

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

State Board of Education Meeting

October 9, 2024

(Approved November 6, 2024)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's website, the members of State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") held a meeting on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, in the media center at Edison Middle School, 1355 North Broad Street, Meriden, Connecticut. Public access to the school allowed for public attendance at the meeting.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Erin D. Benham called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

Present: Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson
Bonnie E. Burr
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Kristen A. Record
Juan C. Salazar
Allan B. Taylor
Seth D. Zimmerman

Absent: Sreenidi Bala, Student Member
Erik M. Clemons
Dr. Aynsley Diamond (designee for Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio)
Sophia Messina, Student Member
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

Vice Chairperson Erin Benham thanked Principal Erin Lyons-Barton and Superintendent Mark Benigni for welcoming the State Board of Education to Meriden and to the Edison Middle School.

II. Public Participation

1. Martin Edgar, spoke on having evening SBE meetings.
2. Dr. Paula M. Talty, Interim Dean, School of Education, Central Connecticut State University, spoke as a representative of AACTE-CT on the Educators Rising Program, the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship, and funding to support testing requirements. A copy of Dr. Talty's written statement is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion to place agenda item III, Executive Session, at the end of the agenda. Board Member Harris moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that Executive Session be tabled to the end of the meeting.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In favor: Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained 0
 Absent: Clemons

Motion carried unanimously.

III. Executive Session

Executive Session was tabled to the end of the meeting agenda.

Vice Chair Benham brought the agenda back to agenda order with IV., Consideration of Minutes.

IV. Consideration of the September 4, 2024, Minutes of the State Board of Education

Board Member Taylor moved, Board Member Record seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the September 4, 2024, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In favor: Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained 0
 Absent: Clemons

Motion carried unanimously.

V. Report of the Commissioner and Agency Update

The Commissioner thanked Principal Lyons-Barton and Superintendent Benigni for hosting the State Board of Education meeting. She referenced her written report and highlighted the following items:

- Hosted Commissioner’s Superintendent Advisory Panel meeting.
- Held Commissioner’s Roundtable Meeting for Family and Community Engagement.
- Presented at the Transforming Children’s Behavioral (TCB) Health Policy and Planning Committee Meeting.
- Provided welcome remarks on the CT Housing Finance Authority’s (CHFA) Teacher Homeownership Webinar.
- Held a 3rd Friday call with superintendents, joined by Governor Lamont, DESPP Commissioner Higgins, DEMHS Deputy Commissioner Bergeron, and members of the CT Intelligence Center for discussion on school safety and security and recent school treats.
- Performance Office launched new Gifted and Talented Dashboard on EdSight.
- Met with State Board of Education members and the Executive Board of the CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE).
- Hosted a virtual all-staff Back-to-School meeting for members of Team CSDE.
- Hosted the annual Commissioner’s Back-to-School Meeting for Superintendents.
- Provided welcome remarks at the annual Special Education Back-to-School Conference.

- Participated in a national webinar: State Chiefs in Conversation, with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading to share Connecticut's efforts around implementing ESSER funds.

School Safety and Security

Division Director John Frassinelli, Division of School Health, Child Nutrition, and Family Services presented to the board. He spoke on the following matters:

- The uptick in school threats
- "All-Hazards" plans
- Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) statewide team
- Interagency Crisis Response Team and Protocol

Mr. Timothy Silva, of the Connecticut Intelligence Center (CTIC), presented to the Board that CTIC was developed after 9/11 to increase collaboration and information sharing among all levels of government. Mr. Silva concluded with methods for assisting leadership, stakeholders and law enforcement in mitigation and decision-making by getting information to the right people.

Board members engaged in questions.

Update on Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations

The Commissioner referenced her commitment to keep the Board updated on its authorized action at the June 5, 2024, meeting concerning Hartford Public Schools Financial Management and summarized the three-prong approach: (i) Magnet School Assessment: Optimizing Funds Utilization; (ii) Special Education Services Assessment and Enhancement; and (iii) Improvement of Financial Systems. She invited Deputy Commissioner Dr. Charles Hewes and Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton to the table. Dr. Hewes and Mr. Norton presented to the Board.

Board members engaged in questions.

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion to move the agenda to XI.A., Items for Discussion: Recognition of CT's 2024 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Board Member Zimmerman moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the agenda be moved to XI.A.

XI. Items for Discussion

A. Recognition of CT's 2024 Blue Ribbon Schools

The U.S. Department of Education named three Connecticut Schools as 2024 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan introduced the three Blue Ribbon Schools with their superintendents and school principals.

Daniel Hand High School, in Madison – Exemplary High Performing

- Dr. Craig Cooke, Superintendent, Madison Public Schools
- Anthony Salutari, Principal

Israel Putnam Elementary School, in Meriden – Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing

- Dr. Mark Benigni, Superintendent, Meriden Public Schools
- Enza Adamcewicz, Principal
- Nedra Miller, Assistant Principal

Sunnyside Elementary School, in Shelton – Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing

- Kenneth Saranich, Superintendent, Shelton Public Schools
- Darla Lussier, Principal

Mr. Gopalakrishnan provided an overview of the Blue Ribbon selection process. Each school team was welcomed to the table and shared their success stories.

