
State Board of Education

Virtual via Microsoft Teams Details:
Dial in number: 1-802-552-8456
Phone conference ID: 714 191 538#
[Meeting Link](#)

Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: December 18, 2024

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Jennifer Samuelson, Chair; Tammy Kolbe, Vice Chair; Mohamed Diop; Grey Fearon; Kim Gleason; Caleb Greenwood; Lyle Jepson; Tom Lovett; Jenna O'Farrell; Rich Werner; Zoie Saunders, Secretary

Agency of Education (AOE): Roseanne Neddo; Deborah Ormsbee; Lori Dolezal; Jill Briggs Campbell; Meg Porcella; Emily Leute; Emily Lesh; Pat Fitzsimmons; Ian Burfoot-Rochford; Jaime Kraybill; Emily Simmons; Maureen Gaidys; Suzanne Sprague

Others: Logan Chalmers; Observing; Jennifer Botzojorns; Sean Toohey

Item A: Call to Order, Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Samuelson called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. and asked for a roll call. Chair Samuelson asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Vice Chair Kolbe made a motion to table Item K to allow for a longer discussion on Item H. Gleason seconded. There was discussion on the lack of meeting materials for Item K, a recent vote by the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont, Commission's draft report, Commission's report had edits in real time, Listen and Learn item being moved to January, the work of and the input from the State Board as it pertains to the Commission, agenda planning, having longer meetings, and AOE closing the loop on any State Board questions. Jepson called the question. Chair Samuelson called the vote. The vote passed. Chair Samuelson asked for a vote on the motion. The motion carried.

Item B: Public to be Heard

None

Item C: Approve Meeting Minutes from November 20, 2024

Werner made a motion to approve the [draft minutes from the November 20, 2024 meeting](#); Jepson seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Item D: Board Announcements

Chair Samuelson said she received feedback from Board members and members of the public regarding the tone of the prior meeting. Some Board members also have voiced concerns about not being able to participate in the meetings. Chair Samuelson reminded State Board members to take turns, to let others speak, to not interrupt and to let people

answer questions that are posed to them. She reminded State Board members to be respectful of others during the State Board meetings. Chair Samuelson said she will do a better job at moderating the meetings' discussions.

Chair Samuelson reminded Kolbe and Fearon to complete the ethics training and to send a copy of the certificate of completion to Gaidys and Sprague with a copy to the Chair.

Chair Samuelson reviewed three items that were included in the meeting materials: 1) [State Board's response to the Vermont School Boards Association \(VSBA\) and its task force](#), 2) [Response from the VSBA and its task force](#), and 3) [Independent School Flow Chart](#).

Chair Samuelson said she has a hard stop at 12:30 p.m.

Item E: Student Report

Fearon said students at his school are having their final summative assessments prior to the break. The winter sports season is beginning. He is participating in indoor track. Fearon said his school's chorus joined with the Middlebury High School chorus and the Mount Abraham Unified Union High School chorus and performed the Dido and Aeneas Opera. It was well received and a well-attended event.

Greenwood said he will be on school break beginning Friday until January 2. Winter sports season is underway. The school's musical is "Once Upon a Mattress" which has a high student participation rate. Greenwood said his district is still searching for a new superintendent and high school principal. He said the vice principal is stepping down as well. There are a lot of changes in leadership at Lake Region High School.

Item F: Health and Physical Education Standards

Chair Samuelson said the agenda item arises pursuant to the board's authority under 16 V.S.A. § 164 (9) and State Board of Education Rule 2111 to implement and periodically update student performance standards. The AOE provided a presentation on the topic at the Board's August monthly meeting. The topic was thereafter referred to the Student Performance Standards Committee for review and consideration.

Gleason said the committee reached out to the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), Vermont National Education Association (VT-NEA), Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA) and the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) for feedback on the Secretary's recommended action. The feedback received primarily focused on implementation and the concerns for agency capacity to support implementation. The AOE addressed the feedback from the field and advised that resources are available at the national level. Once the standards are adopted, the AOE will refine its plan for professional development support for the proficiency indicators for the new standards for the field over the summer and into the fall.

