

State Board of Education

Virtual via Microsoft Teams
Call in Number: 1-802-552-8456
Conference ID: 521 238 99#

Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: March 20, 2024

Present:

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

Agency of Education (AOE): Maureen Gaidys; Ryan Parkman; Sigrid Olson; Martha Deiss; Ian Burfoot-Rochford; Ted Fisher; Lindsey Hedges; Tracy Watterson; Jess DeCarolis; Emily Simmons; Jaime Kraybill; Suzanne Sprague

Others: Adam Walker, Media Factory; Sarah Buxton; Mary Kay Jurovcik; James Pasch; LL (Guest); Ted Molnar; Rabbi Tobie Weisman; Susan Aronoff; Representative Mary-Katherine Stone; Amanda Garces; Representative Elizabeth Burrows; Myles Lahue; Chris Alfano; Farren Stainton; Maya Jones; Gretchen Guffy

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 that an Executive Session be added to the agenda prior to Item E. There were no objections to the amendment.

Item A: Public to be Heard

James Pasch, Senior Director of National Litigation for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), provided the following [public comment](#) to the State Board.

Ted Molnar, President, Jewish Communities of Vermont, addressed the State Board.

Item B: Approve Draft Meeting Minutes

Jepson moved to approve the [February 21, 2024 meeting minutes](#); Kolbe seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried. Lovett abstained since he did not attend the meeting.

Item C: Board Announcements

Chair Samuelson said she and Kolbe testified in the Senate Education Committee on S.304, an act relating to Vermont's career and technical education programs and shared this [presentation](#). The act shifts oversight of Career Technical Education Centers (CTE) and rulemaking authority to the Agency of Education. The State Board questioned why they were

not first advised by the AOE of this shift. Interim Secretary Bouchey will answer questions on this topic at a special meeting of the State Board to be scheduled in early April.

Chair Samuelson said she had a conversation with Sandra Cameron and Clare Wool from the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA). They reached out to discuss a [resolution](#) that was passed at their annual meeting last fall. This [email from VSBA](#) followed the discussion. Chair Samuelson reminded the State Board that this was the same resolution that she had mentioned at the Board's monthly meeting in December that referenced unspecified failures of the State Board. The VSBA acknowledged that was a poor choice of words. Chair Samuelson said there should be follow-up conversations and hopes the State Board will be able to partner with the VSBA in the future.

Chair Samuelson and Sarah Buxton, Attorney, have an upcoming meeting with Big Hartman, Executive Director and Legal Counsel of the Human Rights Commission. Chair Samuelson is looking forward to the conversation and will answer any questions on the Education Quality Standards (EQS) and Rule Series 2200 that arise.

Jenna O'Farrell said that a Vermont student's mixed media artwork is on display in the Capitol Building's basement in Washington, D.C. The artwork is on display for 18 months as part of the Congressional High School Art Show. The artwork was nominated by Congresswoman Balint.

Item D: Student Report

Wilburn said freshman – junior classes will be doing assessment testing. She is exempt since she is a senior. Her school's chorus and band concert went well. Her basketball team finished second in the State finals. She and other students are working to help set up a teen center in Newport in partnership with the school and local community. She said the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network (VSARN) has an upcoming presentation at Champlain Valley Union High School in the coming week. Wilburn said VSARN would like to present at the next meeting.

Fearon said Vergennes High School's musical performance of "Mama Mia" has wrapped. It is pre-season for spring sports. He said there has been a lot of interest in his work with his local school board and the school budget which failed in his district. Students are taking an interest. His school board is on the third version of the budget. Fearon said that there are two controversial topics. The first is not related to the budget but is associated with it and it is gender neutral bathrooms being installed in the high school. The second is cutting a popular alternative learning program, the Walton Project. The budget vote has not taken place. If the budget vote fails again, more cuts will be needed.

Executive Session

Chair Samuelson moved pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1) that the Board finds that premature general public knowledge of confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the State Board of Education would clearly place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Lovett seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Chair Samuelson moved that the Board enter executive session to receive confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services

to the Board pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(F). Diop seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

The State Board entered executive session at 9:11 a.m.

The State Board returned from executive session at 10:11 a.m.

Item E: Rule Series 2000 (Education Quality Standards) Update

Kolbe said that the EQS rules guide how education is delivered in Vermont. The committee is presenting the rule to the State Board for their consideration. She added that the rule will be viewed around the country as one of the strongest sets of public education and rules with respect to protecting students against discrimination and ensuring that students have access to an equitable education. Gleason and Kolbe shared a presentation on [Recommended Changes to Rule Series 2000, Education Quality Standards](#) (EQS) that included changes as a result of Act 1 (2019), a review of the process since the State Board's last review/approval, general categories of public comment, EQS modifications since the close of public comment and next steps.

