

State Board of Education

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference

Call in #: 1-802-828-7667, Conference ID: 583 817 981#

1 National Life Drive, Room 532

Montpelier, VT 05602-2501

Date: November 17, 2021

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Oliver Olsen, Chair; Jennifer Samuelson, Vice-Chair; Patrick Brown; Tom Lovett; Jenna O'Farrell; Angelita Peña; Tammy Kolbe; Lyle Jepson; Kim Gleason; Gabrielle Lucci; and Dan French.

Agency of Education (AOE): Emily Simmons, Heather Bouchey, Maureen Gaidys.

Others: Meaghan Morgan-Puglisi, Vermont National Education Association (VT-NEA); Randall Northrup; Donald Tinney, VT-NEA; Jay Nichols, Vermont Principals' Association (VPA); Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA); Juliette Longchamp, VT-NEA; Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA); Susan Aranoff; Evelyn Monje; Jim Sabataso; Kayla Loving; Mohamed Diop; Sue Ceglowski, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

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

Chair Olsen called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. and there was a roll call.

Item B: Public to be Heard

Chair Olsen recognized Meaghan Morgan-Puglisi, Vermont-National Educators Association (VT-NEA). She spoke about exhaustion in the education field and offered recommendations: remote options/creative scheduling, waiver for school days, and counting remote learning days.

Item C: Consent Agenda

Chair Olsen asked to remove the minutes from the consent agenda. Gleason moved to remove the minutes from the consent agenda and O'Farrell seconded. There was discussion on page 4 where the minutes read, "Chair Olsen will draft a response that offers a suggestion for mediation and will reinforce that the State Board is not going to be supportive of any plan that negatively impacts other districts with the consequences of a decision made by a withdrawing entity." He clarified that there was a request from Ripton and the decision was that the SBE would not be fulfilling that request. He asked for a motion to amend the minutes and strike the words, "offers a suggestion for mediation and". Gleason moved; Jepson seconded. Chair Olsen called the vote; the vote passed unanimously and there was no further discussion. Samuelson moved to approve the minutes as amended; Gleason seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were

approved. Jepson moved to approve the remainder of the consent agenda; Lovett seconded. The vote passed unanimously to approve the remainder of the consent agenda.

Item D: Board Announcements

There were no board announcements.

Item E: Student Report

Peña spoke about struggles in the schools and both teachers and students feeling overwhelmed. She expressed many students felt that there hasn't been much support going into the school year despite still being in a pandemic; a month of leniency would have been helpful in transitioning. Many students are struggling with mental health issues, work demands, and continued stress related to COVID-19. There was discussion on scheduling flexibility and waivers for school days. Lucci spoke about students struggling with seasonal colds and feeling pressure to not miss school and continued behavioral issues that are being addressed through integrated advisory groups working on social emotional learning.

Item F: Reaffirmation of action taken at October 20, 2021, Meeting

Chair Olsen explained that due to an error in the posted agenda at the October meeting, the start of that meeting was postponed, and this item would re-affirm action taken for the benefit of the public who might have had difficulty accessing the meeting. There were two votes where there were abstentions and that requires a roll call vote. He asked for a motion to re-affirm the four votes. Gleason moved; Samuelson seconded. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with 8 affirmative (Gleason, Jepson, O'Farrell, Samuelson, Brown, Lovett, Peña, Olsen) and 1 abstention (Kolbe).

Item G: Independent School Rules Subcommittee Update

Samuelson said Rule Series 7000 is open for rulemaking with two major changes and shared that there is an opportunity for public comment scheduled for December 1, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. Public comment can also be submitted to SBE.PublicComments@vermont.gov through December 10, 2021. Rule Series 2200 phase one is open; the public comment period concluded on November 5, 2021. The subcommittee met on November 15, 2021 and spent a lot of time reviewing the extensive period leading up to the rulemaking process and work done by stakeholders and recognition of receipt of significant public comment in the final days and how best to respond to those. Olsen commented on the value of stakeholder engagement and the work of the AOE's legal staff. There was discussion on public comment received late that was specific and substantive, honoring the entire public comment period, important to protect the integrity of the process, phases of rulemaking, and themes of the last-minute comments. Olsen suggested the committee continue to evaluate comments and present a recommendation on how to move forward at the December meeting. Gleason asked to ensure that all public comment is posted on the SBE's website.

