

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
F. H. Tuttle Middle School Library, 500 Dorset Street, South Burlington
October 19, 2010

*The State Board and Department of Education
provide leadership, support and oversight to ensure that the
Vermont public education system enables each student to be successful.*

Approved MINUTES

Present: Board Members: Ruth Stokes, vice-chair; Stephan Morse; Don Collins; Kathy Larsen; Robert Kelley; Elizabeth Strano; Brian Vachon; Judy Livingston (p.m. only)

DOE: Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf; CFO Bill Talbott; Carol King; Jill Remick; Mark Oettinger; Jesse Moorman; John Fischer; Ken Remsen; Manuela Fonsenca

Others: Sherry Gile, VT-NEA; Martha Allen, VT-NEA; Ned Kirsch; Peg Stewart; Ken Page, VPA; Jeff Francis, VSA; John Nelson, VSBA; Natalie Paterson, Fox-44; Beth O'Brien, Montgomery; Jay Nichols, FNESU; Darlene Worth, ESA Director/CSSU Board Chair; Pat Burke, Principal, SBHS; Kerith Lewis, Cole McDermott, Tristan Davies, Leo Shreib, Neyna Minert, Alex Corrada, Dakota Senna, Sarah Bertucci, Pride Geoffrey, John Dubie, Taylor Shea, Jim Shields, Big Picture School staff and students; Ginger Corrada and Deborah Laporte, parents

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Ruth Stokes, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Board Members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates (Vice Chair, Board Members)

Kathy Larsen reported on her attendance at the September 30 PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) conference in Killington, noting that there were over 100 schools participating. The focus was on improved instruction and behavior in schools.

Stokes noted that on October 29 UVM is hosting a national speaker on the topic of consolidation, which members of the department and State Board plan to attend.

Some Board members will attend the October 28/29 Vermont Superintendents Association and Vermont School Boards Association annual conference in Lake Morey.

Vice-chair Stokes discussed National Association of State Boards of Education's study groups for the coming year. This is an opportunity for professional development for Board members. Board members discussed whether NASBE would pay for some of the costs for members.

Item D: Public to be Heard

No one signed up to speak during this time.

Item E: Commissioner’s Update (Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner)

Vilaseca referenced a recent poll of Vermonters conducted by VPR which included a question about school district consolidation. Forty-five percent supported it with 19 percent undecided. Vilaseca stated this should alert elected officials that there is a body of support for the reduction in the number of school districts. The department will examine how these changes might affect tax rates.

Vermont’s PBIS system has been recognized nationally for their work. Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf recently spoke on this topic at a national conference in Chicago.

The Administration asked the department to reduce its budget by six percent, or over \$500,000. The commissioner’s goal is to not reduce staff.

Vilaseca noted plans for a joint meeting with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators.

Vilaseca also updated the Board on a recent discussion on the National Center for Education and the Economy’s national board certification effort, headed by Mark Tucker.

Discussion Items

Item F: Federal Education Jobs Funding (Board, Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott, Mark Oettinger)

Vermont has received \$19 million in Education Jobs Fund money. Vilaseca proposes that this money be used to offset the reductions for school spending outlined in Challenges for Change (\$23.2 million). Because of usual increases in school budgets, this would actually mean more of a \$50 million reduction, and he expects next year will be another difficult budget year. He does not see how our current structure can absorb these cuts without impacting students. He wants the Legislature and Governor to deal with this issue quickly so school districts know if they are getting any of this funding as Congress intended. He met with Speaker of the House Shap Smith to express these same concerns. Even with the \$19 million, schools still have to make drastic cuts, and he hopes that this would allow another year for consolidation efforts to move towards a more efficient system. Chief Financial Officer Bill Talbott noted Vermont has received the money but the money has not been distributed to schools. The Administration has asked the department to calculate the distribution of the funds. If the funds could be used to offset the 23.2 million dollar reduction, the new reductions would be evenly distributed.

Morse moved that the Board take a formal vote next month in November. Elizabeth Strano noted that next year the schools will not have this \$19 million cushion, but will not have seen the savings outlined under Act 153, the consolidation incentives legislation. Larsen noted she supported the Commissioner’s position.

Item G: Act 153 Regional Education District (RED) Waiver Request Process (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott, Mark Oettinger)

General Counsel Mark Oettinger discussed the Act 153 Regional Education District (RED) Waiver Process. The Board has the authority to grant waivers from the RED creation, but needs to set parameters for granting those waivers. The Board will also be responsible for final proposals for REDs. Applicants will need to explain why they do not meet the minimum numbers as well as how it would improve educational outcomes.

