

January 20, 2015

Every learner completes his or her public education with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, continuing education, careers, and citizenship. The public education system provides flexible learning environments rich with 21st century tools that promote self-development, academic achievement, and active engagement in learning. It operates within a framework of high expectations for every learner with support from educators, families and the community.

Approved MINUTES

Legislative Committee Meeting

The State Board of Education met prior to its regular monthly meeting to review the upcoming session of the Legislature and discuss how to best communicate its priorities regarding legislation concerning education in the State of Vermont. The SBE's Legislative Agenda has been shared with all of the Legislators and will serve as the road map the SBE will follow in any discussions SBE members have with lawmakers.

State Board of Education Meeting

Present

State Board of Education (SBE):

Stephan Morse, Chair; Sean-Marie Oller, Vice Chair; Krista Huling; Bonnie Johnson-Aten (arrived at 10:15); Morgan MacIver; Margaret MacLean; Dylan McAllister; William Mathis; Mark Perrin; Stacy Weinberger; Rebecca Holcombe

Agency of Education (AOE):

Bill Talbott; Vaughn Altemus; Deb Quackenbush; Amy Fowler; Alicia Hanrahan; Karin Edwards; Perry Thompson

Others:

Ken Page, VPA; Jeff Francis, VSA; Nicole Mace, VSA; Steve Dale, VSBA; Dean Stearns, South Royalton School Principal; Liz York, Tunbridge School Board; Laurie Smith, Royalton School Board; Julie Longchamp, Vermont-NEA; Charlotte Albright, VPR; Tim Murphy; South Royalton School Board; Holly Morehouse, Vermont Afterschool; Ginny Burley, Vermont Afterschool; Karen Scott, Vermont Afterschool; Jo Lavasseur, Herald of Randolph; Jennifer Hawk, Valley News; Mike Deweese, VSBA; Deb Mathews, Orange-Windsor SU; Tiffany Packe, VTdigger.org; Cynthia Powers, OWSU; Joseph Spinella, OWSU; Bruce Hyde, Granville School Board & Windsor Northwest SU Board; Frank Russell, Rochester School Board & WNWSU Board; Meg Powden, WNWSU Superintendent; Bruce Labs, OWSU Superintendent; Carl Groppe, WNWSU

Board Chair; Owen Bradley, Bethel-Whitcomb Principal; Andra Bowen, Bethel-Whitcomb Vice Principal; Tamela Ennis, WNWSU Board; Carrie McDonnell, OWSU Board; Burnett Williams, Sharon Elementary School Principal.

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call

Chair Stephan Morse called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM and thanked South Royalton School for hosting the meeting. He led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and reminded those in attendance to sign the attendance sheet. The members of the SBE then introduced themselves.

Item B: Public to be Heard (Items not on the day's agenda)

Bruce Labs, Superintendent of Orange-Windsor Supervisory Union (OWSU) welcomed everyone on behalf of "SoRo" and thanked the SBE for agreeing to hold the meeting at South Royalton School. He introduced Tim Murphy, Chair of the South Royalton School Board; Laurie Smith, Vice Chair; and Dean Stearns, Principal of South Royalton School.

Item C: Consent Agenda

Motion: Oller moved to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Huling seconded.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Specifically, the items on the Consent Agenda were:

- Minutes of December 16, 2014, SBE Meeting; and
- Independent School Amendment – Maple Street School, Manchester, VT

Updates

Item D: Board Members' Announcements & Student Representatives' Emails

Huling said she had attended the formational meeting in Chittenden East SU of the Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District and noted how nice it was to see the communities coming together in such a fashion. She had also attended a fundraiser for Mobius, which promotes the many benefits of mentoring. She said Mobius is looking for new ways to partner with the AOE and the SBE to find ways to utilize mentoring to help reduce the achievement gap. In the past month she had also been a judge for Senator Sanders' essay contest.

Oller reported she had attended a recent meeting of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators.

McAllister said he has been continuing his conversation with the former student representative on the SBE in Massachusetts regarding establishing a student advisory council to meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues related to education that are important to students.

Mathis said that recent discussion at the federal level has centered at using student outcomes as the measure for the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. He called such an approach foolish and said there is no way to use such outcomes for that purpose. Holcombe agreed, saying there is no way to measure student outcomes short of establishing a national database of

student test results, which, itself, would be an impossible task. She said that she is working closing with other states to push the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) to put together a white paper on the appropriate and inappropriate uses of test scores.

Item E: Chair’s Report

Morse said he has been closely following educational issues while out of state and will continue to do so.

An “Item F” was unintentionally omitted from the lettered items on this month’s Agenda.

