

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Minutes
State Board of Education Meeting
May 5, 2021

(Approved June 2, 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, May 5, 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/xf81nDIEUHE>.) to allow for public access.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Estela López called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

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

Present: Estela López, Vice Chairperson (via GoToWebinar)
Erin D. Benham
Bonnie E. Burr
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
Malia K. Sieve
Robert J. Trefry, Ex Officio

Absent: Dr. Jane Gates, Ex Officio was not present for roll call.

II. Public Participation

Vice Chair López stated that two written submissions were received for Public Participation via (i) e-mail communication submitted to SDE.StateBoard@ct.gov, and (ii) three webinar registrations as speakers at the meeting. All written communication received were shared with the Board and will be posted on the Board's Web site.

1. Jane M. Gangi, Ph.D., submitted a written statement on the need to stop standardized testing, especially in a pandemic.

2. Bryan Doughty, Secretary, New London Board of Education, and parent, spoke in support of agenda item VI.A., Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for New London High School, New London.
3. Isaac Gottesman, Vice President, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, (AACTE-CT Chapter), and Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Saint Joseph, spoke on AACTE-CT Educator Preparation Programs.
4. Sara Marshall, parent, spoke in support of agenda item VI.B., Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London.
5. Robert Haxhi, Teacher, Wilby High School, Waterbury, spoke in support of agenda item VI.C., Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for Wilby High School, Waterbury.

Student Voice Presentation

Acting Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker introduced that due to the pandemic, student members were not able to be appointed to the Board for the 2020-21 school year. In recognition of the importance of student voice, the five student finalists were invited to present at today's meeting. Three of the five finalists were in attendance to address the Board. The students were asked to reflect and address the Board on the following two questions: (1) what are your goals after graduation; and (2) what is one reflection/recommendation you want to share with the State Board of Education, based on your experience with learning during the pandemic, as we prepare for back to school in the fall?

Samantha Bergeron –Orville H. Platt High School, Meriden

Ms. Bergeron shared that she will be attending the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus in the fall for the Pharm.D. Degree program. Ms. Bergeron will pursue a doctorate in pharmacy.

Ms. Bergeron reflected that it has been a challenging year, but Meriden had adapted better since the pandemic was first thrown upon them last spring. She was most impressed this year with the communication between students and teachers. She shared that she can text anyone of her teachers at any time with questions, and that it helps with not only making sure that your curriculum and course work is great, but allows for social emotional connection.

Ms. Bergeron's recommendation for the Board was for emphasis on collaborative learning. She stated online learning has been tricky for some students. For the college bound, it was a great way to prepare for college life; however, there are some students who don't have resources at home, or they have difficulty working independently.

Rashad King – Connecticut River Academy, East Hartford

Rashad shared that he was accepted to Bates College in Maine, and anticipates being there in the fall. Mr. King will pursue a political science major as a pathway to being a political analyst or political consultant.

Mr. King reflected that with everything that happened within this year, it has put goals into focus and perspective for seniors in his school, and he suspects all over Connecticut. The pandemic has changed things for schools and administrative offices all over the state and nation, and has caused students to reflect and evaluate their school experience especially in high school.

Mr. King's recommendation to the Board was the need for conversations on society's political or social issues to be had in schools. He stated that that what happens in society does bleed into the schools. Mr. King concluded that he is hopeful with the events of the past that schools and students can have tough discussions where they can feel comfortable to learn and really educate themselves with different peer opinions.

Keshav Ramesh – South Windsor High School

Mr. Ramesh shared that he will attend the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He will pursue the dual Huntsman Program in International Studies and Business program this fall with a goal to complete a double major in economics and international relations with a potential minor in mathematics.

Mr. Ramesh reflected that with the uncertainties of the pandemic, there was a lot of communication between students and teachers, and the students were generally more comfortable in their classes. He commended the teachers on doing a fantastic job this year.

Mr. Ramesh's recommendation to the Board is the transition from standardized testing to a project-based learning environment. With the pandemic it was difficult to take quizzes and tests online and he saw a lot of emphasis on collaborative project-based learning. Mr. Ramesh expressed that he found this far more useful in terms of intellectual and academic growth than standardized testing.

The Board expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have student voice on collaborative learning, the need to have conversations in schools, and project-based learning. The Board congratulated the students on their accomplishments.

Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker announced that Proclamations were issued to the students by Governor Lamont recognizing and appreciating all their efforts.

III. Executive Session

The Board did not meet in executive session.

