

December 13, 2017

- Strategic Goals: (1) Ensure that Vermont's public education system operates within the framework of high expectations for every learner and ensure that there is equity in opportunity for all.*
- (2) Ensure that the public education system is stable, efficient, and responsive to changes and ever-changing population needs, economic and 21st century issues.*

## **Approved Minutes**

### **Present:**

**State Board of Education (SBE):** Krista Huling, Chair; William Mathis, Vice Chair (via phone); Connor Solimano; Stacy Weinberger (joined at 9:35 a.m.), Bonnie Johnson-Aten, Mark Perrin (via phone); Peter Peltz; John Carroll; John O'Keefe (joined at 10:25 a.m.); Rebecca Holcombe

**Agency of Education (AOE):** Donna Russo-Savage, Haley Jones, Robert Stirewalt, Pat Fitzsimmons, Martha Deiss, Margaret Carrera-Bly, Sarah Birge, Heidi Whipple, Susan Yesalonia, Karin Edwards, Maureen Gaidys.

**Others:** Matt Levin, VT Early Childhood Alliance; Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; Andy Kepes, RNESU; Sheila Soule, HUUSD

### **Item A: Call to Order**

Chairman Huling called the meeting to order at 8:50 a.m. and asked for introductions.

### **Item B: Roll Call and Introductions**

Board members introduced themselves.

### **Item C: Public to be Heard**

Chair Huling asked if there were any members of the public to be heard. There was none.

### **Item D: Consent Agenda**

Carroll moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Peltz seconded. There were no comments. The motion passed 6:1; Mathis voted no.

### **Item E: Board Announcements**

Huling shared that Connor was recently selected as a delegate to the U.S. Senate Youth Program. Solimano will spend a week in Washington, D.C. and will learn more about government. He also received a scholarship of \$10,000. Huling asked Solimano to share the application process. Solimano said the process varies by state, that applicants need to hold a leadership position, provide a written application and then finalists (of which there were six) participate in an interview. After that, two delegates are chosen and two alternates. Solimano will be listening to policy addresses, meeting the President, and enjoy being surrounded with like-minded students interested in politics.

Solimano shared that last night he learned that he was accepted into Harvard University.

Mathis shared that Bob Gensburg, the lead attorney in the Brigham v. State case, passed away. Mathis shared that he attended a local forum on consolidation with Otter Valley. He said opinions were strong and mixed and he predicts there will be more of this. He asked if the Education Summit was on the agenda. Huling said that she would address this in her report.

#### **Item F: Chair's Report**

Huling shared that the Education Summit is scheduled for December 18 from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at Norwich University and it has been expanded to about 350 individuals. The agenda is still rough, but should include: Governor's opening statement, budget, Act 166, career pathways, health benefits for teachers, Act 46 and affordability, innovation, and a small group discussion on getting more for less money. The panel members are not yet finalized. Holcombe offered a few changes – health care will not be on the agenda as that report is not yet finished. There will be a presentation on Act 166 preliminary recommendations from Holcombe and Gobeille, update on the budget situation, career pathways work (Oscar Aliaga), post-secondary data, and a series of panels that will involve school board members and others and how they are managing Act 46, ratios, etc. There will be extensive time for conversation. Huling asked for clarification on who from the Board was attending. Holcombe clarified that originally, enrollment was capped at 125, but then based on interest, invitations were extended and a new venue was secured. Many were waitlisted, not just SBE members. Huling suggested that Board attendees be mindful and split up for panel discussions. Attending are Carroll, Peltz, Mathis, and Huling. Huling shared that Weinberger had expressed interest. Carroll reminded the group that they should be friendly observers and adhere to their Board norms.

Huling also acknowledged Harrison Bushnell from U-32 as the other delegate to the U.S. Senate Youth Program, who is also receiving a \$10,000 scholarship.

Huling shared a letter received from North Country SU and a resolution approved at their October Board meeting, which advances equity and addresses the needs of children and families living in poverty.

Huling shared a Thanksgiving thank you note from a school board member in Enosburg acknowledging the SBE for the hard work they put forth for Vermont children.

