

October 18, 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.*

Draft Minutes

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE): Krista Huling, Chair; William Mathis, Vice Chair; Connor Solimano; Stacy Weinberger, Bonnie Johnson-Aten, Mark Perrin; Peter Peltz; John Carroll; John O'Keefe (joined at 9:47 a.m.); Callahan Beck; Rebecca Holcombe

Agency of Education (AOE): Donna Russo-Savage, Robert Stirewalt, Amy Fowler, Peter Drescher, Maureen Gaidys.

Others: Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; Julie Longchamp, VT-NEA; Lynn Cota, FNESU; Tennyson Doane, FNESU; Anissa Seguin, FNESU/Bakersfield; Matt Levin, VT Early Childhood Alliance; Jeff Francis, VSA; Cori Rail, West Pawlet; Sarah Post, West Pawlet; Elaine Ezerins, St. Albans Messenger; Arlene Bentley, West Rupert; Judy Pare, Pawlet; Peter Clark, Peacham/Caledonia Cooperative, Consultant; Steve Dale, Consultant, WRVSU.

Item A: Call to Order

Chairman Huling called the meeting to order at 8:32 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

Chair Huling said there was a typo caught after September's SBE meeting minutes were posted – Dona should have been listed as Donald. Johnson-Aten moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Mathis seconded. The vote was unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda.

Item E: Board Announcements

Peltz announced that he had a discussion with the Regional Advisory Board at Green Mountain Technical and Career Center and said he expressed concern that the enrollments have diminished and that this has a lot to do with sending schools. Holcombe shared that the AOE is evaluating this more robustly region by region. Holcombe also shared the Governor had asked for a position to focus on career pathways and that this is the first state position to focus on this. The AOE has hired Oscar A. Aliaga, Ph.D. and his work will link to Act 77 activities. Oscar has

broad practical and technical experience and the AOE is excited to have him on board. She suggested that at some point, he would attend an SBE meeting.

Mathis shared that he attended the college fair that Senator Sanders held in Castleton and it was well attended. There was a lot of enthusiasm for dual enrollment and it was good to see AOE staff there. He also shared that NASBE is not too worried about the next two quarters' federal fiscal allotment.

Johnson-Aten shared that the Approved Independent School Committee continues to meet and that progress is slow. There are two meetings left, November 3 and 17. They have discussed finances and there is concern about independent schools operating on a shoestring budget; they have not really tackled special education. There was discussion on the concerns and the challenges of the committee: financial review, very small schools, capacity to monitor, DFR review, etc. The report is due early December. Weinberger asked for clarification on the charge of this committee. Chair Huling asked the AOE to send the SBE notifications of these upcoming meetings.

Chair Huling introduced John Alberghini, superintendent and thanked him for hosting the Board.

Alberghini welcomed the group and spoke about their merger, the opportunities as well as some of the broader challenges. His system was the first system merger under Act 156 and it was a long process with failed votes. They have 2,600 students PK-12 and 9 school buildings. Opportunities: first year of Spanish immersion for a class of 21 kindergarten students, they are the first in Vermont to have this and very proud of that. Being able to offer school choice is important – it gives parents the opportunity and has helped to balance class sizes and save money. Without school choice, the district would have had to hire two kindergarten teachers; instead, they have been able to share staff. They have also taken some of the volatility out of the tax rate. The challenges are in the small school arena where it is difficult to balance class sizes (with one kindergarten), and hard to disperse need and compare yourself to larger schools with additional supports and more capacity. Mathis questioned if there was any segregation on socioeconomic status with school choice PK – middle school. Alberghini did not see that as an obstacle. They have made accommodations for transportation.

Item F: New Student Member Introduction

Chair Huling introduced the new, non-voting student Board member, Callahan Beck and swore her in with the oath of office and oath of allegiance.