IV. Consideration of Minutes

A. April 7, 2021, State Board of Education Meeting

Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Benham seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the April 7, 2021, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

V. Report of the Commissioner

Acting Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker referenced her written report that was distributed to Board. She highlighted the following items from her report:

- Legislative and Governor's Office Meetings on the American Rescue Plan Act.
- Convened an All Staff Meeting in a virtual environment.
- She noted the significance of meetings with CAPSS Board of Directors and some of our superintendent regional groups.
- She participated in the Governor's Prevention Partnership Event with Governor Lamont and Commissioner Delphin-Rittman.
- Joined the Governor at press conferences in releasing information about our learner engagement program and summer enrichment.
- Joined Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz's Computing Challenge press conference.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for New London High School, New London

A panel consisting of Division Director Lisa Lamenzo, New London Superintendent Cynthia Ritchie, and Principal Jose Ortiz presented the New London High School plan to the Board. Discussion ensued.

Board Member DuBois-Walton moved, Board Member Reasco seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopts and approves the Turnaround Plan for New London High School of New London for the Commissioner's Network, subject to the conditions noted in the Acting Commissioner's May 5, 2021, Executive Summary to the State Board of Education, and

directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London

A panel consisting of Division Director Lisa Lamenzo, New London Superintendent Cynthia Ritchie, and Principal Chris Vamvakides presented the Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School plan to the Board. Discussion ensued.

Board Member Benham moved, Board Member Prou seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopts and approves the Turnaround Plan for Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School of New London for the Commissioner's Network, subject to the conditions noted in the Acting Commissioner's May 5, 2021, Executive Summary to the State Board of Education, and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

Due to technical audio issues, at approximately 11:21 a.m., Vice Chair López called a recess of the meeting to address the issue. The meeting reconvened at approximately 11:30 a.m.

C. Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan for Wilby High School, Waterbury

A panel consisting of Division Director Lisa Lamenzo, Waterbury Superintendent Verna Ruffin, and Principal Michelle Baker presented the Wilby High School plan to the Board. Discussion ensued.

Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Sieve seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, of the June 2015 Special Session, adopts and approves the Turnaround Plan for Wilby High School in Waterbury for the Commissioner's Network, subject to the conditions noted in the Acting Commissioner's, May 5, 2021, Executive Summary to the State Board of Education, and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Report of the Chair

Vice Chairperson López provided a tribute to teachers in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week. She asked for a motion for the resolution. Board Member Sieve moved, Board Member Burr seconded, the approval to present the teacher resolution that honors the teachers in Connecticut on behalf the Board.

Vice Chair López requested that Board member Erin Benham, read the resolution aloud into the record:

TO BE PROPOSED:

May 5, 2021

WHEREAS, Connecticut's teachers have played and continue to play an integral role in responding to the state's pandemic-related educational emergency; and

WHEREAS, In this educational crisis, in this most important of professions, teachers have gone above and beyond to support and keep students learning while maintaining the safety of our schools; and

WHEREAS, Teachers, who are critical to the success and growth of our children and society, continue to display an extraordinary and heightened sense of commitment to providing equitable access to the best possible outcomes for all students; and

WHEREAS, Teachers' herculean efforts to adapt, improvise and overcome the challenges of this academic year have kept students engaged and connected to their school communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Connecticut State Board of Education stands in admiration of the heroism teachers have demonstrated as the lighthouses providing safe harbor for our students and honors the profession's lasting legacy on inspiring and shaping future generations.

The resolution carried unanimously.

Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker added that on social media, the Department had sent out a Tweet in appreciation of teachers. The Acting Commissioner thanked all teachers and educators for the work they do every single day!

VIII. Financial Matters

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey provided an overview of the budget that was released by the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly.

IX. Consent Agenda

Vice Chairperson López asked for a motion for the Consent agenda.

Board Member Benham moved, Board Member Sieve seconded, that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: IX.A., Request for Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) Action, and IX.B., Reappointment of Members of the Impartial Hearing Board Panel.

A. Request for Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) Action

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education approves the request for Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) action to transfer \$1,529,737 from the State Charter School account to the Education Cost Sharing Grant account, and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

B. Reappointment of Members of the Impartial Hearing Board Panel

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Sections 10-186 (b) and 10-233d of the Connecticut General Statutes and Sections 10-145d-611 (h), 612 (h), 613 (f), 10-4-12 (f), and 10-4-22(c)(3) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, and other applicable provisions of law, hereby reappoints the following individuals to conduct hearings and render decisions as an impartial hearing board, or otherwise, on matters where they may be appointed to serve in accordance with law for the period of September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2024:

Janis C. Jerman
Thomas C. McNeill, Jr.
Steven R. Rolnick
Frederic S. Ury

and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Motions carried unanimously.

Postponement of Agenda Item X.B.

Vice Chair Lopez announced that in discussion and agreement with Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker, that to give proper credit to the report, the agenda item X.B., College Enrollment, Credit Attainment and Remediation of High School (P20WIN Report) will be postponed due to the audio challenges.

