

Board Meeting - Minutes

Thursday, August 13, 2026

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 8:00am by Board Chair Cory Steiner. Board members present were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. Board members Katelyn Benning, Dustin Hager, and Arlene Wolf were absent.

Also present were ESPB Executive Director Becky Pitkin, Mari Riehl, and Amy Bigelow from ESPB, Mark Openshaw from Office of Attorney General, Amy Flicek and Amber Haskell from ND United, Mary Carry Moccasin, and other online guests.

Introductions were held.

Motion to Include Additional Agenda Items – Items to add to the agenda include request to waive a late fee, request to add a minor to a license, and approval of the May licensure report from last meeting. Patti Stedman made motion to accept the agenda as amended, seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion to Ratify May and July Licensure Lists – Evan Kritzberger made a motion to ratify the May and July licensure lists. Motion seconded by Angela Nagel. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

CASES

Marks, Amie – In February 2026, Ms. Marks accepted a settlement agreement to suspend her license until the outcome of her court case. The case has gone to trial and Ms. Marks was found not guilty. Now it comes back to the board for further consideration. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to reinstate Ms. Marks license. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Evan said the criminal justice system has done their job and he doesn't see anything that would necessitate further action. Angela agreed and sees no reason why Ms. Marks license shouldn't be reinstated. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Daley, Devontae – Mr. Daley's file is being reviewed due to a self-disclosed offense on his application for an interim substitute license. He was accused of a crime in Florida that would result in an automatic denial in North Dakota if he was convicted of pled guilty. The case was ultimately dismissed, so our law that states must be automatically denied wouldn't apply as that law states the person has to have been convicted. If the

board would choose to deny Mr. Daley's application for licensure, they can do that under Administrative Rule 67.1-02-02-06(1) and NDCC 15.1-13-25(1)(c).

Patti Stedman clarified that the information submitted from the courts shows the case wasn't prosecuted because the parent chose not to pursue it. Evan Kritzberger asked if it was statutorily required to be prosecuted in Florida, but that is not known.

Attorney Mark Openshaw reminded the Board if they choose to deny Mr. Daley's application for licensure, they need to have a good robust discussion about the reason for denial.

Evan Kritzberger made a motion to request more information from Mr. Daley and requests that he provide three letters of character reference the Board to review further. Motion seconded by Jennifer Jung. Evan said he believes in the past the Board has asked for letters of reference when they are unsure about their decision. Jennifer agrees with Evan and doesn't feel there is enough information to make an informed decision. Cory Steiner agrees and doesn't want to make a decision one way or another without further information. Evan did express other concerns about the information submitted. Perhaps Mark could do more research on the statute of Florida and find out if it's something that is required to be prosecuted?

Becky asked if the letters should come from anyone specific. Board members agreed it's up to Mr. Daley to decide who the letters should come from. Board members who voted in favor of the motion were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Lahr, Shea – Ms. Lahr's application is being reviewed due to self-disclosed background offenses on her application for licensure. Patti Stedman made a motion to grant the license with requirement Ms. Lahr self-report any future offenses. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Patti said the fact there were two offenses so close together is concerning, but Ms. Lahr has satisfied all requirements set forth by the court, so she believes the license should be issued. Angela agrees. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Keo, Canisha – Ms. Keo's file was reviewed after a new offense was found on a search of the NDCourts public search when Ms. Keo applied for renewal of her interim substitute license. She has entered into a pretrial diversion agreement and, if all requirements of that agreement are met, the case can eventually be dismissed.

Cory Steiner made a motion to deny Ms. Keo's application for licensure until the court says the pre-trial diversion requirements have been met under Administrative Rule 67.102-02-06(1) and NDCC 15.1-13-25. Evan Kritzberger seconded but asked if it's possible to offer a settlement agreement to pause the license. Assistant Attorney General Mark Openshaw said in the past, conditional dismissals have been issued with requirements, and after requirements met, the license can be reinstated. Cory originally made his motion because he believes people should be given a second chance, but

after further discussion, believes this action should be taken after all requirements met. No Board members voted yes to the motion. Board members who voted no were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. Motion failed.