Item G: Chair's Report

Chair Huling shared that the subcommittee has been working on the SBE's strategic plan. She said that work is progressing on a contract for a lawyer should the SBE need one. Chair Huling noted that the lawyer would not be offering regular support, since a full-time lawyer is not in the SBE budget.

Item H: Committee Report

There were no committee reports.

Item J: Student Reports

Solimano gave a brief report on post-secondary performance in Vermont. He researched some statistics and found that: 1) there is about a 1.3% drop out rate in students in grades 7-12, which means that we are retaining students in our schools, and 2) about 57% of students are pursuing post-secondary options; leaving room for improvement. Solimano said there is a connection between post-secondary goals and confidence and success in secondary school. Solimano offered that we need to avoid the one size fits all premise and need to continue to emphasize the importance of going on and pursuing something after high school. There was discussion on PLPs, dual enrollment, and CTEs with workforce/training preparation, concern of students dropping out of post-secondary options due to finances or other reasons, the attrition rate, AOE's work with VSAC on boosting FAFSA applications, statistics on Vermont's college tuition and graduate debt rates, and declining college enrollments.

Item K: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe addressed the following:

- Vermont Teacher of the Year, Linda Cloutier-Namdar, English teacher from Essex High School, will represent Vermont in Washington, D.C.; November SBE meeting will be in Essex.
- AOE received a \$10,000 grant from CCSSO for historically marginalized students, this money supports internal operations.
- Smarter Balanced (SB) - some schools did better, but many schools did not. Secretary Holcombe explained how SB develops test items and how computer adaptive tests differ from the kinds of tests used previously. A review of items by SB revealed that the items on the operational test did not differ in difficulty in a meaningful way from items on the previous year's operational test, and did not change or emphasize different domains than in the previous year. The algorithm for item selection remains the same. The SB states are meeting with AIR (the group that administers the test) and they have not found any evidence of psychometric issues that would affect scoring. AIR have offered to provide the SBE a memo. Non-psychometric reasons also need to be considered.

John O' Keefe joined the meeting at 9:47 a.m.

- Budget gap of \$50 million - there will likely be a deficit with the healthcare and other drivers (VEHI) and directives at the federal level. Some of the push back that districts are getting on budget increases reflect the reality that many Vermonters have not experienced real income growth in recent years, along with increasing demands and pressures on the Ed Fund. Secretary Holcombe shared that she sent a memo to superintendents and business managers on managing ratios through attrition. She mentioned that several merged systems have told us they are finding new ways to use attrition to redistribute students across classrooms, use intra district choice to balance classes and avoid extra hires, re-examine skill sets needed, etc. Carroll suggested a 5-7 year plan to address the staffing ratios problem and added that it is a 20-year problem that will not be addresses/solved in 2 years. Secretary Holcombe suggested hearing superintendents speak on this topic at a future meeting.
- Governor's School Safety Conference is November 30 in Burlington – this is a great opportunity for school systems to gain training on safety training.

- In an effort to stay on schedule, Secretary Holcombe offered to send her report on other items in an email to SBE members.

Item L: CCSSO Document, “Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs”

Secretary Holcombe shared the CCSSO document, “Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs.” She explained that CCSSO brings all state chiefs together to grapple and provide resources on common issues. Equity has been a recurring theme for several years and this report shares some commonalities that we can all stand on. She noted the equity statement on page three. One purpose of this report was to reassure communities on the state’s commitment to equity and to hold ourselves accountable. There were 10 recommended actions, not to be undertaken simultaneously. At the AOE, the state plan was consulted and we focused on #1 (prioritizing equity) which most aligned with SBE’s strategic plan. There was discussion on what it means to set equity as a goal, that we all do better when we attend to equity, the need to be proactive about putting equity on the table, the need for clear, accurate data that is accessible (dashboard), piloting of internal work, and dealing with equitable funding for disadvantaged populations.