#### **Item G: Committee Reports**

Strategic Planning Committee: Huling shared that this committee did not meet last month, but she does envision that they will meet this month and come back to the SBE for a vote.

Approved Independent Schools Committee: Johnson-Aten shared that the committee met on November 17 and the last meeting will be Friday, December 15. They are still going around in circles. They have heard more about finances as it relates to independent schools and there has been some good debate as to the purpose of the committee. It is clear that Baruth intends to move this and make it a bill, which was a surprise. Johnson-Aten does not feel that enough work has been done to prepare a final report. Baruth asked the SBE to extend the timeline for rulemaking. As it turned out, this option does not exist, as it would go against Act 49, which says the SBE cannot act until the report is out. Huling confirmed that she spoke with independent counsel and was advised not to take any formal action on independent schools

until the report is issued, per Act 49. Johnson shared that the concern is that this would become a bill and remove the SBE's rulemaking authority, which at this time still exists.

Johnson-Aten shared that Senator Baruth said there would be a straw vote at the next meeting on three options for moving forward: 1) send the responsibility for rulemaking back to the SBE, 2) address this through the Legislature, or 3) delay the rulemaking process. The committee is still stuck on the financial pieces and special education services. There was discussion on what would happen if this went to the Legislature, which committee would take it on, if the committee would give guidance to the SBE if the first option were chosen, the unlikelihood of a consensual vote, starting over with this process that was interrupted, etc.

Johnson-Aten said that she would report back to the Approved Independent Schools Committee that the Board would take no action on this matter because they cannot until the report is finalized.

Carroll expressed concern over this coming back to the Board with no guidance. Johnson-Aten and Holcombe concurred that they do not think it will come back to the Board, that it will be taken up in the Legislature. This is a complicated issue and there are still some logistical misunderstandings among committee members.

#### **Item H: Student Reports**

Solimano spoke about the importance of students and younger generations staying civically engaged, especially with so many feeling disengaged in the current state of politics. Huling asked what helps Solimano stay engaged. He responded that watching the news, discussing this with peers, not staying comfortable with hearing the same political views, choosing a variety of news sources and having ongoing debates with himself and others. Solimano is seeing more engagement now since many are upset with the current political situation. Huling shared that the Sanders' State of the Union essay contest is coming up soon and offered that as a way for students to use their voice and stay engaged.

#### **Item J: Secretary's Report**

Secretary Holcombe shared her hand out and addressed the following: Votes in November and the summary of several new mergers, acknowledgement of the work that the SBE has done, two reports commissioned by the Legislature that will be released soon. The first report addresses the supports provided statewide for struggling learners. Holcombe shared that the field needs to adapt to broader demographical changes that are taking place. She acknowledged the systems that participated in this study. Holcombe said the study findings are very powerful; she cautioned the need to be honest about the equity of access to skilled instruction and to proceed thoughtfully concerning the study's recommendations.

Weinberger arrived at 9:35 a.m.

The second report is a study on special education funding and should be available at the end of December or early January. She said the expectation is that we will handle these two reports with care, and that this will move us to a better place that will meet the needs of our system.

There was discussion on AOE sharing these reports with the field, if the reports address weighting or funding, and the broad definition of “struggling learners.” Holcombe also shared the proposals for the Legislature regarding licensing, data on post-secondary enrollment, Hour of Code event, an update and feedback received on the ESSA sessions, Governor’s School Safety Event, and the Brigham challenge filed by districts in southern Vermont. Mathis asked if it had been filed; Holcombe confirmed this and said that she would forward information to him. Mathis asked about the Act 166 report. Holcombe suggested revisiting that later as there were panelists waiting to speak.

Recognizing that the meeting was running behind schedule, Fitzsimmons suggested addressing the crosswalk between vital results and transferable skills at the January meeting when the report on financial literacy standards is completed. The Board agreed to this.

