



Certification and Higher Education Committee

Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the February 10, 2025 Meeting

The Certification and Higher Education Committee held a virtual monthly meeting on Monday, February 10, 2025, via Zoom. The following were present: Committee Chair Thomas Keller; Victoria Kornfield; and Denham Ward (Board Members). Deputy Commissioner Chuhta; and Michael Perry, Director of Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services.

Guests: Gerry Durgin, MIAAA; Mallory Cook, MEA; Janet Sortor, MMCS; Jon Doty, RSU 34; Megan London, EMCC; Dave Keaton, MACTE; Heather Perry, Gorham; Rose Angell; Laura Cyr, MDOE; and Eileen King, MSSA.

Chair Thomas Keller called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. He welcomed all members and guests. Committee members introduced themselves. Chair Keller reviewed the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Victoria Kornfield, seconded by Denham Ward, and unanimously voted by those present to accept the January 22, 2025, minutes as presented. The motion was adopted.

Public Comment:

No public comment was given.

Higher Education Update: *(Michael Perry)*

- Michael Perry, Director of the Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services, provided an update on the proposed slate of review team members for the Beal University Review for Master's Degree Authorization.
- Michael will be sending the annual report template to EPPs.
- The committee discussed a new architectural degree program that is in early stages of being proposed and the Colby College visit.
- The UMaine Machias review has been put off until Fall 2025. Committee Chair Keller suggested a more in-depth discussion on the realigned crosswalk with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

(CAEP) and chapter 114 in a later meeting.

Certification Update: *(Michael Perry)*

- Michael presented the January 2025 numbers, highlighting that it was the busiest January for applications processed in the last four years.
- He also discussed the team's metrics, including incoming calls to the certification helpline, outgoing calls, and pages of incoming application documents uploaded to Maine Educator Information System (MEIS).
- Michael also shared data on initial teaching applications processed, noting that 2024 was higher than pre-pandemic but slightly lower than recent years. Denham Ward and Tom Keller discussed the importance of understanding the net number of teachers leaving the profession and the need for the data to be useful for superintendents.
- There were 1,156 CHRC violations noted this month.
- The committee also discussed the regional longitudinal data study, with Denham Ward mentioning that they have started round 2 with 14 SAUs involved.

Relative to LD 2222/Amending Chapter 115:

The remainder of the meeting focused on refining the language and definitions in a draft document related to credentialing and education. The committee discussed the potential changes and the need for consistency with the statute. They also deliberated on the definition of "accredited" and the use of "certificates" versus "endorsements." They also discussed the definition of "pre-k" as the year before attendance in kindergarten. The team also discussed the potential changes in the political climate and the need to revise the document accordingly.

The committee discussed the need for more data on certification violations and the potential for a monthly report from the Department of Education. However, concerns were raised about the potential for this information to be used punitively, and the idea of a public report was suggested. The committee decided not to include this requirement in the rules, instead opting for a more flexible approach with Michael, who was tasked with providing a summary of the certification violations on a quarterly or yearly basis. The committee also discussed the need to clarify whether certain rules were State Board rules or DOE rules.

In the meeting, Tom Keller, Denham Ward, Tori Kornfield, Jon Doty, and Michael Perry discussed the language and implications of a protection from abuse or harassment order versus restraining orders in relation to teacher credentials. They debated the appropriateness of the current language and the potential consequences of revoking a credential based on such an order. Denham Ward suggested that the responsibility for deciding on additional requirements should lie with the hiring superintendent, not the state. The team agreed to take the issue to the Attorney General's office for further review.

The committee discussed minor editing issues and formatting inconsistencies in a document. They agreed to make changes to ensure consistency and clarity. They also discussed the renewal procedures for professional credentials, deciding to allow renewal for those whose credentials have lapsed no more than five years, provided they have completed the renewal requirements in place at the time the credential was issued. They also decided to update the term "native language" to "Wabanaki language" in the education technician section. Lastly, they clarified that the document should refer to State Board of Education rules rather than Department of Education (DOE) rules.

The team discussed the accreditation of educator preparation programs (EPPs) and the potential implications of changing the current system. They considered the idea of maintaining rigor by accepting programs accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAPE) or an equivalent accrediting agency for immediate certification. However, there were concerns about limiting options for candidates from other states with different accreditation processes. The team agreed to use the term "equivalent" to allow for flexibility in determining what constitutes an equivalent accrediting agency, with the understanding that the Department of Education would develop policy on this. The goal was to ensure that candidates from other states could still be considered for certification in Maine, while maintaining a level of quality and avoiding the inclusion of potentially substandard programs.

The draft document discusses a proposed pathway for alternative teacher certification. The group debated the use of "portfolios" and "rubrics" for assessing candidates' qualifications. They agreed to remove one portfolio option and clarify the language around a locally-driven process for evaluating career changers and experienced teachers seeking additional endorsements. There is some confusion about whether this pathway is for initial certification, adding endorsements, or both. The group plans to refine the wording to better distinguish between certificates and endorsements.

The meeting focused on refining the language and structure of a rule related to professional teacher certificates and endorsements. Deputy Commissioner Chuhta and Denham Ward discussed the potential for new language in the rule, with Denham expressing concern about the wording of certain sections. Tori Kornfield suggested finding a different place for certain elements and using different wording. The team agreed to continue working on the draft, with the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 26, at 10:30 AM. The conversation ended with an agreement to continue refining the rule and to appreciate any further comments or suggestions.

Adjournment:

The February 10, 2025, Certification and Higher Education Committee meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 PM.