

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

State Board of Education Meeting September 6, 2023

D R A F T

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's Web site, the members of the State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") held a meeting on Wednesday, September 6, 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: [State Board of Education Meeting 9/6/2023 - YouTube](#)

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Karen DuBois-Walton called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.

Present: Karen DuBois-Walton, Chairperson
Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson
Bonnie E. Burr
Erik M. Clemons
Connor Cowan, Student Member
Elwood Exley, Jr.
Yasmeen Galal, Student Member
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Martha Prou
Malia K. Sieve
Allan B. Taylor

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

Oath of Office

Attorney Michael P. McKeon administered the Oath of Office to the newly appointed Student Board members Connor Cowan and Yasmeen Galal. A copy of the Oath of Office is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

II. Public Participation

1. Martin Edger, a member of the Hartford Federation of Teachers and a CTECS substitute teacher, spoke about support of substitute teachers' benefits and salaries.

2. Swarnjit Singh of the Sikh Art Gallery, member of the Norwich City Council and Norwich Board of Education, spoke about his religion and the current challenges Sikh students are facing with school accommodations in his district, specifically as it relates to the Kirpan.
3. Christine Rebstock, Executive Director of Media and Communications for LGBT United, requested that the State Board call upon the State Legislature to repeal a new law mandating feminine products to be placed in all public school bathrooms.
4. Mohinder Kalsi, a resident of Norwalk and Sikh member, stated that there is a need to inform the school districts of Sikh's articles of faith.
5. Khushvir Singh, a high school student in Milford and Sikh member, spoke about his fears as a Sikh student due to strict weapons policies in schools and urges the State Board to consider the importance of religious accommodations.
6. Kulbir Singh, a resident of Milford and Sikh member, spoke about his personal experience with his son's school accommodations issue and stated that the State Department of Education should include basic information about Sikhs and the articles of faith, with particular emphasis on the Kirpan, on their website.
7. Tom Stringfellow, a resident of Manchester, spoke on various topics.
8. Andrew Feinstein, an attorney, spoke about a pending complaint involving parents and students in the Killingly school district and the importance of continuing to move forward.

III. Executive Session

Chair DuBois-Walton requested a motion to go into Executive Session for the consideration of agenda item III.A., Personnel Matter (Discussion of Agenda Item VII.H.)

On a motion moved by Chair DuBois-Walton, seconded by Board Member Sieve, the Board voted unanimously to move into executive session at 10:11 a.m.

Present in Executive Session were Chair Dubois-Walton, Vice Chair Erin Benham, Board Members Bonnie Burr, Erik Clemons, Connor Cowan, Elwood Exley, Yasmeen Galal, Donald Harris, Martha Prou, Malia Sieve, and Allan Taylor. Also present in Executive Session were Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief of Staff Laura Stefon, and the candidate Dr. Charles E. Hewes.

On a motion moved by Chair DuBois-Walton, seconded by Board Member Sieve, the Board voted unanimously to move out of executive session and reconvene in public session at 10:35 a.m.

Chair DuBois-Walton announced that the agenda will be taken out of order to bring forward Action Item VII.H. Personnel Appointment: Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation.

VII. Items Requiring Action

H. Personnel Appointment: Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation

Commissioner Russell-Tucker, asked Dr. Charles E. Hewes to join the Board at the meeting table. Commissioner Russell-Tucker gave a brief overview of Dr. Hewes background and expertise and requested that the Board adopt her recommendation to appoint Dr. Charles E. Hewes as the Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation. Dr. Hewes expressed his excitement and appreciation at the opportunity to serve the parents, students, and the State of Connecticut in this role.

Chair DuBois-Walton thanked Dr. Hewes and requested a motion to adopt the Commissioner's recommendation of the appointment of Dr. Charles E. Hewes as the Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation. Vice Chair Benham moved, and Board Member Sieve seconded.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Consideration of Minutes

A. June 14, 2023, State Board of Education Meeting

Vice Chair Benham moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the June 14, 2023, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

B. June 30, 2023, Section 10-4b Impartial Hearing Panel Meeting

Board Member Harris moved, and Vice Chair Benham seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the June 30, 2023, Section 10-4b Impartial Hearing Panel Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

C. August 2, 2023, Section 10-4b Impartial Hearing Panel Meeting

Vice Chair Benham moved, and Board Member Sieve seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the August 2, 2023, Section 10-4b Impartial Hearing Panel Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

