

**MINUTES – Board Meeting**  
**Thursday, December 12, 2024**  
Teams

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 8:02am by Board Chair Cory Steiner. Board members present by video conference were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. Siri Coleman and Superintendent Kirsten Baesler were absent.

Also present were ESPB Executive Director Rebecca Pitkin, Mari Riehl, and Amy Bigelow from ESPB, Joe Kolosky from DPI, Ellie Shockley from NDUS, Allyson Hicks and Mark Openshaw from Office of Attorney General, Amy Flicek and Amber Haskell from NDUnited, and other online guests.

Introductions were held.

**Motion to Include Additional Agenda Items** – Additions to the agenda include cases for Julie Kinneberg, Joseph Grover, 2<sup>nd</sup> case for Michelle Swanson, a 2<sup>nd</sup> administrative subcommittee case for Eric Nygaard, December 3 special meeting minutes, and an applicant request for an extension. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Dustin Hager. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Motion to Ratify November Licensure List** – Amber Fridley made a motion to ratify the November licensure list. Motion seconded by Patti Stedman. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**CASES**

**Grover, Joseph** – Mr. Grover's file was reviewed at the November meeting due to a past background offense. The board voted to request the entire court docket for Mr. Grover's case including the complaint and any other charging documents or affidavits of probable cause or arrest. Information has been received. Mr. Grover pled guilty to Minnesota Statute 609.345 1 in 1997. The board needs to determine if this is equivalent to an offense that would fall under NDCC 15.1-13-26 that requires denial of a license. Attorney Mark Openshaw said NDCC 12.1-20-05 is the law in North Dakota that most closely aligns with the charge from Minnesota.

Mr. Grover did not serve any jail time for the offense. Sarah Lerud made a motion to grant the license to Mr. Grover. The offense happened when he was in high school. It sounds like he's been working with kids with no issues. Patti Stedman agreed but expressed concern that Mr. Grover did not originally disclose the offense on his application for an interim substitute license.

Attorney Mark Openshaw reminded the board that NDCC 15.1-13-26 states if the board finds these offenses are equivalent ordinances, the board is required to deny the license. He reminded the board their discussion should relate to determining if the

offense is similar to NDCC 12.1-20-05. No board members voted in favor of granting the license. Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner voted no. Motion failed.

Evan Kritzberger made a motion to deny Mr. Grover's application for an interim substitute license based on his past background offense being equivalent to NDCC 12.1-20-05. Motion seconded by Dustin Hager. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried. Patti Stedman was absent for the vote.

**Holien Swanson, Michelle (Case 1)** – Ms. Holien Swanson's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Jenny Bladow. Evan said as an educator, they've all had disagreements with parents about grades, and he doesn't feel this is a violation of Code of Ethics. Jenny stated the same. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Holien Swanson, Michelle (Case 2)** – Ms. Holien Swanson's file was reviewed after a second Request for Inquiry was received. Dustin Hager made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Dustin feels this RFI is similar to first complaint and should be dealt with at the local level. Evan agreed and said it's not a violation of Code of Ethics. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Kinneberg, Julie** – At the November meeting the board voted to request three letters of support. These have been received and provided to the board. Evan Kritzberger asked if the letter of support format is something from ESPB, as they are all the same. Ms. Kinneberg has recently enrolled in the Minot State Para to Teacher program. These are the letters she provided to Minot State as part of her admission application and she chose to submit those same recommendation letters to ESPB because they were recent. Patti Stedman made motion to grant Ms. Kinneberg's application for an interim substitute license. Seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Patti appreciated letters of support and believes it's good practice for the board to obtain. . Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Koffler, Jessica** – Before discussion began, Amber Fridley disclosed that this is a situation from her school and she's requesting to be recused. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to recuse Amber Fridley from this case. Motion seconded by Jenny Bladow.

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

Cory Steiner pointed out Institutional Child Protection Services (ICPS) did an investigation, and the district was “indicated” in the case. Joe Kolosky from DPI explained this means it was found the district didn’t follow their policy/procedure or didn’t have policy/procedure in place. Patti Stedman asked about the letter from the Title IX coordinator, which states the district didn’t believe misconduct had happened.

Evan Kritzberger asked if it’s the duty of the board to decide if the teacher did what needed to be done in relation to the complaint. Patti Stedman referenced Ms. Koffler’s letter that states she doesn’t believe she was there when the incidents occurred. This is not clear in the materials received.

