Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

State Board of Education Meeting

November 5, 2025
(Approved December 3, 2025)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State and posted on the agency's website, the members the of State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") held a meeting on Wednesday, November 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/ObJ6ylWPjms.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Erin Benham called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Present: Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson
Samarth Basanth, Student Member
Bonnie E. Burr
Andrew J. Carlson
Dr. Aynsley Diamond (designee for Interim Chancellor Dr. John Maduko, Ex Officio)
Paula S. Gilberto
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Gladys B. Labas
Hansika Lenkala, Student Member
Evan Pitkoff
Dr. Alice Pritchard (designee for CTECS)
Kristen A. Record
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio-
Seth D. Zimmerman

Absent:

Oath of Office
Attorney Michael P. McKeon, Commissioner of the Superior Court, administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Board member Dr. Evan Pitkoff. A copy of the Oath of Office is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

Vice Chair Benham congratulated and welcomed both Dr. Evan Pitkoff, and Dr. Andrew J. Carlson, who was sworn in at the October 8, 2025, evening meeting in North Haven, to the Board. She asked the two new Board Members to provide an introduction of themselves.

- Board Member Pitkoff shared his background and experience.
- Board Member Carlson shared his background and experience.

II. Public Participation

1. Patricia Phelan, co-president of the CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA), spoke on agenda item VIII.C., Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards (CACAPS) Annual Report 2024-2025. A copy of Ms. Phelan's written testimony is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

2. Frances DiFore, co-president of the CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA), spoke on agenda item VIII.C., Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards (CACAPS) Annual Report 2024-2025. A copy of Ms. DiFore's written testimony is enclosed in the official file of this meeting.

3. Tom Stringfellow, of Manchester, spoke on various topics.

Public Participation ended.

III. Executive Session

There was no executive session held.

IV. Consideration of Minutes:

A. October 8, 2025, State Board of Education Meeting

Board Member Harris moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the Board adopt the minutes of the October 8, 2025, State Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE ON MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Harris, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

V. Report of the Chair

Vice Chair Benham highlighted the following:

- Attended the 2026 CT Teacher of the Year Announcement.
- Reminded Board members that December 2, 2025, is the Teacher of the Year Ceremony at the Bushnell.
- Reminded Board members of the CABE/CAPSS Conference being held on November on November 21, 2025 and highlighted the "Meeting with the State Board of Education" session workshop of the conference and the support for Board member attendance on the panel.

X. Committee Reports

A. Academic Standards and Assessment
Vice Chair Benham reported that the committee will meet on November18, 2025.

B. Accountability and Support
Committee Chair Benham reported that the committee will meet on November 12, 2025.

C. Finance, Audit, and Budget
Committee Chair Harris reported that the committee will meet on November 18, 2025 Mr. Harris thanked Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton for his continued leadership with the extended absence of Director Coates.

D. Legislation and Policy Development
Committee Chair Burr reported that the committee met on October 8, 2025, and moved the Adoption of ETS Parapathways assessments for paraprofessionals to the Board. She noted that the CT Educator Preparation and Certification Board (CEPCB) presented significant amendments regarding the CEPCB, and that the committee had questions regarding the presentation, and it was tabled. She concluded that the committee was meeting today, at 1:00 p.m., and CEPCB is again on the agenda.

E. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board
Vice Chair Benham reported that Dr. Pritchard will report at the next Board meeting.

F. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Vice Chair Benham reported that Dr. Diamond was not able to attend today's meeting and CSCU would have a report at the next Board meeting.

G. NASBE
Vice Chair Benham reported that she attended the NASBE 2025 Annual Conference held in Austin, TX, which focused on AI and math. She further reported that she had completed her term as the Northeast Area Director. She noted that NASBE has an AI Advisory Group, and if any Board member was interested in participating as a CT representative to let her know.

G. SERC
Vice Chair Benham referenced her written report. She highlighted the two flyers that were shared from the last SERC Board of Directors meeting of programs that are open to Board members to attend.

V. Report of the Commissioner and Agency Update

The Commissioner noted that her written report was in the Board's Supplemental Folders.

- Welcomed Dr. Pitkoff and noted his years of experience in education.
- Highlighted the released results from the 2024-2025 Next Generation Accountability System.
- CSDE's Kari Sullivan-Custer, Education Consultant, was a panelist on EdWeek's webinar: *Boosting Attendance: What Are Schools Doing to Cut Chronic Absenteeism*.

