

# Connecticut State Board of Education

## Hartford

### State Board of Education Meeting April 5, 2023

(Approved May 3, 2023)

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, April 5, 2023, 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.

The meeting can be viewed here: [CT-N: State Board of Education April 5th Meeting](#).

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

Chairperson Karen DuBois-Walton called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

Present: Karen DuBois-Walton, Chairperson  
Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson  
Bonnie E. Burr\*  
Erik M. Clemons\*  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca, Ex Officio  
Valli Pendyala, Student Member  
Martha Prou\*  
Awilda Reasco  
Malia K. Sieve  
Allan B. Taylor\*  
Prajya Tickoo, Student Member

Absent: Dr. Rai Kathuria (designee for Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio)  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

#### **II. Public Participation**

1. Katherine Roe, Ph.D., Chair, Education & Educational Psychology Department, Western Connecticut State University, and president of AACTE-CT, spoke on funding for certification testing costs and recruitment incentives for the teacher shortages. A copy of Dr. Roe's written statement is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.
2. Kristina Sweeney, a Danbury parent, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury. A copy of Ms. Sweeney's written statement is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

[Board Members \*Erik Clemons and \*Allan Taylor arrived at the meeting at approximately 9:39 a.m.]

3. Matt Sweeney, a Danbury parent, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.

[Board Member \*Bonnie Burr arrived at the meeting at approximately 9:41 a.m.]

4. Dick Ferguson, Board Chair, Elm City College Preparatory School, school, spoke in support of agenda item VII.D., Renewal of State Charter: Elm City College Preparatory School, New Haven.

[Board Member \*Martha Prou arrived at the meeting at approximately 9:44 a.m.]

5. Clementia Lunner, a Danbury resident, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.
6. Christine Rosati Randall, a parent of a Killingly High School student spoke regarding the 10-4b Killingly Complaint.
7. Kristine Cicchetti, parent of a Killingly High School student, spoke regarding the 10-4b Killingly Complaint.
8. Julia Reveles, a resident of Killingly and former Killingly High School Student, spoke regarding the 10-4b Killingly Complaint.
9. Attorney Andrew Feinstein, a lawyer representing the concerned parents and citizens of Killingly, spoke regarding the 10-4b Killingly Complaint.
10. Ken Gucker, resident of Danbury, and former legislator, spoke in opposition item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.
11. Oswaldo Chin, a resident of Danbury, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.
12. Wilson Hernandez, president of the Ecuadorian Civic Center, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.
13. Juan, a resident and graduate of Danbury High School, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.
14. Tom Stringfellow, resident of Manchester spoke on various topics.
15. State Senator Julie Kushner, representative of the 24<sup>th</sup> District, and resident of Danbury, spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury.

### **III. Executive Session**

Chair DuBois-Walton requested a motion to go into executive session. Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Sieve seconded, with the Board voting unanimously to move into executive session at 10:29 a.m. for discussion with counsel regarding a written request for legal advice regarding the pending matter of Killingly Board of Education.

Present in executive session were Chair DuBois-Walton, Vice Chair Erin Benham, Board members Bonnie Burr, Erik Clemons, Elwood Exley, Donald Harris, Patricia Keavney-Maruca, Valli Pendyala, Martha Prou, Awilda Reasco, Malia Sieve, Allan Taylor, and Praja Tickoo. Assistant Attorney General Darren Cunningham attended the executive session via Teams. Also present was Staff Assistant Aldith Dewar.

The Board recessed its Executive Session at 11:12 a.m.

On motion moved by Vice Chair Benham, seconded by Board Member Sieve, the Board voted unanimously to move out of executive session and reconvene in public session at 11:12 a.m.

Present: Karen DuBois-Walton, Chairperson  
Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson  
Bonnie E. Burr  
Erik M. Clemons  
Elwood Exley, Jr.  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca, Ex Officio  
Valli Pendyala, Student Member  
Martha Prou  
Awilda Reasco  
Malia K. Sieve  
Allan B. Taylor  
Praja Tickoo, Student Member

Absent: Dr. Rai Kathuria (designee for Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio)  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

#### **IV. Consideration of Minutes:**

##### **A. March 1, 2023, State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Burr moved, Board Member Reasco seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the March 1, 2023, State Board of Education Meeting.

#### **VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously.

Chair DuBois-Walton announced that the Report of the Chair and the Report of the Commissioner were being taken out of order to bring forward the Action items.

**VII. Items Requiring Action**

**A. Renewal of State Charter: Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, Bridgeport**

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Charter School Program Manager Robert Kelly, Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Interim Superintendent Karolyn Belcher, and Principal Shalia Garnett presented to the Board.

The Board engaged in discussion.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.A., Renewal of State Charter: Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, Bridgeport. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Clemons seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Achievement First Bridgeport Academy from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026, subject to the Commissioner's April 5, 2023, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**B. Renewal of State Charter: Achievement First Harford Academy, Hartford**

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Charter School Program Manager Robert Kelly, Achievement First Hartford Academy Board Chair Erwin Hurst, Principal Oraina Simmons, and Interim Superintendent Karolyn Belcher presented to the Board.