X. Items for Discussion

A. Agency Update

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

Summer Enrichment

Director of Innovation and Partnerships Chris Soto provided an update on the \$11 million in the American Rescue Plan that was set aside specifically for summer enrichment. This grant focuses on local communities that provide summer enrichment in their communities.

Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

Division Director John Frassinelli presented on the \$10.68 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER). The RESCs are engaging with 15 districts who are engaging with their community partners to build on existing successes around a series of home visits and developing relationships with families. Mr. Frassinelli concluded that the goal is to get kids and families engaged to get back to school before the end of the school year; connect them with summer enrichment and summer learning; get them caught up and accelerate learning in the summer; and welcome them back to school with success in the fall.

Remote Learning for 2021-22 School Year

Legal Director Jessa Mirtle provided an update on interim guidance on remote learning for the 2021-22 school year. In preparation for the 2021-22 school year, Attorney Mirtle she stated that the Department had confirmed with school districts that we would not anticipate with the current health circumstances a mandate that all schools provide remote learning next year. She concluded that we want to build back better by learning and innovating by our experience of what we learned about the use of technology.

Rigorous Coursework

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan provided a presentation on letters that were sent to over 37,000 students in grades 10 and 11 encouraging them to take rigorous courses. He explained that rigorous courses are Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and/or dual enrollment courses (college/career focused) with Connecticut's universities and colleges.

Learning Models of Districts

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan reported that the period of April 26 -April 30, 2021, over 70 percent of districts were now operating in a predominately fully in-person model. Last week only 1% (two districts), were predominately remote. He highlighted that 100% of Connecticut districts have offered some in-person instruction to at least some of their students during the 2020-21 school year.

American Rescue Plan Update

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey reported that Connecticut would receive \$1.1 billion under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and federal law reserves portions of funding for certain activities. The Department received two-thirds of the funds. To access the remaining one-third of the funds, the Department must develop a plan and submit an application to the USED by June 7, 2021. She informed the Board that the Commissioner will be reaching out to the Board, and it requires a significant amount of stakeholder engagement.

Professional Learning Opportunities for Families and Districts

- Informational Webinar for applicants applying for Summer Enrichment grant – April 28.
- Virtual Forum for Principals and Leaders of Pre-K – 3rd grade programs hosted by CSDE, Office of Early Childhood, Connecticut Association of Schools and the National Association of Elementary School Principals – May 6.

Upcoming Opportunities and Shoutouts

- TeachRock Launch. The standards-aligned, art-integrated curriculum that uses the history of popular music and culture to help teachers engage students.
- Alliance District Convening. 33 districts and 91 district leaders and building administrators participated to learn and share how to lead with persistence and agility in our future normal during the 2021 Spring Alliance District Convening.
- CSDE Chronic Absence, Attendance and Truancy Consultant, Kari Sullivan Cluster, presented at the National Attendance Peer-to-Peer (P2P Network) on: Engaging External Partners in Tier 3 Supports for Students and Families featuring the Governor's Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP).

Shoutout!

CSDE Talent Office. Reached the 10% (over 1,900 hires) Goal of Teachers of Color in Connecticut. Acting Commissioner Russell-Tucker stated that this was an attainment of a Board goal. Chief Talent Officer Dr. Shuana Tucker thanked the Board as it was their plan and their goal that they approved in 2016 to reach 10% by 2021.

Teacher Appreciation Week

- Thank you Teachers!

XI. Committee Reports

A. Academic Standards and Assessment

Committee Chair Clemons reported that the committee met on April 13, 2021, to discuss social-emotional assessment with a presentation from Aperture Education, the vendor for the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). Naugatuck Public Schools presented on their SEL model. The next committee meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2021.

B. Accountability and Support

Committee Chair López reported that the committee did not meet in April. The committee will meet on May 18, 2021.

C. Finance, Audit, and Budget

Board Member López reported that the committee did not meet.

D. Legislation and Policy Development

Committee Chair Benham reported that the committee did not meet. The committee will meet on June 2, 2021.

E. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board

Superintendent Wihbey reported on the CTEC Board meeting. The board reauthorized the health tech trade across all school locations. CTECS is moving towards a full in-person school reopening on a site-by-site basis.

F. NASBE

Board member Exley reported that the Government Affairs Committee reported that the U.S. Department of Education has a best practices clearinghouse and they want to hear from us with regard to our success particularly with the reopening of our schools, and also the summer enrichment and summer learning programs.

[Board Member Sieve left the meeting at 12:54 p.m.]

G. SERC

Vice Chair Lopez made reference to SERC's 5th annual Dismantling Systemic Racism: 2021 Virtual Conference on Race, Education and Success to be held on May 7, 2021. Board Member Benham reported that SERC continues with many collaborations with the agency.

Vice Chairperson López adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

Prepared by: _____

Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education