Item M: Strategic Plan Update

Chair Huling shared that the strategic plan work began at the Retreat and that the subcommittee has met a few times since then. She introduced the document as an overview to get feedback from others. The hope is to create SMART goals, work with the AOE on what is measurable, and what data is already available. There was general praise for this document. Weinberger raised concern on the quote from Canfield-Fisher, as she is somewhat controversial. Chair Huling stressed that the subcommittee was looking for feedback from members who were not part of the conversation. Carroll clarified that they are not choosing between these three areas (equity, excellence and efficiency), they are equals – the subcommittee was trying to think in three dimensions. There was continued discussion and concern about the quote from Canfield-Fisher and that this could potentially discredit the document. Johnson-Aten suggested eliminating the Canfield-Fisher quote to avoid controversy and starting with the Dewey quote. Huling acknowledged the good work of this subcommittee and asked for comments or questions on the three dimensions.

There was discussion/comments on: how the goals were pared down, the hierarchy of the three dimensions and if excellence could be achieved through equity, the powerful independency of the three goals, the need to understand and articulate, education vs. virtues, seeing the word “civic,” measurement, challenges and weaknesses and whether or not it should address only socioeconomic background – perhaps substitute with “historically disadvantaged”, VPA’s focus on equity and the synergy on this issue.

Chair Huling called a five minute breaks at 10:48 a.m.

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

Item N: Legislative Subcommittee – Appointments and Charge

Suggestions for the charge of the committee was: 1) keep it the way it is – with a committee and chair who will build relationships with the legislature, 2) taking topics on individually, or 3) having liaisons for the House and Senate and bring this back to the SBE. Perrin suggested allowing the committee members to flesh this out themselves. Chair Huling stated that

interested members are Carroll, Peltz, Mathis and Solimano. There was discussion on being proactive/reactive, having guiding principles, the Governor's role/priorities, differences of opinion between the AOE and the SBE, the issue of ongoing staff/support for the SBE, having one voice, and the process for decision-making.

Item O: UUSD Proposals

1) Franklin Northeast SU

a. Bakersfield/Berkshire/Montgomery

Chair Huling asked the committee to introduce themselves: Lynn Cota, superintendent, FNESU; Morgan Daybell, Business Manager, FNESU; Jean-Marie Clark, Board Member, Bakersfield; Wally Steinhour, Richford; Tennyson Doane, FNESU; and Annisa Seguin, principal, Bakersfield Elementary.

Russo-Savage pointed out a significant error in the green sheet – the first bullet on page 3 should be 11/28/18, not 7/29/18.

Cota led the presentation and provided a map. She explained that their situation is unique in that they do not border each other anywhere. There was thought given to other parts of the region when making this proposal. Some of the challenges are that the PK-8 communities are at the mercy of the high school tuition. This would provide some insulation for all communities because the burden can be shared. Due to geography, there is difficulty attracting and retaining young teachers. Transient students are a concern – also dealing with high poverty, mental health issues and drug addiction. All five communities voted down the original proposal. One important factor was feedback from community forums and the feedback was much more positive this time around. There was concern with Board representation and loss of school choice. This proposal feels very comfortable; there has been great cooperation and this proposal brings them closer to improved educational governance. Communities are unwilling to give up school choice, so there was some visioning with the plan. The proposed vision allows greater flexibility, belief that we are stronger together, and has wide support and collective responsibility. Not all efficiencies that could be maximized have been included. An anticipated question is cost savings. They will continue to be focused on spending and efficiency. They are in a good place for a transition and working well together, which is important with such transient population. Certain alignments have already been made.

There was discussion/questions on why Montgomery is advisable and the connection to school spending, openness to partnering with Montgomery, length of time (2 years) the new board is required to develop articles for intra-district choice, etc.

MOTION: Mathis moved the green sheet for O-1a; Perrin seconded. Chair Huling called the question. **VOTE:** The vote passed unanimously.

b. Enosburg/Richford

Item O-1b is a companion piece to O-1a. Perrin asked to hear what the differences are in the two recommendations. It was explained that there is a shift to PK-12, operational.