Morse asked if, when these waivers come before the Board, they could vote on them in the same month. These will be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Item H: RED Waiver Request: Fairfax & Fletcher School Districts (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott, Mark Oettinger; Ned Kirsch, Superintendent of Schools, Franklin West SU)

Ned Kirsch, Superintendent, spoke to the Board, along with BFA-Fairfax school board chair Peg Stewart. He said the biggest obstacle to creating a four-district RED is school choice. A second issue is how to approach a district outside your current SU to join a RED. The Boards of Fletcher and Fairfax do believe in merging. They are also not a very small SU (1100 students), student enrollment-wise, so it would remain a large RED even with two districts. This waiver would allow the discussion to continue.

Stokes asked what happens to the town that is not a part of the new RED (in this case, Georgia). Then there are a few options, but FWSU could still be an SU with two districts (Fairfax-Fletcher and Georgia). Georgia residents currently are opposed to joining the proposed RED, as are most towns with choice. Oettinger noted that the Board and the Legislature will need to deal with this, to allow all high school students to have choice. Commissioner Vilaseca noted that tuition for choice towns is a spending item that they cannot control. Kirsch outlined the rationale for their plans for the RED.

The Board will vote next month, and asked for enrollment figures and for information about the expected efficiencies. Commissioner Vilaseca noted that he will not take a specific position on these requests

Item K: Updates

2012 Budget Development Process (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott)

The Budget development is in early stages because there will be a new governor. The current administration is working to provide a preliminary budget, and is establishing a Transition Team. The department will reduce the 8.5 million dollar General Fund budget by six percent as an exercise. The DOE operating budget used to be over 12 million dollars. Vilaseca's goal is to not cut any more positions. The new organization structure has been set, and the 3% cut in salaries has been put into effect. This means grants and supports for things beyond K-12 education will be considered. The department has been reducing its budget for the last four years and has reduced staff by 20 percent.

The budget development discussion will continue in November and December in preparation for a vote on the FY12 budget proposal in January 2011.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner, spoke to the Board about the progress on the development of a design for implementation of the Strategic Plan . David Ruff facilitated a discussion with all DOE employees, including breakout sessions by strategies, regarding the development of the Implementation Plan. The broad implementation steps, along with some specific action steps, can be expected for the Board by the December meeting.

Commissioner’s Required Actions

Commissioner’s Required and Corrective Actions items are related to schools identified under No Child Left Behind as not making Adequate Yearly Progress. Commissioner Vilaseca noted that there are some actions that the Board and Commissioner can take beyond the standard actions once a school has been in corrective actions beyond four years. Deputy Commissioner Knopf spoke to the Board about the process and timeline for schools that are identified and the school improvement work. This includes school-wide teams and plans to move changes forward. The department has aligned its teams to have a point-person at the DOE for each school who is a continuous point of contact.

Item I: PreKindergarten Rules Revisions (Armando Vilaseca, Manuela Fonseca)

Manuela Fonseca, Early Education Consultant for the Department, spoke to the Board about prekindergarten rules revisions in light of statewide support for preschool programs under state law. The proposed amendments were revised following public comments received this summer. Commissioner Vilaseca and Fonseca noted that there are two areas still to be worked out with the Department for Children and Families (the co-sponsoring agency): the July 15 date for approval of programs and language on waiving the cap for districts with identified schools. The STARS (Step Ahead Recognition System) is the current method of evaluation. This discussion is in anticipation of a November vote on the proposed amendments.

Commissioner Vilaseca noted his support for Prekindergarten in the Weekly Field Memo and on the Department of Education Web site.

John Everitt, Superintendent of South Burlington, noted that the business community expressed support for early education as one of its top priorities at a recent Vermont Business Roundtable meeting.

Action Items

Item L: Consent Agenda

Motion: Kathy Larsen moved, seconded by Robert Kelley, to approve the consent agenda with comment.

