

MINUTES – Board Meeting

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Teams

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 8:00am by Board Chair Cory Steiner. Board members present by video conference were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Cory Steiner, and Superintendent Kirsten Baesler. Amber Fridley joined at 9am.

Siri Coleman and Patti Stedman were absent.

Also present were ESPB Executive Director Rebecca Pitkin, Mari Riehl, and Amy Bigelow from ESPB, Mark Openshaw from Office of Attorney General, Amy Flicek from NDUnited, Michelle Griffin from UND, Robin Huebner from The Forum, and other online guests.

Introductions were held.

Motion to Include Additional Agenda Items – Additions to the agenda include an NDACTE proposal asking for extension of the Core pilot study and comments on administrative rules submitted from Alyssa Martin. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion to Ratify Settlement Agreements and March Licensure List – Jenny Bladow made a motion to ratify settlement agreements and March licensure list. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

CASES

Berg, Nicole – Ms. Berg's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received. At the March 2025 meeting the board passed a motion to contact Ms. Berg's school district and ask for any information pertaining to this case, including documentation of any investigations completed back to 2018. Information has been received.

Cory Steiner asked attorney Mark Openshaw if, since the investigation happened in 2018, the board needs to look at the rules as they were then, or as they are now. In approximately in 2020 the definition of grooming was unpacked and expanded. Mark said it's important to hold the individual to the rules that were in place at the time the investigation occurred.

Sarah Lerud made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Sarah feels the information requested has been received and the district didn't find anything to stand on legally. Ms. Berg had been placed on administrative leave at the time and the district reinstated her, allowing her to return to the classroom. Based on that information Sarah feels the case should be dismissed. Evan said he knows the board has struggled with cases like this. He agrees with Sarah, that Ms. Berg was put back in the classroom and no legal action taken. He also said the fact that none of the witnesses listed on the

Request for Inquiry actually signed or were willing to substantiate supports his decision. Cory agreed. He said the report shows the district addressed that Ms. Berg was dishonest in the beginning and it was documented. He said holding Ms. Berg to the rules at the time, he also feels dismissing is the right course of action. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

White, Cody – Mr. White's file was reviewed due to self-disclosed background offenses on his application for licensure. Assistant Attorney General Mark Openshaw reminded the board that if any offenses have occurred less than 5 years ago, the board needs to consider the criteria that would impact licensure and if the applicant has been sufficiently rehabilitated.

Evan Kritzberger made a motion to grant Mr. White's application for licensure. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Evan said since the offenses, with the exception of one, were more than 5 years ago he feels comfortable issuing Mr. White a license at this time as long as he continues to self-disclose any future offenses. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Becky asked Mark to provide an update on the Rhawnie Marcellais case. Ms. Marcellais is currently in federal custody in Florida. The federal marshals will be serving her, and when they serve her that is when the 7 day time period for her to respond starts. He has not heard yet if she's been served.

Legislative Session – HB 1220, the North Dakota accelerated degree, was defeated. The bill was being closely watched by teacher education programs. The most recent version of HB 1562 for mandated reporter training only applies to initial licensure. Adoption of the interstate compact for school psychologists has been defeated. Session is nearing the end. Becky believes there may be a legislative management study coming forward related to the Core Academic Skills tests. Yesterday Amy and Mari met with Nexus Innovations, the programmers for NDTech, to start the process of updating our computer system to accommodate for legislative changes.

Director's Report – As of now Becky is not planning for a May meeting. There is information in the board's meeting materials about June meeting and retreat, which will be held on June 12th. Some board member terms are coming to a close. Becky thanked Patti Stedman for her years on the board. Patti has agreed to serve on the board until her replacement is found. Angela Nagel will serve another term. Amber Fridley's term will be ending in June.

Mari and Becky will be keynote speakers at NDACTE conference on April 11, 2025. Feedback from ESPB's customer service survey has been provided to the board. Becky asked the board to start considering some ideas for the June retreat.

One of the legislative changes this year is the lifetime license. The new law will go into effect August 1, 2025. After that date a lifetime license can be issued after 25 years of licensure instead of 30. ESPB has visited with individuals whose license will expire this summer, and they would qualify for the 25-year license but not the 30-year. If individuals aren't teaching over the summer, they can let their license lapse, then renew after August 1 with the late fee. If they do this, they wouldn't have to move to another 5-year license that carries the 6 semester hour re-education requirement for just a few months.

There are a few who are scheduled to teach summer school so they can't let their license lapse. Attorney Mark Openshaw has said if the board decides, the 40-day could be used under section 67.1-02-04-04(1)(b), pending the receipt of official transcripts or other original, signed, or certified documents. Board members were asked their thoughts on using the 40-day provisional as a "bridge" to get these individuals to August 1. Would the board like to utilize the 40-day provisional option, or do we not muddy the waters and have them go through normal process?

Cory Steiner believes it would be wise to include information in the DPI update that the life license change doesn't go into effect until August 1. Becky agreed and was waiting for attorney opinion. Superintendent Baesler said the notification can go into three different publications – weekly messenger, monthly newsletter that targets just teachers, and publication for apprentices. Superintendent. Baesler will communicate with Jen O'Dell and the deadline for the weekly publication is Tuesday or Wednesday.

Cory feels if the board can find a way to help individuals who are going to be teaching summer school, that is an easy public relations piece. Sheila Schlafmann agrees it would be a nice token of appreciation for their years of service. This will be added to the action items so a vote can be taken.

ND RISE – The current recommendation for NDRISE funding is \$3.7 million for the 2025-2024 biennium. This would allow NDRISE to continue mentoring first and second year teachers but would not allow them to expand into a 3rd year program. If for some reason the bill is amended to include funding for 3rd year teachers, there is a plan in place to be able to do that. Erin Jacobson has included a link in her board report to the 5 senators on the Education and Environment Appropriations Committee and would appreciate if any board members are willing to reach out to them.

