
State Board of Education

Virtual via Microsoft Teams
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Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: June 12, 2024

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Jennifer Samuelson, Chair; Tammy Kolbe, Vice Chair; Mohamed Diop; Tom Lovett; Jenna O'Farrell; Lyle Jepson; Kim Gleason; Grey Fearon; Zoie Saunders; and Richard Werner (joined at 9:17 a.m.).

Agency of Education (AOE): Suzanne Sprague; Kathryn Rossman; Jess DeCarolis; Bob Donohue; Lindsey Hedges; Emily Lesh; Maureen Gaidys

Others: Logan Chalmers, Media Factory; Kathy Gingras; PAEMST Finalist; Kate McCann; and Mary Kay Jurovcik

Call to Order, Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Samuelson called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. and asked for a roll call.

Item A: Public to be Heard

There were no members of the public to be heard.

Item B: Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAEMST)

Chair Samuelson shared [this information from the PAEMST website](#). She said the SBE was notified of the three finalists by Kate McCann, the 2017 Vermont Teacher of the Year, who also received the PAEMST award in 2015, and now serves as the PAEMST State Coordinator for math.

Gingras shared that this was quite an honor. This is her 29th year in education. She started off hating math when she was a student. After several years, she grew to love math, and this helps her to connect with students. She teaches grades 3 and 4 and absolutely loves it; she likes keeping math fresh and change is good. She is teaching classes to other teachers because it is so important to know progressions (3 levels below and above current grade level). She also believes it is important for students to teach each other; she tries to help students find the tools that work best for them.

There were comments/discussion on next steps in this process, the importance of early science/math teaching, appreciation for the good work of these teachers, acknowledgment

for staying in the field for so many years, how many different math programs have been implemented, and serving as a role model for struggling math learners.

Chair Samuelson read the [State Board of Education Resolution for Kathy Gingras](#).

Kathryn Rossman, AOE Education Programs Coordinator, spoke about the incredible accomplishments of these educators and the process they have gone through and their high expectations for their students and themselves. She shared the following regarding the recipients who were not able to attend:

Alyssa Castellini – Making science accessible to all students and promoting their growth continues to be Alyssa Castellini’s primary focus. Alyssa is a 3-5th grade science teacher at Bethel Elementary School. Over the course of the past 10 years, Alyssa has developed her skills as an educator, excelling at engaging *all* students in scientific inquiry and discovery. She puts equity and inclusion at the forefront of her teaching practice and pays attention to individual student needs, addressing them in a way that builds confidence and engages learners. Alyssa readily tackles student misconceptions by using examples that students can easily understand and then draw parallels to the material at hand. Acknowledging that there is always more for her to learn as an educator, she uses data to guide her teaching and to highlight areas for improvement in her own practices. Alyssa is also a leader in her professional community. She exhibits a willingness to step up as a lead educator, serving as a role model for other teachers and providing avenues by which they can improve their teaching practices. This year, we had the pleasure of witnessing Alyssa’s leadership abilities as she assumed the responsibility of leading the White River Valley SU K-5 science educators to further develop the district’s proficiency-based learning initiatives.

JoAnn Harvey - It is with great pleasure that we acknowledge JoAnn Harvey as a PAEMST science finalist for Vermont. JoAnn is a 2nd grade teacher at Georgia Elementary School and models a passion for science. She encourages her young learners to deepen their understanding of science concepts through engaging instructional practices that inspire curiosity and inquiry. As her students explore and question the environment around them, JoAnn addresses student questions and misconceptions by bringing in real-world connections and experiences into her classroom. She does this by using hands-on teaching strategies to ensure that every student understands the material and can engage with it in a meaningful and authentic way. The activities and learning experiences are so powerful that students come back years later to talk about what they learned in Ms. Harvey’s class! JoAnn’s enthusiasm for science extends outside of the school day. She has had a long-standing commitment to running after-school STEM clubs and creating opportunities for community engagement in the school setting. She created a planet walk in the school building, a bird sanctuary, and a labyrinth outside the building; giving all in the community an opportunity to engage and learn in these alternative/educational spaces. A colleague of JoAnn shared with us that, “JoAnn has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in teaching and has made a significant impact on the lives of her students, families, and our community.” And a parent shared, “What sets Jo Ann apart is her unwavering enthusiasm and creativity in the classroom.”

