

IV.C.

Connecticut State Board Of Education Hartford

Minutes State Board of Education Retreat

August 5, 2026

Draft Minutes

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 Retreat on Wednesday, August 5 2026, at the H.C. Wilcox Technical High School, 298 Oregon Road, Meriden, Connecticut.

Public access to the building allowed for public attendance at the meeting.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair Benham called the Retreat to order at 9:39 a.m.

Present: Erin D. Benham, Vice Chairperson
Bonnie E. Burr
Shepard Fisher, Student Member (newly appointed)
Paula S. Gilberto
Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Gladys B. Labas
Evan Pitkoff
Dr. Alice M. Pritchard, designee for CTECS
Shruti Shah, Student Member (newly appointed)
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Ex Officio

Absent: Andrew J. Carlson
Dr. Aynsley Diamond, designee for CSCU
Kristen A. Record
Seth D. Zimmerman

Vice Chair Benham welcomed the Board members and State Department of Education (SDE) leadership staff. She reviewed the Retreat objectives for the day. She then introduced the Retreat facilitator, Paolo DeMaria, President and CEO of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

Commissioner Russell-Tucker welcomed the Board members, the SDE staff, and Mr. Paolo DeMaria (NASBE). The Commissioner noted the objectives for review and understanding of the four Strategic Priorities of the Comprehensive Plan for Education 2023-2028.

The Commissioner thanked the H.C. Wilcox Technical High School, Meriden, for hosting the State Board of Education. The Commissioner noted the objectives for review and understanding of the continued implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Strategic Priorities.

Dr. Alice M. Pritchard welcomed the Board to H.C. Wilcox and provided an introduction of Principal Gail Duffy. She highlighted a school tour for later in the day.

Introductions and Member Relationship Building

Mr. DeMaria opened with an introduction of himself and had the Board members and all members of the SDE staff participate in a relationship-building exercise, "*What Defines Me.*" Each person was to share a picture and share its significance.

Boardsmanship Review

Mr. DeMaria presented to the Board on effective Boardsmanship of understanding the role of a Board member, etiquette at meetings, and attendance at Board member engagements beyond the Board meetings. Discussion ensued regarding the structures necessary for an effective governance body that remains focused on learning standards, including the relationship between policy setting role of the Board leadership role support structures provided by the Department.

Mr. DeMaria emphasized the concept of the Board being a team that has goals, roles, processes, and the need to have a relationship. He provided examples of roles and responsibilities that fall under different buckets of (i) Must Do, (ii) Should Do, (iii) Good to Do, and (iv) Optional.

Vice Chair Benham led discussions on the Board activities, e.g., committee meetings, invitations to the SBE, school visits, presiding over charter school renewal hearings and highlighted the 2026-27 schedule.

Updates: Comprehensive Plan – Implementation and Outcomes

- Strategic Priority 1 Division Director John Frassinelli, School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, and Shuana Tucker, Chief Talent Officer
- Strategic Priority 2 – Bryan Klimkiewicz, Division Director, Special Education, and
- Mike McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs
- Strategic Priority 3 – Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, and Melissa Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success
- Strategic Priority 4 - Keith Norton, Chief Strategic Officer

Teacher Recruitment Pipelines

Presented by Deputy Commissioner Sinthia Sone-Moyano.

Special Education Overview and Current Status

Presented by Division Director, Bryan Klimkiewicz, Special Education (virtually), and Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs Mike McKeon (in-person).

The Board recessed at 12:40 p.m. and reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

Updates: Commissioner Russell-Tucker provided an overview on the following two Commissions:

- ❖ Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on K-12 Education Funding and Accountability
 - Established in April 2026 for the development of a strategic plan to reform the funding streams used to support the operations of Connecticut's K-12 public schools.
 - Members of the facilitator organization, Columbia University's Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) to the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on K-12 Education Funding and Accountability, joined the Retreat and provided a virtual overview presentation on Stakeholder Engagement.

Board members engaged in questions.

- ❖ Connecticut Career Pathways Commission
 - The Commissioner introduced that the Commission was created to enhance and better integrate education and career pathways incorporating all the latest innovations throughout the state.
 - She provided an overview of the Commission's official functions to be performed.
 - Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker, and Vice Chair Erin Benham are members.

CT Technical Education and Career System

Dr. Alice M. Pritchard presented on CTECS. Principal Gail Duff and Dr. Pritchard provided a tour of H.C. Wilcox of the career classrooms with an overview of the curriculum.

Legislative Process

Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison Laura Stefon presented to the Board on the legislative process and Office of Policy and Management and the Governor's Office Processes.

Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison Laura Stefon presented to the Board on the timelines of long session and short sessions, review by Office of the Governor and Office of Policy and Management of all proposals and all reports, public meetings, and committee meetings, budget process of the Governor's Budget and the Appropriations' Committee Budget. She spoke on presentations to the Legislation and Policy Development Committee and moving bills to the Board.

Vice Chair Benham adjourned the Retreat at 3:10 p.m.

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