schools for better outcomes.

Visioning

Dr. Lemons next presented a summary of the vision that he heard from the Board, including the universal wanting to keep equity at the forefront.

- We cannot turn away from the statewide investment in equity.
- Attainment – Ensuring more students have powerful choices in life as a result of their education. Position students beyond diploma.
- Authentic and powerful partnerships among family, community and school on behalf of the students.
- Develop balanced, independent thinking adults

Discussion was held on defining equity, introducing the vocabulary of inclusion, diversity and racial equity.

Stakeholder Engagement

Dr. Lemons presented a protocol for the stakeholder engagement. Surveys and Focus groups would be used for stakeholder engagement. The Board's ideas will be used to engage and help gain insight from stakeholders.

Next Steps/Action Items & Counsel from the Board

Dr. Lemons presented the next steps and actions:

- Finalize stakeholder engagement plan
- Administer Survey
- Conduct Focus Groups
- Synthesize Results
- Present Findings to Board at August Retreat 2021

Discussion was held on getting all the voices for stakeholder engagement.

Adjourn

The Retreat was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:22 p.m.

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