

April 21, 2015

The state of Vermont is a national and international leader in education. From exceptional teachers and visionary leadership to creative instruction and leading-edge assessment, Vermont enjoys a highly regarded educational system which serves as a model for other states and schools.

MINUTES

Legislative Committee

The Board held a meeting of its Legislative Committee with the rest of the SBE present. Brad James provided them with a description of the two education bills being worked on in the Vermont Legislature. It was noted that the Senate Education Committee was holding a public hearing the following evening. Huling and Perrin will attend and speak on behalf of the SBE.

SBE Meeting

Present

State Board of Education (SBE):

Stephan Morse, Chair; Sean-Marie Oller, Vice Chair; Krista Huling; Bonnie Johnson-Aten; Peter Peltz; Morgan MacIver; William Mathis; Mark Perrin; Stacy Weinberger; Rebecca Holcombe

Agency of Education (AOE):

Bill Talbott; John Fischer; Vaughn Altemus; Karin Edwards; Tom Alderman; Brad James; Chris Case; Greg Glennon; Lindsay Simpson; Tom Aloisi; Kendra Rickerby; Perry Thompson

Others:

Gail Conley, citizen of Huntington; Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association; Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association; Ken Page, Vermont Principals Association; Steve Dale, Vermont School Boards Association; Robyn Freedner-Maguire, Let's Grow Kids; Christopher Leopold, Chittenden East SU; Jon Milazzo, Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District & CESU

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

Chair Stephan Morse called the meeting to order at 10:55 AM. He then led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and reminded those in attendance to sign the attendance sheet. The members of the SBE introduced themselves.

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

Ken Page talked about the VPA's Leadership Academy coming up in early August and invited the members of the SBE to attend.

Item C: Consent Agenda

This item was discussed after Agenda Item G, but is recorded here to remain consistent with the Agenda as published.

Motion: Peltz moved to enter into Executive Session at 11:30 for the purpose of receiving confidential information and/or advice from AOE General Counsel Glennon. Seconded by Johnson-Aten.

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

The SBE exited from Executive Session at 12:00.

Motion: Mathis moved to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Oller.

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

Specifically, the items approved on the Consent Agenda were

1. Minutes
 - February 17, 2015, SBE Meeting
 - March 17, 2015, SBE Meeting
2. Renewal of general education approval:
 - St. Mary's School, Middlebury; grades K-6
 - Sacred Heart School, Bennington; grades K-8
3. Renewal of general and special education approval:
 - Petonbowk Academy, Burlington; ages 11-21
4. General and special education amendment:
 - Maplehill School, Plainfield; grades 7-12
5. Acknowledgement of a name change:
 - Central Vermont Catholic School, Barre; grades K-8

Updates

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

Oller talked about attending the NASBE conference on data privacy and advertising. Mathis added that he had attended the conference, as well, and said he was optimistic that the reauthorization of the ESEA, currently making its way through Congress, would be adopted. He said he had also attended an American Educational Research Association conference focused on the privatization movement, especially charter schools, and the concerns that arise from the movement.

Item E: Chair's Report

Morse said he had written an article in support of dual enrollment at the request of the Chancellor of the State College System. He noted that he had written it as an individual and not on behalf of the SBE.

Item F: Legislative Update

This item was discussed last, prior to the meeting's adjournment, but is recorded here to remain consistent with the Agenda as published.

Huling and Perrin had begun working to develop a statement for them to give the following evening at a public hearing before the Senate Education Committee. Huling said the plan was to remain positive and to note the areas of focus determined to be important to Vermont's education future at last year's Green Mountain Imperative Summit. Morse agreed with that approach, noting that the discussion had begun with what was best for students, but now seems to have been altered into a focus on how to preserve Vermont's historical educational system that dates back to the 1890s. He said the discussion regarding the education bill should be refocused on what is best for kids' education and not how to preserve communities. MacIver suggested using the word "remodel" to describe the type of changes necessary to improve Vermont's educational system because of the softer connotation associated with the word.

Item G: Secretary's Report

Holcombe was happy to report that the ESEA reauthorization bill had been passed out of its Senate Committee. The bill emphasizes the role of states in developing accountability systems appropriate to their local context and would allow Vermont to lift sanctions imposed under NCLB, shift the conversation to other means of measuring schools' successes and allow for a focus on continuous improvement. The federal requirement for annual testing is not being abandoned, but will allow more flexibility on what the annual testing looks like. She added that she was quite pleased that funding for the 21C program was kept in the bill. That is the only source of money that funds extended day and extended year educational programs, which have been shown to be so important in reducing the achievement gap, especially for students of limited economic means. She expressed her thanks to Senator Sanders who played a pivotal role in the drafting of the ESEA reauthorization bill. The bill still needs to be voted on by the U.S. House, and Mathis said he believes it stands a very good chance of being passed by that Chamber as well.

Oller said she had spoken with Sanders' education staffer who said that both Secretary Holcombe and Deputy Secretary Fischer had been important voices in the discussions surrounding the ESEA reauthorization and extended the Senator's gratitude for remaining in close communication with him throughout the process. She added that the waivers that had been available under NCLB would be eliminated under the reauthorization bill and said she is glad Vermont had never sought one.

Holcombe said she had been working with the Governor and people at AHS to develop ways to provide services at schools. She also reported that Deputy Secretary Fischer had accepted a position at the Gates Foundation in Washington, DC, and would be leaving the AOE in May.

There was discussion about the SBAC assessments. Some data has been collected regarding the type of devices that different schools are using to administer the assessments. Fischer reported that AOE had sent a memo to the U.S. Department of Education requesting a waiver of consequential decisions based on first year SBAC results this year. He noted that the request to US-ED was written in line with their expectations and he fully expects that Vermont's request

will be granted. He said that the determinations that may be made of schools' assessment results would not be used to advance them down the path towards further corrective action. He noted that whatever final form the ESEA reauthorization takes will also affect how Vermont builds its new accountability system.