#### **Item L: Student-Teacher Presentation Panel**

Huling shared due to the relocation of the meeting to Barre, the panel is administrators only and she asked for introductions. Holcombe and Huling thanked the panelist for coming. Susette Bollard introduced herself as the superintendent of Orange North Supervisory Union; she is also in charge of transition between Orange and Washington and the two K-12 districts of Northfield and Williamstown. Michaela Martin introduced herself as the co-director of school transformation who also serves as director of curriculum of Washington South SU. Bollard expressed disappointment over not having the meeting at Williamstown and said she hopes the SBE will plan another visit in the fall.

Martin shared a hand out that showed the timeline of their proficiency based journey. There was discussion on the Great Schools Partnership, seminar approach, the Capstone project, pilot of changing language of the curriculum, outreach and communication around the Proficiency Profile replacing the report card, students and teachers learning more about each other, how MTSS works with the intervention systems, changes in roles due to demographic challenges, greater exposure to more teachers and different subjects.

Holcombe asked about change in the space between performance indicators and how this was communicated to parents. Martin replied that most teachers are teaching vertically and this has been a big help in closing these gaps, especially in Math and Science. Moving the culture from “me and my classroom” to “our students and our classrooms” has also been effective.

There was discussion on social emotional development, support systems, professional development, embedded coaching, outreach programs, background checks, trauma issues, and relationships with WCMH, DCF, the State’s Attorney’s Office, etc. Huling asked how the data is translated to students so that they are not overwhelmed. Martin said clusters helped teachers, parents and students to understand and that teachers saw the need to report differently and worked hard for this. There was discussion on school leadership teams, communication channels (Facebook, Front Porch Forum, newsletters), sharing resources from AOE with the community, grading systems, cumulative grades, matching evidence collected with performance scales, evidence from students, transferring students, support systems, internal capacity to adapt, attempt to avoid 1:1 situation with student and teacher, challenges of incoming students with deep support plans, presence of student voice, and a culture of competition vs. support. Huling thanked Bollard and Martin and restated her desire to get to

Williamstown to visit and to see the profile model. Martin offered that a video on the seminar model will be available in January.

O'Keefe arrived at 10:25 a.m.

Chair Huling called a 15-minute break at 10:35 a.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 10:58 a.m.

**Item M: Proficiency Based Learning: Current Status of Graduation Requirements**

Pat Fitzsimmons, team lead for the Proficiency Based Learning team, introduced herself and shared that for the first time in over 12 years, all of the content areas are represented on one team. She introduced her team: Sarah Birge, ELA specialist; Heidi Whipple, Math specialist, Susan Yesalonia, Health and PE specialist, Emily Titterton, Arts specialist (not present today), Margaret Carrera-Bly, Science specialist, Martha Deiss, Global Citizenship specialist. Fitzsimmons introduced Shelia Soule, Curriculum Director, Harwood Unified Union School District and Andy Kepes, Curriculum Director, Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union.

Fitzsimmons, Kepes and Soule shared their presentations. There was discussion on resources offered by AOE, collaboration of requirements, buy-in, feedback from students, regional collaboration on PBGR, local control, transient students, content knowledge, augmenting long-term goals, access to flexible pathways, alignment with MTSS, how proficiency is determined, proficiency vs. mastery, tracking longitudinally, paradigm shift, and the relation between content depth and transferable skills.

**Item N: Budget Update**

Emily Byrne, Chief Financial Officer, introduced herself and said she was asked to address the Board budget, specifically. The Governor's Office has asked for a level funded budget, so the budget will be the same as last year. Peltz asked about carryover at FYE, specifically legal fees. Byrne explained generally if legal funds are not used, they revert back to the General Fund. Holcombe noted that the SBE has benefitted from legal support of three AOE staff (O'Shaughnessy, Bachman and Russo-Savage), which is not reflected in this budget. Holcombe stated that both Bachman and Russo-Savage thoroughly review anything controversial that comes through prior to going to the Board. There was discussion about if the Attorney General would support the SBE if sued, the Wright-Jones contract, cash or accrual accounting. Carroll asked how the 19% compares to this date in other years. Byrne said that since we are one-quarter of the way through, we are ahead, but NASBE dues are unpaid. There was discussion on negotiating the NASBE dues, the value of NASBE, and the June retreat. Mathis offered to try to negotiate a reduced fee with NASBE. There was discussion on the expenses of copying, postage and paper vs. electronic. Holcombe said that the AOE would wait for direction on paper vs. electronic copies. Holcombe shared that the AOE is working with Huling to get a letter from the Board for the Budget Book. Huling asked if it could be similar to the legislative report. Holcombe agreed that this could be adapted as a memo to fit this purpose.

