

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
College Hall Chapel, Vermont College of Fine Arts, 36 College Street, Montpelier, VT
November 15, 2011

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes

Note: These are draft minutes and have not been approved by the Board; however, they are substantively correct.

Present

Board Members: *Kathy Larsen, Vice Chair; Stephan Morse; Sean-Marie Oller; Judy Livingston; Laura Harris; Don Collins; Brian Vachon; Bill Mathis*

DOE: *Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Carol King; Jill Remick; Jesse Moorman; Bill Talbott; Cathy Hilgendorf; John Fischer; Vaughn Altemus*

Others: *Ryan McLaren, U#46 Board, Essex Junction; Steve Dale, VSBA; Nicole Mace, VSBA; Jeff Francis, VSA; Mill Moore, VISA; Rep. Howard Crawford; Retta Dunlap; Dr. William Symonds*

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Kathy Larsen, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:46 a.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Chair, Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates

Bill Mathis spoke about the devastation brought by Tropical Storm Irene, but noted that in many ways Vermont was very fortunate when compared to other areas of the country and world who have experienced natural disasters

Kathy Larsen reported on her attendance at the most recent NESSC meeting, noting that one main focus of that group's work is increasing the percentage of students going on to some type of postsecondary education or training

Larsen also reported on several topics from Fayneese Miller:

- Vermont has been recognized by the Asthma and Allergy Association of America for its work in this area.
- Miller, Commissioner Vilaseca and Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf met with the members of the House Education Committee on November 4 to update the committee on the ESEA waiver work.

- Miller and Susan Bartlett spoke by phone in October; the conversation focused mainly on the ESEA Waiver work
- UVM’s College of Education and Social Services, of which Miller is the Dean, hosted its 30th annual Vermont outstanding teacher day. Senator Leahy, Governor Shumlin and Commissioner Vilaseca also attended.
- The following Board members have sent study group applications to NASBE: Miller, Don Collins and Sean-Marie Oller.

Larsen shared a thank you letter from retiring NASBE Executive Director Brenda Welburn for the contribution to the foundation established in honor of her NASBE service.

Collins and Oller reported that they have been accepted to participate on NASBE study groups during the coming year,

Item D: Commissioner’s Update

Vilaseca reported on the following:

- Six schools have received innovation grants as part of the NESSC’s league of innovative schools: Montpelier High School, Essex High School, Bellows Free Academy-St. Albans, Cabot School and Williamstown High School. Some of the work they will be undertaking will focus on innovative programming; ungraded options for students, standards based graduation and applied learning.
- The Nellie Mae Foundation has awarded \$100,000 for grants to these schools in support of these efforts, with a goal of replication of practices to other schools and building a network of Vermont and New England-wide schools. Vilaseca noted that Nellie Mae has awarded \$1 M to schools in new England in support of changes to secondary education.
- His Op. Ed. piece on no strikes/no imposition of contracts, saying that he stands by his position even though he has been getting some push back. He reiterated his position that he needs to be speaking about and acting on what is best for students. Vachon and other board members agreed that the Board should have a discussion on possible legislation and its position on this topic. It was noted that there is currently a bill in the legislature on this topic but that it focuses on binding arbitration.

This item led to a discussion on the recent RED formation vote in Fairfax and Fletcher that was voted down by the members of those two communities.

- Vilaseca reported that he spent last week in Cuba, visiting relatives and friends and also, in conjunction with Burlington College, beginning discussions on a program that would take Vermont educators to Cuba for cultural and educational study. Brattleboro and Mt Mansfield Union High Schools currently have programs for students to go to Cuba.
-

10:20 a.m. – Judy Livingston arrived

- **Item J:** Overview: *Connecting the Dots in Transforming Education*
 - Vilaseca reported on the October 26 *Connecting the Dots in Transforming Education* conference sponsored by the Governor's Office and noted that Karen Marshall will come to a Board meeting in the next couple of months to give more information on this initiative. The Board viewed the YouTube video, "A Brave New World Wide Web."
-

Item E: Public to be Heard

Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association addressed the Board regarding the capping of the rate of reimbursement for tuition payments to independent schools. He noted that the rate had been capped for four years and asked Board members to keep that in mind during the budget development process

Ryan McLaren, member of the U #46 Board (Essex), addressed the Board regarding the Green Ribbon Schools project, focusing on energy efficiency, healthy learning and environmental education in schools. Vilaseca responded that while he understands the value of this project, this is a pilot year for the program and the Department does not have the staff time to devote to it at this time.

Action Items

Item F: Consent Agenda

Bill Mathis requested that the Spark item be removed from the consent agenda.