Coaches Academy days 5 and 6 were held on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, concluding with the Learning Symposium on Wednesday afternoon.

Marijke Leibel shared that ND RISE has been selected to present at the Corwin Visible Learning Conference in Las Vegas in July. She's excited to share about what has been happening in North Dakota and how education has been made a priority our state.

March Meeting Minutes, Special Meeting Minutes, License and Financial Reports -

Dustin Hager made a motion to approve the March meeting minutes, special meeting minutes, license and financial reports. Motion seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

The March 2025 financial report showed \$65,285.87 in total income received, \$85,244.61 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$19,958.74. The March 2025 license/financial items totaled 756. This number includes background checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

NDACTE Request – Pilot Study – A request has been submitted from NDACTE to request an extension the pilot study that allows teacher education program to document basic skills competency using a menu of options. They are asking for another school year, 2025-2026, to have a better analysis of teacher education candidate performance and licensure outcomes. Jenny Bladow helped explain the request.

Evan Kritzberger made a motion to grant an extension of the NDACTE study for one year. Motion seconded by Angela Nagel. Evan agreed with the information Jenny provided. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Disability Waiver Requests –

- **Beck, Izabelle –** Ms. Beck has submitted a request for waiver of the Core reading and writing tests and Praxis II Elementary Education and PLT exams. She's passed the Core math and has made three attempts each at reading and writing. Ms. Beck has attempted elementary education Praxis II test 5 times, but only attempted PLT once. Jenny Bladow made a motion to grant Ms. Beck's request for a disability waiver. Seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Jenny said overall, Ms. Beck has attempted all exams a number of times. Based on letters of recommendation it sounds that she's an effective educator even without passing the tests. Sheila agreed. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.
- **Spickenreuther, Kristin –** All required documents have been submitted. Ms. Spickenreuther was granted a university waiver for the Core, after many attempts at the tests. She is requesting waiver of Praxis II Elementary Education and PLT exams, after two attempts at each test. Motion by Sarah Lerud to grant Ms. Spickenreuther's request for a disability waiver. Motion seconded by Jenny Bladow. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Request for Extension – Nejerose Palo-ay – This individual came to ND with a license from another state and had a plan to complete ND testing because they did not have testing in that state. Her first license was issued in September 2022 and expired in February 2025. We do allow renewal for one additional year if an individual has not completed requirements at request of their administrator and with documentation of enrollment in any required testing. That renewal was issued and Ms. Palo-ay's current license will expire in February 2026. She has stated that her school district has put a hold on her contract for next year due to the current expiration date of her license.

Ms. Palo-ay is asking that her license be extended until the end of the 2025-2026 school year so she can remain on her contract for the entirety of next year. Jenny Bladow asked if the applicant has made any attempts at the required tests. Mari did not find any attempts.

Cory Steiner said he has multiple teachers whose licenses expire during the school year and they still get a contract. He understands why a district may be leery of doing that, but he doesn't believe that's the board's responsibility.

Cory Steiner made a motion to deny the request from Ms. Palo-ay. Motion seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Cory said there is time for this individual to take their tests and renew their license. Evan agreed, and said it needs to be treated the same as others. Board members who voted in favor of the motion were Jenny Bladow, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

40-day Provisional as a "bridge" for Lifetime Licenses – Sarah Lerud made a motion to approve, as discussed as part of the director's report. Seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Administrative Rules – Becky received a comment from Alyssa Martin from Center for Distance Education on the rules drafted for the military knowledge license. There is a typo where a word should be "or" instead of "and". Angela Nagel made a motion to approve the comment from Alyssa Martin. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Board Member Reports

NDACTE – There's a legislative mixer tonight from 5-6pm. NDACTE conference tomorrow.

Association of Non-Public Schools – Not present.

Association of School Administrators – Continuing to watch session. Both cell phone bills have passed. School policies will need to be updated after bills are signed. Starting negotiations processes. Cory Steiner hopes all work together for the good of schools, teachers, learners, and the community.

School Boards Association – Not present.

NDUnited – April board meeting tomorrow and delegate assembly on Saturday.

DPI – A lot going on at the federal and state level. State level – DPI budget bill.

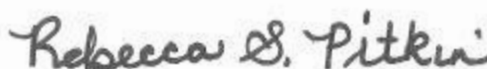
Unfortunately, the teacher recruitment and retention bill did not pass this session that would have provided opportunities for childcare regulation relief and TFFR retirement education on-site for beginning teachers. HB 1369 policy and funding formula received a 'do pass' recommendation. Session is winding down. Two education savings account bills still have not been voted on. One received a do pass recommendation and the other received a do not pass recommendation.

Executive Order effecting US Department of Education directs Secretary of Education to develop a plan to present to Congress. This has not halted funding to state or local districts. Superintendent Baesler has sent many emails to administrators this week at direction of US Dept. of Education to remind them of compliance with FERPA and Title VI.

DPI is working with Angela Duckworth, author of the book Grit. A survey has been developed to collect cell phone policies from districts and examining how those policies have impacted attendance and achievement. Superintendent Baesler encouraged all to sign up for the Weekly Messenger and Capitol Tablet if they haven't already. She also provided clarification on school lunches. DPI has worked with the state tax commissioner and determined that only 3-5% of students that qualify for free/reduced are not receiving them. Students are not going without lunches. Legislature is looking at a way to help districts determine ways to recoup the costs of unpaid school lunches.

Cory thanked all board members for their work. Meeting was adjourned at 9:32am.


Chair


Secretary/Executive Director