- ❖ Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success, Dr. Melissa Hickey participated in *The Right to Read Expert Panel Discussion* with Kareem Weaver at the Hartford Public Library's Downtown Library.
- ❖ The CSDE Academic Office created a Manufacturing Month PD Playlist of curated resources to support identified goals to build awareness and opportunities for careers in manufacturing.

- ❖ Appeared with Division Director John Frassinelli and Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan before the Appropriations Committee Informational Forum on Federal Nutrition Program Changes, to discuss and answer questions on the impacts of the federal government shutdown on nutrition programs.

[Board Member Donald Harris left the meeting at approximately 9:59 a.m.]

Celebration of Educational Excellence

- ❖ Joined Governor Lamont, Danbury Superintendent Casimiro, Congresswoman Hayes to announce the 2026 CT Teacher of the Year, Brian Betesh.
- ❖ Joined Putnam Superintendent Rioux, Mayor Seney, State Representative Stewart and other local leaders to announce the 2026 Ann Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year, Vanessa Taylor.
- ❖ Joined Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley and CSDE staff to present to career and technical education teacher David Mason the Milken Educator Award and $25,000 at a special all-school assembly at Bacon Academy in Colchester.

New England Education Commission of the States Convening

- ❖ The CSDE hosted the first-ever New England convening of the Education Commission of the States, bringing together education commissioners, legislators, higher education and workforce leaders from across the region to learn from one another.

2024-2025 Accountability Results

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan, presented. He provided an overview on the 12 Indicators of the Accountability System's collection of data from school districts and how the results are used to evaluate school performance. He highlighted the SDE's press release and the focus on post-secondary readiness, particularly, the work around dual credit. He concluded that the Accountability Index is used to identify schools of distinction, as well as to identify schools that need state support.

Update on Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations

The Commissioner invited Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton to present to the Board.

Mr. Norton was joined by Division Director Bryan Klimkiewicz, Special Education.

Mr. Norton reported that the agency had put together an Interdisciplinary Team (Accountability and Support Team) that represented almost every office in the Department to implement the recommendations identified by Public Works and New Solutions K12 and to provide HPS with technical support and assistance.

Mr. Klimkiewicz reported on the special education support, monitoring, and accountability work with the district over the summer months. He highlighted the creation of a tool that tracked and monitored each individual students' services within their IEPs that was impacted by staffing vacancies, and the meetings held with the director to look at the strategies around staff vacancies. He noted conducting

on-site visits for HPS extended school year program. Mr. Klimkiewicz noted the reduction of HPS level of non-compliance with IEPs. He concluded by informing of partnering with The Parent Advocacy Center to conduct interviews and collect information from families.

Board members engaged in questions and discussion.

Update Bridgeport Public Schools – Action to Address District Needs
Deputy Commissioner Charles Hewes referenced the report in the Board's Supplemental Folder.

Deputy Commissioner Hewes was joined by Division Director John Frassinelli, School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services to present.

Dr. Hewes reported that in July, we received the final audit for BPS, with 34 recommendations for the district. There is a Technical Assistance Team that is assisting the district with day-to-day operations. He updated that the CSDE procured, through the Department of Administrative Services, a contract with Public Works, LLC to provide technical assistance to BPS in the development, training, and implementation of financial and human resources processes and procedures.

Division Director John Frassinelli, School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, presented on BPS nutrition program. He reported that under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we are required to go into districts every three years and review their child nutrition program. In 2024, there were findings in Bridgeport, and the USDA required that we recover those funds. The issue was based on the USDA requirement of how the meals were counted and the process was corrected.

Board members engaged in questions and discussion.

Educator Attrition Dashboard
Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan presented. He reported that it was a legislative requirement that we create this Educator Attrition Dashboard. He provided a definition of certified educator attrition and highlighted the four data tabs to be used to gather the data.

Board members engaged in questions and discussion.

VIII. Items Requiring Action

A. Report on Agricultural Science and Technology Education Graduates Five Years After Graduation

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VIII.A. Board Member Zimmerman moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-65a(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes, receives the "Report on Agricultural Science and Technology Education Graduates Five Years after Graduation."

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Education Consultant Harold Mackin, and guest Morgan Maglio, an agriculture teacher at Southington High School, presented.

