

## **Home Education Advisory Council (HEAC)**

**Nov. 18, 2021**

### **Approved Minutes**

**Walker Building, Room 100**

In physical attendance: Jennifer Pereira (presiding), Amanda Weeden, Catie McLaughlin, Shireen Meskoob, Michelle Levell (member of the public)

In remote attendance via Zoom: NH Rep Barbara Shaw, Michael Koski, and five members of the public

The meeting was called to order at 3:40pm.

Jen reviewed NH DOE Attorney Bond's written explanation of quorum calculation for HEAC.

June 3, 2021 minutes: Reviewed and accepted with correction to record the presence of George D'Orazio representing CUHE. Motion made by Catie McLaughlin, Amanda Weeden seconded, roll call with all members in agreement.

Chairman's Report: None due to lack of chair/vice chair on the council. Jen briefly reviewed RSA 193-A:10 HEAC membership and duties.

Member reports:

Amanda Weeden of GSHE reported increasing growth of membership in GSHE and the growth of small homeschool groups and coops. She said GSHE is aware of the following difficulties: 1. late receipt of acknowledgement letters from SAUs; 2. schools having requested to see elementary aged student portfolios in order to enroll into public school; 3. some districts having told families that they do not need to do anything to homeschool (notify, year-end assessments, portfolios); 4. parents being forced to sign special education waivers from districts in order to withdraw to homeschool.

Amanda also reported continuing confusion surrounding part time versus full-time status with VLACs. She said that some students are being told they remain part time with VLACs even while taking 5-6 classes. This forces them to report as home education students instead of being considered full time public charter school students.

Amanda mentioned issues with the Class Wallet system used by the NH Children's Scholarship Fund and confusion regarding the legal separation of the Education Freedom Account Program and home education as two different choices to fulfill the compulsory attendance law.

Jen explained the important contributions to the work of the council made by the most recent volunteers that held those seats currently vacant.

Representatives:

Rep Barbara Shaw reiterated her supportiveness of the council and her desire to hear any concerns that she might be able to assist with including any confusion surrounding home education and the new EFA program. She said that she will be attending a meeting for EFA oversight in January and would like to have home educator concerns emailed to her so she can bring them up at this meeting. Barbara mentioned that there are some new LSRs coming out that pertain to homeschooling.

Jen reported that LSR 2022-2543 sponsored by Rep Erica Layon relative to requirements for home education students should have bill text out soon on NH's general court website.

#### Old Business:

At the June meeting, HEAC voted to recommend that Commissioner Edelblut make a clarification concerning Prenda Community Learning PODS. Because they utilize a specific curriculum, and the annual evaluation must be the statewide assessment, and this assessment must be submitted to the local school district, there is a clear distinction between Community Learning Pods and Home Education under RSA 193-A. Therefore, HEAC recommended that instead of requiring "PODS" students to notify under RSA 193-A, the "PODS" be designated as an alternate method of satisfying the compulsory attendance law.

The council asked Shireen to follow up on HEAC's June request.

Amanda reported that she has heard of no further issues with Equal Access Laws in the Rochester district.

#### New Business:

HEAC members reported receiving a complaint regarding receipt of funds under the scholarship program administered by the NH Children's Scholarship Fund. The administrator of the NH CSF had responded to this complaint and copied the council. Council members were not aware of further issues.

HEAC members reported confusion among homeschoolers differentiating between the new Education Freedom Account (EFA) Program versus home education as separate ways to fulfill the compulsory attendance law. Other concerns were raised regarding statements relating to home education in the EFA program handbook and by CSF staff members as well as questions surrounding how to terminate EFA student status.

#### Public Comment:

Michelle Levell commented that past HEAC chair, Kitty Michelotti, was questioned about homeschool numbers expected for the 2021-2022 school year when she gave the annual HEAC report to the NH State Board of Education. Michelle said there was discussion at the State Board of tracking homeschoolers more thoroughly. Discussion ensued regarding data collection. Shireen was asked to make the council aware of any changes to the collection of homeschool data at the DOE.

In response to a question, Shireen, representing NH DOE, reported that HEAC nominees are being interviewed by the commissioner next week; decisions for appointment should be finalized by December 1st.

Amanda made a motion to adjourn at 4:28pm, seconded by Catie. Minutes taken by Jen Pereira