

State Board of Education Business Meeting

Friday, March 5, 2021

Courtyard Lincoln Downtown/Haymarket, Scarlet Meeting Room, 808 R St, Lincoln, NE 68508

[Link to Agenda and Attachments](#)

[Link to Video of Meeting](#)

Publicized notice of the business meeting was given by posting notice on the Department's website; emailed to news media requesting notification and posting a copy of the agenda in the Office of the Commissioner of Education, which gave the date, time, and location of the meeting.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING, Friday, March 5, 2021, 9:00 AM.

1. CALL TO ORDER – President Maureen Nickels called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

1.1 Roll Call

Roll Call showed the following attendance:

Maureen Nickels	Patti Gubbels	Deborah Neary
Robin Stevens	Patsy Koch Johns	Lisa Fricke
Jacquelyn Morrison	Patricia Timm	

Commissioner Blomstedt was also in attendance.

1.2 President Nickels led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 President Nickels announced the placement of the Open Meetings Act.

1.4 COVID-19 Meeting Protocol

Ryan Foor, Department of Education representative, shared information on the COVID-19 Meeting Protocol and reminded the Board and members of the public in attendance about the Self-Screening Questionnaire, wearing masks, maintain 6' physical distance from others, use hand sanitizer and refrain from shaking hands.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

2.1 Request for 10-Minute Special Appearance

John Wyvill, Executive Director, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, spoke on the incident involving a deaf Gering High School Wrestler at the State Wrestling Tournament and the handling of it by the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA).

2.2 Public Comment (5 Minutes)

Marian Holstein, Executive Director at the Nebraska Indian Education Association, provided an update to the Board.

2.3. Written Public Comment

There was no Written Public Comment.

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

3.1. Agenda Overview and Consent Agenda Process

3.1.A. No agenda items were requested for removal.

Commissioner Blomstedt highlighted the federal funds and the direction of the Strategic Plan and how to integrate the efforts on pandemic recovery. The Commissioner proposed to spend time discussing the federal government's plan at the April Board meeting.

Commissioner Blomstedt and Bryce Wilson, Department of Education representative, will be presenting an overview of all the different federal funds that have become eligible for schools and education to the Legislature next week.

3.2. Report on Rules

Commissioner Blomstedt reviewed the report and there were currently no rules pending any action.

3.3. Board Operations Information

Ryan Foor, Department of Education representative, reminded the Board Members of last month's review of upcoming topics, followed up with an email and provided reading material as a refresher and education on those topics.

The Board will continue to meet at the Courtyard by Marriott through June. The NDE will continue to monitor the risk dial, the pandemic numbers, and information received from the Lancaster Health Department and DHHS in terms of what August and beyond will look like.

Foor also provided a reminder on upcoming conferences:

- National Association of State Board of Education (NASBE) Legislative Conference – March 22-23, 2021 held virtually
- Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA) Conference – March 25-26, 2021, held in person at Kearney; board session is on March 25 at 11:00 a.m. and the Commissioner will speak at the lunch that same day.
- Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) Administrator Days –July 28-30, 2021, held in person at Kearney.

3.4. Nebraska Reading Improvement Act and Nebraska READS

Cory Epler, Department of Education representative presented on the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act and Nebraska READS.

At 9:50 a.m., President Nickels called for a break. The meeting resumed at 9:59 a.m.

As a result of difficulty with technology, President Nickels call for a second break at 10:04 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:26 a.m.

3.5. Information on Accountability, Accreditation, and Approval Rules

Brad Dirksen, Department of Education representative, provided information on Accountability, Accreditation and Approval Rules.

4. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Maureen Nickels handed out the President's Policy Priorities for 2021 based on the input provided from the Board. A professional learning session was held on Monday, March 1, 2021 with Robert Hull, CEO of the National State Boards of Education. President Nickels asked each Board Member to share one takeaway from that session.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the Consent Agenda passed with a motion by Lisa Fricke, second by Patti Gubbels.

Lisa Fricke:	Yea
Patsy Koch Johns:	Yea
Deborah Neary:	Yea
Maureen Nickels:	Yea
Robin Stevens:	Yea
Patricia Timm:	Yea
Patti Gubbels:	Yea
Jacquelyn Morrison:	Yea

6. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.6. **Budget and Finance Committee** – Patricia Timm, Chair reported on the Committee meeting. There were Committee member questions on who the Zearn Math target audience was. Per the Commissioner, this contract is for Teacher Professional Development in connection with the Zearn contract.

