

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

The Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Wednesday, September 6, 2023, 8:15 a.m.

Committee Members

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

Minutes

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on September 6, 2023.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order at 8:15. In addition to Ms. Sieve, also present at the meeting were Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Elwood Exley, Jr., and Martha Paluch Prou. Committee Member Bonnie Burr had previously advised Ms. Sieve that she would be unable to attend. Also in attendance were the following individuals from the CSDE: Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services; Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Megan Alubicki Flick, ESL/Bilingual Consultant; and Sonya Efanayi, Administrative Assistant, Communications Office. Yasmeeen Galal and Connor Cowan, who were scheduled to be sworn in as the new student members of the State Board of Education at the Board's subsequent meeting, were also in attendance.

Presenters:

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, CSDE
Megan Alubicki Flick, ESL/Bilingual Consultant, Academic Office, CSDE
Jeremy Stein, CT Against Gun Violence
John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, CSDE

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. DuBois-Walton moved to approve the June 14, 2023, meeting minutes, and Mr. Exley seconded. The motion passed 4-0, with Ms. Sieve abstaining as she had been unable to attend the June 14, 2023, meeting.

III. Review and Discussion: Draft Framework for Educator and Leader Evaluation and Support

Ms. Parisi began a presentation on the Bill of Parental Rights, noting that it had been an initiative of the Governor and that the proposed document was drafted to mirror the legislation.

Dr. Alubicki Flick advised that most, if not all, of the entitlements set forth in the proposed Bill of Parental Rights are already contained in federal and state law and are steps that school districts should already be implementing. The Bill of Parental Rights, however, elevates them and makes them more visible to parents and districts.

There was a lengthy discussion of the meaning and application of the term “multilingual,” during which Dr. Alubicki Flick noted there are approximately 50,000 such learners in the State. Mr. Exley asked whether there are technological resources to address all the languages that are out there. Dr. Alubicki Flick explained that although there are not translators in all languages, there are fairly robust resources given the combination of human and technology-based translations. In conjunction with the discussion about such technology, Dr. Alubicki Flick discussed enumerated right number three, which references web-based communication devices for which districts must obtain State Board approval. Dr. Alubicki Flick explained that the Board’s approval would not be required for both enumerated rights number 3(a) and 3(b), but only the latter.

Ms. Parisi stated that the CSDE would investigate the resources that other states and districts within Connecticut are already using. Dr. DuBois-Walton also mentioned the possibility of there being expert consultants who could assist and asked about the proposed timeline. Ms. Parisi stated that she and Dr. Alubicki Flick could return to the LPDC in October, with the proposal going to the full Board in November. Ms. Sieve asked that when they return, they have a realistic timeframe for when the Bill of Parental Rights could be finalized and ready for dissemination.

Ms. Sieve then introduced Jeremy Stein from CT Against Gun Violence [“CAGV”].

Mr. Stein stated that CAGV was involved in 2018 and 2019 efforts to get safe-gun-storage laws passed, explaining the genesis for Ethan’s Law, specifically Ethan Song’s tragic death as the result of an unsecured handgun. Ethan’s parents felt that Ethan could have benefited from education in school about firearm safety, and part of Ethan’s Law was a mandate that the CSDE create guidelines to help districts to create gun-safety programs. CAGV, however, has concerns about the gun guidance the CSDE subsequently promulgated.

CAGV feels that the guidance goes too far in some places and not far enough in others. Mr. Stein opined that certain aspects of the guidance have nothing to do with firearm safety but rather engage in what he characterized as “propaganda,” seemingly suggesting in some places that firearms are safe. Mr. Stein explained that CAGV felt there should be more direct statements regarding the danger that guns pose, and that there were too many statements that appeared to normalize and excuse the possession of guns. Consequently, CAGV was requesting that the current guidance be pulled until it can be revised to focus on firearm safety.

Ms. Sieve asked John Frassinelli, the CSDE’s Director of School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, whether he had any comments. Mr. Frassinelli noted that the CSDE was legally mandated to disseminate this guidance and that in doing so, it consulted with various law-enforcement entities. He added that as Mr. Stein had admitted, there is no similar guidance available, including from either the Brady or Giffords gun-safety groups. With respect to CAGV’s concerns about the guidance’s references to firearm rights, Mr. Frassinelli explained that the purpose of education is to discuss and consider various viewpoints. Mr. Frassinelli added that the guidance itself is comprised of relatively few pages, but that there are voluminous pages of citations to resources included within it, further noting that that districts are not required to utilize the guidance.

Mr. Exley asked about the role of the LPDC in this matter. Ms. Sieve explained that the guidance had come before the Board in the past, and given the concerns that had been raised, it was before the LPDC. Dr. DuBois-Walton added that the Board had an obligation to create policy or to revisit policy if emendations seemed appropriate.

Ms. Sieve asked that if the guidance addresses gun safety and even goes beyond that, what was the specific nature of CAGV's concern? Mr. Stein responded that CAGV felt the guidance did not go far enough with respect to firearm safety and that certain elements should be removed. Ms. Sieve then asked Mr. Frassinelli whether the guidance is teaching elementary school children how to handle a gun. Mr. Frassinelli explained that the entire thrust of the guidance on the elementary level was to avoid guns and not pick them up.

There was further discussion regarding the CAGV's concerns, including Mr. Frassinelli's responses to them. Dr. DuBois-Walton suggested that the LPDC may wish to consider the guidance and decide how to proceed. Ms. Sieve concurred, and suggested the Committee members take another look at the guidance and at its subsequent, October meeting further discuss the guidance, including whether it should be revised or updated.

Mr. Harris then moved, and Mr. Exley seconded, adjournment of the meeting at 9:25. The motion passed unanimously.