

# Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

## State Board of Education Meeting

**September 4, 2024**  
(Approved October 9, 2024)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's website, the members of the State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") held a meeting on Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 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 Video Player: State Board of Education September 4th Meeting](#).

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

Vice Chairperson Erin Benham called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m.

Present: Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson  
Sreenidi Bala, Student Member  
Bonnie E. Burr  
Erik M. Clemons  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Sophia Messina, Student Member  
Kristen A. Record  
Juan C. Salazar  
Allan B. Taylor  
Seth D. Zimmerman

Absent: Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

### **Oath of Office**

Attorney Michael P. McKeon, Commissioner of the Superior Court, administered the Oaths of Office to the two newly appointed 2024-25 student members (i) Sreenidi Bala, and (ii) Sophia Messina. Copies of the Oaths of Office are enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

### **II. Public Participation**

1. Tom Stringfellow, resident of Manchester, spoke on various topics.

### **III. Executive Session**

There was no executive session held.

Vice Chair Benham asked the Board to take the agenda out of order to agenda item V., Report of the Commissioner with Agency Update.

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

### **V. Report of the Commissioner and Agency Update**

The Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reminded the Board that at its August 21, 2024, special meeting, they approved the Position Statement and Policy Guidance of personal technology use in CT schools, and her commitment for the members to hear directly from districts on their implementation of this policy.

#### **District Implementation of Local Personal Technology Use Policies**

Division Director John Frassinelli, Division of School Health, Child Nutrition, and Family Services introduced Superintendent Brian Benigni, Berlin Public Schools, and Superintendent Michael Wilson and Assistant Superintendent Susan Fergusson from Torrington Public Schools to present to the board.

➤ **Berlin Public Schools**

Superintendent Brian Benigni, presented on Berlin's implementation of a cell phone use policy in 2023.

➤ **Torrington Public Schools**

Superintendent Michael Wilson and Assistant Superintendent Susan Fergusson, presented on Torrington's cell phone policy implemented in 2022.

The Board members engaged in discussion.

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

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

#### **A. June 5, 2024, State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the June 5, 2024, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**B. August 21, 2024, Special State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Zimmerman moved, Board Member Harris seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the August 21, 2024, Special State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**C. August 21, 2024, State Board of Education Retreat**

Board Member Harris moved, Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the August 21, 2024, Special State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Benham returned the agenda to V., Report of the Commissioner with Agency Update.

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

The Commissioner highlighted a few items from her written report in the Board's Supplemental Folders.

- Released of 2023-24 Attendance Data and Statewide Attendance Results.
- Joined Adjutant General Francis Evon and the Connecticut Army National Guard along with principals, superintendents, and other educators for Educator Flight Day to learn about Connecticut's Home Team and how they can be partners in education.
- Participated in Governor's Roundtable Discussion on Youth Suicide Prevention with other agency leaders.
- Joined Senator Blumenthal, State Senator Paul Cicarella, and other local leaders at the Wallingford Family YMCA to visit and celebrate their camp programming.
- Visited Berlin High School with Governor Lamont to see the district's cell phone policy in action and speak to students about its impact.
- Hosted Commissioner's Meet & Greet with new CSDE staff.
- Joined Governor Lamont, Comptroller Scanlon, and local and state elected officials to highlight the Paraeducator Health Subsidy Program and celebrate the work of paraeducators.

- Attended the ECS 2024 National Forum on Education Policy Conference and served as panelist in the Supporting English Learning from Pre-K to Graduation: Reflections from an Educator and State Superintendent session.

#### 2023-24 Attendance Data and Statewide Assessment Results

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Education Consultant Kari Sullivan Custer presented on the 2023-24 attendance data and statewide assessment results.

Ms. Custer presented on the chronic absenteeism trends in CT for the past six years and provided an overview of CT's nationally recognized Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP). She highlighted that for the past two years, there has been a steady improvement in student attendance.

Chief Gopalakrishnan presented on the state assessment results. He highlighted that for the second year in a row, mathematics and science assessment results show an improvement, and English language arts scores are stable overall.

The Board members engaged with questions and answers.