Discussion followed regarding support from the AOE regarding implementation, implementation is not part of the State Board's purview for approving or not approving standards, AOE is being intentional around supporting implementation, schools to which standards apply, , where the standards are prescribed by seat time/credits in the Education Quality Standards (EQS), opportunities for professional development and supporting

educators in the field, Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS), timeline and reconvening the Advisory Council on Wellness and Comprehensive Health.

Gleason made a motion to approve the Secretary's recommendation that the SBE approves adoption of the 2024 SHAPE America National Physical Education (PE) Standards; Fearon seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion carried.

Gleason made a motion to approve the Secretary's recommendation that the SBE approves adoption of the 2024 National Health Education Standards; Fearon seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion carried.

Gleason said the Act 1 Working Group presented to the Student Performance Standards Committee at its last committee meeting. She said the original document that was provided to the Legislature and the full State Board contains both the standards and a framework. The subcommittee is pivoting to this topic and will seek feedback from stakeholders.

Item G: SBE Annual Report to the General Assembly

Chair Samuelson said the [updated version of the report to the General Assembly](#) incorporates comments and edits from individual State Board members. The State Board discussion on edits and wordsmithing of the document included updating that the State Board approved the health and PE standards, adding a total dollar amount for the proposed budget, FY25 and FY26 budget readjustment, explaining the State Board's committees' work and process, adding accrediting body approvals, noting the moratorium on new Independent School applications for approval, delineating between approvals and renewals, AOE Independent School renewal backlog, approval of postsecondary schools, adding hyperlinks where appropriate, including an estimate of budget costs and aligning per diems with other boards.

Werner made a motion to authorize the Chair to make final updates and then submit it to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office and have it posted on the State Board's web page; Lovett seconded. Discussion followed regarding mentioning the inclusion of Chair Samuelson's service on the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont. The motion carried. Chair Samuelson abstained.

Item H: Update: Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

Chair Samuelson reviewed the timeline for her receipt of the [Commission's draft report](#). She shared the then-current draft of the report with the State Board on December 13 and noted in her cover email that it was anticipated that there would be an update to the report prior to the Commission's December 16 meeting. An updated report was received by Commission members on the evening of December 15, but Chair Samuelson was not able to share the updated report with the State Board before the Commission's December 16 meeting since it was not a public document. The updated report was not posted on the Commission's website until after the Commission's meeting. Chair Samuelson shared that the report has not been finalized and that she will share the final report with the full State Board when received.

Discussion followed regarding the work of the Commission, the Chair was named to the Commission given her position as Chair of the State Board and opportunities at prior State Board meetings to discuss the Commission's work.

Secretary Saunders provided a high-level overview and timeline of the Commission's recent work. She shared a brief background and make-up of the Commission. At its December 2 meeting, Commission members needed more time to fully digest the report, and there was also some concern around certain aspects of the report. Due to this, the submission of the report was pushed out to allow the Education Finance Subcommittee the opportunity to address some of the questions and for the full Commission to evaluate some of the outstanding items. The full Commission met on December 16th and authorized the Steering Group to make the changes that the Commission agreed upon. The report is in the final stages of formatting.

Secretary Saunders identified where there were points of discussion and debate with the Commission. She identified data requests received by the AOE which were processed and reported back to the Commission. The AOE included an overview table that identified each specific request, a description of the request and the data source, and a link to an existing report on the AOE website. Also noted in that data overview were certain areas that the Commission decided, or the Education Finance Subcommittee decided, was either not needed at that time or required further evaluation. Secretary Saunders offered to the Education Finance Subcommittee to rewrite the section of the data report to bring in some of the analysis that was already reported through the AOE's [State Education Profile Report](#) and the [Education Funding Report](#).

