



MAINE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

23 State House Station
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

STATE OF MAINE

The State Board of Education held a regular monthly meeting on April 9, 2026 at the Burton Cross State Office Building. The following members were present: Chair Paulette Bonneau; Vice Chair Thomas Keller; Victoria Cohen; Fern Desjardins; Edmond Morin; Denham Ward; and Abbey Hamilton. James Ford and Wendy Ault attended virtually via Zoom.

Absent Excused: Cedar Worster

Others Present: Ezekiel Kimball, Professor and Dean of the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development. Justin Dimmel, Associate Dean for Academics and Student Engagement in the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development. Wilson Hess, former State Board Of Education member, Craig Flowers, State Board of Education Office Specialist.

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chair Paulette Bonneau called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

Roll call was taken by Craig Flowers and Chair Bonneau declared a quorum present.

VISION STATEMENT:

Read by board member, Abbey Hamilton: The vision of the Maine State Board of Education is that all students will receive a high-quality education leading to graduation with the skills, knowledge, and principles to be prepared for future learning, careers, and life.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Chair Bonneau stated someone will be appointed to the Charter Commission, and the Committee will be formed and announced. Chair Bonneau will appoint 3 members to the Nomination and Election Committee.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

Fern Desjardins remarked that she had abstained accepting of previous minutes, and Thomas Keller suggested corrections to previous minutes.

MOTION by Ed Morin to accept the minutes of March 12, 2026, as amended, seconded by Victoria Cohen, and unanimously voted by those present to accept the minutes of March 12, 2026 as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Wilson Hess spoke at the behest of President Sheryl DeWalt of Beal University regarding the ongoing Masters of Science in Nursing Review process that commenced January of 2025. He addressed an ongoing issue that impacts Beal University and possibly other institutions that present challenges to higher education review and accreditation processes. Mr. Wilson cited excessive time lapse along with lengthy stateboard review processes and asks that the review processes be expedited where possible.

OFFICER'S REPORTS:

Chair, Paulette Bonneau

- Paulette stated that during the month of March, she attended the NASBE Exchange and the hearing on Chapter 115. She also attended the CTE Committee Meeting and Construction Meeting. Additionally she has been working with Craig Flowers as he transitions to his new role, and in communications with Angela Pushard, as she will be his Administrative Supervisor through the DOE. An in-person meeting was held with Angela Pushard to clarify the supervisor role and working relationship between she and Craig.
- The Maine Learning Results Taskforce has a report out in terms of what it has accomplished, and is listed on the state website. The taskforce is made up of 36 members and the recent meeting concerned childhood standards and what is happening nationally with those and how those are tied into K-12 standards. Focus of the work remain as continued examination of the structural adherence, review of the national models undertaken by other states, evaluation of the statutory requirements, and consideration of the impact of adherence to standards.

Vice Chair, Thomas Keller

- On March 19, 2026, Tom attended the LD 2175 Amendment Review session in Augusta.
- On March 25, 2026, Tom participated in the University of Maine Machias mid-cycle review conducted by the MDOE.
- On March 27, 2026, Tom gathered questions for the agenda review session after listening to the audio from the February and March SBE meetings.
- On March 30, 2026, Tom participated in the agenda review session.
- On April 1, 2026, Tom participated in an MSSA/MDOE/SBE meeting to discuss student transfer appeal forms and processes.
- On April 2, 2026 Tom attended the confirmation hearing for State Board members.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:***School Construction Committee (Fern Desjardins):***

The School Construction Committee met on March 13 and 27, 2026.

The School Construction Committee is now meeting twice monthly with the goal of having a draft for amendments to *Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects* by June 30. Committee members, MDOE School Facilities staff and consultants reviewed Sections 1-8 at the March 13 and 27 meetings. Team members presented their ideas on the sections. Some proposed amendments were agreed to by consensus while others were tabled for further consideration.

On March 17 Fern emailed communications staff at MSMA, MSSA, MDOE, and the State Board's MSSA liaison, Jonathan Moody, to request that they consider sending out a press release that she prepared to inform the public that the State Board of Education had begun a review of Chapter 61 and that they were seeking input from the public. The MDOE sent a priority notice to superintendents, assistant superintendents, and facilities directors.

To date, Fern has received only one email with comments on Chapter 61. Committee meetings also provide the opportunity for public comments.

