



Nonpublic School Advisory Council Meeting

New Hampshire Department of Education

25 Hall Street | Concord, NH 03301

Granite State College Building | Room 302

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order - 4:00 PM.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

Members Physically Present

David Thibault
Lisa Dias
Andrea Elliot
Matthew Hicks
Susan Harrington
Dan Love
Tobias Iselin
Linda Johnson
Lissa Sirois

Members Virtually Present

Christy Whipple

Members Not Present

Jill Grant
Chuck George
Ryan DeJoy

Staff and Guests

Tim Carney, NHED Administrator of Educational Pathways
Lynette Ronchaquira, Program Specialist II
Brian Voelk, NHED Education Freedom Account Administrator

II. Review and approval of the November 28, 2023 draft meeting minutes.

Members reviewed the draft meeting minutes from November 28, 2023. One typo was identified for correction. A motion was made by Dan Love and seconded by Lisa Dias to accept the minutes as amended. Unanimous roll call vote of all in favor.

III. Public comment period.

There were no public comments.

IV. Introduction of Brian Voelk, NHED Education Freedom Account (EFA) Administrator (tentative).

Brian Voelk, Education Freedom Accounts (EFA) Administrator for the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHED), gave a brief presentation to introduce himself and explain his position's responsibilities and how he can serve as a resource regarding EFAs on the State side. Responsibilities listed were data analytics, payment calculations, and overseeing the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF), which includes compliance monitoring and creating/monitoring RFP, attending Legislative Oversight Committee Meetings, and fiscal notes.

- Andrea Elliot commented she finds it difficult to know which families are and aren't approved for EFAs. Concern was expressed that there is no real way of gathering data on who is receiving financial aid from Class Wallet, etc.
- Christy Whipple agreed and commented that the tuition assistance awards in her school could shift if CSF, EFA, and Class Wallet amounts were known ahead of time.
- Due to privacy restrictions, Brian responded that it is the family's responsibility to communicate with the non-public school. RSA 194-F:2 allows the family to use funds at their discretion towards non-public schools or a different qualified expenditure.
- Andrea commented that her school has added that families must accept and exhaust other financial aid available before her school offers additional tuition assistance.
- David Thibault acknowledges this discussion has come up before.

V. Discussion of Zoom meeting access for the general public.

Zoom Meeting access discussion regarding bots bombing with inappropriate content at the Home Education Advisory Council Meeting.

- Tim updated that the NHED IT is looking into this issue.

- Once a Zoom link is safely established, Tim suggests sending it to all 135 non-public school leaders to create an opportunity to participate. This issue will be further discussed at the next meeting, including how the general public can participate. The council votes on the general public participation.

VI. Discussion of the process for reviewing and recommending non-public school accrediting agencies. Two renewal applications to be received soon.

The process for reviewing and recommending non-public school accrediting agencies was discussed.

- Tim gave a brief overview regarding agencies who are reapplying.
- Tobias Iselin suggested having agencies come in a give a presentation so questions can be easily answered.
- Andrea said the process should be more condensed for agencies for renewing agencies than the new agencies applying. Tim Carney clarified it is the same process because NEASC's approval has expired.
- The council would like to review the NEASC application which Tim will send and then invite NEASC for a presentation at next meeting.
- Linda Johnson suggested asking NEASC to wait outside the meeting for the council to briefly discuss before inviting the representatives in. David Thibault agreed.
- Dan Love asked what an application looks like in terms of length and detail. Tim clarified some applications can be 200 or more pages, but NEASC may have approximately 30-40 pages. Tim reviews for completion before sending it to the council for content review.

VII. Discussion of new Ed 400 rules and recommendations for additional rule changes.

The recently adopted updated Ed 400 rules were discussed.

- January 11, 2024, the state board adopted new rules. Tim highlighted the recent changes, including no longer having a NHED member as part of NSAC. Tim now attends meetings only as support. Also, there is only one representative from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the A3N spring report has been eliminated, and the AA and AP renewal cycles are both now 5 years.
- Additional rule changes are pending, and Tim asked the NSAC to notify him with any issues anyone has regarding existing rules so they can be reviewed with Director Davis.
- Lissa Sirois from the DHHS asked the Council to advise what participation they would like to see from the agency.

