

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR READING RESEARCH
Summary of the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) Meeting
June 3, 2020

Attending: Allan Taylor (Chair), Bonnie Bauer, Erin Benham, Miguel Cardona (Commissioner), Milan Chand (Student Member), Sophia H. Chin (Student Member), Eric Clemons, Karen Dubois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Estela Lopez (Vice-Chair), Donald Harris, Martha Prou, Awilda Reasco, Malia Sieve, Robert Trefry (Ex-Officio).

Absent: Marc Ojakian

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public submitted statements via the online portal.

Missy Barnes, Veronica LaVista, Serge Medvedev and William O'Leary, teachers at the Marine Sciences Magnet School, submitted a statement reporting on the behaviors of Nicholas Spera toward faculty and students.

Kyle Winingar, parent of two students at Marine Sciences Magnet School, submitted a statement reporting on the abusive behaviors of Nicholas Spera toward his children.

Pastor William McCullough and Robert Morton requested that the Board renew the Charter of Capitol Prep Bridgeport for 5 years instead of the 3 recommended by the Board.

State Student Advisory Committee on Education (SSACE)

The 2019-2010 SSACE committee, charged with investigating School Climate and Student Voice. Members created two subgroups and each refined the charge to two areas in each domain. Those investigating School Climate determined that focus on the state of mental health services and district responses to issues would be critical in examining the overall climate within schools. The group investigating student voice focused on the state of student diversity and inclusion within school structures.

With respect to mental health four issues emerged. Students discovered that there is a dearth of "safe spaces" within buildings for students experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Teachers do not prioritize mental health crises and there is, in addition, a lack of follow up when a student displays mental health difficulties. There is a lack of shared knowledge regarding staff responsibilities. The committee recommended the inclusion of students in expanded professional development dedicated to mental health and yearly student evaluations of mental health practices by teachers.

In the area of disciplinary response, the committee found the principles of Restorative Justice to be the most productive response to the overuse of detention, suspension, and expulsion; but adoption of the methodology has been slow and requires substantial professional education along with financial commitment.

The group investigating student voice noted wide use of student councils across districts and the inclusion of students on multiple committees. However, they found that student input was often not seriously considered in decision making. Some districts have student members on their Boards of Education, but most committees related to administrative decision appoint students from a small group of academic achievers and marginalized students rarely participate.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Cardona reported on the ongoing responses of the CSDE to the issues of school closures and racial disparities. The responses include:

- Generating, on the department website, resources that address racial issues
- Conversations related to reopening schools with stakeholders within the state (i.e. Governor's office, districts, CASS, CABE, etc.), and across states.
- Managing, with the Department of Social Services the distribution of food and books. Seven million dollars of food has been distributed to children and families
- Developing communication paths and programs for families of students with special needs
- Continuing attempts to diversify the teacher force
- Continuing the distribution of laptops through districts
- Hosting a Thought Exchange for students across the state (See report of Levi Gillespie that follows below)
- Partnering with CPTV to develop content available on public broadcasting outlets
- Convening strategy teams of multiple stakeholders on reopening in the fall with a strong emphasis on health and safety
- Communicating with the Governor's office regarding all possibilities for a fall reopening

After last month's Board meeting, the Commissioner was charged with capturing on a statewide basis, student experience with distance learning. The Commissioner turned the report over to Levi Gillespie, from the office of the Equal Opportunity Commission, who has had experience with large scale data gathering. He chose the Thought Exchange Platform which allows participants to respond in their own words and react to other participants. More than 17,000 students across the state have participated. The student representatives to the Board commented on the ease of use and real engagement by participants. Gillespie will now code and summarize those responses and report to the Board next month.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

No report

CONSENT AGENDA

Malia Sieve requested that the item renewing the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication be removed from the Agenda. The motion to do so was accepted. The Board approved the remaining items. Ms. Sieve then proceeded to inform the Board of issues with the ISAC principal that had occurred in his last assignment. These issues revolved around the treatment of students with achievement or behavioral issues who subsequently returned to their home schools. The Board approved the ISAC renewal with conditions.

The remaining items were approved.

- Approval of State Board of Education Committee Assignments
- Renewal of State Charter - Booker T. Washington Academy, New Haven
- Renewal of State Charter - Highville Charter School, New Haven
- Renewal of State Charter - Capital Preparatory Harbor School, Bridgeport
- Renewal of State Charter - Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Pearson School, Winchester
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Clinton Avenue School, New Haven
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Extension for Batcheller Early Education Center, Winchester
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan: Michael F. Wallace Middle School, Waterbury

- Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan: North End Middle School, Waterbury
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan: West Side Middle School, Waterbury
- Approval of Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan: Derby Middle School, Derby
- Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) State Plan

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

No items

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marie Mulready