

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**Draft Minutes  
State Board of Education Meeting  
July 9, 2014**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education (hereinafter "Board") met on Wednesday, July 9, 2014, in Room 1D of the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut.

**I. Call to Order**

Vice Chairperson Theresa Hopkins-Staten called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m.

Present: Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Vice Chairperson  
Andrea Comer  
Charles Jaskiewicz  
Terry Jones  
Patricia Keavney-Maruca  
Robert Trefry, ex officio  
Joseph Vrabely

Absent: Allan Taylor, Chairperson  
Gregory Gray, ex officio  
Estela Lopez  
Stephen Wright

**II. Public Participation**

1. Maria Pereira, a resident of Bridgeport, expressed concerns about Bridgeport's underfunded Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) for various years. She requested that the Board conduct a thorough and full investigation regarding Bridgeport's failure to meet the MBR in 2012-13 and 2013-14. A copy of Ms. Pereira's prepared remarks is included in the official file of this meeting.
2. Ann Cronin, an English teacher who has also held several leadership positions, spoke in opposition to the Common Core Standards. She stated that the Common Core English language standards are outdated and were not created by educators. Ms. Cronin asked that the Board reject Common Core in Connecticut. A copy of Ms. Cronin's prepared remarks is included in the official file of this meeting.
3. Jennifer Alexander, Chief Executive Officer at ConnCAN, suggested to the Board that Connecticut needs to update the charter school laws and regulations in order to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn from great educators who will prepare them for future success. Ms. Alexander urged the Board to continue its support of charter schools and encouraged the Board and the Department of Education to involve a wide range of

- advocates and stakeholders working together to guarantee the flexibility and accountability that charter schools need. A copy of Ms. Alexander's prepared remarks is included in the official file of this meeting.
4. Kathy Cordone, a retired teacher, spoke in opposition to the Common Core Standards, and asked the Board to withdraw from Common Core. A copy of Ms. Cordone's prepared remarks is included in the official file of this meeting.
  5. Cheryl Hill, a parent, spoke in opposition to Common Core. Ms. Hill expressed her concerns about the testing procedures and the accompanying HIPPA and FERPA laws and asked the Board to rescind the adoption of the Common Core. A copy of Ms. Hill's prepared remarks is included in the official file of this meeting.
  6. Jeffrey Villar, a member of the Common Core Task Force and Executive Director for the CT Council for Education Reform, offered congratulations to the recent Common Core Task Force members. He stated that he was pleased with the membership of the committee and noted that the recommendations in the final report offer a rubric to track data and provide training to teachers in the classroom.
  7. Cort Wrotnowski described a national trend against the Common Core, expressed concerns about communication about the Common Core, and requested that the Connecticut State Board of Education rescind it.
  8. Tom Stringfellow, a Manchester resident, spoke about several topics including Common Core, the current economy, and hiring practices for teachers of color in all districts. Mr. Stringfellow also recommended several educational publications.
  9. Judith LeGraftenlil, a mother of a special needs child and an educator at a community college, offered her perspective on Common Core and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). She mentioned that she and her colleagues have noticed student testing has plummeted since NCLB, and discouraged the state from moving along the same direction.
  10. Reverend Morrison, the Pastor of the Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in New Haven and founder of the Booker T. Washington Charter School (BTWCS) in New Haven, stated that the BTWCS has ended its partnership with FUSE, and has since devised a new plan. Reverend Morrison asked the Board to consider holding a special meeting to review and approve the new plan.

### **III. Consent Agenda**

There were no items on the Consent Agenda.

### **IV. Executive Session**

Executive Session was not held.

**V. Consideration of (a) minutes of the June 4, 2014, State Board of Education meeting; and (b) minutes of the June 30, 2014, Special Meeting of the State Board of Education**

- (a) Mr. Jaskiewicz moved, Mr. Vrabely seconded, that the Board approve the minutes of the June 4, 2014, State Board of Education meeting.

**VOTE ON**

**MOTION:** In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

- (b) Ms. Keavney-Maruca moved, Mr. Jaskiewicz seconded, that the Board approve the minutes of the June 30, 2014, Special Meeting of the State Board of Education.

**VOTE ON**

**MOTION:** In Favor: Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: Comer, Hopkins-Staten  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**VI. Items Requiring Action**

**A. Approval of Amendment to the Greenwich Plan to Correct Racial Imbalance**

Mr. Vrabely moved, Ms. Comer seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-226d of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the Greenwich Board of Education's amendment to its plan to address racial imbalance and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Mr. Jaskiewicz moved, Mr. Vrabely seconded, that the resolution be amended to read as follows:

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-226d of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the Greenwich Board of Education's amendment to its plan to address racial imbalance, contingent upon the district meeting the timeline within the plan and submitting a more detailed near-term timetable to the Commissioner within three (3) months, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

[It should be noted that resolution of the transportation issues and submission of the application for the school diversity grant should be considered in the timeline within the plan.]