The next Committee meeting will be on April 14. The team will begin discussions on cost sharing in school construction. Future meeting dates include:

Thursday, April 23, 9:00-2:00, Room 500
Friday, May 1, 9:00-12:00, Room 500
Friday, May 15, 9:00-12:00, Room 500
Wednesday, May 27, 9:00-12:00, Room 500
Friday, June 12, 9:00-2:00, Room 500
Friday, June 26, 9:00-12:00, Room 500

Fern also informed the Board that she received an email from Roberta Hersom, Superintendent of Schools in MSAD 49, Fairfield, stating:

I wanted to take a moment to thank you and the State Board of Education for your support these past few years. It has been a tremendous experience that I am honored to have been a part of. Our beautiful new Lawrence Elementary School opened on January 5!

I invite the State Board of Education to visit us at some point, perhaps scheduling a meeting in one of our spaces.

Certification and Higher Education (Thomas Keller):

The Certification and Higher Education (C&HE) Committee met on March 25, 2026.

- Tom presented the highlights of the meeting of 25 March, 2026, Certification and Higher Education (C&HE) Committee. Vicky Cohen, Denham Ward and Tom Keller were in attendance, along with Mary Becker Interim Staff, and Craig Flowers.
- UMAINE Student Teaching Stakeholder Report 2025 - discussion centered on if this should be brought to the full Board and what the outcome of that might be. Members thought paying student teachers and cooperating teachers is a great idea but costs a lot of money. This also raises the issue of equity, especially supporting public university students vs private university students. Vicky thought this could be a good topic for the State Board, but advocated for a broader view on how student teaching is accomplished.
- Beal University review and report status - A draft is being prepared for the Board. We should have the report in hand by next CHE committee meeting.
- Classical Planning Institute is a 501(c)3 non-degree granting business launching the Classic Planning Academy (CPA) for an on-line PhD program in architecture. The CHE committee will review the

commissioner's report at our CHE next meeting and bring a recommendation to the May State Board meeting.

- UMAINE and UMAINE Machias' (UMM) mid-cycle review is underway today. Three programs are under review at UMaine. The programs are a dual enrollment with elementary and special education, dual enrollment in elementary education and early elementary education, and a Masters of Arts program in early education. UMM is looking for approval for Elementary Education - Endorsement 020 (K-6), Middle Level Teacher Education - (Grades 5-8), Endorsement Areas: 100 English/Language Arts, 200 Social Studies, 300 Mathematics, 340 Science, Secondary Education - Endorsement areas: 100 English/Language Arts, 200 Social Studies, 300 Mathematics, 350 Physical Science, or 395 Life Science, Special Education - Endorsement 282 (birth to school age 5, K-8), or 7-12, and Early Childhood Teacher - Endorsement 081 (birth to K).
- NE/Roux Institute review - Report is being circulated among review team members. They are in the final drafting stages. Timeline is "as soon as possible".
- MEIS summary - A dip from January, with 3 retired teachers regaining their certificates and there were 358 initial teacher certificate applications processed. There are starting to be inquiries from charter schools about supporting educators to become certified. Since charter public schools are public, the heads of schools act as superintendents. Thus they are able to access the local portfolio pathway. Tom mentioned the need to parse initial teacher certificate applications to be sorted by traditional (pathway 1), alternative (pathway 2), local portfolio (pathway 3), and also residency and apprenticeship. Michael took note of this.
- CHRC violations report. Currently there is no way to look at these violations longitudinally but Michael and his staff have created a workaround. They will be taking a monthly snapshot and will review them after a few months to determine if these are new folks or the same ones month after month.
- Certifications violations report. This still requires a connection between NEO and MEIS data systems. Dan mentioned an MDOE floor amendment proposal that has been shared with the co-chair of the committee. Tom asked that it be sent to us and Dan replied that he is not the owner of it. But he could get the language. We have not yet received the promised language. TEAME and EPP report - Dr. Sherry Brown, Colby College. Dr. Brown noted the difficulty in getting data from program completers for the annual EPP report. She spoke about the Central Maine Education Consortium, that she and Katie Rybakova at Thomas

College are leading with participation of KVCC. Special Interest Groups have been formed in areas such as arts integration SIG, a teacher workforce development SIG and an alternative education SIG.

