

# Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

## State Board of Education Meeting October 6, 2021

(Approved November 3, 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 meeting on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, in Plaza North Meeting Room C and D of the State Office Building, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut. Public access to the building allowed for public attendance at the meeting.

### **I. Call to Order**

Acting Chairperson Allan Taylor, called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

Present: Allan B. Taylor, Acting Chairperson  
Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson  
Natalie Bandura, Student Member  
Rishabh Bhandari, Student Member  
\*Bonnie E. Burr (via phone)  
Erik M. Clemons  
Karen DuBois-Walton  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Estela López (via phone)  
Martha Paluch Prou  
Awilda Reasco  
Malia K. Sieve  
Robert J. Trefry, Ex Officio  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

Absent: Dr. Jane Gates, (designee for Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio)

### **II. Public Participation**

1. Kristen Ritchie of Southington, submitted a written statement on school mask exemption language. A copy of Ms. Ritchie's written statement is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.
2. Isaac Gottesman, Vice President, Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, (AACTE-CT Chapter) and Chair, Department of Education, University of Saint Joseph, submitted a written statement and spoke on the work of the CSDE during the pandemic. He further commended the work of the CSDE's Talent Office on its day-to-day work of certifying, evaluating, and supporting the teacher workforce in the state. A copy of Mr. Gottesman's written statement is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

#### **IV. Consideration of Minutes of the State Board of Education**

Board Member Benham moved, Board Member Reasco seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the September 1, 2021, State Board of Education Meeting.

\*[Board Member Bonnie Burr joined the meeting at approximately 10:00 a.m.]

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.

#### Request for Committee Reports Out of Agenda Order

Vice Chair Erin Benham requested through Acting Chairperson Allan Taylor for permission from the Board to consider agenda item XI., Committee Reports, E., Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board, B., Accountability and Support, and G., SERC, out of agenda order. The Boards member unanimously agreed.

#### **XI. Committee Reports**

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

- Superintendent Wihbey presented on CTECS achieving its five agency goals outlined in CTECS Strategic Operating Plan. Mr. Wihbey referenced the importance of having a Strategic Plan, and that the goals helped to navigate the pandemic. Mr. Wihbey highlighted items from each of the five Goals. Incoming Interim Superintendent Dr. Ellen Solek was also present at the table.

The question was raised on the student ratio recruitment of males to females. Mr. Wihbey highlighted that as an area to use ESSER Funds to better recruit.

CTECS Chairman Trefry announced that this would be Superintendent Wihbey's last meeting as he steps down from his position to become the Superintendent of Regional School District 17. Mr. Trefry commended the Superintendent for his magnificent leadership which propelled CTECS forward.

Mr. Trefry read aloud a resolution in honor of Superintendent Jeffrey Wihbey into the record of the minutes:

**WHEREAS**, Jeffrey S. Wihbey, was appointed to serve as Superintendent of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System in December 2017, after serving as interim Superintendent starting in March 2017; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wihbey has served with distinction as Superintendent, always striving to meet the needs of students and of business and industry in the State of Connecticut; and

**WHEREAS**, Under his leadership as Superintendent, the system closed out seven major school construction and renovation projects, implemented a blended learning 1:1 student laptop device process and program, decreased chronic absenteeism to under 10 percent, increased students participating in work based learning by 38 percent, and opened up opportunities for students from neighboring comprehensive high schools to receive part time technical training at Connecticut Technical Education and Career System high schools; and

**WHEREAS**, He has had a distinguished career in education; and

**WHEREAS**, He has served as Assistant Superintendent, Principal, Assistant Principal, Department Head, and began his career as a social studies teacher;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Connecticut State Board of Education honors Mr. Jeffrey S. Wihbey for his dedication to the students of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board, and the Connecticut State Department of Education, and expresses appreciation for his service to the State of Connecticut, and wishes him well in his appointment as Superintendent of Regional School District 17.