Item G: Secretary’s Report

Holcombe said that the Agency will be working with the Legislature to adjust licensing fees and to work to align statutory language with the language of the Educational Quality Standards.

Regarding SBAC, Holcombe noted that a lot of scrutiny is being put on all statewide technological contracts, and the SBAC contract is no exception. She hopes the contract will be signed soon so the SBAC portal can go up. She noted that this is not just a new test, but rather marks a change to a new set of standards. While the Agency had some concerns about the internet connectivity at a handful of schools in the state, she noted that not a single school had requested paper copies of the SBAC tests and expressed her gratitude to those schools that have worked extra hard to support online learning and access to information online. She pointed out that it was important to realize that the standards for proficiency on the SBAC tests have been set so high that most students may not achieve it. Mathis noted that Vermont tends to do quite well compared to the rest of the states (and the world) on standardized tests and asked why we now expect that 70% of Vermont’s students won’t test as proficient on the SBAC. Holcombe said that it is expected that the new SBAC tests have cut scores set at a level that at least 50% of the takers around the world would not achieve proficiency. She reiterated that Vermont did not seek a federal waiver from the proficiency requirements because Vermont objects to the idea of evaluating teachers’ performance based on student test scores. Vermont does not want a system of evaluation that measures schools in two areas when there are many more factors that can indicate a student is, can and will be successful. The goal is to help every child improve regardless of where he or she starts from. She said she would like to send out two letters to parents regarding the SBAC: one at the end of February discussing details of the upcoming test and then another when scores are released to help parents and the community understand what can and what cannot be inferred from the test scores.

Discussion Items

Item H: Vermont Afterschool, Expanded Learning Time Work Group

Holly Morehouse gave a presentation on Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO). She said that talk of the opportunity and achievement gaps cannot be complete without considering time outside of the normal school day/school year. Learning opportunities during the summer months and/or involvement in afterschool programs have been shown to be very helpful in reducing the gaps. What students do during these times can help keep them from falling behind their peers and has even been shown to help them make up ground if they have already fallen behind.

She noted that extended day/year is just one piece of ELO. The quality of these afterschool and summer programs are key, as well. A challenge is making the summer programs affordable. Research has shown one-third of students would enroll in ELO if it were available to them. The cost per student for 15 hours per week during the school year and six weeks during the summer is roughly \$2,318. For every dollar spent on such activities in Vermont, a return of \$2.18 in long term savings and benefits is realized.

Morehouse offered several suggestions of how ELO could be encouraged. She also noted the importance of professional development for those who administer such programs and said integration with the school's overall curriculum are both key to the success of the program in the long run.

Item I: PreK Rulemaking: Status Update

Karin Edwards reviewed the initial set of guidance regarding Act 166 that had been sent out to schools. The next set of guidance documents should be ready to distribute in early February. The application for prequalification as an approved program was distributed in early January and the application for expansion of a program in a school should be ready for distribution soon. Edwards noted that, due to issues regarding Head Start programs, the rulemaking process has been temporarily halted. Public hearings on the rules have not yet been scheduled. Once the issues with Head Start are resolved rulemaking will continue; she expects the rules should be finalized by summer.

Item J: Population and Staffing Trends

Holcombe said she would present a PowerPoint presentation at next month's meeting regarding population projections. There is a projected decline in both students and taxpayers in Vermont over the next 20-year period. She will also examine special education services since it seems many of the staff increases in schools are driven by special education. The funding formula for special education may need to be revisited and she plans to look for a correlation between special education spending and poverty levels.

She discussed two reports that had been recently released. One was a report on discipline. She urged caution regarding interpreting the results of that report, noting that unless a person is in the school building itself it is difficult to know how to accurately interpret the statistics cited in the report because there are so many factors affecting why some schools seem to discipline more often. She added that just because a school does not report high incidences of discipline does not automatically mean it is a "safer" school.

The second report was issued by Penn State regarding consolidation of schools in Vermont. She carefully and thoughtfully explained the flaws in the research upon which the report was based and why its conclusions are dubious at best. The AOE has written a rebuttal to the report and will be sharing that rebuttal with the press and the Legislature so they, too, understand the host of issues tainting the accuracy of this report. The report looks at small schools, but the schools used as examples in the report are generally larger than most of Vermont's districts. Nationally, a "small" school is one with 200-300 students, but in Vermont, a small school is one with as few as 15 students. There is no research that shows that schools that small are better. As a result, the report over-generalizes and misleads the public regarding the challenges some of Vermont's

districts actually face. School choice data shows that parents are bypassing closer, smaller schools for bigger, farther away schools. Clearly, both size and regional factors are already playing a role in school choice. The report also says all small schools are the same. That is not true in Vermont.