- Other Business - Chapter 115 - the final report was an 8 to 3 OTP with amendments vote resulting in stripping the emergency designation, accepting the 9 day comment period following the public hearing instead of 10 days, returning the 282 endorsement to 3 grade spans and taking the 7 to 12 and making it 6 to 12, making all 7-12 grade spans to become 6-12, and adding the math specialist certificate. Some discussion ensued regarding outreach to local credentialing committees and SAUs. Michael said he would look at what was done last time.
- Chapter 114 - Tom encouraged the members of TEAME to gather information on EPP standards across the nation and internationally. Michael's colleagues across the nation, NASBE and the TEAME members can all be sources.

Career and Technical Education (Edmond Morin):

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee met virtually via Zoom on Thursday, March 26, 2026.

- Perkins Grant Manager Melissa Sherwood reported that the Perkins Comprehensive Annual Report had been submitted to the federal government. She also mentioned that the state plan update for 2029-2030 performance levels would go out for public comment soon, and that all 27 CTEs were working on their comprehensive local needs assessments.
- As has been mentioned before, under the current U.S. administration oversight of Perkins V federal CTE funding is shifting from the U.S. Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Labor. Maine DOE CTE Director Dwight Littlefield provided an update on the federal government's desire to combine state level plans for Perkins and US Labor's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA. Dwight explained that while the federal government is pushing for combined plans, Maine is not implementing one this round due to concerns about data measurement differences and potential funding complications. Dwight noted that while 6-8 states currently had combined plans, Maine will continue participating in discussions with the State Workforce Development Board and others to prepare for potential future

requirements in 2 years. He also mentioned that the Governor would have to sign off on the combined plans.

- Dwight also discussed a proposal to work on universal design for learning with special populations and possible funding sources.
- Mercedes Pour from the Maine Community College System presented data showing the impact of Maine Free College on community college enrollment, particularly highlighting growth in career and technical education programs like health sciences and industrial technologies.
- Mercedes also discussed the growth in teacher recruitment and challenges in education, highlighting salary issues and the need to highlight non-nursing healthcare careers.
- MACTE President Bill Tracy mentioned ongoing efforts to finalize Chapter 115 support and the need for a committee to develop a portfolio pathway.
- Regarding his own school, the Hancock County Technical Center, Bill reported a significant increase in enrollment to 298 students, with 343 applications for the upcoming school year, particularly noting high demand for automotive and health occupations programs.
- Amanda Peterson, Director of the United Technology Center in Bangor, discussed challenges with limited seating capacity and collaboration efforts with Eastern Maine Community College to address enrollment issues in plumbing, electrical, and health occupations programs.
- Kevin Lavoie, Director of the St. John Valley Technical Center in Frenchville, highlighted the center's recruitment efforts, including outreach to homeschoolers, and mentioned their preparation for the SkillsUSA National Competition with seven students participating.
- Bobby Deetjen, Director of the Mid-Coast School of Technology in Rockland discussed the potential for hosting Southern Maine Community College courses as a satellite campus.
- Paulette acknowledged Mary Becker's contributions before her departure and Craig Flowers was introduced as the new Office Specialist.

Legislative Action (Paulette Bonneau):

The committee has not met formally.

- Paulette reported that they have been busy with Chapter 115, and it looks like it will pass.
- Paulette reported that the LD1819 act regarding of school construction was engrossed in the Senate.

Student Membership (Edmond Morin):

- Tuesday, March 24, 2026, Ed Morin, James Ford, Mary Becker, and Craig Flowers held a meeting to approve minutes of March 3, 2026 Student Membership Committee meeting.
- Governor Mills selected Grace Dunton from Skowhegan area high school for nomination. Grace Dunton's nomination was approved on April 2nd by the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Grace was confirmed earlier this week by the Maine Senate as well as the other State Board of Education nominees who were approved by the Education and Cultural Affairs.

Student voices (Cedar Worster, Abbey Hamilton, and James Ford):

The Student Voices Committee met on March 9, 2026

- Student cabinet met yesterday, April 8, 2026. This was the first of two student Bright Spot meetings. Bright Spot videos were presented. Dan Chuhta, Deputy Commissioner, was in attendance.
- The students serving on the Student Cabinet will be meeting this week.