There are two high schools, 11 miles apart, and they share a tech center and are already partnering in that realm and other ways. They are working hard to align visioning work. Standout: the importance of having two high schools that we can help to flourish; found some discrepancies in access to opportunities. There are strategies for sharing resources and there is already shared transportation. Wally shared the differences in 706b work before and now. A per pupil spending handout was distributed, that demonstrates the importance placed on cost containment – spending is significantly below state averages, mindful of providing equity for students.

There was discussion on resistance and hesitance, the high bar for significant changes and reasons for it, restrictions on flexibility, travel time on busses, school closures and access to services/opportunities, poverty levels, intention is solid to support all schools in this new district, especially because of the rurality.

MOTION: Carroll moved to accept the motion as presented on the green sheet for item O-1b; Perrin seconded. Discussion: governance structure, town representation, choice for PK – 8, impact outside this district. **VOTE:** The vote passed with unanimous approval.

O’Keefe recused himself and left the room at 11:57 a.m.

2) Bennington Rutland SU: Pawlet-Rupert

Committee members introduced themselves: Jackie Wilson, superintendent, BRSU; Susan Hosley, Chair, Pawlet; Diane Mach, Pawlet; William Morrissey, Pawlet; Scott McChesney, Pawlet; William Meyer, Rupert.

The committee addressed the equity issue raised at the last meeting. The commitment to come together has remained constant on the part of all communities. They want very much to remain in the Bennington Rutland SU. There was discussion on messaging, financial modeling and projected impacts, cultural identity, importance of towns to have an opportunity to vote, messaging on equity concerns, breadth and depth of opportunities, voice(s) of the study committee, Rupert contingency and strong disappointment.

MOTION: Mathis moved to accept the motion; Peltz seconded. There was no discussion. **VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Huling adjourned for lunch at 12:08 p.m. with the intent of resuming at 12:38 p.m. Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 12:44 p.m.

Item P: UUSD Proposals

1) White River Valley SU – Rochester-Stockbridge

Committee members introduced themselves: Frank Russell, Rochester; Carl Groppe, Stockbridge; Amy Wildt, Rochester, parent, RHS alum; Bruce Labs, superintendent, WRVSU; Dani Stamm, principal, RHS; Rob Gardner, Rochester; Steve Dale, Consultant.

Groppe shared a Power Point presentation. He explained that this committee was reconvened in August because Rochester pivoted, this was not a last ditch effort to gain tax breaks. In a few years, they will have gone from two SUs with 10 towns, to one unified SU with six districts. They are a river valley that is forested and ridged. Bus rides can be in excess of ½ hour. They are surrounded by tuition towns. There are just under 2,000 residents and just under 200 students. There are some common threads: local elementary schools are important, choice matters to this community, quality education and equal opportunity is important, need to maximize resources, outdoor learning experiences are valued as is maintaining traditions of community. Reasons to merge: educational and fiscal strength, equal voice on the committee, sustainable cost reduction and effect on tax rate. Benefits: coordinated curriculum, more opportunity for after school programming, more opportunities for planned activities between schools, integrated support systems can grow and be strengthened, financial decrease in per pupil cost for Rochester, opportunity for additional opportunities. The unified budget will have better accountability and a simplified governance structure to focus on educational issues as a smaller board. There will be three members from each town, a ceiling on the budget, savings of \$334K+ by closing Rochester, and capacity to sustain FTE cuts at the elementary level and still have a robust program. It is important to keep Rochester-Stockbridge unified district to decide this together as students and communities, have planned an evaluation of unified district 5 years out. Challenges: building a new elementary facility that is sustainable, blending cultures and traditions, to leverage facility and operations to take advantage of outdoor education/experimentation. Labs commended the committees for coming together for common goals. Chair Huling expressed disappointment for mothballing the facility and the loss of excitement.

