



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 January 8, 2026, at the Burton Cross State Office Building and virtually via Zoom. The following members were present: Chair Paulette Bonneau; Victoria Cohen; Victoria Kornfield; Edmond Morin; Denham Ward; Cedar Worcester; and Abbey Hamilton.

Vice Chair Thomas Keller; Wendy Ault; and James Ford attended the meeting virtually via zoom.

Absent with Excuse: Fern Desjardins

Others Present: Laura Cyr, Federal and State Legislative Specialist, DOE; Scott Brown, Director of School Construction Programs, DOE; Michael Tracy, Superintendent of Augusta Schools; Martha Witham, Building Committee Board Member, Augusta Schools; Susan Parks, Building Committee Board Member, Augusta Schools; Jon Stonier, Director of Buildings and Grounds, Augusta Schools; Kathryn Cogan, CHA Architecture; Robin Tannenbaum, CHA Architecture; Chris Mallett, Chief Administrative Officer, Northeastern University; Michael Ferrari, Assistant Vice President, Northeastern University; Kristin Smith, Assistant Vice President, Northeastern University; Ian Anderson, Northeastern University; Patricia Law, Director of Professional Development, University of Southern Maine; Rachel Sommerville, Maine College of Art and Design; and Mary Becker, Interim Office Specialist, State Board of Education.

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chair Paulette Bonneau called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

Roll call was taken by Mary Becker, and Chair Bonneau declared a quorum present.

VISION STATEMENT:

Read by student 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 added two items to the agenda under New Business:

- Ad Hoc Hiring Committee
- Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) Report

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION by Wendy Ault, seconded by Victoria Kornfield and unanimously voted by those present to accept the September 10, 2025, minutes with amendments. The motion was adopted.

MOTION by Wendy Ault, seconded by Victoria Kornfield and voted seven in favor with one member abstained (Wendy Ault) to accept the October 9, 2025, minutes as presented. The motion was adopted.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

OFFICER’S REPORTS:

Chair, Paulette Bonneau

- Paulette attended the NASBE webinar titled "Evolving High Schools to Engage Today’s Students." The focus was on how high schools must evolve to meet the needs of today’s students and prepare them for college, careers, and civic life. Legislators and education leaders play a crucial role in advancing policies that make schools more relevant and effective. Research was shared on effective redesign strategies and insights from Indiana and Washington to help shape improvements to the high school experience.
- On December 10th, she attended the monthly Construction Committee meeting. The following week, the Construction Committee met with Valerie Landry, Chair of the Governor’s Commission on School Construction.
- On December 12th, Paulette attended the Educate Maine Conference in Bangor. The State Board presented to approximately 50 people on the State Board’s role, functions, and statutory responsibilities. It was very well received.
- On December 17th, she attended the Maine Learning Results Taskforce. In 2025, the Legislature enacted Resolve, LD 1701, which calls for a comprehensive, statewide examination of the purpose, structure, and efficacy of the Maine Learning Results across all content areas. The Department has paused the regular five-year standards review cycle while the Maine Learning Results Taskforce completes its two-year charge. The Taskforce is bringing together educators, leaders, community members, and partners to:
 - Examine the role of standards in supporting meaningful learning for all students

- Study the structure, coherence, and design of current standards
- Consider how the Learning Results can more strongly reflect the Science of Learning and Development
- Develop recommendations for the future framework of Maine’s PK–12 standards

At the conclusion of this process, the Taskforce will present recommendations to the Maine Legislature for consideration. The regular standards review cycle will resume following legislative action on the Taskforce’s recommendations.

- Mary Becker has graciously agreed to work for us as an interim assistant. The position was posted immediately and closed on January 5th. The applications are currently being vetted through the HR process. Although they volunteered, Paulette is appointing Tom Keller and Tori Kornfield to serve on the interview panel. Wendy Ault will serve as an alternative. Assisting the Board, Deputy Chuhta and Melissa Beecher (Chief of Operations) or her designee will also sit on the interview panel. Once applications are cleared, interviews will be scheduled.