Committee members asked for more information regarding the Center for Assessment contract regarding the review of AQuESTT. Discussion occurred concerning how COVID is impacting this work and how the NDE can improve this process. How are we involving Teachers in this process? Per NDE we are using an advisory group of teachers to help inform NDE and get their perspective on several issues. The question on how we get consistency related to assessments was also discussed.

6.6.A. Monthly Board Travel Expense Report

The Committee reviewed the Monthly Board Travel Expense noting it was still very low since most meetings and conferences continue to be held virtually.

6.6.B. In-State Travel Authorization Reports

The Committee held a short process discussion regarding whether approvals are needed when there are no costs associated with attending a virtual function. It was determined that it was not needed in those instances.

6.6.C. NDE reviewed the audit, noting that an agreement was in place prior to the pay rate increases. However, the contract wasn't executed prior to the start of work with the YRTC's on April 1st. As the pandemic situation progressed, the contract completion was delayed. No issues were noted by Committee members.

Approval to accept the 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) passed with a motion by Patricia Timm, second by Deborah Neary.

Lisa Fricke:	Yea
Patsy Koch Johns:	Yea
Deborah Neary:	Yea
Maureen Nickels:	Yea
Robin Stevens:	Yea
Patricia Timm:	Yea
Patti Gubbels:	Yea
Jacquelyn Morrison:	Yea

- 6.6.D. Review the proposed revised Rule 1 (Rules and Regulations Governing the Audit of Nebraska Public School Districts)

The proposed revisions to rule 1 were discussed. It was noted that all changes were technical in nature other than the requirement for expense allocations reported by schools in their annual financial report used to calculate per pupil cost, which was a result of ESSA changes requiring school level per pupil cost. NDE noted that they had worked with several different auditing firms on the proposed changes.

- 6.6.E. Review the proposed revised Rule 2 (Uniform System of Accounting for Nebraska Public School Districts)

NDE noted all changes were technical in nature and were the result of system changes, coding changes and ESSA requirements. NDE also noted that currently 243 school districts account on the cash basis with Omaha using modified accrual accounting but converting to cash basis for reporting to NDE.

- 6.1. **Policy Committee** –Patricia Timm, Chair, reported on the Committee meeting. The Committee reviewed and discussed the two action items on the agenda: State Board Bylaw, B2, *Board Committees*, AND State Board Bylaw B16, *Board Member Expenses*. The proposed revisions for each of these Bylaws were reviewed and discussed and the Committee recommends approval of revisions to both bylaws.

The Committee began their four-year review of State Board Position Statement S9, Model Policy to Prevent Dating Violence. This position statement was written in response to Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-2,141(1) in 2010 and was last reaffirmed in 2017.

- 6.1.A. Approve proposed revisions to State Board Bylaw B2, *Board Committees* passed with a motion by Patricia Timm, second by Patti Gubbels.

Lisa Fricke:	Yea
Patsy Koch Johns:	Yea
Deborah Neary:	Yea
Maureen Nickels:	Yea
Robin Stevens:	Yea
Patricia Timm:	Yea
Patti Gubbels:	Yea
Jacquelyn Morrison:	Yea

- 6.1.B. Approve proposed revisions to State Board Bylaw B16, *Board Expenses* passed with a motion by Patricia Timm, second by Patti Gubbels.

Lisa Fricke:	Yea
Patsy Koch Johns:	Yea
Deborah Neary:	Yea
Maureen Nickels:	Yea
Robin Stevens:	Yea
Patricia Timm:	Yea
Patti Gubbels:	Yea
Jacquelyn Morrison:	Yea

6.1.C. The Committee discussed the four-year review of State Board Bylaw B12, Policy Development. In concurrence with the review of this bylaw, the Committee has started discussion of reorganization of the Board bylaws, policies and position statements. The Committee will offer technical revisions to this bylaw to be approved by the full Board later and continue discussion on the reorganization as a Committee and make a recommendation to the full Board at a later date.

6.2. **Legislative Committee** – Robin Stevens, Chair reported on the Committee meeting.