V. Report of the Chair

Chair Dubois-Walton welcomed everyone back from the summer months. She highlighted the following:

- Board Member Awilda Reasco resigned from the Board. She recognized her and wished her well.
- The Chair, Vice Chair Benham, and Board Member Exley joined Commissioner Russell-Tucker at the Back-to-School event for Superintendents at Berlin High School
- Expressed her excitement to hear the Commissioner’s message of “infinite possibilities.”
- The reinstatement of some Board Members on the individual Board Committees.
- She expressed excitement about the draft of the 5-year plan, which is available for public review and comment.
- Vice Chair Benham was nominated for a position on the NASBE Board, and that Vice Chair Benham has represented the Board at the Commissioner’s Back-to-School event,

the new teacher certification council event, the Asian American and Pacific Islander education symposium, and a convocation in New Haven.

Chair DuBois-Walton announced that the agenda will be taken out of order to bring forward Action Item VII.B. to accommodate guests' schedules.

VII. Items Requiring Action (continued)

B. Continuing Approval of the Office of Higher Education Alternate Route to Certification Educator Preparation Programs

A panel consisting of Office of Higher Education (OHE) Executive Director Timothy Larson; Jennifer Delaney, OHE Program Director of the Alternate Route to Certification; Jacqueline Lucier, OHE Executive Director of National Service; Shuana Tucker, Chief Talent Officer; and Lauren Tafrate, EPP Program Approval Coordinator, gave a presentation regarding the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation's (CAEP) findings on their assessment of the Office of Higher Education's Alternate Route to Certification Program (ARC).

Chair DuBois-Walton moved, Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), grants probationary approval to the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE) Alternate Route to Certification Program (ARC) for the period of September 6, 2023, through October 31, 2025, until OHE ARC's Fall 2024 probationary accreditation site review by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), for the purpose of certifying graduates from OHE ARC in the following areas:

Program	Grade Level	Program Level
Business Education	7-12	initial
Mathematics	7-12	initial
English	7-12	initial
Science:		
Biology	7-12	initial
Chemistry	7-12	initial
Earth Science	7-12	initial
General Science	7-12	initial
Physics	7-12	initial
Music Education	PK-12	initial
Family and Consumer Science	PK-12	initial
Technology Education	PK-12	initial
World Languages:		
Mandarin Chinese	7-12	initial
French	7-12	initial

German	7-12	initial
Italian	7-12	initial
Latin and Classical Humanities	7-12	initial
Spanish	7-12	initial
Portuguese	7-12	initial
Russian	7-12	initial
Other World Language	7-12	initial
Elementary World Languages:		
Mandarin Chinese	K-6	initial
French	K-6	initial
German	K-6	initial
Italian	K-6	initial
Spanish	K-6	initial
Portuguese	K-6	initial
Russian	K-6	initial
Other World language	K-6	initial

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

VI. Report of the Commissioner with Agency Update

Commissioner Russell-Tucker referenced her written report and highlighted the following:

- The 2023-24 school year is underway. The theme for this year is "Infinite Possibilities."
- Since April, the CSDE has hired 24 new staff.
- Director of Communications, Eric Scoville, will be transitioning to the Department of Transportation (DOT).
- New Director of Communications is Matthew Cerrone.
- Commissioner introduced Dr. Ingrid Canady, Executive Director of SERC, who shared her story at the Back-to-School meeting about her journey as an English learner to where she is today.
- Shared the list of priority areas that CSDE continues to work on.
- Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, gave a presentation on education bills from the 2023 legislative session.

- Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, gave a presentation on school district vacancies.

VII. Items Requiring Action (continued)

A. Recognition of State Board Member Awilda Reasco

Chair Dubois-Walton read the State Board of Education Certificate of Recognition for Board Member Reasco. It reads as follows:

Connecticut State Board of Education Certificate of Recognition in honor of Awilda Reasco who has served with distinction as a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education and with appreciation for her significant and lasting contributions to the State Board of Education and selfless dedication to Connecticut's children.