The Board engaged in discussion.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.B., Renewal of State Charter: Achievement First Harford Academy, Hartford. Board Member Sieve moved, Board Member Prou seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Achievement First Hartford Academy from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026, subject to the Commissioner's April 5, 2023, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**C. Renewal of State Charter: Amistad Academy, New Haven, New Haven**

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Charter School Program Manager Robert Kelly, Amistad Academy, New Haven Board Chair Lorraine Gibbons, Principal Lauren Raimondi, and Interim Superintendent Karolyn Belcher presented to the Board.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.C., Renewal of State Charter: Amistad Academy, New Haven. Board Member Exley moved, Board Member Harris seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Amistad Academy from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026, subject to the Commissioner's April 5, 2023, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**D. Renewal of State Charter: Elm City College Preparatory School, New Haven**

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Charter School Program Manager Robert Kelly, Elm City College Preparatory School, New Haven Board Chair Dick Ferguson, Principal Lauren D'Addario, and Interim Superintendent Karolyn Belcher presented to the Board.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.D., Renewal of State Charter: Elm City College Preparatory School, New Haven. Board Member Sieve moved, Board Member Reasco seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Elm City College Preparatory School from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026, subject to the Commissioner's April 5, 2023, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**E. Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury**

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Charter School Program Manager Robert Kelly, Chair of the Danbury Prospect Charter School Planning Committee Stephen Tracy and John Taylor, CEO of Elevate Charter Schools presented to the Board. Legal Director Mike McKeon provided legal guidance as to statutory charter definitions.

The Board engaged in discussion.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.E., Material Change to Danbury Prospect Charter School, Danbury. Board Member Sieve moved, Vice Chair Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the September 30, 2022, initial certificate of approval for a state charter amendment proposal of Danbury Prospect Charter School to change its name to Danbury Charter School and engage Elevate Charter Schools as its charter management organization, and directs the Commissioner of Education to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried.

**F. The Condition of Education in Connecticut 2021-22**

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented an overview and key highlights of the annual report to the Board.

The Board engaged in discussion.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion for agenda item VII.F., the Condition of Education in Connecticut 2021-22. Board Member Burr moved, and Board Member Prou seconded that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-4(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes, receives *The Condition of Education in Connecticut (2021-22)* and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**VIII. Financial Matters**

There was no financial report.

## **IX. Consent Agenda**

Chair DuBois-Walton called for a motion on the Consent agenda. Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Burr seconded, that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: IX.A., Request for Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) Action.

### **A. Request for Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) Action**

**Resolved**, That the State Board of Education approves the request for Finance Advisory Committee action to transfer funds from the Charter School account to the Adult Education and Excess Cost-Student Based accounts, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

#### VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

## **X. Committee Reports**

### **A. Academic Standards and Assessment**

Committee Chair Clemons reported that the committee will meet on April 17, 2023.

### **B. Accountability and Support**

Committee Chair Benham reported that the committee will meet on April 19, 2023.

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

Committee Chair Harris reported that the committee met on March 29, 2023, and provided an update on the status to fill the Director's position.

### **D. Legislation and Policy Development**

Committee Chair Sieve reported that the committee did not meet this month. She then provided an introduction for Student Member Valli Pendyala to present to the Board. Mx. Pendyala provided a presentation on *Sex Education Curriculum and its Impact on LGBTQ+ Students*.

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

Chairperson Patricia Keavney-Maruca reported on the loss of a beloved Coach Kendall May, boys' basketball coach from Prince Tech.

### **F. NASBE**

Board Member Exley reported that he attended the NASBE Legislative Conference that was held from March 19-21, 2023. He highlighted the activities of the Conference.

**G. SERC**

Vice Chair Benham referenced the SERC report placed in the Supplemental Folders. She announced that SERC moved into its new location in Waterbury and an Open House is forthcoming.

Chair DuBois-Walton highlighted that the SERC Board has an open SBE appointee position on the SERC Board and the SBE is seeking candidates for consideration.

April Month of the Military Child

Chair DuBois-Walton read into the record of the meeting the Official Statement of Governor Lamont proclaiming April the Month of the Military Child.

**V. Report of the Chair**

Chair DuBois-Walton, thanked Board members who presided over the public hearing renewals that were on the agenda and thanked Vice Chair Benham for her continued work on the Educator Evaluation and Support Council. She recognized the leadership efforts of the department to modernize the teacher certification process, and described her participation on a panel at the CT Innovation Cohort.

**XI. Items for Discussion**

**A. 2021-2022 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut**

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Division Director John Frassinelli, presented the report on the analyses of trends in student disciplinary behaviors in Connecticut public schools.

**VI. Report of the Commissioner and Agency Update**

**CT-SEDS Update**

Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz provided an update on the CT-SEDS data. Mr. Klimkiewicz highlighted six in-person sessions that were held and the primary takeaways from practitioners and the opportunity to discuss the challenges, time, and access to training.

**Results from Vacancies Survey (August 2022)**

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan provided a summary of the vacancies survey for Alliance: Opportunity, Alliance: Non-Opportunity, and All other Districts for paraprofessional, teaching, special service vacancies that was conducted in August 2022 and a follow up survey in March 2023.

The Commissioner referenced her written report. She highlighted the following Shoutouts!

**Shoutouts!**

- Update on agency positions with 12 new hires
- Seymour High School visit
- Voice4Change: Enfield High School visit
- Participation in a national panel discussion about the Voice4Change program and related project implemented at Danbury High School with former Danbury High School students



Chapal Bhavsar and Viviana Flores, and their teacher Heather Lorenz. This panel was part of CCSSO's 2023 Legislative Conference held in Washington DC.

- 2023 National Paraeducator Appreciation Day

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Board Member Sieve moved, Board Member Exley seconded.

Chair DuBois-Walton adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

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