Secretary Saunders said the other area of concern focused on a working document tracking ideas produced by the Education Finance Subcommittee. There was debate around including the document because some ideas are contradictory, they have not been validated by data, and assumptions were built into the ideas that are not substantiated. Secretary Saunders voiced her strong reservations about including the document at the Education Finance Committee meeting on December 9. The entire Commission had agreed at its December 2 meeting that the report is not a set of policy recommendations and expressed concerns about how to frame this in the report. In her revision submitted back to the Commission on December 15, Secretary Saunders offered alternate language should the Commission decide to exclude the list of policy ideas. The Commission decided not to include the list but referenced it in the report along with other documents. A disclaimer has also been added to the document that indicates that it is an initial brainstorming and identifies that it does not represent any policy recommendations by the Commission. Chair Samuelson added that the Commission has not had discussions about any of the ideas that are on the document, there has been no opportunity to consider various policy ideas in light of recently received data from the AOE and other suggestions have been offered in public comment that are not included on in the document

Chair Samuelson said that the bulk of the work by the Commission so far has been collecting and compiling data, largely done by the AOE, so the Commission can start analyzing the data and really start analyzing any suggestions through the lens of the data. The January meeting will not have a public engagement session since the consultant's contract is not yet fully executed. The next public engagement session will occur at the February meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the State Board's perspective and voice being represented, the Commission vote taken on Monday was not unanimous, yay vote implies agreement, concern that data presented has issues, inflation has not been considered in the data, districts may have shown great restraint, process, questions regarding the report's content,

statute defines the composition of the Commission to include the Chair of the State Board of Education or designee and submitting public comment. Vice Chair Kolbe noted for the record that she does not support the yay vote on the report.

Further discussion continued regarding data and robust data validation, [State Education Profile Report Re-Release](#), promoting a system that ensures equity, Commission members vote according to best judgement and conscience, Legislative Committee, standing agenda item with an overview summary, including materials in the meeting packet, Commission's Report is a call to action, representing the majority opinion of the State Board, soliciting feedback, questions around data, calculations and conclusions, expanded focus on the AOE's work, recipe cards and open source data sets, correcting long standing data issues, AOE's commitment to quality data, future agenda planning, comfort with the Chair voting on topics and scheduling special meetings when necessary.

Item J: Secretary's Report

Secretary Saunders said the AOE wrapped up the Listen and Learn Tour. The AOE is compiling qualitative themes and will be reporting on them in January. She highlighted the scope of the work that included engagement across the state with superintendents, principals, business managers, curriculum directors, educators, students and members of the public. The agency has been working monthly to engage with strategic planning and aligning the work in the short term with the educational priorities and needs of communities across Vermont. She looks forward to holding a Listen and Learn Session with the State Board.

The [December 1st Tax Commissioner's Tax Rate letter](#) was released and a 5.9% average property tax increase is expected. The letter is based on input that the agency collects from the field and is a collaborative effort with the Tax Department and the Joint Fiscal Office.

The AOE launched its school and district budget training series in partnership with New Solutions K-12. The themes focus on staffing best practices, tips and strategies for budget development and budget communication. The themes for these sessions were prioritized with input from VSBA, VSA and the Vermont Association of State Business Officials (VASBO).

Secretary Saunders participated in the University of Vermont Grand Rounds with Doctor Heidi Schumacher to talk about chronic absenteeism and the role of the pediatric community in supporting academic recovery. It was a great opportunity to think concretely in the ways that the education and the health sectors can partner and collaborate with each other. She was encouraged by the level of engagement and participation.

The AOE is focused on providing additional and expanded professional development and training in the field. This past month, the AOE held several trainings around social studies and math inclusion in addition to the budget series.

Legislative Reports that have been submitted or are in process of being submitted include the Prekindergarten Implementation Subcommittee Report, School Construction Aid Working Group Report, Afterschool Advisory Committee Report and a Community Schools Report.

Discussion followed regarding having notes, a written report or presentation to accompany the Secretary's Report, long term average daily membership calculations, webinar to help

explain poverty indicator and updates and changes with the common level of appraisal (CLA), excess spending threshold and challenging and dynamic budget timeline and process.