1. Minutes of September 21, 2010 SBE Meeting

2. Independent School Approval (Pat Pallas Gray, Michael Mulcahy)

Renewal of General & Special Education Independent School Approval:
CHOICE Academy, Barre; ages 11-21 in grades 6-12

3. Post Secondary Approval (Cathy Hilgendorf; Cassandra Ryan)

Certificate of Approval: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

4. Commissioner’s Corrective Actions (John Fischer; Ken Remsen)

Year 4 and Beyond Corrective Actions:

1. Barre City Elementary/Middle School
2. Edmunds Middle School, Burlington
3. Lyndon Town School

4. Milton Elementary School
5. Missisquoi Valley Union High School, Swanton
6. Mt. Anthony Union High School, Bennington
7. Mt. Anthony Union Middle School, Bennington
8. Rutland Intermediate School
9. Rutland High School
10. St. Albans City School
11. St. Johnsbury School

Year 3 Corrective Actions:

1. Molly Stark School, Bennington
2. Otter Valley Union High School, Brandon
3. Rutland Middle School

Year 2 Corrective Actions:

1. Academy School, Brattleboro
2. Barre Town Elementary/Middle School
3. Bellows Falls Middle School
4. Bellow Free Academy (BFA), Fairfax
5. Burlington High School
6. Camels Hump Middle School, Richmond
7. Crossett Brook Middle School, Duxbury
8. Derby Elementary School
9. Highgate Elementary School
10. Hunt Middle School, Burlington
11. Riverside Middle School, Springfield
12. St. Albans Town School
13. Springfield High School
14. Swanton Schools
15. Thatcher Brook Primary School, Waterbury
16. Williston Schools
17. Winooski High School

Year 1 Corrective Actions:

1. Johnson Elementary School
2. H.O. Wheeler School, Burlington

The motion was approved (6-0).

Item N: Future Agendas (Board members, Armando Vilaseca, Carol King)

Likely items include: Board's position on the 19 million Federal Education Jobs funding; vote on the Fletcher-Fairfax RED Waiver Request; FY 12 budget development and the agenda for coming legislative session. Another item under consideration is a joint discussion with the VSBPE executive board. Dual enrollment will be discussed with Tim Donovan of VSC in the winter months.

The Board recessed for lunch (12:00 p.m.)

The Board reconvened (12:40 p.m.)

Item M: Washington South Supervisory Union Study (Armando Vilaseca, Mark Oettinger)

Commissioner Vilaseca noted he is striving for consistency with how requests for permission to hire a new superintendent are handled. Commissioner Vilaseca recommends that the State Board

of Education vote to place the Washington South Supervisory Union under consideration for a supervisory union boundary change and support the commissioner’s recommendation that a superintendent of schools be hired for up to two years while the supervisory union board researches options to merge with an adjoining supervisory union/district or forming a Regional Education District (RED). He does not want the Washington South SU to remain as it is currently configured.

Motion: Brian Vachon moved, seconded by Kathy Larsen, that the Board vote to place the Washington South Supervisory Union under consideration for a supervisory union boundary change and support the commissioner’s recommendation that a superintendent of schools be hired for up to two years while the supervisory union board researches options to merge with an adjoining supervisory union/district or forming a Regional Education District (RED). Stephan Morse moved to amend the motion to the effect that the supervisory union complete the study and report to the commissioner no later than June 1, 2012. Motion on the amendment passed unanimously (6-0). The amended motion passed (6-0).

(Judy Livingston arrived 12:58 p.m.) (Commissioner Vilaseca left at 1 p.m.)

Item K: Updates

Commissioner’s Required Actions – continued from above with John Fischer and Ken Remsen from the DOE present.

John Fischer and Ken Remsen of the department’s Integrated Support for Learning team joined Deputy Commissioner Knopf for further discussion about the commissioner’s required and corrective actions under NCLB. They outlined the current approaches to holistic school improvement with assistance from the department and outside partners, using data, multiple measures, progress over time, and examination of subgroup achievement. Elizabeth Strano noted that students are not motivated to participate in standardized testing.

Item J: Setting the Stage: Opportunities for Students - South Burlington’s Big Picture School - Secondary Transformation in Action

Eight students, Patrick Burke (principal of South Burlington), and five staff members and parents spoke about the Big Picture School in South Burlington. There are 30 Big Picture students in all. Each student has an individual learning plan and participates in internships. Students described their reasons for choosing to attend South Burlington’s Big Picture School, as well as his or her particular area of focus.

Item O: Wrap Up and Adjourn

Motion: Stephan Morse moved, seconded by Don Collins, to adjourn the October 19, 2010 meeting of the State Board of Education.

Item P: Written Reports

1. *Common Core Update (R, S & A)*

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick
Minutes prepared by Carol King