Ms. Maglio shared her journey to becoming an agricultural teacher starting with attending Southington High School as an agriculture education student. She went on to college with no intention of becoming a teacher until her senior. She was contacted by her high school teacher to

collect the five-year data, and became aware of a long-term substitute agricultural teacher position. She applied to an agricultural master's program to get a degree in agriculture education, and her continued connection with the agricultural community lead to her becoming an agricultural teacher.

Board Member Burr thanked Mr. Mackin for the report. She further thanked him for coordinating all the agricultural science and technology education (ASTE) tours.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker thanked Mr. Mackin all his work. She announced that Mr. Mackin was retiring and spoke on his service and years at the agency, as well as being the State Career Technical Education Director.

Chief Parisi spoke on working with Mr. Mackin both in district, as well as at the agency. She highlighted that Mr. Mackin was true to the regulations to ensure that programs are implemented as intended.

VOTE ON MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	Harris

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards (CACTPS) Annual Report 2024-2025

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VIII.B. Board Member Record moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded, that the State Board of Education receives the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards Annual Report 2024-2025, submitted in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-144d, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Bureau Chief Jade Gopie, and Education Consultant Sharon Fuller, presented.

Vice Chair Benham commented on vacancies, and Ms. Fuller highlighted the increased membership.

VOTE ON MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	Harris

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards (CACAPS) Annual Report 2024-2025

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VIII.C. Board Member Record moved, and Board Member Gilberto seconded, that the State Board of Education receives the Connecticut Advisory Council for Administrator Professional Standards Annual Report 2024-2025, submitted in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-144e(e), and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Bureau Chief Jade Gopie, and Education Consultant Sharon Fuller, presented.

Board Member Record raised a question on formalized mentoring for administrators.

VOTE ON MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	Harris

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Adoption of ETS ParaPathways Assessments for Paraeducators

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion on agenda item VIII.D. Board Member Gilberto moved, and Board Member Burr seconded, that the State Board of Education adopts the Educational Testing Service (ETS) ParaPathways Assessment as the successor to the ParaPro Assessment, including all future updates that continue to be aligned to state standards and including any bridge offerings designed to support paraeducators, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Bureau Chief Jade Gopie, and Education Consultant Lauren Tafrate, presented.

Board members engaged in questions and discussion.

VOTE ON MOTION:	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	Harris

Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Financial Matters

There were no Financial Matters on the agenda.

IX. Consent Agenda

Vice Chair Benham asked if there was a Board member wishing to remove an item from Consent. Hearing none, she asked for a motion on agenda items IX.A., Reappointment of Impartial Arbitrators.

Board Member Record moved, and Board Member Labas seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the Consent Agenda.

A. Reappointment of Impartial Arbitrators

Resolved, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (a) of Section 10-153f of the Connecticut General Statutes, recommends Janis Jerman, Richard Kosinski, William DeVane Logue, Dennis Murphy, Glenn Powell, Michael Ricci, Gerald Weiner, and Linda Yelmini for reappointment as impartial arbitrators representing the interests of the public in general, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON MOTION:		
	In favor:	Benham, Burr, Carlson, Gilberto, Labas, Pitkoff, Record, Zimmerman
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained	0
	Absent:	Harris

Motion carried unanimously.

XI. Items for Discussion

A. Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations Financial Analysis of Hartford Magnet School Operations Executive Summary of the Final Report

Update on Hartford Public Schools Fiscal Operations – Financial Analysis of Hartford Magnet School Operations

Chief Strategic Planning Officer Keith Norton was joined by Staff Attorney Matthew Venhorst, Legal and Governmental Affairs, to present.

Attorney Venhorst provided an overview review of his September preliminary findings presentation. He provided:

- Foundational Principles, to include background on Sheff v. O'Neil in 1996
- Presented on Major OIA Findings: Sheff Operator Comparison
- Major OIA Findings – Budgeted operating funds per Pupil
- Trends Comparison – Magnet and Neighborhood Schools
- Legal Conclusions on Differential Funding with Identical Enrollment Equity-Based Framework –Conclusion

Attorney Venhorst noted that the 2022 requirements were about providing great educational options for all students.

- Funding Growth v. Student Need
- Trends in Enrollment
- Facilities
- Recommendations

Board members engaged in questions and discussion.

Mr. Norton and Attorney Venhorst, along with Robin Cecere, Director, Regional School Choice Office, responded to the Board inquiries.

Vice Chair Benham asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Gilberto moved, and Board Member Zimmerman seconded the motion to adjourn.

Vice Chair Benham adjourned the meeting at 12:23 p.m.

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