VOTE ON  
MOTION  
AS

AMENDED: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion as amended carried unanimously.

**B. Approval of Menu of K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments**

Mr. Vrabely moved, Mr. Jaskiewicz seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Public Act 12-116, approves the "Menu of Research-based Grade K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments" for use by school districts beginning July 1, 2014, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action including:

- Providing a transition period in the school year 2014-15 whereby priority school districts may report assessment data from the previous assessment (DRA2) or assessments in the menu;
- Providing districts with an assessment reporting table in January of each year for the following school year;
- Providing an "open review period" each year, beginning in 2016, whereby the Connecticut State Department of Education will review and recommend to the State Board of Education additional assessments to be added to the menu.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**C. Draft Position Statement on Comprehensive Social Studies Education for All Students in K-12 and Beyond**

Mr. Jaskiewicz moved, Ms. Keavney-Maruca seconded, that the State Board of Education approves the "Position Statement on Comprehensive Social Studies Education for All Students K-12 and Beyond," and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

[The Board recessed for lunch at 12:23 p.m. and reconvened at 1:07 p.m.]

**D. Resolution Regarding Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillators**

Mr. Jones moved, Ms. Comer seconded, that the Board approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, National Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Awareness Month was celebrated during the month of June 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 15, 2012, Governor Dannel P. Malloy signed into law Public Act 12-198 focusing on CPR and AED training in the classroom; and

**WHEREAS**, Connecticut students must be provided instruction in health and safety as part of their prescribed course of study; and

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has been invited to accept the assistance of the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association in a joint effort to provide clear compliant CPR curricula and assist in identifying and leveraging local resources; and

**WHEREAS**, a CPR curricula must be based on an instructional program established by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross or another program which is nationally recognized and uses the most current national evidence-based Emergency Cardiovascular Care guidelines and incorporates psychomotor skills development into the instruction; and

**WHEREAS**, all school districts should have available access to these resources by SY 2015-16 and all should be accessing these resources by SY 2016-17; therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, That the Connecticut State Board of Education concurs with the goal of the request and directs the Connecticut State Department of Education staff to work with the proponents and partners to help provide districts with access to existing materials and other such available resources.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

The Board members acknowledged and thank the following three Ellington High School students for their demonstration on the life-saving techniques of cardiopulmonary resuscitation: Megan Chamberland, Gabriela Ewald and Julia Scavetta.

Ms. Keavney-Maruca moved, Mr. Vrabely seconded, to consider agenda item IX, Report of the Commissioner, at this time.

**VOTE ON**

**MOTION:** In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**IX. Report of the Commissioner**

Commissioner Pryor offered the Board updates on charter school issues and Common Core:

As approved by the Board on June 30, 2014, an investigation to examine the operations, finances and governance of Family Urban Schools of Excellence (FUSE), and Jumoke Academy, has begun. Attorney Fred Dorsey has been appointed as the special investigator and will be working closely with the Department's Legal Office, Office of Internal Audit, and other staff members to coordinate his work. Attorney Dorsey will advise the Department on any potential proposed actions and/or policy changes.

Commissioner Pryor advised the Board that he spoke with Frances Rabinowitz, Bridgeport's Superintendent, regarding the Dunbar School in Bridgeport. Ms. Rabinowitz plans to end Bridgeport's partnership with Jumoke/FUSE, and she will present such recommendation to the Bridgeport Board of Education on Thursday evening. Commissioner Pryor stated that he supports her decision and agrees that it is in the best interest of the students, teachers and parents. He hopes that Dunbar's participation in the Commissioner's Network continues. A partnership with Cooperative Educational Services (CES) is currently being explored. CES would assist Bridgeport and provide site-based professional development, training for teachers and overall support for the school's leadership.

Booker T. Washington Charter School (BTWCS) has submitted a revised plan. Commissioner Pryor stated that the Department has just begun its review. He noted that BTWCS already has 160 applications to date and is employing the professional services of Yardstick Learning. Commissioner Pryor stated that he supports Reverend Morrison's request for a special meeting this summer.

Regarding charter schools overall, Commissioner Pryor has directed Department staff to review the existing rules concerning the oversight of charter schools. The resulting analysis will include a review of public transparency, completion and reporting of background checks, and student performance and equity. The goal is to conclude the review by August 11, 2014. Commissioner

Pryor noted that the review and subsequent analysis will not delay other recently enacted policies related to background checks and nepotism.