Evan Kritzberger made a motion to issue a settlement agreement to Ms. Keo for a conditional approval after requirements of her pre-trial diversion agreement have been met. Mark asked if the Board wants this to come back after successful completion or automatically be reinstated. Board members expressed they would like the license to be automatically reinstated at that time. Motion seconded by Patti Stedman. Patti likes the idea of the settlement agreement being conditional and if the courts find all requirements have been met, it's the right move. Cory agrees that getting thru the pretrial diversion agreement is important. Jennifer Jung asked if the pre-trial diversion includes a stipulation for no subsequent offenses. Mark said yes, that's part of the pretrial diversion agreement. Board members who voted in favor of the motion were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Brown Otter, Danielle – Ms. Brown Otter's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was filed by a parent. After much discussion, Patti Stedman made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Patti feels that since the district did their investigation and allowed Ms. Brown Otter to come back with conditions, she doesn't feel the Board can say she cannot continue to have a license. Angela agreed that the district let her come back and they felt that was ok to do. Patti asked if there is an education piece that needs to happen? Cory Steiner wishes the district would have sent a Request for Inquiry when the incident originally happened and believes if there is more to it, it may come back to the board in a different way. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Gores, Brittany – Before discussion began, Cory Steiner recused himself from this case as it's from his district and he's been very involved in the case. He will turn off his camera and asked Vice Chair Evan Kritzberger to lead this portion of the meeting. Jennifer Jung also stated she may need to recuse herself as she knows individuals involved in the case, however she said she does believe she can remain impartial. She does not know Ms. Gores at all, but does know others referenced in the case. Patti Stedman asked if Jennifer has any access to the information at the district level regarding the case? She said no, she only knows the principal and human capital officer that signed as witnesses. She has had no conversations about the case. Patti Stedman made a motion to allow Jennifer Jung to participate in the case. Motion seconded by Jenny Bladow. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried and Jennifer is allowed to participate in this case.

A Request for Inquiry was received from Fargo Public Schools after Ms. Gores was discharged for cause. Patti asked what options the Board has – they have all the normal options including education, ethics course, reprimand, suspension, or revocation.

Jennifer shared that as a former school counselor she can see how situations can get messy, as counselors often become a mediator between parents, but it's important to focus on the student.

Patti Stedman made a motion to offer Ms. Gores a settlement agreement to suspend her license and require completion of the NASDTEC ethics course within 30 days at her own expense, with her essay to come back to the Board. Her essay should also address how it aligns with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards and require her to self-report any incidences before her license expires in 2028. Motion seconded by Jennifer Jung. Patti said the Board understands that people make mistakes and there is a path back to teaching. The ethics course is a way to do that. Jennifer added that being a school counselor is complicated and this is a good path. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Nelson, Malaun – The case for Mr. Nelson has moved to civil litigation. Mr. Nelson is currently incarcerated so is not a danger to children at this time. In the meantime, since there isn't a threat to public safety, litigation is on hold until the outcome of the case. Things are ready to move to litigation if needed.

The meeting recessed from 9:23am until 9:30am. Dena Venneman left the meeting at this time.

Election of Officers – Cory Steiner opened nominations for the Board Chair position. Cory stated he's more than willing to serve as Chair for another year if the Board wishes. Angela asked Evan if this is something he was interested in at this time. Evan stated he is happy to serve.

Evan Kritzberg nominated Cory Steiner for Board Chair. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, and Patti Stedman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Cory Steiner nominated Evan Kritzberger as Board Vice-Chair. Seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Pro-Ethica – At the May 2026 meeting Lisa Colon Durham from ETS presented ProEthica. Pro-Ethica is online professional development modules that support ethical decision making using relatable scenarios to examine professional risks. ETS has recently regenerated Pro-Ethica to enhance it with updated content, a module

addressing ethics and AI. Pro-Ethica takes approximately 10 hours to complete. ProEthica has multiple integration options including with teacher preparation programs, a possible requirement for alternative pathways to licensure, and/or used as district professional development.