Board Member Harris moved, and Board Member Clemons seconded to approve the State Board of Education Certificate of Recognition this sixth day of September, Two Thousand Twenty-Three.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Issue Report or Order Hearing in the Matter of CS, Certification Action

Mike McKeon, Legal Director, and Louis Todisco, Staff Attorney, presented the case of educator CS to the State Board. Attorney Todisco explained that, pursuant to Section 10-145d-612 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), when an individual's educator and administrative certificates are at risk of either being suspended, revoked, or placed on probation, the individual is given an opportunity to either request a hearing, or surrender the certificates and waive his or her right to a hearing within a specified time. If the specified time passes and the individual does not do either, the regulation says the Board holds the right to do one of two things, either order the Commissioner to request a hearing or order the Commissioner to file a written report.

Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Sieve seconded that pursuant to its authority under subsection (e) of Section 10-145d-612 of the Regulations for Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), the State Board of Education orders the Commissioner to file with

it, within the regulatory time period, a written report In the Matter of CS, Certification Action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Material Change to Booker T. Washington Academy, New Haven

A panel consisting of Dr. Belinda Carberry, Executive Director of Booker T. Washington Academy; Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; and Robert Kelly, Education Consultant, gave a presentation regarding a proposed contract between Booker T. Washington Academy and Elevate Charter Schools, a charter management organization.

Chair DuBois-Walton moved, Vice Chair Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), approves the charter amendment proposal of Booker T. Washington Academy to contract for whole school management services with Elevate Charter Schools, a charter management organization, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

E. Joint Position Statement on Equity in Mathematics Education

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, and Jennifer Michalek, Mathematics & Computer Science Education Consultant presented on a collaborative effort among mathematics experts, leaders, stakeholders, and the CSDE to transform mathematics education policies and practices in Connecticut. The result was the development of Equity in Mathematics Education: A Joint Position Statement for Connecticut.

Chair Dubois-Walton motioned to move, and Vice Chair Benham seconded that the Board approves the endorsement of Equity in Mathematics: A Position Statement for Connecticut, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

F. Consideration of Hamden Addendum to Racial Imbalance Plan

A panel consisting of Gary Highsmith, Superintendent of Hamden Public Schools; Melissa Kaplan, Hamden Public Schools Board Chair; Laura Anastasio, Staff Attorney; and Mike McKeon, Legal Director, presented on the status of Hamden’s racial imbalance plan.

Chair DuBois-Walton moved, Vice Chair Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Sections 10-226a and 10-226b of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), accepts the Hamden Board of Education’s addendum to its racial imbalance plan, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

G. Consideration of Brass City Charter Petition for Declaratory Ruling

Mike McKeon, Legal Director, and Louis Todisco, Staff Attorney, gave a presentation relating to a Petition for Declaratory Ruling filed by the Brass City Charter School in relation to a dispute it has with the Waterbury Board of Education (WBOE).

Chair DuBois-Walton moved, Vice Chair Benham seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 4-176 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) and Sections 10-4-21 and 22 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), the State Board of Education agrees to issue declaratory rulings on the first and third issues, but declines to issue declaratory rulings on the second, fourth and fifth issues set forth in

the Brass City Charter School’s May 26, 2023, Petition for Declaratory Ruling concerning the application of CGS Section 10-66ee, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

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

Motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Financial Matters

A. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Mid-Term Budget Technical Adjustments

Chief Financial Officer Kathy Demsey presented on the mid-term budget technical adjustments.

Board Member Burr moved, and Vice Chair Benham seconded that the State Board of Education approves the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Mid-Term Budget Technical Adjustments and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

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

Motion carried unanimously.

IX. Consent Agenda

Board Member Exley requested to remove IX.B., Continuing Approval of University of Hartford Educator Preparation Programs from the consent agenda.

Chair DuBois-Walton asked for a motion on the Consent agenda. Board Member Harris moved, and Board Member Sieve seconded that the Board approve the following Consent agenda items: IX.A., Continuing Approval of Mitchell College Educator Preparation Programs and IX.C., Appointments to CSDE Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Program Approval Review.