Numeracy Advisory Council (Victoria Cohen):

- Beth Lambert and Vicky met on March 13th to discuss logistics for our upcoming Numeracy Advisory Council meeting.
- The Numeracy Advisory Council met on March 27th in Augusta.
- We heard Beth's overview of the DOE's Numeracy work so far, and then discussed the revisions to the Numeracy Playbook, detailing our feedback for the DOE.
- We discussed what we learned at the ATOMIM conference, and how these learnings conflict or correspond to the DOE Numeracy initiative.
- We also discussed ways we can help with the rollout of the Numeracy Playbook when it's launched in May, perhaps creating a "book group," led by NAC members.
- Vicky attended ECA work sessions in person at the State House on March 4th, 11th, and 19th to support LD 2175. The Math Specialist Certification was added in the amendment H-931 and was adopted on April 2nd.
- Vicky attended a full-day in-person meeting in Augusta for the Math Specialists Professional Learning Community (PLC) on March 23rd.

- Vicky was a panelist at the Association of Teachers of Math in Maine (ATOMIM) conference in Augusta on March 24th, and attended the rest of the conference.
- Vicky attended the Elementary Math Teachers Community of Practice on March 30th, and met on March 31st with Justin Dimmel to discuss moving forward with several initiatives to increase the efficacy of math education.

Charter Commission Representatives (Thomas Keller and James Ford):

The Maine Charter School Commission met Wednesday, April 8, 2026.

- The staff provided SY25-26 Mid-year reports after meetings with each of the schools. While mid-year reports are not required but the commission and the schools prefer to be proactive with information and data.
- Across the portfolio, several key themes emerged:
 1. Academic Performance: Math remains a common focus area across schools
 2. Attendance: Chronic absenteeism remains a challenge, though several schools are showing improvement
 3. Governance and Compliance: There is continued focus on timely reporting and board training and multiple schools showed meaningful improvement in governance practices.
 4. Leadership Capacity and Sustainability: In some schools, leadership capacity remains a constraint and financial sustainability challenges persist.
- It was noted that Jeremy Ray, Superintendent of Schools in Dayton, Saco and Biddeford, was confirmed by the ECA Committee and the Senate to assume a seat on the Commission. It is generally regarded that this is the seat formerly held by Norm Higgins. Leigh Weisenberger Albert asked that her renomination to the Commission be withdrawn.

Professional Standards Board (Denham Ward):

The Professional Standards Board (PSB) has not met – meets next week.

NASBE:

Executive Committee/Board of Directors/Finance & Audit Committee (Fern Desjardins):

The Executive Committee's meetings have centered on upcoming events. Fern reminded members about New Member Institute that will be held on July 7 and ending at 1:30 p.m. on July 8, 2026 in Washington, DC. It will be held just before the Education Commission of the States' 2026 National Forum on Education Policy, July 8-10. NASBE provides financial assistance for up to two Maine state board members designated by Chair Bonneau to attend. The registration fee will be waived and up to \$550 in travel expenses will be reimbursed by NASBE (airfare, train fare, ride shares, parking, and mileage). The deadline to register new members is Monday, April 13.

Due to the Easter season, both the *April NASBE News* and the *April NASBE Exchange* were delayed by one week. The *News* will come out on Friday, April 10 and the *Exchange* will take place on Monday, April 13.

UNFINISHED (OLD) BUSINESS:

Committees - Chapter VII, Board Of Education Policy and Procedures Manual – sent out in recent packets for today's board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Appointment of Vickey Cohen to replace Victoria Kornfield to the Charter School Commission. Motion by Tom Keller, and seconded by Denham Ward. Vote is unanimous.
- Appointment of Nomination and Election Committee for Chair and Vice Chair of the Board. Wendy Ault, Fern Desjardins, and Ed Morin are appointed. A slate of officers will be brought back to the May 14th meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Superintendent Conference is coming up at the end of June, 2026. In the past, board members have attended. Comes out of board funds. Will be held in Bar Harbor.
- The next regular State Board Business meeting will be held on Thursday, May 14, 2026, at 1:00 PM at the Margaret Chase Smith School in Skowhegan and virtually via Zoom.
- Appointment of

ADJOURNMENT:

The April 9, 2026 State Board of Education meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by
Craig Flowers, Office Specialist II
State Board of Education