Buxton shared the [Draft Final Rule 2000 – v.18](#) with the State Board and walked through the document and reviewed the updates and changes made to it since the last version was published. These include identifying school district, supervisory union and supervisory district without abbreviation, statement of purpose (Sect. 2105) reflecting changes to the prohibition of discrimination and aligning it with federal and state law, non-discriminatory protections and providing greater awareness, understanding and inclusion, definitions section (Sect. 2110) and the term anti-discriminatory, describing how words should be applied rather than defined, moving the definition of culturally responsive teaching to Sect. 2120.5, the definition of discrimination aligning with federal and state law, education support teams moved to Sect. 2120.5, removing education technology since it is not used in the rule, definition of equity and equitable, removing all definitions that are currently defined in law, interdisciplinary moved to Sect. 2120.1, separated terms proficiency-based learning and proficiency-based graduation requirements, terms race and ethnicity are legally protected classes, racism definition, State Board is a new definition and transferrable skills now located in Sect. 2120.5.

Discussion followed regarding the term “race”, where universal design for learning is located in the rule and removal of the term Personalized Learning Plan from the rule since it is already defined in law.

Buxton continued with in-depth walk-through the rules.

Gleason reminded the State Board members to review the document and send any comments and feedback to Kolbe and Gleason by March 26, 2024. A Special Meeting will be scheduled in early April to vote on the rules.

Item F: Rule Series 2200 (Independent School Approvals) Update

Chair Samuelson provided a brief update. She said the committee met three times in March to process public comment. Their work centered on definitions, applicability of CTEs to independent schools, statement of purpose, the annual compliance assurance, and the process for recognizing accrediting agencies. The committee is taking a brief pause, and updates will be provided as the work continues.

The State Board took a break at 11:41 a.m.
The State Board meeting resumed at 11:55 a.m.

Item G: Presidential Scholars

Chair Samuelson invited Sigrid Olson, AOE Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator, and Ryan Parkman, AOE Personalized Learning Program Manager, to share information about the Presidential Scholars Program. Olson said the Presidential Scholar Program recognizes students in three different areas including the arts, CTE and a general category. The general category focuses on academic excellence and also excellence outside the classroom. These awards are based on the same national awards run by the US Department of Education. Vermont has tailored the awards to its education landscape. Students are recognized for achievements that go above and beyond test scores and GPA and that show that they are creating their own pathways to success. Olsen reviewed some of the [achievements](#) of this year's 31 Presidential Scholars.

The following Presidential Scholars were present, introduced themselves and were recognized by the State Board:

Maya Jones, South Burlington High School
Farren Stainton, Woodstock Union High School
Christopher Alfano, Burr and Burton Academy
Myles Lahue, Burr and Burton Academy

Students are nominated by their school, or they can be self-nominated. SAT and ACT scores can be used. Olson hopes that the US Department of Education will make a change to the general category application, which requires that the student identify as either a male or female and be a U.S. citizen. The other categories do not require this information.

Item H: Legislative Update

Ted Fisher, Director of Policy Strategy and Outreach, and Lindsey Hedges, Policy Communications Specialist, addressed the Board. They shared this [presentation](#) and discussed the following bills that made crossover: H.630 - an act relating to boards of cooperative education services (BOCES); H.873 – an act relating to financing the testing for and remediation of the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools; H.874 – an act relating to miscellaneous changes in education law; H.871 – an act relating to the development of an updated State aid to school construction program; S.167 – an act relating to miscellaneous amendments to education law; S.204 – an act relating to reading assessment and intervention; S.284 – an act relating to the use of electronic devices and digital and online products in schools; and, S.304 – an act relating to Vermont's career and technical education programming. Discussion followed regarding S.304, S.167 and S.204.

Item J: Future Meeting Planning

Chair Samuelson said that both the April and May meetings will be in-person. The May meeting will be at North Country Union High School and the April meeting location is yet to be determined. In addition to the regular, monthly State Board Meeting, there will be a special meeting in early April to address the Education Quality Standards rule and CTE rulemaking authority. Other items discussed were updates on Rule Series 2200, strategic plan, and board retreat.

Item K: Public to be Heard

There was none.

Gleason moved to adjourn; Lovett seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.