

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 8:30 a.m.

Committee Members

Malia K. Sieve, Chair
Karen DuBois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Bonnie E. Burr,
Martha Paluch Prou, Elwood Exley, Jr., and Valli Pendyala

Minutes

(Approved February 1, 2023)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on December 7, 2022.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order. Also attending the meeting were Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Jr., Martha Paluch Prou, and Valli Pendyala. In addition, the following individuals from the CSDE were in attendance: Keith M. Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer, and Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs.

Presenters:

Keith M. Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer
Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Exley moved to approve the November 2, 2022, meeting minutes, and Ms. Paluch Prou seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Review and Discussion: State Board of Education Bylaws

Attorney McKeon reviewed with Committee members certain provisions of the Connecticut State Board of Education [“CSBE”] bylaws and discussion ensued as to whether certain revisions were required to eliminate outdated references to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System [“CTECS”] being part of the Connecticut State Department of Education [“CSDE”]. Although similar references had previously been deleted or modified, there still existed language that suggested, if not outright stated, that CTECS was a constituent part of the CSDE rather than a separate, independent agency.

Committee members also discussed certain language contained in Article IV of the bylaws, entitled “Functions of the Board,” which provides in part: “The Board is the legally established body charged with responsibility for the educational interests of the state, which interest shall include preschool, elementary and secondary education.” Dr. Dubois-Walton questioned whether preschools more appropriately fell within the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Under Connecticut law, local and regional boards of education are not required to establish pre-kindergarten programs or to be “open” to students who are not five

years of age prior to January 1 of any school year. Attorney McKeon noted, however, that the Article IV language in question closely tracks the language of Section 10-4 of the Connecticut General Statutes, which sets forth the CSBE's duties. Dr. Dubois-Walton noted that that raised a question as to what, if any, oversight responsibility the CSBE might have over preschool.

The Committee members asked that Attorney McKeon make the possible revisions to the bylaws and provide them to the Committee members.

IV. Review and Continued Discussion: Status of 2022-2023 Policies, Goals, Areas of Focus, and Process

Discussion turned to the areas of possible Committee consideration that Committee members had suggested and discussed at prior meetings. Mr. Norton spoke in detail about the Open Choice program, explaining that it had traditionally been, and continued to be, focused on districts in the Greater Hartford area, but that Norwalk and Danbury had been added. Mr. Norton noted that Norwalk had expanded its Open Choice relationships with neighboring districts but that Danbury had "stuttered" to a start. Mr. Norton advised that although Superintendents of Schools were generally in favor of the Open Choice program, their enthusiasm was not always shared by school board members. As Mr. Norton observed, for Open Choice programs to succeed, there needed to be a voluntary buy-in by local and regional boards of education. Dr. Dubois-Walton noted that the Committee could look into the Open Choice process and see what has caused it to work in some districts and not work in other districts.

Mr. Norton answered Committee members' questions, advising that Open Choice districts can choose how many students they will take and adding that if the Open Choice programs are terminated, students who previously opted to attend districts other than their home districts as part of the Open Choice program were grandfathered and could remain in place.

Attorney McKeon and the Committee discussed the other areas of possible consideration that Committee members had previously discussed. Attorney McKeon advised the Committee that the CSDE was currently working on some of these issues, such as efforts to encourage and enhance diversity in teacher recruitment and training. The Committee discussed whether Black and Puerto Rican Studies should be incorporated into required history courses so as to expand student exposure to this area of study. There was also discussion of the status of updates to the CSDE's guidance pertaining to transgender students. Attorney McKeon was asked to provide a copy of the updated guidance to Committee members upon its completion.

V. Additional Discussion

Committee members discussed changing the meeting start time from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. to provide sufficient time to discuss agenda items. The Committee would strive to conclude its meetings by 9:20 to ensure Committee member availability for the 9:30 start of the full CSBE meetings.

VI. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

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