Joe Kolosky said the district has developed a corrective action plan to train all staff and that action plan was approved by the ICPS. Cory asked if the group is interpreting the ICPS investigation correctly and if the report states the action did happen. Sheila Schlafmann said yes, she believes Cory is interpreting the report correctly.

Students had reported that action of another student was “weird” and “mean”. There was no clarification of what those things meant.

Cory asked for a motion. Dustin Hager made a motion to dismiss the case pending successful completion of a mandatory reporter course. Attorney Allyson Hicks said this would be a conditional dismissal, is still issued as a settlement agreement, and is not reported to the Clearinghouse. The case would be considered dismissed upon successful completion of course. Motion seconded by Patti Stedman. Patti feels many of the things she would like to see done have already been put in place by the district. Jenny Bladow asked if this is the same mandatory reporter course that all teachers are already required to complete. Allyson said yes, there’s only one mandated reporter training in ND completed by all professions and it would be a refresher. Patti suggested that perhaps she submit an essay after course completion. Board members also asked if it would be wise to have her complete an ethics course. Dustin said he would be open to amending his motion to require completion of an ethics course.

Becky said there is a new course through the ND Educational Hub that went live this week that combines educator ethics and mandatory reporter training. Mari and Becky have both reviewed the course this week and it’s highly reflective.

Dustin Hager amended his motion for conditional dismissal and to require completion of Professional Ethics in Education: Guiding Principles for Educators from the ND Educational Hub that covers mandatory reporter training and educator ethics. Patti Stedman continued to second the motion. Board members who voted yes were Jenny

Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Williams, Alana** – Ms. Williams's file was reviewed due to a self-disclosed offense on her application for licensure and also a disclosure that her license had previously been suspended in Georgia and later reinstated. Patti Stedman made a motion to grant a license to Ms. Williams. Motion seconded by Angela Nagel. Patti feels Ms. Williams provided a clear letter of explanation about what had happened. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Amber Fridley, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

The regular meeting was recessed at 8:51am. Amber Fridley left the meeting at this time.

**Administrative Subcommittee** – Called to order at 8:51am by Administrative Subcommittee Chair Cory Steiner. Reviewed by Administrative Subcommittee of the Education Standards and Practices Board. Administrative Subcommittee members present were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner.

**Hirning, Sherlock** – At the November meeting the board asked for all information from the August case to be provided. In August 2024 the administrative subcommittee passed a motion to issue Mr. Hirning a settlement agreement to complete mandatory reporter training and to issue a letter of reprimand. Mr. Hirning has submitted a counteroffer to have the case dismissed now that he's completed mandatory reporter training. His attorney has also asked if Mr. Hirning would be allowed to address the board. Attorney Allyson Hicks let his attorney know that would be at the discretion of the board chair.

All information has been provided to the board for the original case. The board now needs to consider Mr. Hirning's counteroffer. He's asking for the case to now be dismissed so it doesn't go in the Clearinghouse. Sarah Lerud asked if it's common to receive counteroffers. Allyson said if the educator retains an attorney and there is no criminal case, it is common. Often teachers don't retain legal counsel. Allyson said in other professions (medical, medical imaging, nursing), those individuals do frequently retain attorneys and counteroffers are received.

The subcommittee could choose to approve the counteroffer, deny, or accept a board counteroffer. If Mr. Hirning wouldn't accept the board's counteroffer the case could go to litigation. Allyson stated it appears that Mr. Hirning's concern is to avoid disciplinary action in the clearinghouse that would be on his permanent record.

Dustin Hager made a motion to issue a counteroffer to have Mr. Hirning complete

Professional Ethics in Education: Guiding Principles for Educators from the ND Educational Hub and to remove the letter of reprimand. Patti Stedman asked if the hub course had been around previously when the original motion was passed, would the subcommittee have felt completion of that course was enough to not issue a letter of reprimand? Dustin stated he is not in favor of a conditional dismissal, but is in favor of Mr. Hirning completing the new course and forgoing the letter of reprimand. He would still like it to be reflected in the Clearinghouse that disciplinary action was taken. Sarah pointed out Mr. Hirning said in his letter he claimed he did not know who originally filed the 960 report, but the original Request for Inquiry alleges that he named individuals who had filed the report, breaching confidentiality. Motion seconded by Patti Stedman.