Board Member Trefry noted that he could not vote, but moved the motion, Board Member Prou seconded the resolution in honor of Superintendent Jeffrey S. Wihbey.

VOTE ON

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

Commissioner Russell-Tucker thanked Superintendent Wihbey for all his work.

**A. Academic Standards and Support**

- Committee Chair Erik Clemons reported that the committee met on September 14, 2021. Division Director John Frassinelli presented on the Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework. Dr. Melissa Hickey presented on Considering the Adoption of New Standards to Replace CSDE Technology and Literacy Framework. The next committee meeting will be held on November 9, 2021.

**B. Accountability and Support**

- Committee Chair Estela López reported that the committee met on September 22, 2021, and was presented with an update on Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)'s progress on its corrective action plan.
- Committee Chair López reported that the committee endorsed New Beginnings Family Academy's (NBFA) proposed modification of its grade configuration to phase out Grades 7 and 8 in June 2023, and opening a new building to serve as NBFA's Early Childhood center for Grades PK and Kindergarten that is on the Consent agenda. She updated that on September 23, 2021, Ms. Benham accompanied Division Director Lisa Lamenzo to visit NBFA.

Incoming Committee Chair Erin Benham reiterated that NBFA was vetted by the Accountability and Support Committee, that she and Ms. Lamenzo recently visited the school, and that NBFA was on the Consent agenda for today. The next committee meeting will be on October 14, 2021.

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

- It was reported that the committee did not meet.

**D. Legislation and Policy Development**

- Committee Chair Erin Benham reported that the committee met this morning. Attorney Laura Anastasio, Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs, and West Hartford Public Schools presented on Racial Imbalance Progress.

**F. NASBE**

- Vice Chair Erin Benham reported that Board Member Elwood Exley will be Connecticut's Delegate at NASBE's Annual Business Meeting. Mr. Exley reported that he is designated to be NASBE's Northeast Area Director.

**G. SERC**

- Board Member Erin Benham referred the members to the SERC report in their folder.

Board Member Benham then invited Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, SERC, to the table before the Board].

Acting Chairperson Allan Taylor read aloud a resolution in honor of Ingrid Canady into the record of the minutes:

**WHEREAS**, Ingrid M. Canady, an educator of nearly 20 years, was unanimously voted by the State Education Resource Center ("SERC") Board of Directors to serve as the Executive Director of SERC in September 2016; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Canady became a member of SERC in 2003 and has served as Interim Executive Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director for Program Development and Partnerships for Equity, Workforce Development Coordinator, and SERC Education Consultant; and

**WHEREAS**, Through her role as a transformational leader at SERC, Ms. Canady has been a catalytic advocate to elevate the role of equity and create a sense of urgency for the need of providing equitable educational opportunities and accessible education excellence for all children; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Canady has led courageous conversations around race and equity as a vital component of policies and practices that support equity in our public schools and educator workforce; and

**WHEREAS**, The Connecticut State Board of Education recognizes that the Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (CALAS) will present Ingrid M. Canady with its 2021 CALAS Equity Champion Award on October 8, 2021.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Connecticut State Board of Education congratulates and honors Ingrid M. Canady for her career as a champion of educational excellence and equity, and the Connecticut State Board of Education, together with the Connecticut State Department of Education, express their appreciation and gratitude for her leadership on behalf of Connecticut's children.

Ms. Ingrid Canady thanked the Board for the resolution.

#### **H. CT Remote Learning Commission**

- Board Member Karen DuBois-Walton reported that the Remote Learning Commission held its first meeting on September 27, 2021, consisting of 15 members. The meeting covered the commission's introduction of members, purpose, tasks, norms and decision-making process. The next meeting will be held on October 18, 2021.