Chair Huling called for lunch recess at 12:08 p.m. with a plan to resume at 1:10 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 1:25 p.m.



**Item O: EQR Follow-up**

Holcombe shared a Power Point presentation. She offered a correction on page 25 – there should not be an asterisk next to “A calculated return on investment (ROI).” This is not required by ESSA. There was discussion on return on investment, shortage areas, media specialists, being creative with student to staff ratios, and different school structures. There was additional discussion on the timeline, the dashboard, how the data is broken down (weighting), inferences on data, expectations, and descriptive statistics for context.

Holcombe asked for a statement from the Board around their expectations for each of these different areas, on the weighting formulas, and how best to get to a place that meets their needs. Holcombe suggested having SBE members reach out to Huling if interested in working on this. Carroll expressed concern. Holcombe recapped Carroll’s alternative suggestion that for each of these domains, the AOE provides the SBE with descriptive statistics (highs, lows, decile breaks) to put it in context and shift the focus to continuous improvement. Carroll agreed and proposed that the Board see all indicators for state level data and that a composite be used for systems level data. Holcombe asked for input on the weighting. Mathis suggested stepping back because there is not a rational basis for determining weights. Huling said she was comfortable with weighting assigned by the AOE and asked for members input. Most members were comfortable with the weights and did not see this as their area of expertise.

Chair Huling recessed for a 5-minute break at 2:45 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 2:48 p.m.

**Item P: CTE Information Session**

Deputy Secretary Bouchey introduced herself and shared a Power Point presentation.

There was discussion on adult CTE programs, CTE’s isolations from declining enrollment, funding formula for CTEs, the predicted statistic of one worker per dependent in Vermont, career advising systems, the gender gap, partnerships with businesses (GW Plastics and Randolph Union High School), visiting local CTE centers, Perkins reauthorization and other federal authorizations, the Higher Education Act (PROSPER) and apprenticeship money.

**Item Q: Legislative Subcommittee Report to the Legislature**

Huling introduced the report and offered a correction on page 2 and that merger proposals should be 145 school districts not 147. Peltz gave some background and said that much collaborative effort went into this. Huling gave credit to Carroll for putting some good leadership into this and asking good questions. She feels that it is superior to what has been done in the past and reflective of where the Board has been and what they have done and aspirations for moving forward. It should help the Board to be more nimble. Carroll commented on the demands faced by the field and noted that this report also serves as a note of caution to the State House on how to proceed this session with regard to new initiatives/demands. Huling noted that this paired nicely with what Gibbs shared at the last Board meeting.

**MOTION:** Peltz moved to accept the report. Johnson-Aten seconded. Discussion referenced the correction needed on page two, changing 147 to 145 and on the last page, last paragraph,

capitalizing the B in board. Carroll offered that data could be updated, if need be. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to accept the report to the Legislature.

#### **Item R: Legislative Focus for 2018 Session**

Peltz shared that the strategy is to take a wait and see approach with the Legislature and that the legislative subcommittee plans to have a “Meet and Greet” at the State House with coffee and light breakfast, then meet with both committees in Room 10. Peltz reiterated the formalizing of Board expectations when invited to speak to the Legislature and reminded that the subcommittee chair or Board Chair should be notified. Issues of interest identified include PreK, Act 77 and special education. Huling/Peltz reminded that the Board would not weigh in until the end of January/early February and the need to stay at a higher level and out of the weeds. A date is needed for the Meet and Greet; the second week in January was suggested. Since this will include the full Board, it was also suggested that this could piggyback the January Board meeting, with a shorter agenda. Space in Room 11 needs to be confirmed. Russo-Savage offered that Senate Education committee meets in the afternoon, so a morning event might not work for them; lunch might be better.

