



Nonpublic School Advisory Council Meeting

New Hampshire Department of Education

25 Hall Street | Concord, NH 03301

Granite State College Building | Room 302

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:07pm. Motioned by Christy Whipple and seconded by Linda Johnson - roll call vote and all in favor.

Members Physically Present

David Thibault
Christy Whipple
Matthew Hicks
Dan Love
Tobias Iselin
Ryan DeJoy
Timothy Carney
Heidi Clyborne
Gina Powers
Linda Johnson

Members Virtually Present

Lisa Dias
Jill Grant

Members Not Present

Andrea Elliot
Chuck George
Susan Harrington
Caitlin Davis
Lissa Sirois

II. Review and approval of September 26, 2023 meeting minutes.

Members reviewed the draft meeting minutes from September 23, 2023. A motion as made by Christy Whipple and seconded by Linda Johnson to accept the minutes as written. Unanimous roll call vote of all in favor.

III. Public comment period

There were no public comments.

IV. Presentation by Cognia representatives relative to their application to be approved as a nonpublic school accrediting agency in accordance Ed 405. (Jake Goldsmith, Dave Smith, Susie Elsa (remote)).

- At the committee's request, Cognia gave a presentation to answer the committee's questions regarding their accrediting application. Jake Goldsmith, VP of NE Region, and Dave Smith, NE Region Director, were physically present, and Susie Eisa, Senior Director of Accreditation, was remote. Presentation attached.
 - David Thibault asked if graduation requirements will be specifically stated and if Cognia will confirm the institution meets state requirements. Jake Goldsmith answered yes.
 - Linda Johnson asked for clarification on the language in the application that says Cognia may choose to require the institution to meet the guidelines in the card and then references the guide. Susie Eisa responded that the educational practice reference guide is designed to support institutions within a state that have no direct state oversight.
 - Linda Johnson deferred to Tim Carney to confirm there is accreditation for attendance purposes and accreditation for programming purposes. Tim confirmed there are no graduation requirements in New Hampshire for non-public schools outside of the legislative regulations.
 - L. Johnson added that she wants to clarify all requirements because accreditation is important to schools. Susie Eisa confirmed Cognia will require state-mandated policy and procedure. Guidelines in the reference guide are only referred to when state requirements are absent.
 - Tobias Iselin asked for clarification on transfer students, specifically in their senior year, needing to earn twenty-five percent of their credits from the school they graduate from and if institutions clearly understand that before the accreditation process. J. Goldsmith and S. Eisa clarified that the rule only applies to digital learning schools. That does not apply to public and non-public brick-and-mortar schools.
 - Linda Johnson asked if Cognia is on a six-year time frame for reaccreditation. Jake confirmed this but said Cognia will move to a five-year cycle if the state prefers. However, Mr. Goldsmith clarified that Cognia cannot move to a seven-year cycle.
 - Tim Carney commented that state renewal cycles won't necessarily align with Cognia based on when the accreditation process starts. T. Carney also stated that if a school is not reaccredited, the institution is expected to report that to the state.
 - David Thibault asked if Cognia has experience working with residential schools. Susie

responded they have been working with residential schools for decades, including boarding and programs that range from one to six nights of residency. Jake agreed.

- Tobias Iselin raised concerns about ensuring schools know what they are getting into regarding the accreditation process. For example, our institution is interested, or we are ready to proceed with the accreditation. Jake Goldsmith requested that the PowerPoint presentation be shared to further explain the process from start to finish. There is a four-step system: member, applicant, candidate, and accredited. If schools fail to meet minimum requirements, they return to the candidacy step until the required data/information is gathered and reviewed.
 - David Thibault asked if Cognia differentiates between catholic schools and the outlined thirty standards. Jake responded the same standards are used but adjusted to fit the catholic identity piece. He volunteered to send Mr. Thibault an example and further information, and the chair accepted.
 - Ryan DeJoy asked if Cognia has worked with schools that worked specifically with neurodivergent students. Susie Eisa responded yes and stated that school names and how many are all public information.
 - Ryan DeJoy asked for the stats on how many schools have been declined accreditation. S. Eisa reported that over the last decade, under five percent of schools have not been approved for accreditation. She credits the success rate to the relationship Cognia builds with its members, the process, and the partnership between the institution and the accreditation agency. Susie added that institutions must be established for a bit to have the proper data.
 - David Thibault asked if Cognia works with other denomination schools. Jake confirmed they do and named examples of Islamic, Chinese, and Jewish institutions.
 - Cognia's presentation concluded at 4:52 pm. Tim requested a copy of the PowerPoint to distribute to members.
- Vote that NSAC recommend to the State Board of Education that Cognia be recognized an accrediting agency for non-public schools.
 - Motioned by Tobias Iselin and seconded by Christy Whipple. Roll call vote results were unanimous.