Chair Samuelson expressed appreciation for all the finalists and to live where teachers are so dedicated and inclusive.

Chair Samuelson read [this State Board of Education Resolution for Alyssa Castellini](#).

Chair Samuelson read [this State Board of Education Resolution for Jo Ann Harvey](#).

Chair Samuelson circled back to see if there were any members of the public who wished to speak; there were none.

Item C: Approve Draft Meeting Minutes from May 15, 2024

Gleason moved to approve the [draft meeting minutes from May 15, 2024](#); Kolbe seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chair Samuelson called the vote; it passed unanimously.

Item D: Board Announcements

Vice Chair Kolbe reminded SBE members that on June 13, 2024, both Rule Series 2000 and Rule Series 2200 will go before the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR). Chair Samuelson, Vice Chair Kolbe, and Gleason will participate in the LCAR review and report on the outcome at the next meeting.

Chair Samuelson shared that Wilburn is not able to attend today's meeting, which is her last as a student member. If Wilburn shares any reflective comments, Chair Samuelson will forward them on to SBE members.

Chair Samuelson gave a shout out to Max the 6-year-old tabby cat, who recently was awarded a diploma from Vermont State University.

O'Farrell congratulated Fearon for his performance at the 800-meter race at New England. She also added that she will need to sign off for about 30-minutes at 9:30 a.m. and will region.

Item E: Student Report

Fearon said he is in the final week of school – sports are over, the jazz festival has passed, and AP exams finished a while ago. The track season ended two weeks ago at States and his 4x8 team won the division. This is the team's third consecutive win and probably the last for a while since Fearon is the only non-senior on the team. He spoke about how the local budget finally passed on the third vote and there was good voter turnout. There were still a lot of people who tried to vote the budget down. He is happy to have the budget season closed and said all are a bit worried about next year and remarked on how much time this consumed.

There was discussion on the importance of student voice, Fearon's school board involvement and expectations, how student members are recruited, and summer plans.

Item F: Secretary's Update

Interim Secretary Saunders reaffirmed her commitment to staying tightly coordinated with the SBE and ensuring that members receive updates on all the great work that is underway at the AOE. She recognized that some SBE members are not receiving the Weekly Field Memo and press releases. The AOE is addressing this and will include all members going forward. AOE is very open to continuing to have that dialog with SBE.

Highlights:

- Afterschool Grant awards were announced in a [May 29, 2024 Press Release](#); this effort was designed to expand access to affordable and enriching afterschool and summer experiences; she is very proud that awardees represent the geographic diversity of Vermont.
- [Expanded summer meals benefit](#); this was the result of a cross-functional effort with AHS; many Vermont families will benefit from this new federal program.
- AOE is doing a lot of work this summer on focused planning to develop priorities and the strategic direction for the AOE. This is happening in coordination with different roundtable/stakeholder groups and will result in the development of a Listen and Learn tour that will start in August and go into the fall. AOE will prioritize working with administrators and others who are more available in the summer to ensure alignment and build partnerships.
- Some conferences that AOE is preparing for include School Nutrition, School Safety, and broader strategic planning and support.
- Many recurring themes identified in the 100-day report are still rising to the forefront and include improving literacy, expanding College and Career Readiness opportunities, and mental health needs tied to chronic absenteeism.

Chair Samuelson asked to have the [Afterschool Grant Press Release](#) and [Summer Meals Press Release](#) included in the meeting minutes. There was discussion on sharing more information on how many independent schools are contracting with a licensed special educator as opposed to using the module, clarifying adjustments made to the Independent School Technical Assistance (ISTA) form, access to the updated form, communication to independent schools, crosswalk with Special Education staffing rules and the newest proposed updates to the rules, independent schools are not required to have a Special Educator on staff, transitioning process, all elements may not be in place for fall but AOE is working on a timeline, and a future update on the District Quality Standards (DQS) and Quality Assurance (QA) process.

Item G: Legislative Update

Interim Secretary Saunders shared that this meeting is ahead of the veto session scheduled for the week of June 17, 2024, so the update will focus on passed bills and implementation from the AOE's perspective. Following the veto session, a more comprehensive update will be provided. Chair Samuelson asked that anything that might implicate the SBE be flagged in the presentation.

