
State Board of Education

In-Person Meeting
Location: North Country Union High School – Library
209 Veterans Avenue
Newport, VT 05855
Call in Number: 1-802-552-8456
Conference ID: 528 577 743#

Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: May 15, 2024

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Jennifer Samuelson, Chair; Tammy Kolbe, Vice Chair; Tom Lovett; Lyle Jepson; Richard Werner; Jenna O’Farrell; Mohamed Diop; Kim Gleason; Aaliyah Wilburn, Interim Secretary Saunders

Agency of Education (AOE): Maureen Gaidys; Emily Simmons; Jaime Kraybill; Deborah Ormsbee; Meg Porcella, Heather Willis-Doxsee; Pat Pallas Gray; Cassandra Ryan; Suzanne Sprague

Others: Adam Walker, Media Factory; Mary Kay Jurovcik; Alison Novak; Jacqui Kelleher; Michelle Ollie; Gabrielle Malina; Dave Lloyd; Katie Carson; Aime Forbes; Ashley Dewing; Chris Young; Lori Gilbar; Elaine Collins; Nancy Griffith; Samantha Stevens; Addie Lentzner

Call to Order, Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Samuelson called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m. and asked for a roll call. Chair Samuelson asked that an introductory message from North Country Union High School Principal, Chris Young, is added to the Agenda prior to Item A and that the student report is moved after Item K. There were no objections to the amendments.

Chair Samuelson introduced Principal Young. He welcomed the State Board of Education to North Country Union High School and shared some opening remarks.

Item A: Public to be Heard

None

Item B: Approve Draft Meeting Minutes

Gleason moved to approve the [April 17, 2024 meeting minutes](#); Kolbe seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried. Diop and Wilburn abstained since they did not attend the meeting.

Item C: Board Announcements

Gleason read a [resolution of appreciation](#) to Wilburn. The Board members thanked her for her work on the State Board of Education. Wilburn shared her plans following graduation. She will attend Lesley College in the fall and hopes to become an immigration lawyer or a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator in schools.

Jepson provided an update on the success of the Rutland Robotics Team, named the IBOTS, at the national Robotics Competition in Houston, Texas. The team came in 16th out of 640 competing teams. Jepson said that the IBOTS presented to the Retired Educators' Association and shared how important education is to them.

Item E: Presentation on Community Schools

Chair Samuelson provided a brief background on [Act 67, an act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through community schools](#). The act awarded funds to five recipients to develop and pilot Community Schools models. These schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed and well-coordinated supports and services that help students and their families with increasingly complex needs. She introduced Elaine Collins, Superintendent of North Country Supervisory Union, and Samantha Stevens, Community Schools Coordinator.

Collins began and provided context on the North Country Supervisory Union, including that it is a multidistrict (12 districts totaling 2750 students), average poverty rate of 50%-60% across the SU, community schools program supports schools that would not otherwise have the capacity or resources for this work, teams of behavior and neuro-developmental specialists to support the schools, role of mental health and behavior providers as well as homeschool coordination is outside the role of education, SU is dedicated to the work, grant award offsets financial burden of this work, two most important features that Community Schools contribute to are improvements to chronic absenteeism and disengagement from school, and the work of schools has become more integral.

Stevens said she appreciates the supervisory union for providing for student needs that are essential to children coming to school. She began her work as the McKinney-Vento Coordinator and sees her position as one that reduces social barriers to learning. She shared this [presentation](#) and reviewed this [document](#). She reviewed the 5 Pillars of Vermont Community Schools, work is further supported by a Bernie Sanders Earmark Grant that supports the Family Resource Center at the high school, the Encore Afterschool and Summer Program, and a program that includes a service-learning component. She stressed the importance of safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments, collaborative leadership and practices, and community involvement. She referenced the Van Gogh Mobile Arts Program and Community STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) Night, and various programs aimed at Restorative Truancy.

Discussion followed thanking the NCSU for being a community partner in this work, funding sources once the Community Schools Grant ends, needing measurable long-term data to show positive outcomes, visioning commission work, how the State Board supports this work, the real cost of education, and possible contributions from the Agency of Human Services.

Item F: Special Education Advisory Panel Update

Chair Samuelson said the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) was formed to provide guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities across the state. Katie Ballard, Chair of SEAP, provides updates to the State Board. Today's update will touch on critical staff shortages in special education, transition services, and a letter to be developed.

