



Minutes State Board of Education September 14, 2023

Brooke Axiotis
Vice President
Des Moines

Cindy Dietz
Cedar Rapids

Cassandra Halls
Carlisle

Brian J. Kane
Dubuque

Mike May
Spirit Lake

Mary Meisterling
Cedar Rapids

Nathan Peterson
Iowa City

John Robbins
President
Iowa Falls

Sophia Van Houten
Student Member
Ida Grove

McKenzie Snow
Director and
Executive Officer

The State Board of Education (State Board) meeting was held on September 14, 2023, in person at the Anne E. Nelson Early Learning Center, 620 N. 8th Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

State Board members present were John Robbins, Brooke Axiotis, Cindy Dietz, Cassandra Halls, Brian Kane, Mike May, Mary Meisterling, and Sophia Van Houten.

Iowa Department of Education (Department) staff members present were McKenzie Snow, Shan Seivert, Kim Buryanek, Thomas Mayes, Heather Doe, Janet Boyd, Wanda Steuri, Tana Mullen, and Steve Ervin. Department members attending remotely were April Gosselink-Lemke, Terri Schuster, Leigh Bellville, Tom Wood, Greg Feldmann, Jennifer Denne, Jay Pennington, Tina Wahlert, Kimberly Villotti, Jillian Dotson, Tiffany Poage, Stephanie TeKippe, Eric St Clair, Kala Shipley, Molly McConnell, Maryam Rod Szabo, Hannah Walsh-West, Bryan Bauer, Lisa Albers, Earl Whipple, Christi Donald, SueAnn Johnson, Isbelia Arzola, Kassandra Cline, Holli Marolf, and Hollie Welch.

Also in attendance were: Margaret Buckton (Urban Education Network), Cynthia Knight (Choice Charter School), Kristin Novak, Nicole Grundmeier, Keenan Crow, Kathy Bertsch, Charles Mausser, Zach Engstrom, Michelle Hargens, Kim Walsh, Kristin Rozeboom, Susan Gentz, Erin Kokemiller, KCRG, Corey Lunn, and Jacob Ludwig.

State Board Business Meeting

John Robbins called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

The meeting was conducted in person, with remote access information provided in the notice of meeting.

John Robbins notified the Board of a need to amend the agenda to include a special meeting to be scheduled on December 4.

Motion: Brooke Axiotis made a motion and Mike May seconded to amend the meeting agenda to add a special meeting on December 4 and approve the amended meeting agenda.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Communication

John Robbins made a statement regarding limiting the time of public comment based on the number of speakers wishing to provide public comment.

Public Comment

Margaret Buckton, Urban Education Network (UEN), provided comment regarding the process for reviewing Executive Order 10 and requested a more itemized version of each of the changes be made available to the public for improved transparency and ease of interpretation.

Cynthia Knight, Choice Charter School, provided comment concerning the process of working with the Department during their first year of operation last school year. She expressed concern regarding communication and requested better clarity and collaboration with the Department in the coming year, while also acknowledging that it has been a learning process.

Director's Report

Director Snow began by thanking educators, family, students, and State board members for their part in serving, engaging, participating, and supporting each other in the learning process. She thanked Council Bluffs Superintendent Vickie Murillo for hosting the meeting at the Anne E. Nelson Early Learning Center.

Snow's report included an overview of her visits to the field, including King Elementary and Central Campus at Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (IESBVI), Northwest AEA, Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC), and the Iowa State Fair. These visits gave her the opportunity to observe students in various settings, as well as engage directly with educators, superintendents, and other education professionals. Snow joined Governor Reynolds in congratulating the 2023 STEM teacher award recipients at a recognition ceremony, as well as joining Governor Branstad in recognizing this year's Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship awardees.

Snow shared information regarding recent staff recognitions, as well as upcoming application and nomination deadlines including 2024 U.S. Presidents Scholars Program nominations, 2023-24 Career Academy Incentive Fund grant application, and Iowa STEM Teacher Award nominations. The report concluded with updates on upcoming training and support opportunities for schools and the Department, including the Department's partnership with SAS/EVAAS that offers state-wide training workshops to learn how to navigate the web application and interpret results. The Department also hosted its first Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Support Network meeting, which serves to support the implementation and sustainability of high-quality instructional materials and evidence-based practices, and is comprised of representatives from each of the superintendents' regions and AEAs and Department staff.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Mary Meisterling made a motion and Cassandra Halls seconded to approve the consent agenda.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

There was discussion regarding status quo and inconsistent language in Chapters 65 and 95. Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, provided further clarification and also confirmed that the rules listed in the consent agenda are to provide notice of a public hearing and will return to the Board for final review and approval at a later date.