There was discussion/questions on: the palpability of this proposal, need to avoid duplication/replication, researching and finding the model that will work best for these two communities, potential fluidity of curriculum, PLPs, merging schools not being explored at this time, future use of the Rochester facility, travel time and geographic barriers, funding – loss of tuition and relationship, projected cuts in staff to move to multi-age model, best interests of students and state dollars, sustainability, remaining a viable alternative, and the current dynamic of 14 graduates in 2016 for Rochester.

MOTION: Mathis moved to accept the proposal as presented on the green sheet; Johnson-Aten seconded. There was discussion on the physical campus and structure of Rochester, available space at Stockbridge, considering if our tax dollars are being spent where they matter most, outreach to UVM and Castleton for use of the building. **VOTE:** The vote passed. O’Keefe was opposed.

2) Two Rivers SU: Mt. Holly-Ludlow-Black River

Committee members introduced themselves: Meg Powden, superintendent, TRSU; Craig Hutt Vader, principal, Mt. Holly; Dan French, Act 46 consultant.

Powden explained what has changed since the last time, as this is the third proposal. The vote in May to join Mill River UUSD passed in Mt. Holly, was rejected in Ludlow,

and was very divisive. Powden gave credit to the committee and their hard work. This proposal will mean closing Black River and this will be difficult – affecting many families and 40 employees. Enrollment at Black River over the last 20 years has a net loss of 142 students and most recently, enrollment has been down 36 students in grades 7-12. Post vote, the “Looking Forward” committee came up with four options for consideration, one of which is today’s proposal. In the articles, there are protections for the elementary schools and Black River will stay open for two more years.

There was discussion/questions on the timing of Black River closure, plans for future use, where the 17 “lost” students go, facilitation of closure, other viable high schools, plans for transportation, and designation. Secretary Holcombe praised Powden for her difficult but successful work. Powden praised Russo-Savage for her assistance.

MOTION: Peltz moved to accept the proposal; Weinberger seconded. **VOTE:** Chair Huling called the vote and it passed unanimously.

Item Q: 3-by-1 Proposal

Caledonia Central/Essex Caledonia SUs – Caledonia Coop UUSD and Peacham

Committee members introduced themselves: Mark Clough, Chair, Peacham; Cornelia Hassenfuss, Peacham Board; Mike Heath, Peacham Board; Ray Lewis, Chair, Walden; Mat Forest, superintendent, CCSU; Peter Clark, Act 46 consultant; Michael Clark, superintendent, ECSU.

Clarke shared that there have been struggles with leadership and student outcomes. They have turned over administration and leadership and outcomes have improved. There is a cost and scale issue and they are trying to figure out how to fit into Act 46. With the passing of Act 49, there was a way to benefit the town, schools and community. He stated that the Peacham School is a good size. And said young families are moving into town; there is a lot of positive energy. The town is willing to recognize the tax issue. Education is strong value of the town. He said if the census could be increased to 100 students and more affordable housing could be available, they could be a very affordable school. Many cost issues could be mitigated with the new synergy of the K-6 group and Forest’s cost-saving ideas. The building is in excellent shape. They are in the process of installing solar panels and wood chip plant.

There was discussion/questions about the number of students at the school, ADM, number of phantoms, other options for Danville, educational efficiencies for Danville, interest in asking the SBE to move Blue Mountain Union School into Caledonia, socioeconomic advantage for Peacham, mediocre results, undesirability of this proposal. Carroll shared that he would cast a lonely no vote. Discussion continued on the justification for rebuilding the foundation, triangulation of data for assessment, depth of responsibility on teachers when teaching multi-age, meeting EQS, structural isolation of Peacham, net effect of an SBE yes or no vote and message this will send to the voters, the importance of a unanimous SBE vote and its impact, time needed to work through problems and build trust.

MOTION: Johnson-Aten moved to accept the motion on the green sheet. Peltz seconded. Chair Huling called a roll call vote. **VOTE:** The vote passed five in favor (Johnson-Aten, Solimano, Peltz, Perrin, and Weinberger) and three opposed (Carroll, Mathis, and O’Keefe).