Item H: Recognition of Service for Kathy Lavoie

Chair Olsen read a resolution of appreciation for Lavoie. Gleason moved and Kolbe seconded. Chair Olsen called that vote; the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Olsen called recess at 9:05 a.m. and reconvened at 9:20 a.m.

Item I: Roles and Responsibilities Committee Update

Kolbe spoke about the subcommittee meeting and building off a template created earlier by Olsen that addressed six functional areas (appeals, rulemaking, public input/visioning, district/SU governance, accountability/oversight, and independent school approval). This subcommittee will meet again on November 22, 2021 and will be targeting input from stakeholder groups. The goal is to have a draft report for the legislature by December 15, 2021. The final report will be provided at the end of January. Olsen clarified that there was no formal extension, but that there was informal notification that delivery of the final report would be delayed. There was discussion on subcommittee members, the six functions, and the template that is organizing this work.

Item J: Presentation from Winooski School District (WSD)

Chair Olsen invited Brown to introduce guest participants from Winooski School District (WSD). Brown noted that WSD is the most diverse school district in Vermont and introduced Kayla Loving, Winooski's Restorative Justice Coordinator; Evelyn Monje, UP for Learning; and Mohamed Diop, Project Liaison for Hiring and Retaining Teachers of Color/Behavior Interventionist. Loving, Monje and Diop shared a presentation titled "Winooski Antiracism Steering Committee" that covered who they are, guiding beliefs, action demand groups, updating the community, and successes and challenges. There was discussion on numbers of languages spoken at WSD, policy work with school boards, praise for the great work, support needed, Vermont's changing demographics, community preparation for refugees, assumptions as a barrier, and continuing these conversations. Chair Olsen thanked the WSD participants for joining the SBE.

Item K: Student Behavior at Extracurricular Events

Chair Olsen asked Simmons to speak to [sources of State authority related to student conduct at extracurricular events](#) and shared that education organizations had been invited to share their experiences and ideas of how the SBE could support addressing this problem and improving culture and climate. Nichols spoke about tools available to school officials, importance of timely, real-time reporting, personnel resources, increased incidences possibly due to encouragement of students to report, and [VPA's form](#) for submitting a complaint/concern. There was discussion on inconsistency of supervision, major concerns with parents/spectators, restorative practices, authority of supervisors, and sanctions for repeat offenders. Francis spoke about the VSA partnering with the VPA, programmatic responses following high profile incidences, uniformity of guidance, communications, and support of third-party investigations. Ceglowski spoke about the VSBA's model policy manual, climate at school board meetings and its impact on board functions and a comprehensive webinar to assist school board members with such challenges. There was discussion on potential trends to underlying causes for increased behaviors, general increase in anxiety, connection of divisiveness to pandemic, and that the trend is national and not unique to Vermont. Moore spoke about not hearing of any issues with independent schools who participate in interscholastic events, that all schools have been reminded that they must all have a hazing, harassment and bullying policy and must be a member of VPA. He said he was interested to hear that there were reported increases in racist behaviors and comments at the elementary level and said he would follow up with independent elementary schools. Olsen thanked the education partners.