Jacqui Kelleher, co-chair of SEAP, shared a presentation on [Critical Shortage Area in Education](#) and highlighted that the SEAP advises based on data, schools are in need of resources, Vermont is one of the highest states where students go out of state for services, SEAP has reestablished its partnership with the AOE and recruited new members, and focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She explained that the SEAP advises AOE on its performance plan and ensures that IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is being implemented as written. She unpacked the role of the paraprofessional, documented unmet needs, and said SEAP continues to be concerned with critical staff shortages. She shared a sampling of concerns from Vermont Administrators regarding the shortage in 2022. Some of these concerns are LEA (Local Education Agency) IDEA budgets are sparse, pay equity, feeling supported, complicated case load management, special education mentoring program, workload and planning time, lack of collaboration between general education and special education, challenging behavior around trauma and mental health, lack of implementation of Vermont MTSS (multi-tiered systems of support), streamlining paperwork, and elevating the role of paraprofessionals.

Discussion followed regarding Vermont being a CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform) state. Kelleher shared the SEAP recommendations that included mentoring and induction programs, paid internships, Grow Your Own, connecting with Career Technical Education, collaborative co-taught teaching, suggestion box, alternative route to licensure, financial incentives, district/university partnerships, positive school climate, leadership and quality curriculum, collaboration with LEAs, colleges and government agencies, think-tanks with paraprofessionals, paraprofessional pathways funding, housing incentives, Praxis exams, training and professional development that extends to parents, higher education improvements, local resource mapping, and responding to and understanding learning loss. Next steps include forming partnerships and developing action plans.

Willis-Doxsee, State Director of Special Education, addressed the State Board, and shared some of the priorities at the AOE. These included being a CEEDAR state, supporting paraprofessionals on becoming licensed educators, initiative to support principals and holding a statewide job fair that included school districts and higher education organizations. She added the AOE is working on supports, training and initiatives toward inclusive scheduling to support more collaborative teaching, training and collaboration with high leverage practices, and supporting students that have the most significant emotional and behavioral needs.

Chair Samuelson invited SEAP back in August to present on their annual report and soon to be released letter.

Item G: Post-Secondary Renewal Recommendation – Center for Cartoon Studies

Lovett provided background information on The Center for Cartoon Studies. Lovett moved that the State Board of Education renews The Center for Cartoon Studies' Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority to offer a Master of Fine Arts and renews a Certificate of Approval

to permit The Center for Cartoon Studies to offer credit-bearing courses leading to a Certificate in Cartooning for a period of five (5) years commencing on May 15, 2024, and ending May 31, 2029. Gleason seconded. After discussion, the motion carried.

Item H: State Update: Technical Assistance Reviews of Independent Schools

Chair Samuelson said that, earlier in the year, the AOE sent a Technical Assistance (TA) Review form to all approved independent schools in Vermont, requesting that they complete the Independent School Technical Assistance (ISTA) form and submit a variety of documents to substantiate their compliance with the last round of updates to Rule Series 2200 that became effective last year. Emily Simmons, AOE General Counsel, addressed the State Board. Simmons shared this [presentation](#). She provided background and process. She reviewed the elements of the [ISTA form](#) including enrollment policy, student facing application, a series of checks for state law safety compliance, school record retention policy, and elements of Rule 2229. Simmons shared that the AOE required assurances that the approved independent school either employ or contract with a licensed special educator or provide the Agency with records of at least one staff member who has completed the required module series, offered by the Agency, for a provisional license in special education. She shared that the schools needed to affirm and include a description of compliance activities. Simmons provided an update and the current work.

Discussion followed regarding what happens when a student with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) transfers to a different school, assurance that a student enrolling receives the same admission opportunity regardless of whether they have an IEP, timing regarding technical assistance and families who need to make decisions about where to enroll their children in the fall, modules for provisional special education license, and duration of a provisional license. Discussion continued that neither Act 173 nor SBE rule requires an approved independent school to employ someone with a special education license as long as the school can demonstrate that it contracts with someone with a special education license , module is a good objective marker, module is one element of the steps needed for a provisional license for someone seeking special education licensure, no prerequisite for taking the module, educators in independent schools have to be qualified by training and experience, LEA and school determine how the IEP service is implemented, threshold question about whether a school as it exists is eligible for public funding, staffing assurance and module for provisional license section appear to be in conflict, requirement regarding the module seems insufficient, standing capacity versus actual delivery of services, whether the form is clear that assurances with regard to 2229.2 and 2229.3(c) pertain to two different points in time and thus that the requirements are different, expectation that the schools are ready and willing to serve students with disabilities, number of schools that checked the 2nd box under 2229.2, site visit is the true test of compliance, shortage of special educators, and included in the form is an assurance that school personnel understand and enumerate special education concepts.