Discussion Items

Item H: PreK Rulemaking

Edwards reported that the current version of the proposed rules had been successfully submitted to the Secretary of State's office. Next up will be the public hearing on the rules, which is scheduled for May 20 at various locations throughout the state. Once that step is complete, the proposed rules will come back to the SBE for approval in August or September.

The meeting recessed from 12:05 – 12:45 for lunch.

Item I: Educational Quality Review (EQR) Update

Fowler presented a PowerPoint on the subject. The current objective is to design a beta implementation plan for approximately 20 SU/SDs for use beginning in the fall of 2015. She reviewed the methods by which the AOE is seeking input on the process and noted that EQRs are defined by the Educational Quality Standards (EQS) and part of a systemic program of continuous improvement. Two types of reviews will be used in the EQR, a snapshot review and an integrated field review. Each SU/SD will receive a snapshot review annually and one-third of SU/SDs will receive an integrated field review per year so that every SU/SD receives one triennially.

Item J: Proficiency Based Learning (PBL) Update

Morse thanked Fischer for all he has done for education in the State of Vermont. Fischer then began a review of a PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed the elements of the EQS and what Personalized Learning Plans (PLP) look like and how they can be implemented. He noted the importance of aligning PLPs with the state educational accountability system. He reviewed what AOE has been doing to support schools as they work through the shift to PLPs and Proficiency Based Graduation requirements.

Alderman then began a review of the series of trainings the AOE has given regarding PBL. He said that more than half of the SUs have participated in some aspect of PBL training. SUs are working to implement a local, comprehensive assessment system in which a combination of traditional assessment and performance based assessment models tied to performance based skills are used.

Edwards reviewed the Local Comprehensive Assessment System (LCAS). There is still some work to be done to enhance understanding in the field regarding the System. She reviewed the connections between the LCAS and the content areas of Science, English Language Arts and Math.

Case reviewed the timeline for the Vermont Transferrable Skills Assessment System. This is necessary to assess transferrable skills as required by the EQS. The AOE is working to provide

schools with a tool set they can use to perform this assessment. He noted that this ties back to the work being done on Proficiency Based Graduation requirements.

Alderman noted that EQS requires graduation standards to be based on proficiencies. The AOE has offered guidance on this process by putting out a model that can be used as-is by schools, or modified, or schools can build their own system as long as it meets all the necessary criteria. He elaborated on the difference between content areas and transferrable skills. Fisher said that the goal is that curriculum will be coordinated and developed at the SU level. Alderman added that PLPs should enable students who move into a different SU to achieve more consistency in their learning.

Item K: Let's Grow Kids

Weinberger introduced Freedner-Maguire who reviewed her organization's campaign and what its goals are. She said they had done research to determine how Vermonters feels about early childhood development. The issue of kids not entering Kindergarten with the necessary skills was identified as the top concern. She went on to review the 4 major components of their work: communication, outreach, the VT early childhood framework and action plan, and research.

She explained how her organization's goals and work tie in to the SBE's Strategic Plan. They would like to see all children considered as learners, beginning at birth. Ensuring that all children of all ages from all areas and of all socio-economic backgrounds have access to quality early learning experiences is essential. She said that science has shown that in young children new neural connections are formed at the rate of 700 per second. This is greatly affected by the adult caregivers in their lives. If children do not have healthy interactions with their caregivers those connections are not formed. She mentioned toxic stress, where a child is living in a situation of abuse or neglect, and said it all takes is one adult caregiver to mitigate the effects of toxic stress. She also said that the vast majority of families these days have both parents in the workforce. Therefore a system of childcare is also a system of workforce care that stands to benefit everyone by allowing parents to be in the workforce while providing a nurturing environment for children to learn and thrive. She noted that the return on investment for every dollar spent on education in a child's early years is between five and eighteen dollars. She said her organization supports the formation of a blue ribbon commission to research the cost and how to finance high quality affordable childcare in Vermont.

The meeting recessed from 2:05 – 2:15.

Action Items

Item L: Waiver for CESU

Altemus explained that 16 V.S.A. § 261(d) gives the SBE authority to grant the waivers being requested. He said that the Secretary was recommending approval of the four waivers that CESU has requested, which are designed to allow the SU board to function effectively and are consistent with the Articles of Agreement for the Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District (MMMUSD), which the SBE approved several months ago.

Leopold reviewed each of the four waivers the CESU was requesting. He noted that a majority of the current CESU board voted to request these waivers, but the vote was not unanimous. He also noted that the current CESU board will change on July 1 to the MMMUSD board, at which time the number of board members will reduce from 18 to 16.

Milazzo expressed excitement to be breaking new ground with the MMMUSD. He knows there are some challenges on the horizon for them, but there are also a lot of opportunities. He said the new board is functioning well and moving forward methodically. Mathis asked if there were any weaknesses or downside to what Milazzo is seeing so far and Milazzo said there is not. He said if they run into other challenges they will come back before the SBE to seek potential remedies. He noted that he did not see how the board could function without the waivers being requested.

Motion: Peltz moved that the SBE approve the four waivers being requested by CESU. Seconded by Perrin.

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

Item M: Strategic Plan, Define Nature of the Gaps

Motion: Oller moved to table this item for discussion at the May meeting. Seconded by Johnson-Aten.

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

Adjourn

Motion: Perrin moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 PM. Seconded by Huling.

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

Minutes recorded and prepared by Perry H. Thompson