

# **Connecticut State Board of Education**

## **Hartford**

### **State Board of Education Meeting**

**March 5, 2025**

(Approved April 2, 2025)

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, March 5, 2025, 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: <https://youtu.be/ziyWgqLJmFU>.

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

Vice Chairperson Erin Benham attended the meeting virtually and opened the meeting at 9:31 a.m. Vice Chair Benham transferred the chair responsibilities of the meeting to Board Member Donald Harris as the Chair Pro Tempore.

- I. Mr. Harris requested that agenda item XI.A., Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations: Public Works Fiscal Services Review Executive Summary of the Final Report be moved to immediately following agenda item V., Report of the Chair.

Present: Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson (attended virtually)  
Bonnie E. Burr\*  
Dr. Aynsley Diamond (designee for Terrence Cheng, Ex Officio)  
Donald F. Harris, Jr.  
Sophia Messina, Student Member  
Kristen A. Record  
Juan C. Salazar  
Allan B. Taylor  
Seth D. Zimmerman

Absent: Sreenidi Bala, Student Member  
Christine Benz, Ex Officio  
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

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

1. Anita Ford Saunders, Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, spoke on funding for Capital Prep Middletown and on the statutory funding of new charter schools. A copy of Ms. Saunders' written testimony is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.
2. Dr. Steve Perry, head of schools and founder of Capital Prep, spoke on the funding for Capital Prep Middletown and the statutory funding of charter schools.

3. Michele Clay, read the written testimony of Vanessa Cockrell, in support of the establishment of Capital Prep Middletown Charter School. A copy of Ms. Cockrell's written testimony is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.
4. Michele Clay, co-chair of Capital Prep Middletown, spoke on education equity and the establishment of Capital Prep Middletown to provide parents with equitable education options.
5. Malik Turner, spoke in support of the establishment of Capital Prep Middletown in the community.
6. Millie Arciniegas, Executive Director, Hartford Parent University, spoke on educational options, funding equity, and new pathways for certification and PRAXIS for educators.
7. Mark Sommaruga, Esq., attorney representing Capital Prep Schools, spoke on the statutory process for charter schools opening and funds appropriated from the General Assembly to the CSDE.

Public Participation ended.

### **III. Executive Session**

There was no executive session held.

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

#### **A. January 15, 2025, State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Burr moved, Board Member Taylor seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the January 15, 2025, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

#### **B. January 22, 2025, Special State Board of Education Meeting**

Board Member Zimmerman moved, Board Member Taylor seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the January 22, 2025, Special State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**V. Report of the Chair**

Vice Chair Benham highlighted the following:

- Introduced and welcomed Dr. Aynsley Diamond, Ed.D., Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs as the representative for State Colleges and Universities (CSCU).
- Board Members Kristen Record and Seth Zimmerman joined her on the NASBE Exchange.
- School Discipline Collaborative – advises Board and Commissioner on school discipline throughout the state.
- Congratulated student members Sreenidi Bala and Sophia Messina on their confirmation hearings at the General Assembly.

Pro Tem Harris moved the agenda to item XI.A., Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations: Public Works Fiscal Services Review Executive Summary of the Final Report.

**XI. Items for Discussion**

**A. Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations; Public Works Fiscal Services Review Executive Summary of the Final Report**

Deputy Commissioner Charles Hewes provided an overview of the work with Public Works LLC., and introduced Eric Schnurer, President, Dr. JoAnn Cox, Consultant, and Ms. Betty Ressel, Consultant, of Public Works LLC., who presented to the Board.

Vice Chair Benham requested the Commissioner make a motion to add a resolution and certificate for Mr. Taylor and Mr. Clemons to the agenda for Items Requiring Action.