#### Launch of the Educator Vacancy Dashboard

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented on the EdSight vacancy dashboard. Mr. Gopalakrishnan announced the creation of a dashboard that shows budgeted vacancies that districts are actively trying to fill in three categories: (i) teaching vacancies; (ii) paraeducator vacancies; and (iii) special service vacancies.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker highlighted a one-pager in the Board's Supplemental packet on the initiatives addressing the educator shortage.

The Board members engaged in questions and answers.

#### Statewide Multi-Agency Suicide Prevention Efforts

Commissioner Russell-Tucker shared that in response to the increase in the number of young people who have died by suicide, the Governor hosted a roundtable discussion at the Village Crisis Center in Hartford. Commissioners shared information on resources available within their respective agencies to support mental health needs.

#### CSDE's Role in Interagency Suicide Prevention Efforts

Division Director John Frassinelli, Division of School Health, Child Nutrition, and Family Services presented an overview that covered the following efforts:

- 9-8-8 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- Interagency Public Health Bulletin
- Be Sensitive, Be Brave Program
- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale
- Interagency Crisis Response Team and Protocol
- Virtual House Calls

The Board members engaged in questions and answers.

#### 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 Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton and colleagues from Public Works, LLC to the table.

Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton, Eric Schnurer, President, Public Works, LLC, and Dr. Lyndsay Brown, Consultant, Public Works, LLC presented to the Board.

The Board members engaged in discussion.

#### Summer EBT Shoutout!

Division Director John Frassinelli, Division of School Health, Child Nutrition, and Family Services presented on the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (Summer EBT) that is administered between the CSDE and Department of Social Services.

The Commissioner concluded the Agency Update.

### **VI. Report of the Chair**

Vice Chair Benham highlighted the following:

- Speaker at Farmington High School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
- Attended an AFL-CIO Breakfast with U.S. Secretary Miguel Cardona in Meriden
- Reminder of the 2024 Superintendent's Back-to-School Meeting on September 10, 2024
- Announcement of CAFE Board of Directors invitation for the SBE members
- Reminder that the October 9, 2024, SBE meeting is an offsite evening meeting

Vice Chair Benham brought the agenda back to agenda to VII., Items Requiring Action.

### **VII. Items Requiring Action**

#### **A. Approval of List of Translation Services for English Learners/Multilingual Learners**

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VII.A. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Harris seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-17o of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopts the Approved Providers for Translation and Interpretation Services for English Learners/Multilingual Learners for use by districts, and directs the Commissioner of Education to take the necessary action including:

Providing districts with a menu of Approved Providers for Translation and Interpretation Services:

- ABC Language Services
- Alpha Omega Translations
- Bromberg & Associates: A Language Solutions Company
- Dantli Corp
- Interpreters & Translators, Inc.

- Language Line Solutions
- Linguanational Translations, Inc.
- Lionbridge Technologies, LLC
- MasterWord Services, Inc.

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi and Education Consultant Dr. Megan Alubicki Flick presented to the Board.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**VIII. Financial Matters**

**A. Biennial Budget Submittal**

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

Chief of Fiscal and Administrative Services Roger Persson presented to the Board.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**IX. Consent**

Vice Chair Benham asked if there was a Board member wishing to remove an item from Consent. Seeing none, she asked for a motion on agenda item IX.A. Board Member Salazar moved, Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the XI.A, Approval of 2024-2025 Annual Audit Plan.

**A. Approval of 2024-2025 Annual Audit Plan**

Resolved, that the State Board of Education adopts the Annual Audit Plan for the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION:      In favor:      Benham, Burr, Clemons, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman  
                  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 be meeting on September 7, 2024.

**B. Accountability and Support**

Committee Chair Benham reported that the committee will be meeting on September 12, 2024.

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

Committee Chair Harris reported that the committee held a meeting on August 29, 2024, for a final review of the 2024-2025 Audit Plan and update on OIA activities.

**D. Legislation and Policy Development**

Committee Chair Burr reported that the committee did not meet this morning, and suggested meeting at the end of the October 9, 2024, meeting.

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

No report was provided.

**F. NASBE**

Vice Chair Benham reported that she hoped the members were receiving the NASBE emails. She heightened the next NASBE Office Hours.

**G. SERC**

Vice Chair Benham referenced her written report. She referenced the last page and highlighted SERC's quarterly newsletter and podcasts.

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

Vice Chair Benham adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

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