



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 September 10, 2025 at the Burton Cross State Office Building. The following members were present: Chair Paulette Bonneau; Vice Chair Thomas Keller; Victoria Kornfield; Edmond Morin; Denham Ward; Victoria Cohen; Fern Desjardins.

Present via Zoom: Wendy Ault; James Ford; Abbey Hamilton

Absent with excuse: Cedar Worster

Others Present: Michael Perry, Director of Higher Education and Educator Support Services; Robbie Feinberg, Maine School Management Association; Jon Moody, Superintendent of MSAD 54 and MSSA Superintendent Liaison; and Erica Tompkins, State Board of Education Office Specialist II.

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chair Paulette Bonneau called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.
Roll call was taken by Chair Bonneau, and she declared a quorum present.

VISION STATEMENT:

Read by State 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:

Adjustments to the Agenda: New exhibit from Certification and Higher Education for UMA EPP Review Team and removing receipt of Committee Report Findings from the Roux Institute.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

August 2025 minutes were tabled for correction. The July 9, 2025 minutes were accepted with amendments to enter full exhibits in the body of the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No Public Comment

STUDENT TRANSFER APPEALS:

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING REQUESTS FOR REVIEW OF STUDENT TRANSFER REQUESTS

Paulette Bonneau, Chair of the Board, read a procedure for the Board when going into executive session to review requests for review of the Superintendents’ decisions on student transfer requests.

The Board will be considering requests for Board review of the Superintendents’-decisions regarding requested transfers of students to another school district, pursuant to Title 20-A, section 5205(6)(F). The Board will be going into executive session to consider the requests because each one involves reviewing and discussing information contained in student records made confidential by the federal law known as FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The parents and any attorney representing a parent are welcome to attend the executive session for the discussion of their particular student’s transfer, as are the Superintendents of the school districts involved in that requested transfer. The Board will review each of the transfer requests in separate executive sessions. Today, the Board has five transfer requests.

After the Board comes out of executive session, the Board will entertain a motion and take a vote on the disposition of the request in public session.

The Board’s role in these proceedings is to review the Superintendents’ decisions based on the record that was before them at the time they made the decision. Although the statute directs the Board to “communicate with” the parties involved, which the Board has done, the Board cannot accept any new evidence pertaining to a transfer request that was not considered or not available in the record at the time of the Superintendents’ decision.

The Board provides for public comment, which was explained earlier in the meeting. In the executive session the same rules apply for public comment and there will be a three-minute time limit for comment. This is not a time for debate or a time to introduce new evidence. It is a time for families to highlight the things they want the Board to consider in the record.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by Victoria Kornfield, and unanimously voted by those present for the Board to go into Executive Session, pursuant to Title 1 of the Maine Revised Statutes, section 405, subsection 6, paragraph F, to discuss information contained in records that are confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Title 20 of the United States Code, section 1232g relating to a request from SB to review the Superintendents’ decisions to approve or disapprove a request for a student transfer, pursuant to Title 20-A, section 5205, subsection 6, paragraph F at 1:16 PM.

The Board returned to the regular business meeting at 1:43 PM.

MOTION by James Ford, seconded by Thomas Keller, voted 8 in favor with 1 abstained (Paulette Bonneau) to deny the transfer as it was not in SB’s best interest given the information the State Board received. The transfer was denied.

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by Edmond Morin, and unanimously voted by those present for the Board to go into Executive Session, pursuant to Title 1 of the Maine Revised Statutes, section 405, subsection 6, paragraph F, to discuss information contained in records that are confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Title 20 of the United States Code, section 1232g relating to a request from MB to review the Superintendents' decisions to approve or disapprove a request for a student transfer, pursuant to Title 20-A, section 5205, subsection 6, paragraph F at 1:47 PM.

The Board returned to the regular business meeting at 2:33 PM.

MOTION by Victoria Cohen, seconded by Fern Desjardins, voted 5 in favor and 3 against (James Ford, Thomas Keller, Edmond Morin) with 1 abstained (Wendy Ault), that it was in MB's best interest to approve a transfer given the information the State Board received. The transfer was approved.

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by Victoria Kornfield, and unanimously voted by those present for the Board to go into Executive Session, pursuant to Title 1 of the Maine Revised Statutes, section 405, subsection 6, paragraph F, to discuss information contained in records that are confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Title 20 of the United States Code, section 1232g relating to a request from to review the Superintendents' decisions to approve or disapprove a request for a student transfer, pursuant to Title 20-A, section 5205, subsection 6, paragraph F at 2:40 PM.

The Board returned to the regular business meeting at 3:00 PM.