Following the vote, Mayes shared justification regarding placement of rules in the consent agenda versus separating rules on the agenda, explaining that placing rules with relatively uncontroversial proposed changes in the consent agenda allows time optimization for addressing the remaining rules listed individually that may warrant further information and explanation.

Rules: Chapter 16 - Preschool

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 16 – Preschool. Proposed amendments include removing obsolete language, duplicative statutory language, and restrictive terms that do not add value. He also cited aspirational rules that were removed due to unenforceability.

Motion: Brian Kane made a motion and Brooke Axiotis seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 16 – Preschool.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Rules: Chapter 18 - Fees

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 18 – Fees. Proposed amendments include removing restrictive terms that do not add value, as well as an effective date rule, which was a legacy rule that has been in place since original adoption. Discussion included whether complaints or appeals have been received in recent years and questions about the free and reduced-priced meals application process.

Motion: Brian Kane made a motion and Mike May seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 18 – Fees.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Rules: Chapter 19 and 68 – Charter Schools

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 19 and 68 – Charter Schools. Mayes stated there were no substantive changes. Proposed amendments include consolidating the two chapters, removing inapplicable rules, duplicative statutory language, unnecessary and redundant language, and obsolete rules under the legacy law. Discussion included questions regarding monitoring and the renewal process, which were addressed by Janet Boyd, Consultant, School Improvement.

Motion: Cassandra Halls made a motion and Mary Meisterling seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 19 and 68 – Charter Schools.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Rules: Chapter 33 - Homeless

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 33 – Homeless. Proposed amendments include removing duplicative statutory language, unnecessary and redundant language, and scope and sequence revisions for improved flow. There was discussion regarding the current homeless student population in Iowa, as well as questions pertaining to the Department's current procedures.

Motion: Mike May made a motion and Cindy Dietz seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 33 - Homeless.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Rules: Chapter 59 - Gifted

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 59 – Gifted. Proposed amendments include removing duplicative statutory language, of which Mayes noted that this chapter contains a large amount; removing a sub rule pertaining to staff qualifications, as this would fall under jurisdiction of the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), and editorial changes to streamline decision-making processes.

Motion: Brian Kane made a motion and Cassandra Halls seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 59 - Gifted.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Rules: Chapter 60 – English Learners

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel, presented information regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 60 – English Learners. Proposed amendments include removing obsolete and duplicative statutory language related to the funding mechanism. Mayes made one clarification, noting a substantive change, in that the underlying statute requires nonpublic schools to serve English learners while the status quo rule does not. Mayes stated that English learners are protected on the basis of national origin under federal Civil Rights law and the Iowa Civil Rights Act, which includes English language services. The proposal is to adopt or import the standard for nonpublic schools to serve children with disabilities with minor adjustments. The Department's Federal Programs Bureau staff believe this to be an appropriate standard for nonpublic schools to serve English learners because they have a statutory obligation to not discriminate due to national origin. The proposal aims to balance expectations in a nonpublic school environment and statutory requirements.

There was discussion regarding rule applicability, aspirational language, and rule implementation.

Motion: Mike May made a motion and Brooke Axiotis seconded to give notice of intended action for Chapter 60 – English Learners.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Mayes made a final comment reminding the board that these rules will appear on the November meeting agenda prior to adoption and filing, in addition to the next batch of rules that will be presented for the purpose of issuing notice of intended action. He also stated that Executive Order 10 requires two public comment periods per rule; the first rulemaking public hearing will be held at the Grimes Building, and the Department is committed to holding the second public hearing at locations throughout the state.

Tour of Council Bluffs Early Learning Center

Board members and Department attendees toured the new Anne E. Nelson Early Learning Center. The facility opened on August 28, 2023 and is named after Anne E. Nelson, a former educator, volunteer, and philanthropist in the Council Bluffs area. The tour was prefaced by a brief overview of the development of the early learning facility and program presented by Superintendent Dr. Vickie Murillo. Dr. Tracy Matthews, Chief Academic Officer, presented information regarding the partnerships and collaboration that were involved in launching the program, as well as the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of the program. She also gave information regarding the requirements that were met for the infant and toddler classrooms within the facility. Dr. Kimberly Villotti, Bureau Chief of Early Childhood, praised the Council Bluffs school district staff for their efforts, work, and collaboration in building the program and facility. Dr. Murillo concluded the tour by providing information about the Diploma Plus One program, which also included personal anecdotes shared by three senior students in attendance at the meeting.