**VII. Items Requiring Action**

**G. Resolution in Honor of Allan B. Taylor**

Pro Tem Harris read the resolution into the record of the meeting as follows:

*Whereas*, Allan B. Taylor of Hartford was first appointed to serve on the Connecticut State Board of Education by Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. on April 7, 1994; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was reappointed to the State Board of Education by Governor John G. Rowland on February 28, 1997; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was reappointed to the State Board of Education by Governor M. Jodi Rell on March 3, 2005, and to serve as Chairman; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was reappointed to the State Board of Education by Governor Dannel P. Malloy on February 28, 2013; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was recognized by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) as the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award in 2014; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was reappointed to the State Board of Education by Governor Ned Lamont on April 13, 2021; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor was the recipient of the 2024 CABE Friend of Public Education Award on November 14, 2024; and

*Whereas*, Mr. Taylor's commitment and vast knowledge of public education, his firm belief in the abilities of all students and his advocacy on their behalf, coupled with his support for all those stakeholders who share responsibility for student success, Therefore, be it

**Resolved**, The Connecticut State Board of Education honors Allan B. Taylor for his selfless dedication to the State Board of Education and extends to him its gratitude and appreciation for his commitment and 31 years of service to the students and families of the State of Connecticut, and wishes him well in his future endeavors.

Approved unanimously this fifth day of March, Two Thousand Twenty-Five.

Vice Chair Benham congratulated and thanked Mr. Taylor for his service to the board. On behalf of NASBE, she thanked Mr. Taylor for his service to NASBE as the Northeast Area Director, President-Elect, and President.

#### **H. Recognition of State Board Member Erik M. Clemons**

Pro Tem Harris read the certificate of recognition into the record of the minutes as follows:

**Certificate Of Recognition** in honor of Erik M. Clemons who has served with distinction as a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education, and with appreciation for his significant and lasting contributions to the State Board of Education and selfless dedication to Connecticut's children.

Approved unanimously this sixth day of November, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

Pro Tem Harris stated that Mr. Clemons was not in attendance but deserved to be applauded for his service.

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

The Commissioner referred to her report in the Supplemental Folders.

##### Update on Educator Evaluation Plans

Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano and Education Consultant Sharon Fuller, together with school officials from Madison and Waterbury Public Schools provided an update on the implementation of educator and leader evaluation plan guidelines.

##### Update on CT Technical Education and Career System Section 10-4b Complaint

Legal Director Mike McKeon presented a summary of the CTECS practices and policies for special education students and students with disabilities that had warranted the investigation. He stated that the new CTECS leadership have been extremely cooperative and CTECS has taken a positive turn with practices and policies. He concluded that that he is working to formulate a final report.

#### Update on Bridgeport Public Schools Action to Address District Needs

Commissioner Russell-Tucker presented an overview of the CSDE intervention. She then highlighted and updated on the progress of work with the Technical Assistance Team, entrance conference with the superintendent and members of the team, Bridgeport Board of Education required training that has started with CABE, the transparency of local reporting at monthly board meetings, hosting of listening session with students, and highlighted her open letter to the Bridgeport community.

She shared information on the following items:

- Highlighted that Governor's proposed Senate Bill 1244 empowers the CSDE to create a methodology to determine and set tuition rates.
- Visted Middletown High School to meet with students on entering the teaching profession, the importance of diverse educators; creating a sense of culture of community within the school.
- Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities invited students and educators to join digital illustrator and author Krista Weltner for a read-aloud of her picture book series, Everyday Adventures with Molly and Dyslexia.
- Announced an initiative that will transform how students engage with technology in the classroom by launching an innovative artificial intelligence (AI) in education pilot program.
- Guest on WICC's Melissa in the Morning to discuss the State Board of Education's decision to intervene in Bridgeport Public Schools and what it means for the district.

#### **CSDE SHOUTOUTS!**

- Attended the 2025 Kid Governor Inauguration. Congratulations to this year's Kid Governor, Keudy Martineze, and his entire cabinet.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Collaborative for Advancing Science Teaching and Learning in K-12, was attended by Commissioner Russell-Tucker, Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, CSDE Science Education Consultant Ron Michaels, and 2023 Teacher of the Year Carolyn Kielma.
- Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. CSDE's Kari Sullivan Custer participated in the webinar entitled Decoding NAEP: Attendance Matters. Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The Board members engaged in questions on assessing of the risk of losing federal funding.

Pro Tem Harris requested the Board's permission to bring the agenda to XI., Consent Agenda.