MOTION by Victoria Cohen, seconded by Thomas Keller, voted unanimously by those present to deny the transfer, that it was not in BBS's best interest to approve a transfer given the information the State Board received. The transfer was denied.

MOTION by Victoria Cohen, seconded by Thomas Keller, voted unanimously by those present to deny the transfer, that it was not in DBS's best interest to approve a transfer given the information the State Board received. The transfer was denied.

MOTION by Victoria Cohen, seconded by Thomas Keller, voted unanimously by those present to deny the transfer, that it was not in ASC's best interest to approve a transfer given the information the State Board received. The transfer was denied.

NEW BUSINESS

MAJOR CAPITAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM; CONCEPT APPROVAL
CONSIDERATION; RSU 17/MSAD 17 - NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

STATEMENT OF FACT: RSU 17/MSAD 17 Superintendent Heather Manchester requests that the State Board of Education grant Concept Approval for a new grades 6-8 Middle School to be constructed in the town of South Paris. RSU 17/MSAD 17 Oxford Hills Middle School rated 7th on the Final Priority List of the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle and was placed on the Approved Projects List at the September 14, 2022 State Board of Education meeting.

RSU 17/MSAD 17 hired Harriman to evaluate construction options for the existing Oxford Hills Middle School North Campus (grades 7-8) in South Paris. Their analysis resulted in a recommendation of new construction that would include students from the leased building that houses the South Campus Middle School (grades 7-8) in Oxford. This project allows for the elimination of leased spaces including 13 classrooms, 2 Guidance Offices, 1 Reflection Room, and 1 Office Space and will expand programming to include the sixth grade from the district's 7 sending elementary schools.

The project received State Board of Education Site Approval on June 11, 2025. The approved site has a central location in the community and will allow the new school to be constructed while the existing schools remain operational.

The new building has been designed in accordance with the Department of Education school construction standards. Appropriate state and local agencies have had input in the planning process. The building will have an Energy Use Intensity (EUI - energy use in BTU per square foot annually) of 35.

This Concept Approval is being requested pursuant to Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, §15905, subsection 1 and Rule Chapter 61, State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects.

Project Description: by Heather Manchester, Ed.D, Superintendent

The investment in a new Oxford Hills Middle School will provide excellent and equitable educational opportunities for 6-8th grade students in the Oxford Hills.

Currently, Oxford Hills Middle School (OHMS) is home to the 7th and 8th grade students in the district. Since 2013, OHMS has operated on two campuses, approximately 2.6 miles apart in the towns of South Paris and Oxford. Built in 1954, the OHMS population eventually outgrew the facility. As a result of this, many portable classrooms were in place outside of the school for over 20 years. Eventually, the condition of the portable classrooms deteriorated and the district made the decision to relocate approximately 140 students to the South Campus in Oxford.

Bringing all students together on one campus- and including 6th graders- will foster a stronger school culture and give students more time to build lasting relationships with teachers and peers before high school. In addition, the 6th grade students will have the opportunity for increased learning opportunities in several curriculum areas, including STEM and STEAM.

The new school will include purpose-built spaces for our special education students, including classrooms tailored for the needs of our Functional Life Skills, Applied Academics, and Day Treatment students. A dedicated STEM/STEAM room will support our district goal to increase hands-on experiential learning opportunities for our students, including the ability to experience aspects of Career and Technical Education in middle school.

Building the new facility on the site of the existing middle schools allows us to honor our past and while preparing a new generation of learners in the Oxford Hills. This new school will expand learning

opportunities, strengthen community connections, and help to instill pride in public education in the Oxford Hills.

Project Information:

Project: RSU 17/MSAD 17 New Grades 6-8 Middle School Construction Project Superintendent: Heather Manchester, Ed.D

Architect: Harriman – Lisa Sawin

Schools to be closed: Oxford Hills Middle School North Campus and Oxford Hills Middle School South Campus

Project Budget Information:

Total Project Cost: \$90,848,538.

Local Only (no State participation): \$2,717,812.

Approved for State/Local Debt Service Subsidy: \$88,130,726.

COMMISSIONER’S RECOMMENDATION: The Commissioner of the Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education grant Concept Approval to RSU 17/MSAD 17 for a new grades 6-8 Middle School construction project as presented.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On September 5, 2025 the School Construction Committee recommended that pursuant to Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, §15905, subsection 1 and Rule Chapter 61, State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects this exhibit be placed on the September 10, 2025 State Board meeting agenda and the State Board of Education grant Concept Approval to RSU 17/MSAD 17 for a new grades 6-8 Middle School construction project as presented.