Holcombe suggested having one the authors of the special education reports speak at the January meeting. Huling said she also wanted MTSS to be discussed. Holcombe said there would also be a Smarter Balanced representative at the January meeting.

#### **Item S: Discussion of SU Realignment**

Huling shared a handout and spoke about looking at SU boundaries with less than 900 students in regard to Act 46 and Act 49 and the Board’s imperative to look at boundaries in relation to governance changes. She asked if the Board wanted to ask the AOE to prepare a list of SUs with less than 900 students so they can consider taking action. The Board should be reviewing regrouping of SUs to increase efficiency. Mathis was concerned and reluctant about increasing anxiety when it is already high. Huling noted that this list would also include recently merged entities, still under 900.

There was discussion on the intent behind the legislation, economies of scale, administrative turnover, next steps if provided with a list, working with local intent, reminders to systems when hiring for superintendents, the timing of this exercise, and whether or not a motion was needed. The Board requested a list of all SUs by size; Holcombe said that the AOE would provide the information requested.

#### **Item T: Montpelier-Roxbury UUSD Name Change**

Russo-Savage shared the request to approve the request of the Montpelier-Roxbury Unified Union School District to change its name officially to the Montpelier Roxbury School District and to have the Board authorize this name change to the Secretary of State.

**MOTION:** Perrin moved to accept the request for a name change; Weinberger seconded. There was no discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to accept the motion for a name change.

#### **Item U: Act 46 Section 9 Proposals**

Russo-Savage said there were a few errors and shared an updated handout of the map, which should be on the website soon. About 40 governance related issues/proposals have been

reviewed in 2017. One-hundred forty-five school districts have collapsed to 36 unified school districts. There may be as many as three more merger proposals. December 26 is the legislative deadline for the section 9 proposals to come to the AOE. Russo-Savage estimates 30 of these, maybe more; 8 have been received so far. In the next five months, proposals will be grouped into regions. The AOE will be reviewing these, speaking with school board members and on June 1, the Secretary will issue a proposed statewide plan. The Board does not need to be actively involved, but she offered to create binders for members to stay informed. Russo-Savage suggested addressing the Secretary's proposal at the June Board Retreat. Holcombe said it is important for the Board to remain in the conversation, so that come June, they have the appropriate context. From June through November, the Board will be very involved and are required to have a statewide plan by November 30, so this should be in solid draft form by October in order to be voted on at the November meeting.

#### **Item V: Small Schools Grants Metrics**

Russo-Savage said that for 15 years and until July 1, 2019, grants are awarded per a straightforward calculation, but in 2015, the Legislature changed this and it is now a more subjective exercise, that primarily applies to districts that have not merged. Schools must be of a certain small size and on an annual basis have either geographic isolation or educational and fiscal excellence. Eligibility metrics are needed by July 2018; the new criteria go into effect in 2019. The statute is subjective, the Board is charged to come up with metrics that make this less subjective. Carroll shared that he is uneasy with small schools grants as a concept. There was discussion on reverse incentives, why the Board is being asked to do this, talking with the General Assembly about this, statewide perspective, protecting small schools, a recommendation vs. a mandate, complacency with rewarding districts that have not complied with Act 46, and districts getting money based on small schools within the district.

Russo-Savage estimated there are about 40 schools that receive small school grants that have not merged. Holcombe asked for clarification on the law and what happens to eligibility post-merger if enrollment declines continue. Russo-Savage said they remain eligible and that we can anticipate more small school grants in the future.

Huling shared that future Board agenda items in the parking lot include: independent schools, special education reports, MTSS, transferable skills, PBGR, Act 166, CTE Part 2, date for Legislative breakfast meeting, SBAC, small schools grant and paper vs. electronic. Johnson-Aten suggested mapping out the next 6-9 months of Board meetings and added that having this discussion at the end of the day is not the ideal way to get the Board's best efforts.

#### **Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Johnson-Aten moved to adjourn the meeting; Weinberger seconded. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.

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