#### **V. Report of the Commissioner**

Commissioner Russell-Tucker referenced her written report in the Board's supplemental folders and highlighted the following activities:

- Working with districts to support staying safe
- Issued FAQ regarding Vaccinations for Covered Workers in Schools
- Convened Back to School Town Hall meetings with CSDE/CTECS Central Office staff.
- Visit to Wendell Cross Elementary School and Dual Language International School in Waterbury
- Visit to East Haven High School
- Attended the 2022 Ann Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Announcement with Lt. Governor in Bloomfield
- Participated in the FAFSA Challenge Event Kick-off with Governor Lamont
- Attended meetings with Educational Stakeholders on bussing concerns and School Bus Drive Shortage Taskforce
- Keynote address at the CT Parent/Teacher Association Leadership Symposium
- Speaker at the Red, White and Blue Kick-off Event with Secretary of the State Denise Merrill

- Speaker at national Attendance Works Attendance Awareness Campaign webinar: Fully Present: Leveraging Attendance Data to Ensure ongoing Success
- Follow up from September 2021 Board Meeting:
  - State Board of Education letter of support to districts and local boards – has been completed
  - Arbitration Panel Focus Group – group formed and meeting scheduled

## **VI. Items Requiring Action**

There were no Items Requiring Action on the agenda.

## **VII. Report of the Chair**

Acting Chair Taylor spoke on the Meet and Greet with Secretary Cardona in Waterbury on September 3, 2021, and the attendance of Governor Lamont. He thanked the Board members who were able to attend the event. He also commented on his older grandson eagerly going to school and the importance of children interacting with one another.

## **VIII. Financial Matters**

### **A. Budget Reduction Options**

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey reminded the Board that last month's meeting addressed mid-term technical adjustments, and this month was budget reductions. Ms. Demsey highlighted the reductions for the Board.

Vice Chair Benham moved, Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Mid-Term Budget Technical Adjustments and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

#### **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.

## **IX. Consent Agenda**

Acting Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion for the Consent agenda. Vice Chair Benham moved, Board Member Reasco seconded, that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: IX.A., Approval of State Board of Education 2021 Committee Assignments, IX.B., Approval of Material Change to New Beginnings Family Academy, and IX.C., Program Approval Methodology, Connecticut Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Programs.

### **A. Approval of State Board of Education 2021 Committee Assignments**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Article II, Section 4, of its Bylaws, approves the following assignments to the State Board of Education standing committees:

Academic Standards and Assessment Committee

Erik M. Clemons, Chair  
Erin D. Benham  
Martha Paluch Prou  
Awilda Reasco  
Allan B. Taylor  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Accountability and Support Committee

Erin D. Benham, Chair  
Karen DuBois-Walton  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Estela López  
Malia K. Sieve

Finance, Audit, and Budget Committee

Donald F. Harris, Jr., Chair  
Bonnie E. Burr  
Allan B. Taylor  
Robert J. Trefry

Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Malia K. Sieve, Chair  
Bonnie E. Burr  
Karen DuBois-Walton  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Martha Paluch Prou  
Robert J. Trefry

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

### **B. Approval of Material Change to New Beginnings Family Academy**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the August 31, 2021, charter amendment proposal of New Beginnings Family Academy to the extent such proposal seeks modification of its grade configuration to phase out Grades 7 and 8 in June 2023 with a maximum approved enrollment cap of 499, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the August 31, 2021, charter amendment proposal of New Beginnings Family Academy to the extent such proposal seeks to open a new school building, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**C. Program Approval Methodology, Connecticut Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Programs**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education adopts the recommendation from the Connecticut State Department of Education to implement an educator preparation provider (EPP) program approval methodology using the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation decisions based on CAEP site visits, with annual monitoring of EPPs using the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) EPP Data Dashboard, beginning October 6, 2021, 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

Motions carried unanimously.

**X. Items for Discussion**

**D. Agency Update**

Commissioner Russell-Tucker provided a summary of agency activities.

ARP ESSER Update

The Commissioner shared that the CSDE had issued a press release that announced approval of all Local Education Agency (LEAs) ESSER II Plans.

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey provided an update on ARP ESSER II, and confirmed approval of the ESSER II applications. She highlighted the four District-Level priorities of the Department and referenced that under the ARP ESSER II, there is a fifth level category for school safety and school building.