#### **IX. Consent Agenda**

Pro Tem Harris asked if there was a Board member wishing to remove an item from Consent. Seeing none, he asked for a motion on agenda items IX.A., Continuing Approval of University of Saint Joseph Educator Preparation Programs; XI.B., Approval of the 2025-26 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches; and XI.C., Regional School District 13 Member Town Contribution Agreement Board Member Burr moved, Board Member Salazar seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the Consent Agenda.

##### **A. Continuing Approval of University of Saint Joseph Educator Preparation Programs**

**Resolved,** That the State Board of Education (SBE), pursuant to Section 10-145d-9(g)(1)(A) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, grants full approval to University of Saint Joseph (USJ) for the period March 5, 2025, through March 4, 2032, for the purpose of certifying graduates from USJ in the following areas and directs the Commissioner to take necessary action.

| <b><u>Program</u></b>             | <b><u>Grade Level</u></b> | <b><u>Program Level</u></b> | <b><u>Program Type</u></b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Elementary Education <sup>1</sup> | K-6                       | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Secondary Areas:                  |                           |                             |                            |
| English                           | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| History/Social                    | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Studies                           | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Mathematics                       | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Biology                           | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Chemistry                         | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| General Science                   | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| French                            | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Italian                           | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Latin                             | 7-12                      | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Spanish                           |                           |                             |                            |
| Special Education                 | PK-12                     | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Early Childhood                   | N-3                       | Initial                     | Undergraduate/graduate     |
| Family/Consumer Science           | PK-12                     | Initial                     | Graduate                   |
| School Counselor <sup>2</sup>     | PK-12                     | Advanced                    | Graduate                   |

**B. Approval of the 2025-26 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches**

**Resolved,** That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Subsection (b)(2) of Section 10-149b of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the 2025-26 Concussion and Head Injury Annual Review for Coaches, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**C. Regional School District 13 Member Town Contribution Agreement**

**Resolved,** That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-51(b)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the Memorandum of Understanding between the Towns of Durham and Middlefield concerning the Regional School District 13 budget contribution rates, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**VOTE ON**

**MOTION:**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| In favor:  | Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman |
| Opposed:   | 0  |
| Abstained: | 0  |
| Absent:    | 0  |

Motions carried unanimously.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to section 10-145d (f) of the Connecticut General Statutes, on or after July 1, 2017, an endorsement for elementary education will be issued for Grades 1-6 only to in-state graduates

<sup>2</sup> Accredited by Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs

## **VIII. Items Requiring Action**

### **A. Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Hamden Middle School, Hamden**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.A. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education approves the continued participation of Hamden Middle School, Hamden, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Chief Turnaround Officer Dr. Melissa Jenkins, and Bureau Chief Jennifer Webb, together with school officials Erin Bailey, Assistant Superintendent, and Michelle Coogan, Principal, presented.

Board members engaged with questions.

#### **VOTE ON**

|                |            |  |
|----------------|------------|--|
| <b>MOTION:</b> | In favor:  | Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman |
|                | Opposed:   | 0  |
|                | Abstained: | 0  |
|                | Absent:    | 0  |

Motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for McDonough Middle School, Hartford**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.B. Board Member Zimmerman moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the continued participation of McDonough Middle School, Hartford, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional year commencing July 1, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Chief Turnaround Officer Dr. Melissa Jenkins, and Bureau Chief Jennifer Webb, together with school officials Dr. Kondra Rattley, Deputy Superintendent, and Marjorie Rice, Principal, presented.

#### **VOTE ON**

|                |            |   |
|----------------|------------|---|
| <b>MOTION:</b> | In favor:  | Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Taylor, Zimmerman |
|                | Opposed:   | 0   |
|                | Abstained: | 0   |
|                | Absent:    | Salazar   |

Motion carried unanimously.

**C. Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.C. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education approves the continued participation of Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Chief Turnaround Officer Dr. Melissa Jenkins, and Bureau Chief Jennifer Webb, together with school officials Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti, Assistant Superintendent, and Chris Vamvakides, Principal, presented.

Board members engaged in discussion.

**VOTE ON**

|                |           |  |
|----------------|-----------|--|
| <b>MOTION:</b> | In favor: | Benham, Burr, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman |
|                | Opposed:  | 0  |
|                | Abstained | 0  |
|                | Absent:   | 0  |

Motion carried unanimously.