The Committee reports on the work since February 5, 2021. The Committee has held weekly conference calls with the Commissioner and NDE staff while Nebraska Legislature has been conducting hearings on bills. These meetings have included discussion on Bills heard by the Education Committee and submitted letters or NDE staff testifying as a proponent on bills introduced that the Board has designated. This included discussion about the February 19 NDE budget hearing before the Appropriations Committee. The Legislature will wrap up hearings next week, but the Education Committee of the Legislature has completed hearings on bills introduced in January. Next week, Priority bill designations are due by March 11. Committee will continue to closely follow bills and report to the Board on activity that occurs before the April 2 State Board meeting.

6.3. **Commissioner's Appraisal Committee** – Maureen Nickels, Chair, reported that the Committee will be meeting via Zoom next with Joel Scherling, Department of Education representative, to discuss the appraisal process.

6.4. **AQuESTT Teaching, Learning and Serving Domain Committee** – Lisa Fricke, Chair, reported on the Committee meeting.

The Committee reports on one discussion item. The first draft of the Nebraska Health Education Standards will be released on Wednesday, March 10. NDE staff member, Cory Epler, will provide brief information to the Board on the public input process at the end of this report.

6.4.A. Cory Epler, Department of Education representative, presented on the Nebraska Health Education Standards.

6.5. **AQuESTT Student Success, Access and Support Domain Committee** – Patsy Koch Johns, Chair reported on the Committee meeting. The Committee discussed three main goals to accomplish this year. The first goal is to develop an equity policy for NDE. This policy serves as a model for school districts and requires school districts to develop and implement local equity plans. The equity policy should emphasize on 1) Human dignity; 2) increasing access to equitable resources and programing for ALL students; 3) creating and maintaining environments that are equitable, fair, safe, diverse, and inclusive; 4) reducing racial isolation by increasing integration and diversity; and 5) improving access to a diverse educator workforce.

The committee recommended actions and strategies for improving equity and reducing achievement and opportunity gaps. Examples of action plans including a) provide tailored and differentiated professional learning to build capacity for cultural responsiveness to address areas of inequity identified by the school system; b) require that an equity lens be used in reviews of staff, curriculum, pedagogy, professional learning, instructional materials, and assessment design; and c) identify the method of evaluation to measure the effect of equitable practices in the school system and schools.

The second goal of the committee for 2021 is to keep equity at the forefront and center of NDE policies. This includes prioritize investments for vulnerable populations, selection of population served by NDE (student with disabilities, students of color, ELL, etc.), and selection of services provided by NDE (addressing the whole child, academic enrichment opportunity, etc.).

The last goal is to address inequities during COVID-19 pandemic including food insecurity, mental health, wellbeing, child abuse prevention, translation, communication, childcare, etc.

6.5.A. The Committee reviewed Rule 11 waiver request from the Santee Community Schools. The committee recommended approval of the waiver.

Approve the Rule 11 waiver request from Santee Community Schools passed with motion by Patsy Koch Johns, second by Lisa Fricke.

Lisa Fricke:	Yea
Patsy Koch Johns:	Yea
Deborah Neary:	Yea
Maureen Nickels:	Yea
Robin Stevens:	Yea
Patricia Timm:	Yea
Patti Gubbels:	Yea
Jacquelyn Morrison:	Yea

6.5.B. Leading for Equity and Excellence Program (LEEP)

The Committee had one discussion item on Leading for Equity and Excellence Program (LEEP) State Policy Network. The Committee discussed the importance of maintaining NDE LEEP group to continue working on NDE equity efforts.

6.7. **Strategic Planning, Performance and Improvement Committee** – Deborah Neary, Chair reported on the Committee meeting. The Committee has no discussion or action items to report this month.

6.7.A. Board members are encouraged to review the current strategic plan. The Committee will engage in discussions in the coming months in preparation for a review of the plan and potential revisions. Please send thoughts and questions to the Committee Chair.

7. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

None

8. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

None

9. INFORMATION ITEMS AND REPORTS

9.1. President Nickels referred Board Members to review information items and reports.

10. ADJOURNMENT

President Nickels adjourned the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the State Board of Education will be held on Friday, April 2, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. at Courtyard Lincoln Downtown/Haymarket, Scarlet Meeting Room, 808 R St, Lincoln, NE 68508.