ESSER II Special Education Initiatives State Set Aside

Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz presented on the ESSER II aspect of Special Education. He stated that there was a substantial investment in Special Education totaling \$16 million into four primary pockets. He also announced that the CSDE will be hosting Summit in November for school districts to gather and share strategies.



#### School Transportation

Commissioner Russell-Tucker provided an introduction of Communications Director Eric Scoville to report on the CSDE involvement with school transportation.

Mr. Scoville provided an update on the statewide efforts to support communities currently experiencing school bus driver shortages. He reported that at the directive of the Commissioner and the Governor, a multi-agency School Bus Task Force was established. He highlighted the outreach activities of the Task-Force of identifying CDL S and/or V drivers, and efforts to expedite CDL drivers in the hiring pipeline.

#### Vaccinations – Health and Safety

Division Director John Frassinelli provided an update on vaccination requirements. He reported that the CSDE continues to work with DPH and promote **#Vax2SchoolCT Toolkit**. He concluded that there was an update to the Advance, Adapt, Achieve Addendum 5 – Interim Guidance for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios in Connecticut School Districts that includes quarantine and contact tracing guidance.

#### Screening Testing – Health and Safety

Commissioner Russell-Tucker stated that the Project COVID DeteCT is a weekly COVID-19 screening testing program for districts that have opted to provide weekly testing.

#### Special Education Update

Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz, provided an update on Special Education.

- He announced that on July 1, 2022, Special Education in collaboration with the Performance Office will be kicking off and implementing a statewide, web-based Special Education IEP Data Management System, CT-Special Education Data System, at no cost to school districts and with each district utilizing the same system. Questions and answers ensued.
  
- State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR). He explained the purpose of the SPP as a six-year plan of the state's efforts to implement and improve requirements of IDEA statewide, and the APR being an annual report on the SPP performance across 17 indicators including the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

#### Office of Literacy Research and Reading Success

Deputy Commissioner Desi Nesmith provided a status update on the creation of the office.

#### Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities

Deputy Commissioner Desi Nesmith provided a status update on the creation of the office.

#### Picture Highlights of the Commissioner's School Visits

- Wendell Cross Elementary School and Dual Language International School in Waterbury
- East Haven High School
- Bolton Center School in Bolton
- Odyssey Community School
- West Haven High School

Kyle Mansfield – 2022 Ann Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

Kyle Mansfield was announced as the 2022 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year on Wednesday, September 22, 2021, in Bloomfield, CT 06002. Mr. Mansfield is from The Steps to Success Academy in Bloomfield.

CSDE/SBE Site Visits

The Commissioner thanked Vice Chair Erin Benham for accompanying Division Director Lisa Lamenzo on the following school visits:

- Side by Side Charter, Norwalk
- New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport

CT Teachers Receive National Recognition

- Nataliya Braginsky – Metropolitan Business Academy, New Haven, CT. Ms. Braginsky is the recipient of the *Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History Teacher of the Year* award.
- Carly Imhoff – The Ashford School, Ashford, CT. Ms. Imhoff is the recipient of the *Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators*.

Shoutouts!

- Talent Office. Between July 2020 and September 2021, the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification team has processed **32,645** applications for certification.
- Nutrition Efforts.
  - P-EBT: In partnership with the Department of Social Services, the implementation of the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer program has provided more than \$248.7 million in food benefits through electronic debit cards.
- Chronic Absence. LEAP has had nearly 5,000 contacts with families. The RESC Alliance, with Attendance Works, under CSDE leadership continues to offer opportunities for home visitors to connect and learn from one another.

Mr. John Frassinelli announced that the CAFE Board of Directors selected the CSDE and DPH team from the Tuesday Health and Safety calls for this year's CAFE Friends of Public Education Award.

Board Member Estela López announced that she will be submitting her resignation from the Board effective at the conclusion of the November 3, 2021, Board meeting.

Acting Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:49 a.m.

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