Chair Huling called a 5 minute break at 2:18 p.m. Johnson-Aten and O’Keefe left the meeting during break. Chair Huling reconvened the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

Item R: Standards, Guidance, Frameworks

Deputy Secretary Fowler introduced herself. At the SBE’s request, she presented a general overview of some definitions – standards, frameworks and curriculum guidelines, curriculum and evidence.

There was discussion/questions on the efficiency of local control in regard to developing curriculum, the uncomfortable idea that “standards” and “frameworks” are relatively interchangeable, the direction set for local entities and their role in deciding how the student gets there, coherence of process. Mathis suggested pushing for curriculum content specialists at the state level. Fowler clarified that the AOE already has this for every EQS piece; this staff works with the curriculum coordinators/directors (about 54 statewide) at the schools.

There were additional questions on proficiency, a model policy distributed by the AOE, reviewing the EQS for excellence, equity and efficiency and the fact that Vermont is one of the few states who does not have state-level graduation requirements.

Item S: Update on Review of Education Technology Standards

Peter Drescher, AOE, Education Programs Manager, introduced himself and shared his presentation.

He explained that public input was sought and he gave historical background on these standards. He explained that this review is appropriate because of the EQS, and the language in the original 2007 standards changed and needed alignment with EQS – there is also a need to be more learner-driven, with more of human interaction piece. Equity in updating standards is important, so that there is synergy with EQS. The SBE asked for input from the field and Drescher shared responses. The changes from 2007 to 2017 are that there is a new emphasis on student agency and a learner-centered approach; 2017 focuses on user vs. 2007’s focus on technology.

Chair Huling stated that this would be discussed today and voted on next month. She asked for feedback on whether this comes back as a consent agenda item or regular item for vote next month. There was discussion/questions on the approval of these standards and the impact on school systems, value of SBE approval, what is missing, measurement, local assessment systems, role in IFRs, and digital citizenship.

It was agreed that this topic will be voted on at the November meeting as part of the Consent Agenda.

Drescher shared his experience with SEDTE and recent training.

Item T: Next Step EQR

Deputy Secretary Fowler shared a Power Point presentation and took a straw poll on the five domains of EQS. There was lengthy discussion on comparing apples and oranges, academic achievements, outputs vs. inputs, integrative quality, how this maps to the strategic plan, the importance of incorporating excellence and equity into each of the five areas and efficiency into most of these areas. The primary audience for this information is the entire state of Vermont. There was additional discussion on the digestibility of this information, the history of the process of whittling down the domains, the charge per statute to have a report that is easy to understand and accessible. Fowler asked that design principles be kept in mind and shared design priorities for the EQRs. There was some question on needing the qualitative information to understand the quantitative piece. It was clarified that this information has been presented to the SBE on several occasions. SBE participation in an IFR was suggested. Fowler rejected this idea and explained how it would negatively affect the process. Fowler took another straw poll; most members were in favor.

Secretary Holcombe will bring back remaining information from this presentation at the next SBE meeting.

There were questions about continuing to use the federal scale or not and whether Board members agree or disagree about the weighting. It was suggested that Board members think about this prior to the next meeting. Secretary Holcombe suggested needing more context for weighting of the last box (investment priorities). This will be discussed later.

Chair Huling asked Maureen to resend the Doodle poll for a December meeting date. She asked SBE members to respond by Thursday.

Secretary Holcombe asked for feedback on the meeting agendas. Peltz commented that meetings feel productive. Weinberger would like more time to think about a vote. Mathis suggested getting back to having a few minutes at the end of each meeting to discuss future agenda items.

Future agenda items for next meeting were offered: EQR continuation (Holcombe), next phase of Act 46/49 (Russo-Savage), Teacher of the Year. Chair Huling asked Board members to email her additional ideas.

Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.