

JDS Comments on Secretary of Education Zoie Saunders
March 22, 2024

Thank you, Governor, and good morning, everyone.

I'm joined this morning by my fellow Board member and member of the Secretary Search Committee, Lyle Jepson, and I'm grateful that we can both be here with you today.

After we received the Governor's letter requesting that the State Board of Education initiate the search for the next Secretary of Education, the Committee met 11 times to execute its duties. Our work included establishing a framework for the search process; developing and advertising the job posting; holding a public comment hearing, during which we received and later reviewed more than 100 written and oral comments regarding the preferred qualities and attributes of the next Secretary of Education; drafting interview questions that incorporated this public comment and creating a scoring rubric; reviewing applications; conducting interviews; and, finally, debriefing with the full Board to discuss the candidates.

I'm happy to report that we received applications from many highly qualified individuals, and, in many ways, our selection of three finalists to advance to the Governor for his consideration was not easy. However, the Board was unanimous in its decision, and I am delighted to welcome Zoie to the position.

As I reflect back on the Governor's letter, in which he shared his vision of a transformative educational leader — one who has a demonstrated commitment to ensuring that all students have the skills to succeed in the classroom and beyond; who can build a vibrant and inclusive organizational culture to support the vision of the Agency; who provides inspirational leadership; and who believes in the power of education as the key to uplifting and revitalizing our communities — I believe that Zoie possesses all of these traits and more.

Zoie impressed the Board with her extensive experience with the public school system, her skills at collaborating and building consensus among disparate groups, her strategic ability to leverage resources in order to do more with less, and her proven track record in government and educational policy. She is a talented leader who is deeply committed to improving student opportunities and outcomes, and we share in her enthusiasm to serve as our next Secretary of Education. Welcome, Zoie — on behalf of the State Board of Education, we look forward to collaborating with you to deliver high quality educational services in Vermont.

Thank you.