The Board engaged in discussion.

B. Recognition of the 2024-2025 Educators Rising Student Cabinet and Aspiring Educators Program

Chief Talent Officer Dr. Shuana Tucker and Education Consultant Dr. Jessica Ocasio presented to the Board. They explained that the Educators Rising and Aspiring Educators Programs are a direct connection to the state's efforts to increase the diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce.

Recognition of the 2024-2025 Educators Rising Student Cabinet

Dr. Ocasio shared that the Connecticut Educators Rising program encourages high school students to consider teaching as a vocation and provides them with meaningful opportunities to explore education courses and activities.

Dr. Ocasio introduced the 2024-2025 Educators Rising Student Cabinet Officers. The students shared their goals and accomplishments for the year.

The Aspiring Educators from Central CT State University (CCSU)

The CCSU chapter of Aspiring Educators attended the National Aspiring Educators Conference in Philadelphia. The CCSU Chapter won the Emerging Chapter Award.

The Board members engaged in discussion.

Vice Chair Benham brought the agenda back to agenda item VII.B., Appointment to the State Education Resource Center Board of Directors.

B. Appointment to the State Education Resource Center Board of Directors

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VII.B. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-357a (b) (1) (B) of the Connecticut General Statutes, appoint Patricia Sullivan-Kowalski to the State Education Resource Center Board of Directors for a term coterminous with that of the Governor or until a successor has been appointed and qualified, whichever is longer, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Vice Chair Benham introduced and invited Assistant Superintendent Patricia Sullivan-Kowalski to the table.

Ms. Sullivan-Kowalski spoke on her 29 years of experience.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In favor: Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained 0
 Absent: Clemons

Motion carried unanimously.

A. Recognition of State Board Member Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca

Vice Chair Benham apprised the members that Board Member Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca sat on the Board as an ex-officio member in her capacity as Chairperson of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) board, and that she has resigned from the CTECS board.

Vice Chair Benham considered a motion for the Recognition of State Board Member Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca, Board Member Salazar moved, and Board Member Taylor seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Benham requested that the recognition be placed in the record of the minutes as follows:

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION in honor of **Patricia M. Keavney-Maruca** 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.

Approved Unanimously This Ninth Day of October, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In favor: Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained 0
 Absent: Clemons

Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Benham brought the agenda back to complete V., Report of the Commissioner with Agency Update

ARP ESSER Update

Chief Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented the status of the ARP/ESSER grants.

Board members engaged in questions and answers.

Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) and Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) Complaint to U.S. Department of Education

Legal Director Mike McKeon and Special Education Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz provided a summary that outlined the complaint filed by the Office of the Child Advocate and Disability Rights Connecticut, with the U.S. Department of Education.

V. Financial Matters

A. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Reduction and Reallocation Options

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VIII.A. Board Member Burr moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that that the State Board of Education approves the Fiscal Year 2025-26 and Fiscal Year 2026-27 Biennial Budget Options and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Chief of Fiscal and Administrative Services Jessica Brunetti presented to the Board.

The Board members engaged in discussion.

VOTE ON

MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	Clemons

Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Consent Agenda

There were no matters for Consent.

A. Accountability and Support

Committee Chair Benham reported that the committee will be meeting on November 19, 2024.

B. Finance, Audit, and Budget

Committee Chair Harris reported on the status of a committee meeting date.

C. Legislation and Policy Development

Committee Chair Burr reported that the committee has not met and is working on its meeting time.

D. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board

No report was provided.

E. NASBE

Vice Chair Benham reported on the upcoming NASBE Annual Conference 2024. She highlighted that Chief Talent Officer Dr. Shuana Tucker and team will be presenting Connecticut's Educator Rising program at the NASBE conference.

F. SERC

Committee Member Benham referenced her SERC report in the Supplemental Folders.

Vice Chair Benham moved the agenda back to agenda item III., Executive Session.

A. The Board anticipates entering into Executive Session for the purpose of reviewing a written legal opinion from the CSDE's Legal Director regarding investigation into potential SBAC testing irregularities within the Bristol Public Schools.

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion for agenda item, III.A. to go into Executive Session. Board Member Burr moved, and Board Member Harris, seconded, that the Board move into executive

session. At approximately 7:03 p.m., the Board went into executive session. Present in executive session were Vice Chair Erin Benham, Board Members Bonnie Burr, Donald F. Harris, Jr., Kristen A. Record, Juan C. Salazar, Allan B. Taylor, and Seth D. Zimmerman. Also, present were Legal Director Mike McKeon, Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, and Staff Assistant Aldith Dewar.

At approximately 7:43 p.m., the Board reconvened the regular meeting. Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion to exit executive session. Board Member Salazar moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the Board exit executive session and reconvene the regular meeting.

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Board Member Salazar moved, Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the meeting be adjourned.

Vice Chair Benham adjourned the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

Prepared by: _____

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