Item K: Listen and Learn with the State Board

Tabled until a future meeting.

Item L: Interstate Compact

Chair Samuelson provided background on the Rivendell Interstate School District and reminded the State Board members of the meeting materials that include the original [Articles of Agreement](#) as well as the [proposed amendments to them](#). She introduced Interim Superintendent Botzjorns who addressed the State Board. Interim Superintendent Botzjorns reviewed the process for amending articles of agreement: 1) amendments are brought to the School Board, 2) the School Board agrees, 3) a public hearing is held, 4) approval by the Vermont State Board of Education, 5) approval by the New Hampshire State Board of Education, and 6) voters consider the amendment at their annual meeting in March, where the amendment must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote.

Interim Superintendent Botzjorns reviewed the [proposed amendments to the articles of agreement](#) which are changes to the articles of agreement related to the district's annual meeting and elections processes. Discussion followed regarding following the procedure, discrepancies between the language contained in the public hearing notice and the proposed amendment, other amendments noted in the memo to the State Board will be included in the article that the electorate will vote upon and community members voting on all proposed amendments, not just the ones that were included in the public hearing notice.

Fearon made a motion that the State Board of Education approve the amendments to the Rivendell Interstate School Districts' proposed changes to the articles of agreement articulated in the [school districts' memo to the State Board of Education dated December 18, 2024](#); Kolbe seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion carried.

Item M: AOE: Read Vermont

Chair Samuelson said this topic relates to [Act 139 of 2024](#) and aims to ensure that every child can read by third grade while also supporting struggling adolescent readers and preparing Vermont students for college or career. Secretary Saunders said the AOE is excited and engaged in promoting literacy outcomes statewide. She said this was an interagency initiative and every division at the AOE has been involved in developing Read Vermont. Secretary Saunders introduced Emily Lesh, Project Manager, Act 28 Literacy Initiative, and Emily Leute, Proficiency-Based Learning English /Language Arts Coordinator.

Lesh and Leute addressed the State Board and shared this [Read Vermont Overview Presentation](#). The presentation included an outline of the presentation, Read Vermont and why it launched, the many drivers to enhance literacy outcomes, Read Vermont vision, about Read Vermont, shared vision for literacy, implementing Read Vermont, Read Vermont priorities, leveraging and braiding resources, accomplishments and next steps, State capacity building, professional learning, job-embedded coaching, guidance documents and resources and family and caregiver engagement.

Discussion followed regarding AOE work and EQS, Advisory Council on Literacy, equipping educators with tools and training, literacy is interdisciplinary and cross curricular, addressing concerns around equity, building capacity in the field to implement the underpinnings of EQS, professional development, evidence based best practices and instruction, screeners and guidance, timing and over assessment.

Chair Samuelson handed the gavel over to Vice Chair Kolbe. Chair Samuelson and Lovett left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Item N: AOE: State of the State of Special Education

Vice Chair Kolbe suggested that, due to time constraints, a shorter presentation be provided at the meeting. This topic will be tabled and added to a future agenda. Meg Porcella, Student Support Services Division Director, addressed the State Board. She provided a brief update on where special education is now. Porcella said the AOE will announce the new State Director of Special Education in 2025. AOE staff has worked diligently to keep the work moving forward and the department is in good shape. Porcella added that a Special Education report is expected to be released in January.

Discussion followed regarding the state designation, AOE moving in the right direction, federal funding is not impacting LEAs, corrective action, acronyms cheat sheet and the role the board of cooperative education services (BOCES) might play in the future.

Item P: Future Meeting Planning

Chair Samuelson said the following items are on her list of potential topics for the next State Board meeting: portrait of an adult learner, Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont update, committee updates, and Listen and Learn session. Discussion followed regarding a legislative committee discussion and norms and governance discussion.

Item Q: Public to be Heard

None

Werner moved to adjourn; Jepson seconded. There was no discussion. Vice Chair Kolbe called the vote. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.