Item L: Workforce Challenges in the Education System

Chair Olsen asked education organization partners to share their perspectives. Francis spoke about normal vs. pandemic-created challenges, all staffing shortages are acute, current challenges are

unprecedented, all positions, specifically support positions (paraprofessionals, bus drivers, food service workers, facility staff) are under-staffed. There are no immediate measures to be taken – but from policy perspective, suggestions include: drawing on retired educator pool, careful messaging around the pension fund situation, and the General Assembly taking a break on new initiatives that would impact the education field. Nichols spoke about stakeholder meetings that have resulted in: a scheduled conversation with the VSBPE, pipeline to attract education as a career path for students and staff, problem solving issues with pay and pension, utilizing retired educators without affecting pension, incentivizing educators/administrators considering retirement, fields/specialization desperately needed everywhere and the need to work together to address it. Ceglowski spoke about VSBA being in alignment with Francis and Nichols to address this critical situation. Moore added that independent schools are also struggling with staffing, with a severe need in therapeutic schools. He expressed concern about “The Great Resignation” and independent schools losing employees to the private sector. There was discussion on potential delays in placing students at therapeutic schools, impact on public schools, flexibility in hiring requirements, tapping into non-traditional resources, need to address cross-sectionally, and rethinking licensing credentials.

Tinney spoke about retention bonuses, increase in substitute payments, research/evidence (Rutgers and Cornell) that educator collaboration increases longevity, removing some responsibilities from educators, pressures on educators related to assessments, emotional well-being of students, student loan forgiveness, childcare challenges, concern with special educators and correlation with services provided to special needs students, school nurses being overwhelmed and hard to retain, difficulties with immigrants transferring credentials, suggesting a joint meeting with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) at a future Board meeting to continue this discussion.

Item M: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Presentation

Deputy Secretary Bouchey presented [Education Recovery and Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#). Discussion followed on supporting teachers and professional development, benchmarks on SEL skill acquisition, systematic patterns in participation rate, incorporating SEL into standards, and schools as hubs for this foundational work.

Item N: State Board of Education Legislative Recommendations

Chair Olsen spoke about gaps in the law and technical issues related to [Chapter 11 of 16 V.S.A.](#) (formation and reconfiguration of union school districts). Samuelson spoke to the House Education committee last month about the challenge of school districts’ withdrawal process and the committee asked for the SBE to come back with suggestions. Legislative action is anticipated, and it is important for the SBE to have a voice in that process and work closely with the AOE for a legislative proposal. Chair Olsen proposed having Gleason be the SBE authorized representative for legislative changes proposed related to [Chapter 11 of 16 V.S.A.](#) and asked for a motion to formalize this appointment. Lovett moved and Brown seconded. There was no discussion. Chair Olsen called the vote and the vote passed unanimously.

Item N: State Board of Education Agenda and Workplan

Chair Olsen asked for future agenda items. Suggestions: continue discussion on education workforce issues with WSD and other districts and understanding what is being contemplated for alternative pathways to certification in an effort to address BIPOC concerns, aligning efforts/discussion with the VSBPE, understanding broad context of challenges and opportunities, SBE giving a more robust

opportunity for public to be heard on diversity/equity/inclusion, hearing from Burlington School District (BSD), hearing perspectives from communities outside Chittenden county, finding time to highlight opportunities that have resulted from unification, Career Technical Education (CTE) and hearing from one that is using career pathways (Stafford Technical Center suggested for January).

Chair Olsen talked about the SBE Retreat, if decided upon, being contingent on the work of the SBE/AOE Roles and Responsibilities subcommittee. Kolbe said that might be useful after stakeholder input is received (after December 15, 2021). Olsen suggested an early January retreat so that a report could be drafted and approved at the regular January meeting. Olsen reported that both Ripton and Addison Central School District (ACSD) were advised to provide an update at the January meeting.

Secretary's Update

Vaccination of 5-11-year-olds is going well. This will play out differently across that state and AOE is working on how to support areas with lower student vaccination rates. The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP-ESSER) State Plan revisions were to be submitted soon. In December, the Administration will gear up for the legislative session; AOE will be working on policy and budget development to address stressed systems. There was discussion on mask mandates and school districts being excluded from municipal authority.

Adjourn

Samuelson moved to adjourn; Gleason seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Maureen Gaidys