Vice Chair, Thomas Keller

- Thomas participated in the State Board presentation at the Educate Maine summit in December, but more as Chair of the Certification and Higher Education Committee. Tom strongly agrees with Chair Bonneau that this was an important and well received endeavor.
- He has tried to support Chair Bonneau by responding to her questions and ideas.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

School Construction Committee (Fern Desjardins):

The School Construction Committee had a Special Meeting on December 18, 2025.

- The meeting was held to provide members an opportunity for discussion with the Chair of the Governor’s Commission on School Construction, Valerie Landry. Fern wanted Committee members to hear about the Commission’s work from Landry’s perspective and not just her own as a member of the Commission.
- Chair Landry provided an overview of Governor Mills’ Executive Order; Commission purpose and membership; use of resources like the two MEPRI reports; references to other states facing similar issues with school construction needs and renovations; the Commission’s *Interim Summary* in April 2025; how the Commission built the essential elements of what was happening or not happening toward having every school in Maine being safe and sound for students; and the drafts of concept papers that were reviewed by members. Landry emphasized that the Commission seeks recommendations for long-term solutions to school renovations and construction. That would include a quasi-independent state entity established by the Legislature to fulfill governmental purposes. It would have independence outside the MDOE.

- State Board Chair Paulette Bonneau invited Chair Landry to make a presentation at the January 8, 2026 State Board workshop.

Certification and Higher Education (Thomas Keller):

The Certification and Higher Education (C&HE) Committee did not meet in December.

- Laura Cyr has prepared packets for the Education and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Committee consisting of the redline and clean versions of Chapter 115. She has filed the necessary paperwork with the Legislature and Secretary of State. No hearing has yet been scheduled before the ECA Committee.
- The committee is beginning to discuss revisions to Chapter 114. Our AAG has determined that the SBE does have authority over this chapter although the statutes could be strengthened.
- The next meeting is scheduled to be held on January 28, 2026.

Career and Technical Education (Edmond Morin):

The CTE committee met via Zoom on Wednesday morning December 17, 2025.

- All three committee members commented on how well they thought the SBE presentation at the Educate Maine symposium went well. The SBE explained what the State Board of Education is and what its responsibilities are. Thanks to Chair Paulette Bonneau for organizing it.
- DOE CTE Director, Dwight Littlefield, reported that his group is working on the Comprehensive Annual Report that is due at the end of this month to the federal Office of Career and Technical and Adult Education. He said they completed two on site comprehensive reviews this fall, one at the Portland Arts and Technology High School and the other at Waldo County Technical Center in Belfast. Dwight reported that they have a new staff member joining the CTE team this month. Nik LaBreck is the Middle School-CTE/CTE Liaison Specialist. Dwight reminded the group of their Hall of Flags gathering on February 10,11,12 in recognition of CTE Month. Each morning at 10:00 they'll have a short program which will include a student speaker.
- DOE Perkins Grant Manager Melissa Sherwood reported that, as of December 15, 2025, the Briggs account had a new funding allotment available of \$46,640 (unobligated). This is in addition to the total unexpended cash balance of \$251,934.83.
- Regarding Perkins federal CTE funding: CTEs have submitted final invoices for reimbursement under FY25 Perkins.
- The state had received no updates on FY26 Perkins or Perkins Reserve.
- CTEs will begin working on their comprehensive local needs assessments (CLNAs) in the new year. These are required under Perkins every two years.
- Mercedes Pour from the Maine Community College System said they also have been working hard on Perkins funding. She said that, even with the loss of free community college funding, most of their technical programs are full. She said

they are trying to work on a path that would move students ahead without needing to put them into general studies until a spot in their desired fields opens up.