Alt English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21)

Jennifer Denne and Terri Schuster, Consultants, Bureau of School Improvement, presented information regarding the Alt ELPA21, which is the final step in the Department's assessment becoming fully operational.

The Alt ELPA21 is for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K-12. The test measures attainment of English, as well as progress during the process of learning English, which is done by testing four language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Testing is conducted to meet a federal requirement and also inform on progress. The development of this assessment also addressed accessibility issues among this particular group of students.

Iowa was the lead state on this project and played a key leadership role in developing the assessment, with nine other partnering states supporting the work, in addition to national experts. The project was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Additional information presented included the development timeline, standard setting process, accountability measures, results interpretation, and how the data is used.

Motion: Cassandra Halls made a motion and Mary Meisterling seconded to approve the recommendation to adopt the Alternate ELP21 modality cut scores and achievement level determinations.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

Board Reports

Brian Kane shared information in conjunction with his August report regarding the Community Foundation in Dubuque. The foundation would like to build a dyslexia tutoring facility and has asked him to create a nonprofit corporation to start fundraising toward this goal. He noted that Cedar Rapids currently has the closest facility to Dubuque.

Cassandra Halls gave an update on the Community College Council (CCC), which met on September 13 and covered a lot of topics. She specifically shared some statistics from the Community College Tuition and Fees report as well as sharing a website containing more information pertaining to student outcomes. She also gave a reminder about the first-ever Community Colleges for Iowa Convention coming up on November 28-30. Additionally, she had the opportunity to attend the ribbon cutting for Horizon Science Academy, which is located in the newly refurbished, former Franklin Junior High School in Des Moines. Lastly, she shared her involvement in a new project with United Way of Central Iowa regarding integrated workforce strategies to update the pathway for childcare providers, paraeducators, and educators.

Mary Meisterling shared that she and Nathan Peterson visited Grant Wood AEA. They had discussions with the chief administrator and board chair and learned a lot. They were also invited to attend an upcoming superintendents meeting.

Sophia Van Houten shared that she was invited to a performance relating to the importance of music education in school systems at the Omaha Orpheum Theater on September 20.

John Robbins shared his concern regarding the recent recommendations from Boards and Commissions. Several board members engaged in discussion regarding the uncertainty surrounding the circumstances. Robbins stated that the board would continue to monitor.

Briefing of the Science of Reading

Director Snow began by providing statistics on reading proficiency. Dr. Kim Buryanek, PK-12 Learning Division Administrator, introduced Dr. Greg Feldmann, Administrative Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement, who presented data on early reading achievement in Iowa. Feldmann cited Early Literacy Implementation (ELI), which, among other requirements, legally requires all public schools to screen K-3 students to measure reading achievement and identify those who may be at-risk of reading difficulty. He shared data illustrating the past five years of literacy achievement data for grades K-3 and explained different ways to interpret the data. He shared that the current goal is 80% or higher at or above the benchmark through core, universal instruction. Current data indicates that 60-70% are at or above the benchmark for reading achievement, with those results remaining similar from year to year.

Tom Wood, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports, continued, stating that the data paints a picture of a need to focus on literacy learning. Wood's presentation team included Leigh Bellville, Wanda Steuri, and April Gosselink-Lemke, Consultants, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports. Topics presented by the team included information regarding the cognitive process involved in the science of reading, results from recent reading initiatives implemented in other states, and potential next steps.

Discussion topics included current methods districts are using and their efficacy, ways to improve results, including bolstering instructional methods with high-quality professional development, further analysis of other states' results, and the Board's role in supporting the mission going forward.

Executive Order 10: Special Meeting Date

It was proposed to reschedule the December 14 special meeting that was previously approved in March to December 4 to accomplish work related to administrative rules.

Motion: It was moved by Brian Kane and seconded by Mary Meisterling to reschedule the special meeting for December 4, 2023 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm to be held by Zoom only.

Vote: The ayes were unanimous. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Work Session: State Board Strategic Plan 2022-23

A work session was conducted immediately following the business meeting to discuss the State Board Strategic Plan 2022-23 and concluded on September 15.

John Robbins
President

McKenzie Snow
Director