Cory Steiner said he thought the subcommittee saw the letter of reprimand being necessary the first time the case was reviewed, and he doesn't feel that has changed. Dustin stated the fact that Mr. Hirning has retained counsel would draw this out further if a counteroffer is not issued. Administrative subcommittee members who voted yes were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, and Patti Stedman. Cory Steiner voted no. Motion carried.

**Nygaard, Eric (Case 1)**– Mr. Nygaard's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received. Dustin Hager made a motion to dismiss. Seconded by Sarah Lerud. Dustin said this is a complaint that should be handled at the local level. Cory Steiner agreed and said this should go through chain of command and be handled by the district. Administrative subcommittee members who voted yes were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

**Nygaard, Eric (Case 2)** – Mr. Nygaard's file was reviewed after a second Request for Inquiry was received. Patti Stedman made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Patti and Sheila agreed this is a local issue. Administrative subcommittee members who voted yes were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

Administrative subcommittee was adjourned at 9:18am and the regular meeting resumed at 9:18am.

**Interstate Teaching Compact** – At the September meeting the board had directed Allyson to send a response to proposed interstate compact. The military commission forwarded Allyson's letter to their legal counsel and they've sent a letter in return.

Compacts are not joint powers agreements. The passage of the compact wouldn't negate the concerns of the board. This bill has been prefiled and is being carried by Senator Axtman. Allyson's recommendation to the board is to continue discussions with Senator Axtman since that will be more productive than sending letters back and forth with legal counsel. She also wants the board to know there is a lawsuit in Virginia with

their dental board that has been litigating concerning many of the same issues presented in the Interstate Teaching Compact. That case was recently dismissed. Allyson has been keeping Lieutenant Colonel Sheldon aware of that case. Other compacts have been presented for the upcoming session and those boards have the same concerns as our board. Cory Steiner suggested that at some point it would be a good idea for he and Becky to meet with Senator Axtman.

**Governor Resignations** – In state law, each time there is a gubernatorial election, there is a list of boards that need to resign and be reappointed. Historically if it's the same governor, not a lot needs to happen. With a new incoming governor, the board submits their resignation and indicates if they would like to continue to serve. This allows the governor-elect to then decide if individuals will be reappointed or if new board members will be selected. Board members need to let Becky know their stance, so the letter can be sent next week. It's required that one less than a majority be retained to maintain continuity.

**ND RISE** – Marijke Leibel from ND RISE reviewed the program. They've been working for a handful of years with University of Mary NAELP Scholars. Survey sent out last summer about things the group would like to focus on this year. Results were leadership and trauma. This semester they've been focusing on leadership and doing a book study of Dr. Rod Jonas's book, *Build a Dynamic Organizational Culture – a 7-Step Team Approach*. They are focusing on leadership styles, real-life scenarios, and struggles in their roles. Next semester the group will be looking at trauma with both students and teachers.

ND RISE has been working with The Good Kids on updating materials to share with stakeholders. A goal for this year has been communicating better with stakeholders. Marijke shared a brochure that's been developed to give an overview of ND RISE. Cory Steiner thanked Marijke for taking the time to join today.

**Director's Report/Stakeholder Collaboration/Policy Development** – Becky reviewed the board's non-negotiables.

Last session there was a bill that proposed a statewide occupational board. Last December the office completed a report for the Department of Labor to gather more information about how the board and office works. At this time there is not a bill proposed for the 2025 session that would develop a statewide occupational board for all professions. In materials there is documentation of Becky's stakeholder collaboration, which is required each year for her evaluation. Outcomes of reading survey have been provided to the board. PAAC is meeting at 12:00 today.

Becky thanked Mari for working to review a new ethics course offered through the ND Educational Hub. Mari said board members can get access to the course for an overview of the modules. Jenny Bladow asked if pre-service teachers could have access to that course. Mari believes they can, and will reach out to her contact at the

Educational Hub to find out for sure.

One of the education preparation programs (EPPs) in North Dakota is involved in a research study based on reading. Students at that EPP will complete the reading test, then provide answers to research study questions. ETS will aggregate the data.