- Speaking on behalf of Maine Administrators of Career and Technical Education, United Technologies Center Director Amanda Peterson said they are starting to rewrite State Department of Education rules pertaining to Career and Technical Education. Amanda notes that these rules are 40 years old and are really outdated. She noted that CTE's in the state are getting ready for recruiting seasons. She said at her center in Bangor they don't have enough space to support the numbers of students wanting to get into programs and so they are exploring possibly starting satellite programs at some of their sending high schools. She also said UTC has added a Special Ed Coordinator which is paying dividends.
- Kevin LaVoie, Director at St. John Valley Technology Center in Frenchville, said they were working on their budget and that he's been able to revive a dormant program by bringing on a residential electrical instructor for the next fiscal year. He said they are bringing on co-op programming and changing their advanced technologies program to their pre-engineering format and exploring collaborating with Twin Rivers Papers about possibly holding sessions there a day a week. They are talking about dovetailing into their Early Childhood Occupations program with a teacher prep component.
- Much of the meeting involved distribution of Briggs Trust funding and whether to set up a committee to explore how this should be done, given that there's almost \$300,000 that can be awarded on behalf of vocational education in Maine. Wondering just who should be on that committee, whether a facilitator should be hired, how to include business and non-profits, alumni, parents, superintendents and principals etc., in other words a group that would include a number of constituencies. There was also discussion about whether it would be wise to hold a series of events across the state to gather information. Also wondering what thoughts the State Board has, given that they ultimately make decisions on how Briggs funding is used.
- It was suggested that a couple of committee members could meet with the head of the DOE CTE team to start working on some of these issues. Acknowledging that whatever we come up with is going to be a big lift.
- There was also discussion of CTE involvement with student readiness.
- Another action item is the CTE Committee sending out a survey to those involved and interested in CTE asking them what the State Board of Education can do for CTE in Maine. Some of this information might help guide the CTE Committee as we work to revise our Strategic Plan.

Legislative Action (Paulette Bonneau):

The Legislative Action Committee has not met.

Student Membership (Edmond Morin):

- Application materials will be distributed this week to high school principals, counselors and CTE Directors in Maine's Second Congressional District.
- The deadline for submitting applications is February 13, 2026. Applications may be submitted either electronically or by traditional mail.
- In February, James, Cedar and Ed will hold a Zoom meeting to review applications and choose six finalists, which they will interview.
- The names of three students will then be sent to Governor Mills, who makes the decision about who is nominated to serve on the State Board.
- A press release will be submitted to the DOE Communications team.

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

The Student Voices Committee met on January 6, 2026.

- Cedar and Abbey shared updates on their meeting with the Commissioner's Student Cabinet.
- Abbey highlighted her participation in a program at the School for Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington, D.C.

Numeracy Advisory Council (Victoria Cohen):

- Vicky and Beth Lambert met on December 23rd so that Vicky could share her decisions about applicants.
- Vicky sent congratulations and rejection letters to all the applicants (final total for applicants was 21; final number for the Numeracy Advisory Council is 12, not including Vicky).
- The Council represents 9 counties (7 regions); the group has one principal, one Special Ed teacher, one accelerated learning teacher, one 5th grade teacher, one 8th grade math and science teacher, two high school teachers, four math coaches, and one director of instruction.
- The first meeting will be held on Friday, Jan. 16th, in person, in Augusta, for an overview with Beth Lambert, and a team building session to decide on protocols and norms.
- Beth, Peter Lancia, and Vicky will meet regularly both pre-meetings and post-meetings to plan and debrief.
- Vicky also participated in the Maine Math Collaborative Zoom meeting on Wednesday, during which Beth rolled out an overview of the new Numeracy Playbook. During discussion, Vicky suggested that the math methods professors of the 15 teacher prep colleges in the state gather at a round table to learn more about this tool, so that it could be not just for in-service teachers, but also for pre-service teachers.
- Vicky also sent Governor Mills the Math Specialist Certification draft for her consideration, and she said she'd review it with her team.

Charter Commission Representatives (Victoria Kornfield, Thomas Keller, and James Ford):

The Charter Commission did not meet in December 2025.