Chair Samuelson asked Simmons to provide additional data specific to how many schools checked the second box under 2229.2 and, of these schools, how many are providing special education services for the first time since the updates to Rule Series 2200 became effective.

Item D: Student Report

Chair Samuelson welcomed Lentzner to the meeting. Wilburn and Lentzner provided a Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network (VSARN) update. Wilburn said VSARN held an

Advocacy Day at the Statehouse to get youth to meet and make connections with others that are doing the work of being anti racist and encouraging other people join in that effort. One hundred students were in attendance. Lentzner said that, throughout the year, VSARN was doing both the book campaign and the Let Me Be Great campaign. They visited 30 schools and offered presentations on different books for the younger students and suggestions on how to be an anti-racist for older students. The efforts were very successful and VSARN received several book donations. Feedback received indicates that students are interested in learning more and have a lot of questions about what it means to do this work and how they can help. There were some students that did not want to recognize that racism was a problem.

Lentzner said that summer plans include listening tours to see what students need and to craft a new bill for the General Assembly's (GA) consideration around education reform. VSARN members are hoping to go to parks and libraries and attend events to spread their message and involve more community members.

Chair Samuelson extended an open invitation to VSARN to provide updates on its work to the State Board of Education.

Item J: Update: SBE Activities and Policies

Chair Samuelson provided a brief background for this topic and said this dates back prior to 2012 when the State Board of Education oversaw the work of the then Department of Education and its Commissioner. The Department is now the Agency of Education, and the Commissioner is now a Secretary but the rules and statutory obligations were never updated and, since the SBE has no staff and limited resources, still seemingly pertain to the concept of a Department and Commissioner. Gleason offered to sort through relevant information and come to the State Board with a master list of obligations that the Board has in statute.

Gleason referenced [Vermont State Board of Education Statutory Authority](#). It includes Title 16, Title 3, the State Board's authority and responsibility, and the date it was last updated. She reviewed each section. Gleason suggested reviewing this during the State Board's summer retreat and identifying what work is specifically the responsibility of the State Board and identifying those areas of work that belong to the AOE. Gleason referenced the [Vermont State Board of Education Rules](#) document. This can be used to help the State Board prioritize its work.

Discussion followed regarding next steps, checking statutory requirements to see if work belongs to the State Board or AOE, receiving state reporting results, this work falls under the purview of the SBE Roles and Responsibilities Committee, having a better understanding of the new Commission established by the General Assembly, starting with quick wins and identifying timelines, creating a standard operating procedure manual, informing the legislature, centering around successes in education, the rules contain reference to laws that no longer exist, identifying strengths and challenges of the AOE, establishing a cadence of reporting, creating alignment with the AOE and the State Board, and important pre-work for the Commission.

Chair Samuelson asked Gleason to take a first pass at what should remain with the State Board and what should go to the Agency and forward that document to the Roles and Responsibilities Committee for its discussion and consideration. Gleason suggested

continuing this discussion at the retreat. Discussion followed regarding the Commission's charge and how it might affect the timing and content of the Board's work on this topic.

Item K: Updates to Rule Series 2370 (Career and Technical Education)

Chair Samuelson said the Governor hoped the GA would pass a bill that would consider updates to Career and Technical Education (CTE). The bill did not make it through, but the State Board does have the authority to update the rules on its own initiative. Interim Secretary Saunders suggested the AOE take the first pass at updating the rules and then hand them to the State Board to oversee the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) formal rulemaking process. The State Board would facilitate public comment and the AOE could provide comment at that time as well. Interim Secretary Saunders said that the idea was to frontload the resources and expertise at the initial drafting phase since, if the initial draft is in a solid place, then there is likely less need for refinement, and maximizing public input. This shared approach could maximize and leverage resources of both entities. She added that the AOE is committed to working with the SBE and moving forward with drafting the first set of proposed updates to the rules.

Kolbe moved that the State Board of Education establish a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Update Committee that will consider changes to Rule Series 2370 (Career and Technical Education) and manage the rulemaking process through to completion. Samuelson seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Kolbe further moved that the State Board of Education authorize its Chair to appoint members to the CTE Update Committee. Diop seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Item L: Future Meeting Planning

Chair Samuelson asked Wilburn if she would share reflections on her time on the State Board of Education. Wilburn confirmed she would be willing to share. The June meeting may also include an update from the Otter Valley Unified Union School District regarding their board composition and an update from the EQS Subcommittee report pertaining to the Ethnic Studies Standards Framework submitted by the Act 1 Working Group.

Item M: Public to be Heard

Chris Young, Principal of North Country Union High School, addressed the State Board.

Gleason moved to adjourn; O'Farrell seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.