Discussion followed.

Commissioner Pryor continued with an update on Common Core. The Governor's Common Core Task Force issued its report and recommendations for next steps. The report includes five major areas of recommendations: develop clear and consistent knowledge of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) at the classroom, school, district and state level; provide the necessary support and training to effectively transition the CCSS into district-defined curricula; support all teachers and instructional staff in developing the capacity to master the instructional shifts that the standards necessitate; engage all stakeholders in a rich dialogue regarding the CCSS; and provide the necessary resources to support effective implementation of the CCSS across all state districts. Commissioner Pryor noted that the report is thoughtful, well structured, and he is grateful for the work product and the membership which consisted of teachers, parents, superintendents and principals. The recommendations include the Department being asked to allocate \$2 million to fund special training days for teachers; and the Department being asked to create a grant advisory committee to formulate mini grants for teachers and parents to develop Common Core aligned resources in the classroom and community. The Governor also obtained \$10 million in additional capital grants for school technology upgrades and enabling Common Core related purposes.

Discussion followed.

**VI. E. Report on the Condition of Education**

Ms. Keavney-Maruca moved, Mr. Jaskiewicz seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-4(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes, receives *The Condition of Education in Connecticut* and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**F. Adoption of Revised Praxis II Tests: Secondary Mathematics, Secondary English, Middle School English**

Ms. Keavney-Maruca moved, Mr. Jaskiewicz seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (b) of Section 10-145f of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopts the Praxis II Tests for Middle School English Language Arts (5047) and English Language Arts: Content and Analysis (5039), effective January 1, 2015, for any person seeking certification in such areas, unless the person meets requirements for an exemption from such testing

requirements as provided in subsection (f) of Section 10-145f of the Connecticut General Statutes, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**G. School Climate Transformation Grant (CFDA 84.184F) Grant Application**

Mr. Vrabely moved, Mr. Jaskiewicz seconded, that the State Board of Education, approves the submission of the Connecticut State Department of Education's application to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, for funding under the School Climate Transformation Grant Program – State Educational Agency grants (CFDA 84.184F), and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**H. Appointment of Chief Financial Officer**

Mr. Jones moved, Ms. Comer seconded, that the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-3a of the Connecticut General Statutes and Article IV of its Bylaws, approves the following appointment:

Ms. Kathleen E. Demsey, Chief Financial Officer  
State Department of Education

effective July 9, 2014, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

VOTE ON

MOTION: In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**I. Extension of Term: New London Special Master**

Mr. Jaskiewicz moved, Mr. Vrabely seconded, that the State Board of Education, at the request of the New London Board of Education, and pursuant to subsection (e)(2) of Section 10-223e of the Connecticut General Statutes, extends the term of the Special Master of the New London Public Schools selected by the Commissioner, for the term July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

**VOTE ON**

**MOTION:** In Favor: Comer, Hopkins-Staten, Jaskiewicz, Jones, Keavney-Maruca, Vrabely  
Opposed: 0  
Abstained: 0  
Absent: Lopez, Taylor, Wright

Motion carried unanimously.

**VII. Items for Discussion**

**A. Connecticut Technical High School Strategic Plan**

Dr. Nivea Torres, Superintendent of the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), provided the Board with a brief overview on CTHSS strategic effort, mission statement and foundational imperatives. Dr. Torres noted that CTHSS is in the final stages of completing the plan, and it will be brought to the CTHSS Board for further review at its meeting next Tuesday. The final version will then be provided to the State Board.

Discussion followed. Board members were advised to send any comments on the plan directly to Dr. Torres.

**VIII. Report of the Chair**

No report was given.

**X. Financial Matters**

No report was given.

**XI. Committee Reports**

**A. Academic Standards and Assessment**

No report was given.

**B. Accountability and Support**

No report was given.

C. Finance, Audit, and Budget

No report was given.

D. Legislation and Policy

The Committee reviewed the issue of chronic absenteeism.

E. Connecticut Technical High School System Board

No report was given.

F. NASBE

No report was given.

Prior to adjournment, Board member Andrea Comer announced her resignation from the State Board of Education. Ms. Comer stated that it has been an honor to serve on the State Board of Education. Ms. Comer noted that she appreciates the dedication of her colleagues and staff of the Department of Education, and is profoundly grateful to the educators across the state.

Vice Chairperson Hopkins-Staten, along with other Board members, expressed their sentiments about Ms. Comer's commitment to the children of the state and the tremendous impact she's had on the lives of the children that she deeply cares about.

Vice Chairperson Hopkins-Staten adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Stefan Pryor, Secretary