- Victoria Kornfield reported that the School Performance Committee met on January 6, 2026. The Committee set a bar for standards on the Performance Framework. The Commission will vote on these changes in February.
- The committee reviewed Fiddlehead Schools Intervention Plan. The school is being put on an improvement plan.
- The next meeting for the Charter Commission will be held on January 14, 2026.

Professional Standards Board (Denham Ward):

The Professional Standards Board did not meet.

NASBE:

Executive Committee/Board of Directors (Fern Desjardins):

- The Executive Committee met on December 23, 2025 and January 6, 2026 to finalize details in President and CEO Paolo DeMaria's contract, plan for the January 12 NASBE Exchange that will be facilitated by Chair Byron Ernest (IN), begin planning for the New Member Institute to be held July 7 and 8, 2026 in Washington, DC, and to finalize plans for the Executive Committee Retreat with NASBE staff on February 8 and 9, 2026.
- The January 2026 issue of *The State Education Standard* was emailed to all State Board members on January 7 and NASBE Communications will email the January NASBE Newsletter to members on Friday, January 9, 2026.

UNFINISHED (OLD) BUSINESS:

No Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS:

MAJOR CAPITAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM; *SITE APPROVAL CONSIDERATION*; AUGUSTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

STATEMENT OF FACT: Augusta Public Schools Superintendent Michael Tracy Jr. requests that the State Board of Education grant Site Approval for an elementary school construction project in Augusta. The Lillian Parks Hussey School (grades K-6) rated 9th on the Final Priority List of the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle.

Augusta Public Schools hired CHA Consulting to complete a New vs. Renovations analysis of the existing Lillian Parks Hussey Elementary School and conduct further site, building, and program studies of the other three elementary schools in the district

as well as Cony Middle/High school. This analysis resulted in a recommendation for an addition to the Farrington Elementary School which would address educational equity and expand early childhood and special education programming at all three elementary schools in the district.

The existing site is 17.05 acres and there will be no site acquisition costs. It is well known throughout the community and has the necessary utility and transportation infrastructure. Site investigations and environmental analysis studies have been conducted and have not revealed any issues of significance. The addition will be constructed while the existing school remains operational. A completed Site Application is on file with the Department of Education and meets all the applicable criteria of the Rule Chapter 61, State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects.

In a public meeting on October 27, 2025, recommending the Farrington School site for an addition was endorsed by a straw poll vote of 12 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Project Information:

Project: Augusta Public Schools - Elementary School Construction Project
Superintendent: Michael Tracy Jr.
Architect: CHA Consulting
Engineer: Gorrill Palmer
Schools to be closed: Lillian Parks Hussey School
Site Acreage: Existing Farrington school site 17.05 acres
Purchase cost: \$0

COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION: The Commissioner of the Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education grant Site Approval to Augusta Public Schools' Farrington School Site for an elementary school addition that will address district elementary school facility needs as presented.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On December 10, 2025 the School Construction Committee recommended that pursuant to MRS Title 20-A §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, this exhibit be placed on the January 8, 2026 State Board meeting agenda and the State Board of Education grant Site Approval to Augusta Public Schools for an elementary school construction project as presented.

MOTION by Edmond Morin, seconded by Denham Ward, and unanimously voted by those present that pursuant to MRS Title 20-A §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, grant Site Approval to Augusta Public Schools for an elementary school construction project as Presented. The motion was adopted.

APPROVAL OF MAINE COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM

BACKGROUND: Educator preparation programs (EPPs) offered by institutions of higher education in Maine are approved by the State Board of Education following the guidelines laid out by Rule Chapter 114, *Purpose, Standards and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education Personnel*. Approved EPPs are able to recommend graduates for eligibility to earn certification under “Pathway 1” in Rule Chapter 115 for the specific certification area(s) included in their review.

The Maine College of Art & Design (MECA&D) applied for reapproval of their existing program and submitted a self-assessment report indicating their adherence to the EPP standards in Rule Chapter 114. A review team chaired by Dr. Patricia Law of the University of Southern Maine was approved by the State Board of Education, with James Ford assigned as the State Board observer. Dr. Laura Cyr and Michael Perry served as non-voting observers on behalf of the Department of Education.

The formal review of MECA&D’s educator preparation program took place between November 9-12, 2025. The review team finalized consensus findings and recommendations for the State Board of Education, and a draft of their report was reviewed by institutional representatives to verify factual accuracy and to provide any feedback or response to the review team’s findings. The State Board of Education formally received the report along with the program’s self-report materials, in accordance with Rule Chapter 114, subsection 3.11.

The review team has recommended the State Board of Education approve the Maine College of Art & Design’s educator preparation program in Art (PK-12). Where MECA&D previously received an extension of its five-year approval and were originally scheduled for a Fall 2023 review, Rule Chapter 114 stipulates that this approval would be valid from Fall 2025 - Fall 2028 to return the EPP to its original review cadence (2018, 2023, 2028, 2033, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION: That, pursuant to State Board of Education Rule Chapter 114, subsection 3.11, paragraph d, the State Board of Education accept the Maine College of Art & Design review team’s recommendation and grant full approval to the Maine College of Art & Design’s educator preparation program in Art (PK-12) through Fall 2028.

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by James Ford, and unanimously voted by those present that pursuant to State Board of Education Rule Chapter 114, subsection 3.11, paragraph d, the State Board of Education accept the Maine College of Art & Design review team’s recommendation and grant full approval to the Maine College of Art & Design’s educator preparation program in Art (PK-12) through Fall 2028.

TEMPORARY APPROVAL OF NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, PURSUANT TO 20-A MRS §10703

BACKGROUND: Northeastern University is a private, non-profit institution of higher education founded in 1898 with a primary campus in Boston, Massachusetts. Northeastern presently operates 13 campuses across seven US states, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Northeastern is accredited by the New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE).

One of Northeastern University's 13 campuses operates in Portland, Maine, under the name of the "Roux Institute". These Maine-based programs are currently approved to operate in the state under the requirements of State Board of Education Rule Chapter 149 as an out-of-state institution with program approval in Maine.

Northeastern University has presented evidence to the state on three occasions to show the institution's adherence to the institutional standards laid out in Rule Chapter 149. The first review culminated in a vote by the State Board of Education in July 2020 to approve 26 programs offered by Northeastern at the Roux Institute. The second review culminated in a vote in October 2022 approving a further 19 programs. Over the course of that period, it became clear that the July 2020 and October 2022 votes contained omissions from the review report to the actual text of the vote in some cases, and irregularities in title or degree level between the report and the actual text of the vote in others.

Northeastern then applied for a third programmatic review, which formally kicked off with a virtual review visit in July 2025. That review – pending final recommendation from the state review team and vote by the State Board of Education – could potentially renew the programs approved in July 2020, extend the approval of the programs approved in October 2022, correct any inconsistencies or omissions in those two votes, and establish a new, five-year approval of a further 22 programs submitted to the state for approval for the first time.

In sum, Northeastern has submitted 75 programs for approval by the state at one time or another; 6 of these programs have since been sunset or have not launched. If the third review results in approval by the State Board of Education, Northeastern will then be operating 69 approved programs in Maine.

Northeastern has indicated its intent to transition its approval within Maine from the temporary, program-by-program approval track in Rule Chapter 149 toward degree-granting authorization in Maine. Such an authorization status would be more typical of an institution with a significant physical footprint in the state through which a large number of programs operate. It would also allow Northeastern to amend or introduce programs without triggering a new State Board review – so long as those programs are within degree levels at which Northeastern has been authorized by the state.