The Board had talked about the option of using Pro-Ethica as a reeducation option. Becky received vouchers for Board members to view Pro-Ethica last night and will send them to interested Board members.

July License and Financial Report – Angela Nagel made a motion to approve the July meeting minutes, license, and financial reports. Motion seconded by Patti Stedman. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

The July 2026 financial report showed \$96,031.34 in total income received, \$101,320.72 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$5,289.38. The July 2026 license/financial items totaled 1050. This number includes background checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

Policy – Becky has asked the Board to review policy for additional hours for staff as we look toward some special projects going forward, like credentials, programming, litigation, etc. Patti Stedman asked if there needs to be a dollar cap per project. Becky said yes, she would like a cap of \$5000 per project with review by the Board annually.

Patti Stedman made a motion to approve the policy with amendments of \$5000 max stipulation per project and reviewed annually. Seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. Motion carried.

Request for Late Fee Waiver – The Board has received a request for waiver of a late fee. The individual applied for renewal of their principal credential and believed that was all that was needed but had not submitted their teaching license renewal application. Their license lapsed during this time. Cory Steiner made a motion to deny the request. Motion seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Board members who voted in agreement were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Addition of Minor to a License – Dickinson State University and Minot State University have an articulation agreement for DSU students to earn a minor in special education issued through Minot State. There was a leadership change at a university and steps were missed for an individual to get their minor transcribed. Minot State has verified that the person has completed the minor requirements. Becky is asking if the Board will consider giving approval to list special education on this person's license as a minor. Angela made a motion to approve the addition of the minor. Seconded by Jenny

Bladow. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Jennifer Jung, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

ND RISE Update – ND RISE has fully moved into the 2026-2027 mentoring year and is completing financial and program responsibilities from 2025-2026. Currently there are 495 participants enrolled in mentoring for 2026-2027. So far in July and August, 101 new mentors have completed training.

ND RISE continues to work with participating districts and Regional Education Associations (REAs) on Beginning Teacher Network grants. Closeout of 2025-2026 grants has been completed and new grants are being awarded for 2026-2027. They also continue to work with Williston Public Schools to integrate local mentoring supports within the ND RISE structure and with Fargo Public Schools to support continuation of the district's mentoring partnership.

Director's Report – ESPB continues to work with stakeholder groups to gather feedback on the transition of credentials from DPI to ESPB. Becky is presenting on the Model Code of Ethics for Educators with colleagues from Iowa and Kansas at the October Professional Practices Institute. Joint Boards will be held Tuesday, September 29th. All Board members are invited to attend, but there will be no ESPB business. The State Board of Higher Education is the host of this year's meeting.

Board Education: Strategic Vision – On July 30th, Amy Bigelow from ESPB attended the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Steering Committee meeting. Stakeholders from various educational groups reviewed the results of the ND Community Survey on Education and Education Stakeholder Survey Reports. Committee members reviewed the existing strategic vision language and additional draft vision statements based on stakeholder feedback. The committee will continue to meet in the future to evaluate recommendations for consideration.

Board Member Reports

NDACTE – NDACTE has not met, so nothing to report at this time.

Association of Non-Public Schools – Not present.

Association of School Administrators – Jennifer Jung attended the national elementary principal association meeting. There was much discussion on being school principal association as a whole instead of separate elementary and secondary associations. Here in North Dakota, the associations will stay separate at least for this year. Cory Steiner shared that conversations have started about federal tax credits and how that may impact school districts. Talking with DPI about accreditation. Federal funding conversations.

School Boards Association – Have not met yet, so nothing to report. Evan Kritzberger shared that he's been elected to Hillsboro School Board, so will serve there also, though he is not on ESPB as a school board representative.

NDUnited – Sarah Lerud has attended many PD opportunities as part of ND United over the summer, including a special education meeting where legislators were invited.

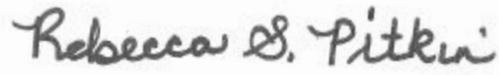
DPI – Not present

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Meeting was adjourned at 10:01am.


Chair


Secretary/Executive Director