- Tobias asked why NHED members were removed, and Tim explained that the NSAC should be the voice of the nonpublic schools and not NHED staff.
- Linda Johnson added that DHHS supports non-public school students' health and safety. Lissa Sirois suggested continuing to listen this year at meetings and then offer connections to representatives who can assist with concerns.
- David Thibault asked who needs to approve of adding or taking away grades. Tim responded that the State Board of Education (SBOE) has that authority and clarified that NHED has no authority over 18 months to 2 years old, including preschool.
- Christy clarified preschool falls under childcare licensing.
- Dan asked for clarification on adopted and readopted language. Tim responded and advised that some of the readopted with amendment language will not be in the state's final version on the website.
- Dan also inquired if the 30-hour instructional time regarding weather was new, and Tim confirmed it was in the original rules.

VIII. NHED Office of Nonpublic Schools Report. (Tim Carney)

The NHED office of Nonpublic Schools report was presented by Tim Carney.

- Ed400 rule revisions (discussed moments ago)
- Potential new schools are still in the waiting stages, working through the new process with ED. 320 rules regarding facility approval.
- NHED worked with one organization that added a Kindergarten, and the SBOE approved that at the January meeting. The SBOE approval is a requirement.
- 27 non-public schools are going through the renewal process before June 30, 2024. Next year, renewals will need to meet new facility requirements.
- Tim notified schools on December 1, 2023, and has heard from four.
- Reminders will be sent monthly. If schools miss the deadline this year, they will be unapproved and will need to resubmit as a new school. Tim is constantly reaching out and trying to get in touch, but there have been a few nonresponsive ones. Director Davis and Commissioner Edelblut want to make sure schools understand that. Tim said he does all he can to ensure schools understand the deadline and renewal process. Lisa asked if the notification was sent digitally or by paper. Tim replied that the notification was sent via email and asked for confirmation that it was received.
- Non-public school webpage revisions have begun. Tim will inform the schools before a full update based on the new rules is done. He will request that NSAC provide feedback and approve once complete.

- Non-public school awareness technical assistance efforts continue. Tim will also bring topics to the NSAC, such as public-school transportation. David Thibault agrees it would be great to discuss.
- Tim said the goal is to ensure non-public schools are aware of all available resources.
- Linda commented that the website is straightforward to maneuver and found documents helpful—particularly the code of conduct document.

IX. Open Council discussion.

a) Discussion of potential funding sources for lead in water testing. (Christy Whipple)

Christy Whipple did three rounds of water testing through a local company. She reported the high expense and stated that no funds are available for non-public schools. Christy said she reached out to the commissioner regarding this issue. Tobias Iselin said some funds are available only after you exhaust all other options (i.e., loans, etc.). The NSAC gave feedback on the high cost of water testing.

Lissa Sirois asked if a public health lab could do it. Lisa Dias said she would look into it because her facility does not have to pay the cost.

b) Newsletter

Matthew Hicks gave an update on the start of the newsletter to spark interest from other schools. He requests that everyone send him items they feel should be included. Hyperlinks or written information is welcome! The Zoom link will be removed from the newsletter. David Thibault asked for highlights of the first draft.

- Did you know this organization existed?
- Several items from recent meetings trying to bring people up to speed.
- Contact information of current board.
- Tim's information.
- Asking what people want to know. Matthew included his email to gather responses.
- Meeting dates
- Linda Johnson suggested resources for non-public schools. Maybe including one piece in each newsletter.
- David expressed he wants schools to know they have a voice for questions and concerns.

c) Potential agenda items for March meeting.

Potential items for the next NSAC meeting were discussed.

- Amy Clark and Marlon Austin from the Bureau of School Facilities would like to come to next meeting to present ED. 320 rules.
- Christy Whipple asked for Tim Carney to share Brian Voelk's email to further clarify funds given to families.
- Matthew Hicks suggested Kate Baker from CSF could be invited to the next meeting to share some helpful information.
- Tim will reach out to Kate and request she come in for the scheduled March meeting.
- Tim advised that Amy and Marlon's presentation could be postponed if necessary. They will be scheduled to present last.

X. Public comment period.

There were no public comments.

XI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made at 5:01 pm by Andrea Elliot and seconded by Lissa Sirois.
Unanimous rollcall vote.