Lindsey Hedges, Policy Communications Specialist, introduced herself and said she would be brief with the intent of coming back to the SBE in August with a follow-up legislative update. Hedges shared the [Agency of Education Legislative Update 2024](#) and said her presentation would focus on session themes; subject matter experts would speak to Literacy and School Construction; and there would be time for questions at the end. Session themes included Literacy, Career Technical Education, Education Funding, and Education Vision.

Interim Secretary Saunders spoke about continuing to focus on CTE and balancing the opportunity to modernize CTE rules while aligning them with the need for broader reform. Additional recommendations are forthcoming from the consultant, and these will guide the CTE work.

There was discussion on the Yield Bill, lowering the tax burden, ensuring schools are successful, consultant under contract with AOE, timeline for CTE rules, SBE will need to plan ahead to retain counsel for rulemaking, AOE wanting to be very thoughtful to ensure that rules are supportive of long-term sustainability. AOE will be able to provide clarity around the timeline and expectations soon.

Interim Secretary Saunders shared that the passage of Act 139 is very exciting and builds on a lot of the Act 28 work and current initiatives of AOE. She said this was a collaborative effort and will require a paradigm shift in how teachers teach, and students learn. She asked DeCarolis to address the SBE.

Jess DeCarolis, Student Pathways Division Director, walked the SBE through the [Act 139 - Literacy section of the Agency of Education Legislative Update 2024](#): major elements of the Act, findings, literacy assessment & intervention K-3, literacy professional learning, advising/staffing and early childhood, legislative milestones, and drivers to improve literacy learning.

There was discussion on concern that the Act does not address the needs of some older students (refugees and immigrants), mainstream and English Language Learners (ELL) teachers not being prepared to serve high-school aged students who are learning at a 3rd grade level, needing a formalized strategy for all schools to support all learners, family literacy engagement, professional development is required (not optional), uneven implementation of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and need for sustained focus. Emily Lesh, Act 28 Program Manager, introduced herself and thanked SBE members for their interest in this work. Saunders said continued updates would be provided.

Bob Donahue, School Facilities Program Manager, walked the SBE through the [Act 149 - School Facilities section of the Agency of Education Legislative Update 2024](#): three major elements of the bill, master facilities grant program, minimum requirements for the facilities master plan, prequalified consultants, working group, focus areas of the working group (large lifts and many tasks), other working group considerations, and implementation timeline.

There were questions/discussion on capacity of contractors, timeline for funding, 12-18 months needed for detailed master facilities assessment, solution still needed for funding a construction program, several firms already doing this work, school closure report (part of Chapter 11 rewrite), emotions play into school facility decisions, systematic/thoughtful approach is appreciated, District Quality Standards (DQS) and how these align with facility improvements, continuous improvement approach, opportunity to raise the bar, timeline is aggressive, and the importance of collaborating with neighboring districts. Saunders thanked the AOE team, as did Chair Samuelson. Werner asked for a copy of the [Legislative Update 2024 presentation](#).

Item H: Future Meeting Planning

Chair Samuelson said the SBE will not meet in July. The list of agenda items for the August meeting include administration of oath of office to new student member (Caleb Greenwood), AOE presentation on vision for Special Education, updated annual report from the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), Otter Valley Unified Union board composition update (possible), update on DQS (possible), and a comprehensive overview of the Legislative session. She asked for the SBE to plan a full day for August 21 (morning meeting and afternoon retreat). There was discussion on meeting materials and plans for the SBE retreat.

The August meeting will be in-person at the [Chamber of Economic Development - Rutland Region](#), Meeting Room 2, sponsored by Casella Waste Systems. An IBOTS presentation from the Rutland Area Robotics team has been requested and the students are excited to share their work with the SBE. Chair Samuelson said the August retreat will be a first step in several retreats over the year – to start work on creating an SBE manual, identifying roles and responsibilities, diving into work of the SBE committees and how they work. The SBE's process needs to be formalized.

Item M: Public to be Heard

Chair Samuelson asked if there were any members of the public to be heard; there were none.

Adjourn

Gleason moved to adjourn; Kolbe seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Maureen Gaidys.