MOTION by Fern Desjardins, seconded by Edmond Morin and voted unanimously by those present that pursuant to Maine Revised Statutes, Title 28, Section 15905, Subsection 1, and Rule Chapter 61, the State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects State Board of Education grant concept approval to RSU 17, MSAD 17, for a new grades 6-8 middle school construction project, as presented.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM

BACKGROUND: The educator preparation programs (EPPs) at the University of Maine at Augusta are reaching the end of their current approval cycle. The institution has indicated its desire to renew State Board approval for its existing programs and has prepared the requisite self-study materials in advance of an in-person review.

State Board of Education Rule Chapter 114: *Purpose, Standards and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education Personnel* lays out the process by which educator preparation programs are approved in Maine. The chapter defines a review team as, “A team of educators recommended to the State Board of Education by the Commissioner”. Subsection 3.4 (“Preparation of the Self-Assessment”) further explains that a “Review Team will consist of 4-5 team members, plus the MDOE consultant and a State Board of Education Observer”.

The following individuals have agreed to serve on the team for this EPP review:

- Audrey Bartholomew, PhD, Associate Professor of Education, University of New England
- Charlotte Jacobs, Program Director, Seedlings to Sunflowers
- Evan Mooney, PhD, Assistant Professor & Clinical Director of Teacher Education, Husson University
- Christina O’Neal, PhD, Educator Excellence Coordinator, Maine Department of Education (Chair)
- Erin Straine, MEd, Director of Academic and Student Services, University of Maine

Non-voting observers of the review will include the following:

- Honorable Victoria Kornfield, Maine State Board of Education
- Laura Cyr, PhD, Maine Department of Education
- Michael T. Perry, Maine Department of Education

Representatives of the institution have confirmed no conflicts of interest exist with this slate of review team members. Pursuant to Rule Chapter 114, Subsection 3.5(a), this review team is hereby “submitted to the State Board for approval prior to visitation”.

RECOMMENDATION: That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Rule Chapter 114, Subsection 3.5(a), approve Dr. Audrey Bartholomew, Charlotte Jacobs, Dr. Evan Mooney, Dr. Christina O’Neal, and Erin Straine to serve on the University of Maine at Augusta EPP Review Team, with Dr. O’Neal serving as chair and the Honorable Victoria Kornfield serving as State Board observer.

MOTION by Thomas Keller, seconded by Edmond Morin and voted unanimously by those present that pursuant to Rule Chapter 114, Subsection 3.5A, that the State Board of Education approve Dr. Audrey Bartholomew, Charlotte Jacobs, Dr. Evan Mooney, Dr. Christina O’Neill, and Erin Strain to serve on the University of Maine at Augusta EPP Review Team, with Dr. O’Neill serving as Chair, and the Honorable Victoria Kornfield serving as State Board observer.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION (NASBE) VOTING DELEGATE

MOTION by Paulette Bonneau, seconded by Victoria Cohen and voted unanimously by those present that Fern Desjardins is to be the representative for the State Board at the Delegate Assembly.

OFFICER’S REPORTS:

Chair, Paulette Bonneau

- Just a reminder that beginning in October, the Board be meeting on Thursday, which will be October 9th, and not on Wednesday.
- Just to note that I have received the forms to prepare for the supplemental budget, and

there's no increase for our budget. Going into the to the next year, I have to have those submitted by the 6th. So, I'll be working on that.

Vice Chair, Thomas Keller

- October Board meeting will be in Houlton

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

School Construction Committee (Fern Desjardins):

The School Construction Committee met on September 5.

The committee recommended the exhibit that will be taken up under New Business to grant Concept Approval to RSU 17/MSAD 17 for a new grades 6-8 Middle School construction project.

Fern reported on topics discussed at the August 19 and 22 Breakout Sessions of the Governor's Commission on School Construction, a Small Group discussion on August 26, and a September 5 meeting of the entire Commission. Topics included moving from an application to a selection process for school construction, drafting essential roles and responsibilities of any new approach to construction, and school consolidation.

Scott Brown, Director of School Construction Programs, MDOE, reported that the Commissioner received only one appeal on the point rating of a SAU on the 2024-2025 Rating Cycle Proposed Priority List. Commissioner Makin appointed three members of the Department staff to a Review Committee. They will review the written demonstration submitted by the SAU and presented at an informal hearing, Notification of the Review Committee's findings will be made in writing within 60 days of receipt of the request for administrative review. After the completion of the Administrative Review process, the Proposed Priority List approved by the State Board will become the Final Priority List.