A. Continuing Approval of Mitchell College Educator Preparation Programs

Resolved, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), grants provisional approval to Mitchell College for the period of September 6, 2023, to October 31, 2025, until Mitchell College’s fall 2024 stipulation visit by the Council of Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), for the purpose of certifying graduates from Mitchell College in the following area:

Program	Grade	Certification	Program Type
Early Childhood	Nursery-Grade 3	Initial	Undergraduate

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

C. Appointments to CSDE Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Program Approval Review

Resolved, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), appoints the following individuals to serve on the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Program Approval Review Committee, effective September 6, 2023, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Name	Affiliation	Representative	Terms Ending
Joseph Bonillo	Hartford Public Schools	K-12	September 5, 2026
Thomas Danehy	Area Cooperative Educational Services	K-12	September 5, 2026
Stacy McCann	Middletown Public Schools	K-12	September 5, 2026
Kevin Walston	Danbury Public Schools	K-12	September 5, 2026
Paul Whyte	New Haven Public Schools	K-12	September 5, 2026
Dorothea Anagnostopolous	University of Connecticut	EPP	September 5, 2026
Catherine O’Callaghan	Western Connecticut State University	EPP	September 5, 2026
Julie Sochacki	University of Hartford	EPP	September 5, 2026

VOTE ON

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

Absent: 0

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Continuing Approval of University of Hartford Educator Preparation Programs

A panel consisting of Dr. Cesarina Thompson, Dean, Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP), University of Hartford; Paige Bray, Chair, ENHP, University of Hartford, and Carol Ciotto, University of Hartford; Shuana Tucker, Chief Talent Officer; and Lauren Tafrate, Program Coordinator, gave a presentation regarding the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation’s (CAEP) findings on their assessment on University of Hartford’s Educator Preparation Programs.

Resolved, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, grants full continuing approval to the University of Hartford (UHART) for the period September 6, 2023, through October 31, 2030, until UHART’s 2029 CAEP site visit, for the purpose of certifying graduates from UHART in the following areas and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action:

Program	Grade Level	Program Level	Program Type
Early Childhood Education	Birth-K	Initial	Undergraduate/Graduate
Early Childhood Education	Nursery-3	Initial	Undergraduate/Graduate
Elementary Education	K-6	Initial	Undergraduate/Graduate
Elementary & Special Education	K-6 & K-12	Initial	Undergraduate
Comprehensive Special Education	K-12	Initial	Graduate
English	7-12	Initial	Undergraduate
Mathematics	7-12	Initial	Undergraduate
Music Education	PK-12	Initial	Undergraduate/Graduate
School Psychology	PK-12	Advanced	Graduate

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

X. Committee Reports

A. Academic Standards and Assessment

Chair Clemons stated their next meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2023.

B. Accountability and Support

Chair Benham indicated they will have a virtual meeting on September 20, 2023.

C. Finance, Audit, and Budget

Chair Harris reported that Gloria McCree, former Director of the Office of Internal Audit is currently serving as Interim Director, due to the retirement of Nora Chapman. The 2023-2024 Annual Internal Audit Plan was presented at the committee and will be brought to the full board in October.

D. Legislation and Policy Development

Chair Sieve reported the committee met today. They had two items: (1) The Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners/Multilingual Learners, which Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi presented; and (2) the CSDE Firearm Safety Guide, which was approved in 2020; however, there are concerns about the guide itself. The committee is still in discussion to assess the balance of the guide.

E. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board

In the absence of CTECS Chairperson Patricia Keavney-Maruca, Vice Chair Benham read the Chair's report. She reported that the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) school year is off to a great start, with all 20 locations opening safely and successfully. CTECS leadership is working with cross-state agencies to explore opportunities for workforce development partnerships and is very appreciative of DOL's Commissioner, Dante Bartolomeo, for her team and support.

F. NASBE

Board Member Exley reported that he attended a NASBE session regarding school buildings' effect on health and learning. He learned that when the temperature outside goes up, learning and performance in the classroom goes down because there is no air conditioning. Black and Latino and poor students are exposed to higher temperatures in the schools. Teachers have the second (2nd) highest occupational rate of asthma; second only to minors.

G. SERC

Vice Chair Benham reported that SERC continues to do great work with the Special Education department in the agency. In particular, she pointed out the amount of training SERC is involved in across the state.

XI. Items for Discussion

A. Presentation by the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation: Safe Routes to School

Kristen Levesque, Transportation Engineer, and Safe Routes to School Coordinator at the Department of Transportation (DOT), gave a presentation on the collaboration between the DOT and the SBE regarding children safely walking or bicycling to school, including children with disabilities. The Board thanked Ms. Levesque for her presentation.

B. Killingly 10-4b Matter

Mike McKeon, Legal Director, provided an update to the Board regarding the Killingly 10-4b matter and its current status.

Chair Dubois-Walton asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Board Member Harris moved, Vice Chair Benham seconded. The meeting adjourn at 1:10 p.m.

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