The transition between these two tracks in Rule Chapter 149 is not particularly significant in terms of what the state would be reviewing. The institutional standards for each track are identical, as is the process for the state board’s review and approval vote. The ramifications to the ongoing operation of an institution of higher education under each of the different approval tracks are, however, significant:

Table 1. Comparison of Program Approval vs. Degree-Granting Authorization in Maine

	Program Approval	Degree-Granting Authorization
Review Standards	Identical, spelled out in State Board of Education Rule Chapter 149. (Ch 149, 2(C)(4); Ch. 149 2(A)(4))	
Approval Action	A vote by the State Board of Education. (Ch. 149, 2(C)(7))	A vote by the Maine State Legislature (20-A §10704), informed by a State Board of Education review. (Additional degree authorization may be granted by State Board alone; see 20-A §10704-A.)
Unit of Approval	By <i>program</i> , i.e. specific majors at specific degree levels. New majors require a new review using the same Ch. 149 standards.	By <i>degree level</i> , i.e. a master’s degree authorized institution may launch new master’s degree programs without triggering a new review.
Duration of Approval	Four years at initial approval and then can be renewed per program at a length determined by the State Board. (Ch. 149, 2(C)(7), 2(C)(9))	Ongoing, until withdrawn by the legislature or terminated by the State Board of Education in specific circumstances. (20-A §10712)

In November 2025, Northeastern University spelled out its intent to seek degree-granting authorization to the Maine Department of Education and further applied for temporary approval in Maine under 20-A MRS §10703 to cover its activities in Maine while the degree-granting authorization process takes place. While that statute specifically refers to permission to use the title of “college,” “university,” or “community college,” both Rule Chapter 149, Section 2(F) and the final sentence of 20-A MRS §10712 treat the ability to use the title as the ability to operate with the full authority of an institution otherwise authorized in the State.

Pursuant to Rule Chapter 149, Subsection 2(F), Paragraph (5), in the case of an application for temporary approval of an institution of higher education, it is incumbent upon the Commissioner of Education to review the materials, evaluate the submitted materials, and prepare a report to the State Board of Education. The maximum length of a temporary approval is “the earlier of: the expiration of the academic year; or the applicant is authorized by the Legislature to grant degrees in accordance with section 10704.” (20-A MRS §10703 (1)). It can then be extended or

renewed “for not more than 2 years” beyond its initial temporary approval period (20-A MRS §10703 (2)).

In the case of Northeastern University, the Commissioner recommends the full duration of initial approval and encourages the State Board to extend as needed and allowed by law as Northeastern University navigates the legislative process for degree-granting authorization.

RECOMMENDATION: That, pursuant to 20-A MRS §10703, the State Board of Education approve Northeastern University’s request for temporary approval through the end of the 25-26 academic year.

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by Denham Ward, and unanimously voted by those present that pursuant to 20-A MRS §10703, the State Board of Education approve Northeastern University’s request for temporary approval through the end of the 25-26 academic year.

AD HOC HIRING COMMITTEE:

The Ad Hoc Committee is formed to hire an Office Specialist II. The committee's responsibility is to review applications and serve on the interview panel to choose an applicant to hire on behalf of the State Board.

MOTION by Paulette Bonneau, seconded by Edmond Morin and unanimously voted by those present that the State Board of Education appoint the following individuals, Paulette Bonneau, Tom Keller, and Tori Kornfield, with alternatives Wendy Ault and Denham Ward, and delegates the authority to these individuals to choose the Office Specialist II on behalf of the State Board.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Submit expense account vouchers to Mary Becker by the 15th day following the month of the expenses incurred. When you have your last meeting in January, please submit your expense voucher so it can get processed.
- Jonathan Moody, Superintendent of Schools, MSAD54/RSU54 will send an invitation to Mary Becker to forward to State Board Members for the Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) Winter Convocation being held in Portland on January 15 and 16, 2026.
- The next regular State Board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 1:00 PM at the Burton Cross State Office Building, and virtually via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 3:14 PM.
Respectfully Submitted by
Mary Becker, Temporary Staff
State Board of Education