A bill has been drafted to change the 30-year life license to a 20-year life license. Last session, the board's biggest concern was the self-reporting of background offenses if a person no longer needed to renew after being licensed for 20 years. The drafted bill is for a 20-year life license, requires individuals to self-report if they've violated a criminal statute since the life license was issued and any other information that may cause their license to be revoked or suspended. The bill stipulates that the applicant cannot incur cost for this process. The drafters of the bill have tried to address the board's primary concern of background offenses. Becky asked how the board feels about continuing education credits, as the board has previously issued a statement supporting the need for continuing education for all teachers. Cory Steiner said he still sees a need to keep the profession elevated and for individuals to keep learning. Patti Stedman stated teaching shouldn't be different from other professions that still require continuing education for individuals to work in their profession. Evan Kritzberger agreed and said education is always changing, and good teachers know this and understand the need to learn. Becky also pointed out it was not a recommendation of the Recruitment and Retention Task Force to eliminate re-education credits.

**License Report** – Mari shared the alternative licensure pathways report and data for the past 6 years.

- American Board – 176 individuals licensed through American Board.
- Permits – 91 individuals have obtained permits and filled 157 positions.
- Out-of-Field Endorsements – A total of 469 out-of-field endorsements have been issued since March 2019.
- Alternate Access Licenses – This is the most widely utilized alternative route to licensure. There have been 1123 positions filled with 757 people granted an alternate access license in the past 6 years.

**November Meeting Minutes, November and December Special Meeting Minutes, License and Financial Reports** – Patti Stedman made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes, November and December special meeting minutes, November license and financial reports. Seconded by Angela Nagel. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

The November 2024 financial report showed \$57,202.50 in total income received, \$72,709.81 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$15,507.31. The November 2024 licensure report documented 688 items issued. This number includes background

checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

### **Applicant Requests –**

- **Jangula, Brandi** – Ms. Jangula has submitted a request for additional time to complete her re-education credits. Patti Stedman made a motion to grant the request for an extension until March 7, 2025. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

### **Disability Waiver Request –**

- **Brown Otter, Danielle** – Waiver request is for Elementary Education and PLT tests. Ms. Brown Otter is scheduled to take her elementary test again for the third time on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Jenny Bladow said she noticed there wasn't an actual letter from Ms. Brown Otter's healthcare provider, but a printout of health information from her online account showing diagnosis. Cory Steiner said he noticed this also. Mari had asked Ms. Brown Otter if she had additional information she would like to provide and she did not at that time. She's been granted a waiver of Core tests by her university using alternative methods to document basic skills competency. Dustin Hager said the healthcare information submitted is called a Continuity of Care document and it's not a letter from her medical provider but shows all the things Ms. Brown Otter has ever been diagnosed with. Evan Kritzberger made a motion to request a letter from Ms. Brown Otter's primary care physician and revisit next month after that's been received. He would like extra layer of verification. Motion seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. She said she would like the requested information for consistency. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.
- **Meyer, Abigail** – Sarah Lerud disclosed that Ms. Meyer is a former student of hers. She does feel she can be impartial. Motion by Patti Stedman to allow Sarah to participate in the case. Motion seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried. Ms. Meyer was granted a waiver by her university for the Core tests and has passed her PLT. She's requested a waiver for the Elementary Education Praxis II. Jenny Bladow made a motion to approve Ms. Meyer's request for waiver of her Praxis II test. Motion seconded by Angela Nagel. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.
- **Hanson, Morgan** – Waiver request is for Core writing and math, Elementary Education, and PLT tests. Angela Nagel made a motion to approve Ms. Hanson's request for waiver of her tests. Seconded by Patti Stedman. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud,



Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried.

### **Board Member Reports**

**NDACTE** – NDACTE asked the board to do a 2-year pilot study for basic skills menu where they could also earn a B or higher in specific content courses. They are working to fill in data being collected and comparing to student teachers admitted to teacher ed under previous requirements of Praxis or ACT. Jenny Bladow anticipates they will report back to the board with their findings. Still looking at student teacher placements for individuals who should have two student teacher placements.

**Association of Non-Public Schools** – Not present.

**Association of School Administrators** – Discussion on school choice for the upcoming session. Cory Steiner believes this will be a hot topic going forward. Discussions on school lunch and the possibility of a bill for reduced cost or free lunches. Conversations about juvenile justice reform system and how that can be staffed to help them do their work. Also talk of bills related to cell phones in schools.

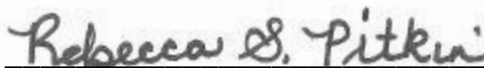
**School Boards Association** – Nothing new to report at this time. ND SBA is working on legislative issues going forward and how they can support public education.

**NDUnited** – Getting ready for session and teacher negotiations.

**DPI** – Not present.

Meeting adjourned at 10:29am.

Chair



Secretary/Executive Director