**D. Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for New London High School, New London**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.D. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education approves the continued participation of New London High School, New London, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Chief Turnaround Officer Dr. Melissa Jenkins, and Bureau Chief Jennifer Webb, together with school officials, Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti, Assistant Superintendent, and Bryan Mahon, Principal, presented.

**VOTE ON**

|                |           |  |
|----------------|-----------|--|
| <b>MOTION:</b> | In favor: | Benham, Harris, Record, Salazar, Taylor, Zimmerman |
|                | Opposed:  | 0  |
|                | Abstained | 0  |
|                | Absent:   | Burr   |

Motion carried unanimously.



**E. Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Wilby High School, Waterbury**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.E. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that, pursuant to Section 10-223h of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education approves the continued participation of Wilby High School, Waterbury, in the Commissioner's Network for an additional and final year commencing July 1, 2025, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action, including, but not limited to, expending such funds as may be necessary to execute and implement the foregoing.

Chief Turnaround Officer Dr. Melissa Jenkins, and Bureau Chief Jennifer Webb, together with school officials Dr. Darren Schwartz, Interim Superintendent, and Dr. Michelle Baker, Principal, presented.

**VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**F. Approval of Reauthorization of Emergency Educator Certification Endorsements 2025-26**

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion on agenda item VII.F. Board Member Taylor moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education adopts the recommendation from the Connecticut State Department of Education to extend, for the 2025-26 school year only, implementation of the following temporary certification endorsements, as allowable under Sec. 10-145d-619 of *Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations*, Emergency Generalist, PK-8 (#201), Emergency Generalist, 4-12 (#202), and Emergency Teacher of English Language Learners, PK-12 (#204) to allow educators who currently hold and continue to hold during the 2025-26 school year an appropriate provisional or professional teaching certificate to be eligible for Emergency Authorization at the request of the local education agency (LEA)/district, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano, and Education Consultant Kaylan Ricciardi presented.

**VOTE ON**

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

Motion carried unanimously.

**IX. Financial Matters**

Chiefs of Fiscal and Administrative Services Roger Persson and Jessica Brunetti presented on the Governor's proposed budget.

**X. Committee Reports**

**A. Academic Standards and Assessment**

Vice Chair Benham reported that the committee will be meeting on May 20, 2025.

**B. Accountability and Support**

Committee Chair Benham reported that the scheduled committee meeting was canceled due to the weather. The next committee meeting will be on April 23, 2025.

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

Committee Chair Harris reported that the committee met on February 25, 2025. He praised the small team for their audit work.

**D. Legislation and Policy Development**

Committee Chair Burr reported that the committee will not be meeting today. The next meeting will be on April 2<sup>nd</sup> after the adjournment of the Board meeting.

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

Vice Chair Benham reported she did not receive a report from CTECS .

**F. NASBE**

Vice Chair Benham reported that NASBE had an upcoming member exchange for April 7, 2025.

**G. SERC**

Vice Chair Benham referenced her written report. She noted the last page with a list of all the awardees. She noted all the ongoing work that SERC board is doing for our districts. She highlighted the great work of Dr. Ingrid Canady in Bridgeport on the Technical Assistance Team. She referenced attending the SERC's *Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference*.

**XI. Items for Discussion**

**B. Implementation of State Board of Education Comprehensive Plan**

Strategic Priority: All learners are supported, including those with high needs, and have equitable access to education regardless of background or advantage, as well as access to great teachers and leaders, and a diverse educational workforce.

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Charles Hewes provided an update on the progress of the State Board of Education's Strategic Plan. He noted that work is underway on all four priorities, however, his presentation would be focused on the significant progress that Department has made since the start of the school year on Strategic Priority: *All learners are supported, including those with high needs, and have equitable access to education regardless of background or advantage, as well as access to great teachers and leaders, and a diverse educational workforce.*

He noted that actionable items related to this priority that will drive high-level measurable outcomes are focused on supporting districts to improve school climate and the use of alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices; and the recruitment and retention of a diverse educator workforce.

Pro Tem Harris asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Board Member Taylor moved, Board Member Burr seconded, that the meeting be adjourned.

Vice Chair Benham adjourned the meeting at 12:59 p.m.

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