1. Minutes of October 18, 2011 SBE Meeting

Oller moved, seconded by Morse that the minutes of the 10-18-11 SBE meeting be approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

2. Postsecondary Approval: Certificate of Approval: Educational Praxis, Inc. (DBA Spark Teacher Education Institute), Putney (Cathy Hilgendorf)

Oller moved, seconded by Collins, that the State Board of Education grant to Educational Praxis Inc., DBA Spark Teacher Education Institute, a Certificate of Approval for four years, commencing November 15, 2011, to offer graduate credit for coursework leading to teacher licensure on the condition that they satisfy the conditions, terms, and limitations contained in the attached report prepared by the Department of Education. Mathis requested clarifying information on how teacher education programs are approved. Oller requested clarifying information on the reason for the December 31, 2012 requirement for the submission of annual audited financial statements. Cathy Hilgendorf explained the approval process and the reasoning behind the imposition of a regular financial audit and statement. The motion was approved (6-0 with 1 abstention).

Item G: Annual Construction Aid Budget Request and Prioritized School Construction List

Bill Talbott introduced Cathy Hilgendorf and explained the many areas of responsibility that she has. Hilgendorf explained the current state with respect to school construction aid, especially since moratorium set by the legislature in 2007. Since that time, the annual construction aid budget request and prioritized school construction list have focused on paying down the debt incurred by school districts. **Motion:** Mathis moved that the State Board of Education approve the FY 2013 school construction aid request for presentation to the House and Senate Institutions Committees in January 2012. Mathis noted that he would like the information transmitted with a note on the interest costs to districts for carrying these amounts of money. Board members

asked questions about the current demand for approval of construction projects, effects of ARRA funding on construction projects, reimbursement at the 90% level for projects converting to renewable resources for heat. Morse seconded the motion. The motion was approved (7-0).

Discussion Items

Item H: Update: FY 13 Budget Development

CFO Bill Talbott reported that he and Commissioner Vilaseca are scheduled for a budget target meeting with Jim Reardon on Thursday, November 17. At that time, they will learn what the budget targets are for the coming year. Vilaseca and Talbott addressed the following points:

- Department operations are at the base level now – there is no room to move to a lower level. This leaves grants as the only area for possible reductions
- With respect to school funding, the grand list is declining but not as much as anticipate
- December 1 requirement for announcement for the amount school budgets are anticipated to increase will be 1.7%, which will amount to little to no increase in the homestead tax rate.

Board members asked questions about the ARRA effective date, the decline in the statewide grand list, the statewide tax rate (estimated to be 89 cents), and the impact of a possible reduction in federal funds. Vilaseca and Talbott will be able to provide more in-depth information at the December 21st meeting.

Item I: 2012 Legislative Agenda Development Board members; Rep. Howard Crawford

Acting chair Larsen invited Representative Howard Crawford, member of the House Education Committee, to join the Board for this discussion. Topics covered included the ESEA Waiver process, Act 153, including both voluntary consolidation and the virtual merger process, poverty and its impact on student achievement, H.440 (the commissioner appointment bill), school choice, and mentoring and professional development.

In response to clarification on the ESEA Waiver Request process, Vilaseca reported that Board members would receive a draft of the waiver around November 22 with a response requested by November 29. the waiver request will be an item on the December 21 SBE agenda.

Strategic Plan Implementation:

Item K: Pathways to Prosperity Project (John Fischer, Director, ISL: HS – Adult, Department of Education)

John Fischer provided an overview of the pathways to Prosperity Project Report being discussed by Dr. William Symonds during the afternoon. Fischer outlined some of the work going on in Vermont and New England that dovetails with findings in the report.

Item M: Future Agendas, Wrap Up and Adjourn

Carol King reviewed items anticipated for the December 20th agenda: Commissioner's Update, FY 13 Budget and 2012 Legislative Agenda, RED Update, ESEA Flexibility Waiver, School Choice Discussion, VSA Act 153 Study Recommendations (Jeff Francis), Litigation update (written). One addition will be a discussion on possible legislation regarding teacher strikes and imposition of contracts (including research on what other states are doing/have done).

Motion: Morse moved, seconded by Oller, to adjourn the November 15, 2011 meeting of the State Board of Education. The motion was approved unanimously.

Lunch – Board members were joined by Dr. Symonds during lunch

Item L: Board members joined *Workforce Development Council* meeting to hear a presentation by Dr. William Symonds, Harvard Graduate School of Education on his *Pathways to Prosperity Project*.

Minutes prepared by Carol King