Scott also reported on the near completion of the updates to the *Educational Specifications, Space Allocation Guidelines* and the *Public School Standards and Guidelines for New School Construction and Major Renovation Projects*. They are the planning documents for the design of new school facilities that meet the goals and objectives of education in Maine's schools. A presentation on the new documents is being planned for the second week of October. All board members will be invited to attend.

Certification and Higher Education (Thomas Keller):

The Certification and Higher Education (C&HE) Committee met on August 27, 2025.

- There will be an EPP review of UNE in early October, that Fern is the observer.
- We reviewed, the annual EPP reports from Farmington, Presque Isle, University of New England, and USM.
- U-Maine Farmington has a 17 to 1 student-teacher to supervising higher ed staff ratio, and UMPI has a 2 to 1 ratio.
- The plan right now is for the University of Maine Machias to come under U-Maine's approval as an EPP program. Machias was last reviewed in 2019, so we're continuing to move forward on that.
- Michael reported that in July, there were 2,659 applications processed, which is down slightly from June. This included 3 more retired teachers coming back.

- We moved our meeting from September 24th to September 17th.

Career and Technical Education (Edmond Morin):

The CTE Committee met via Zoom Thursday morning July 24th.

- Maine DOE CTE Director Dwight Littlefield reported that there's been no disruption of Perkins federal funding but the funding has been shifted from the U.S. Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Labor although the statutory oversight still sits with DOE.

Legislative Action (Paulette Bonneau):

No Report.

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

- The committee met September 9, 2025, for a brainstorming session on what we're going to do moving forward.
- Cedar and Abby attended the NASBE New Student Orientation which was helpful to Abby as a new member. The NASBE Student Voices Committee discussed national education issues and how other boards are integrating student voices into their work.

Student Membership (Ed Morin):

No Report.

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

The Charter Commission met September 8, 2025 in Cornville and visited all three schools.

In October there are renewal hearings for Acadia and the Maine Arts Academy.

Moxie continues to move forward and is being supported by the staff.

Professional Standards Board (Denham Ward):

I met with Andrew McCullough where we discussed the Professional Standards Board and the lack of quorum and appointments. Later I received an email from Andrew that said he will set a PSB meeting date shortly and send out invites as one set for October 7th. He doesn't have a summary statement, but we will be drafting a response to the state legislature, and we will share this with the State Board as well.

NASBE:

Executive Committee/Board of Directors (Fern Desjardins):

- Fern attended the NASBE Exchange on September 5. The session was led by Matt Donaldson from the Georgia State Board of Education. Reg Leichty of Foresight Law + Policy provided federal updates, which was followed by breakout sessions. The Northeast Region discussed the ending of the National Blue-Ribbon Schools program, Connecticut's educator certification reciprocity with 23 states, and New Jersey's support for the teaching of math. There was also a general discussion about the status of federal funding for multilingual learners.

After the Exchange, President DeMaria held an open forum to discuss proposed changes to NASBE's bylaws and the rationale for the changes. The proposed bylaw changes would eliminate the Public Education Positions Committee and the Governmental Affairs Committee and instead emphasize NASBE's role as an information resource. The adoption of NASBE-wide positions would require consultation with all member states and approval by two-thirds of the Board of Directors. The NASBE Delegate Assembly will vote on the proposed changes recommended by the Board of Directors when they meet on October 29 at the Annual Conference.

- The September issue of *The State Education Standard* was emailed to all members of NASBE on September 3. The theme is Civic-Ready Students, focusing on a need to improve and expand K-12 civics learning to inspire students to become better citizens.
- New Student Member Institute was held on September 9 from 6 to 9 pm. Fern thanked Abbey for attending.
- Any Board member interested in joining the HQIM Member Exchange is encouraged to register. The first meeting will be held on September 29 at 5:00 pm and there are plans for two additional meetings later in the year.

Government Affairs Committee (Thomas Keller):

No Report

Public Education Positions Committee (Paulette Bonneau):

No Report

UNFINISHED (OLD) BUSINESS:

Student Transfer Appeals Policy:

MOTION by Edmond Morin, seconded by Victoria Kornfield and voted unanimously by those present to table the Student Transfer Appeals Policy.

State Board Committee Descriptions:

MOTION by Fern Desjardins, seconded by Victoria Kornfield and voted unanimously by those present to table the State Board Committee Descriptions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Submit expense account vouchers to Erica Tompkins by the 15th day following the month of the expenses incurred. When you have your last meeting of the month, please submit your expense voucher so it can get processed.

- The next regular State Board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 9, 2025, at 1:00 PM at 7 Bird Street, Houlton, ME and virtually via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by
Erica Tompkins, Office Specialist II
State Board of Education