She said that towns are facing very real challenges and if the state can't help them understand the true facts that is a disservice to the kids in those towns. Additionally, in a small town with no industry in some cases all they have is their school. They fear if they lose their school they will lose their sense of town community. That is a real fear that needs to be acknowledged.

Item K: Teacher Equity Report

Amy Fowler explained that this report is a new report being required by the Federal government. Three core principles have been identified and states are now required to adopt several areas to measure to track teacher equity in their state. The core principles are as follows: every student deserves an equal educational opportunity, teachers and principals deserve the support they need to succeed, and educators should be fully able to support their students in achieving academic excellence.

The specific metrics chosen to measure for this report are up to each state, but states will be judged on how thoughtfully the metrics are chosen and the metrics chosen must be something that the state can track over time. She noted that the data recently released by the Federal government contained some rather severe data collection errors, but Vermont is not allowed to alter the data. However, since Vermont can choose which data it wants to track the specific data already released by the Federal government does not have to be among the data points Vermont chooses to track. Ultimately the report is intended to illustrate the degree that historically underserved segments of the student population continue to be underserved and the degree that the more privileged segments continue to be privileged. In this case, "privileged" means resources and access to quality educators.

Item L: FY 16 Budget

Bill Talbott reviewed the budget information. He explained the way the AOE is organized by funding source and noted the year-to-year comparisons in changes in the budget. He said that, in essence, the AOE will be level funded in FY 2016. Funding for dual enrollment was also discussed. Specific to the SBE, he noted the SBE's budget for FY 2016 has also been level funded.

The meeting recessed from 12:20 – 1:05 for lunch.

Action/Tabled Items

Item M: Windsor Northwest SU Consolidation Report

Morse commended the members of the two Supervisory Unions and local school boards as well as Steve Dale, Bruce Labs and Meg Powden for the work they had done throughout the process. His hope was that other school districts will look to this as a model of a way to improve educational opportunities for students.

Holcombe recognized the two SUs for taking the bull by the horns and not simply letting change happen to them. The good will shown by these communities and the tremendous effort put forth to increase the educational opportunities for students in their districts was truly commendable. She applauded their focus on “trust” in the Consolidation Report because having trust in each other and in their common decisions is essential to the success of the integrated SUs.

Vaughn Altemus said it had been a pleasure working on this project. He applauded the SUs for the great degree of forward-thinking that went into the preparation of the Report. They looked far into the future when developing the document and he said doing so would no doubt prove to be highly beneficial.

Carl Groppe, Don Shaw, Meg Powden and Bruce Labs addressed the SBE, each taking a certain part of the Report and reviewing it. In both the short and the long term, the integration of the two SUs creates the potential for educational and efficiency gains. They, too, expressed their pleasure that the integration conversation had demonstrated everyone’s commitment to what is best for the students in the two SUs. There was discussion regarding the authorization of a Transition Board as well as what sources of special funding or grants would be available as the two SUs completed their integration.

Motion: Oller moved that the State Board of Education directs the school districts of the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union and the Orange-Windsor Supervisory Union be regrouped as follows: The member school districts of the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union shall be reassigned as member districts of the Orange-Windsor Supervisory Union, as of July 1, 2016. The school districts that shall be moved into the Orange-Windsor Supervisory Union are: Bethel School District, Granville School District, Hancock School District, Rochester School District, and Stockbridge School District. As of July 1, 2016, the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union shall cease to exist. Seconded by Huling.

Vote: By unanimous roll call vote, all 9 voting members of the SBE voted to approve the motion.

Motion: Oller moved that the SBE supports the two SUs in their consolidation plan through the creation of a Transition Board. Seconded by Weinberger.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

The meeting recessed from 1:45 – 2:00.

Item N: 2015-2019 Strategic Plan

Motion: Oller moved to accept the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan as presented. Seconded by Huling.

Johnson-Aten thanked the Strategic Planning Committee for its hard work in putting the Plan together. She also expressed her appreciation to the members of the public who submitted comments on the Plan. Her committee had met earlier in the month and incorporated the comments and feedback that helped to make the plan more solid.

Johnson-Aten said there is still work to be done, as directed by the Plan. There was discussion about having an item on each month's Agenda moving forward to ensure the Plan is kept fresh and continues to evolve as intended.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Item O: Designation of New Military Compact Member

Holcombe explained that this item was not able to be completed in time to be taken up this month. The item will reappear on February's Agenda.

Adjourn

Motion: Johnson-Aten moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:30 PM. Weinberger seconded.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Minutes recorded and prepared by Perry H. Thompson