V. Cybersecurity and Privacy presentation by Cameron Shilling of McLane Middleton concerning (1) preventing ransomware attacks, (2) how to avoid EFT fraud, and (3) complying with privacy laws that apply to nonpublic schools.

- Cybersecurity presentation by Cam Shilling, founder of McLane Middleton's Cybersecurity and Privacy Group
 - Cam gave a background of his company, who they work with, and why cybersecurity is crucial for all schools, especially small ones that have become more vulnerable. Presentation attached.
 - Tobias asked for clarification that criminals watch activities involving large sums of money once they have accessed high-level employees' emails, such as a controller and CFO. Cam explained the process of the length criminals will go to watch until the right opportunity happens patiently, and they can jump in from a specific email point.
 - Tobias asked how criminals get into email in the first place. He wondered if it had to do with phishing. Cam responded, usually through malware, which silently downloads onto

devices from infected websites or public Wi-Fi. Cam suggested that a hot spot from your phone is the safer method to gain Wi-Fi instead of unsecured public Wi-Fi.

- Cam discussed how his company works with schools to train one or two employees to verify and double-verify before transactions are completed. This helps to eliminate some of the threats. Mr. Shilling also highlights payment portals such as Venmo as the safest payment method. C. Shilling noted cybercrime insurance is separate from other insurance.
- Gina Powers had to exit the meeting early at 5:17 pm.
- At the ten-minute mark of the meeting closure, David Thibault confirmed the committee was comfortable giving Cam the remaining ten minutes to continue with his presentation. Any other agenda items would not be addressed at this meeting. Chirsty Whipple confirmed her water testing item could be postponed until the next meeting. Tim Carney said his report is straightforward and goes to all committee members and agreed it did not have to be addressed at this meeting.
- Cybersecurity continued
 - Tim gave an example of a phishing attack email scam that appeared to come from NHED to non-public schools approximately six months ago, which instructed schools to click on a link within twenty-four hours or lose their approval. Tobias said Tim's email warning the non-public schools helped ensure people didn't move forward with the link.
 - Matthew Hicks asked if the state was responsible for holding school records, would they be better protected. Cam said it would be better in one sense that a large institutional actor was keeping track of them, but it would be worse because there would be a bigger target.
 - Jill Grant asked if programs like FACTS provide the level of security Cam suggests. Cam Shilling replied no and suggested they deliver their own consent and privacy policy.
 - Tobias asked if it was the receiver of the email job to ensure privacy or the sender. Cam confirmed it is the sender's responsibility.
 - Cam Shilling told Jill he would email his presentation to Tim Carney, who said he would distribute it to the committee members.
 - The cybersecurity presentation was completed at 5:34 pm.

VI. Open Council discussion.

- David Thibault addressed that at the next meeting, the committee would need to vote on who will take the position of vice chair.
 - Tobias asked for clarification on what the responsibility of the vice chair would be outside of filling in for the chair if he could not attend. David responded that it is primarily the only responsibility.
- Linda Johnson asked if notices such as the change in the fiscal restraints law go out to non-public schools. Tim Carney replied it is included in the Friday Forum, which he worked to get all schools added to the mailing list. However, Tim recognizes this may be challenging for non-public schools to get critical information, so he wants to do a separate direct email to school leaders on such issues. However, it would not necessarily solve the issue of other non-leaders receiving this

information. Linda suggested the committee newsletter mentioned in the previous meeting might be a good place to find this information.

- Linda Johnson gave information on the free webinar McLane Middleton Cybersecurity and Privacy Group is hosting on Wednesday, November 29th.
- David Thibault confirmed the next meeting is January 23rd, 2024. Jill Grant requested to start the meeting earlier, but the committee agreed it is not possible due to scheduling conflicts. The chair welcomed online attendance and reminded the committee that all online attendees could vote.

VII. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn was made at 5:40 by Christy Whipple and seconded by Matthew Hicks to adjourn the meeting — roll call vote was unanimous, and the meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm.