

NH Home Education Advisory Council (HEAC)

Draft Minutes of March 14, 2025 Meeting

Granite State College, 25 Hall St., Concord, NH

In physical attendance: Heather Barker (arrived 2:48PM), Alyson Landrigan, Mike Koski (arrived 2:36PM), Michelle Rohrbacher, Marcus Zuech, Althea Barton, Dianne Nolin, Rebecca Anderson, Rep. Drye, and Senator Ward. Commissioner Edelblut (attended 2:30-3:40PM).

Five members of the public present: Amanda Weeden, Debra Sullivan, Jennifer Marker, Kate Abbott, and Michelle Levell.

In remote attendance via Zoom: Jill Grant (online attendance 2:30-3:30PM). Members of the public included: Cristina, Jeff Hines, Emilia, Jennifer Hayes, Colleen Prieto, Jenny Jones, Diane L., Jenai Moore, Frederick, and Jen Periera.

Meeting called to order at 2:30PM by the Chairperson, Mr. Zuech.

Minutes: Ms. Rohrbacher requested an amendment to the minutes. Motion to accept January 10, 2025 minutes with amendment made by Mr. Zuech. Ms. Barker seconded the motion. Voice roll call: All in favor.

Appointments/Resignations: Rebecca Anderson (PRAX Village) appointed. Lindsey Pattison resigned. Representatives Drye and Peternel have been appointed to HEAC from the House of Representatives. Any additional nominations will be on hold.

Immediate Business: none

DOE update: Ms. Landrigan presented her report to HEAC. An FAQ document has been added to the "Useful Links" section as "Resources", at the bottom of the Home Education page of the NHED website. Ms. Landrigan noted that home education notifications have grown by 6% over the same time last year.

The Commissioner encouraged everyone to review and provide feedback on the FAQ document.

Agenda Review: no changes

Commissioner's Address: Commissioner Edelblut, who had announced his resignation one day prior, addressed the committee in person. He voiced concerns about how HEAC is functioning right now, the professionalism, the concerns about how people are treating one another, and the focus on mission for the council. The Commissioner reiterated that all HEAC members had received an email from him, in January, that outlined many of his concerns. He provided and reviewed a copy of Ed 315.09 which lists the duties of HEAC.

He mentioned that RSA 193A families have been selected for all HEAC home education organization seats. The Commissioner feels that it is helpful to get feedback from HEAC, working collaboratively with HEAC to address issues that are discovered in the fulfillment of their duties. He referenced a concern that had recently been raised, as an example of his expectations for HEAC. The issue that was brought to his attention involved a perceived increase in the cost of education programs, which would

be something HEAC could analyze, discuss, and present creative solutions to address.

Traditionally, HEAC has brought issues to the Commissioner to be addressed. HEAC members should be ambassadors for home education. They should flag legislative issues, accretion issues, or present threats, relative to home education, for the Commissioner to act on.

Chairman's Remarks: Mr. Zuech addressed the committee regarding the ongoing controversy over EFA associated members. He outlined three points: 1) There is a conflict of interest between RSA 193A and RSA 194F and it is a threat to homeschooling. 2) How the public perception of homeschooling evolves is a political issue not to be addressed on the council. 3) HEAC should not continue to address the grievance between RSA 193A and RSA 194F in this body.

The Commissioner suggested that HEAC consider using a vernacular to make distinctions between home educators (RSA 193A) and the RSA 194F for HEAC discussion purposes. He further addressed the chain of authority with respect to how to address issues within the council and how the chair should handle them.

Ms. Rohrbacher clarified how she defined a member with a 'divided mind' as an individual who is an RSA 193A representative, but they also accept funds from RSA 194F. The Commissioner felt that until and unless a HEAC member acted inappropriately in representing anything but RSA 193A, no action need be taken. If, however, a problem with a member arose, the chair should address that issue and advise the Commissioner of any future actions to be taken.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the Commissioner question HEAC nominees in order to glean information on the status as RSA 193A families, and to further inquire as to whether or not they intend to switch to RSA 194F if the income limits are removed from that program.

Ms. Grant revealed that it had been a challenge to distinguish her role on HEAC as a non-public school administrator. Her understanding of the distinctions between RSA 193A and RSA 194F improved through the discussion with the Commissioner on educational pathways.

Ms. Rohrbacher also brought up how EFA families can simultaneously apply to be ETC recipients. There was discussion about where that is stated in NH law. The Commissioner said that he would look into the issue and get that information back to HEAC. Ms. Rohrbacher also inquired about the status of the letter sent to the Commissioner regarding the CSF payments.

Member Reports: Sen. Ward stated that there were no specific home educator bills, but many EFA bills. Sen. Ward mentioned that people in the public still complain about home education. She felt that it would be helpful to share data and publicize home education success stories in order to refute these complaints.

Rep. Drye introduced herself. She homeschooled her 9 children while her husband was on the original HEAC that helped draft Ed 315 Home Education. She updated HEAC on the status of HB739 (background check bill) that was voted ITL in the Education-Policy and Administration Committee and placed on the Consent Calendar. She also informed HEAC on HB671 (kindergarten literacy bill) that, although it includes language including home educators, it is merely an optional offering of materials.

Ms. Barker suggested that she would like to present a report on the distinctions between the educational pathways at the annual NHSAA meeting. This could improve understanding within the school

administration community.

Mr. Zuech reiterated the Commissioner's suggestion to identify terminology that differentiates the pathways. Mr. Koski stated that he is an Assistant Superintendent, but his family is RSA 193A and he represents home education on the council. Ms. Barton had nothing to report. Jill Grant had nothing to report. Ms. Rohrbacher had nothing to report.

Ms. Nolin discussed home educator access to the SAT test at NH schools. A student was told that they could not take the SAT test in the spring at the high school in their town. Ms. Landrigan was able to confirm that statewide testing in April 2025 was open to home educated juniors, as well as public school juniors, resolving the issue quickly.

Ms. Nolin suggested that the annual HEAC report be drafted prior to the next meeting in order to allow time for review by the committee, prior to the presentation of the report to the DOE Board.

New Business: Discussion ensued about meeting monthly. The motion to meet in April was made by Ms. Barker. Ms. Rohrbacher seconded. Voice vote: All in favor. Discussion regarding whether to include video of the meeting with the minutes on the NHDOE website took place. Mr. Zuech motioned to post the video with the minutes. Mr. Koski seconded. Voice vote: All in favor.

Continuing Business: The discussion on the CSF/Class Wallet issue will be deferred to the next meeting.

Rulemaking/Legislative Updates: no discussion

LSRs: no discussion

Information Items: no discussion

Announcement: Next meeting is April 11, 2025 from 2:30-4:30PM.

Open Board Discussion: none

Public Comments:

Jennifer Marker (New Durham) expressed her concerns regarding fair representation of RSA 193A families within the appointments to HEAC.

Kate Abbott (Portsmouth) expressed concerns regarding the 'double-dipping' of equal access and the EFA.

Ms. Levell (Auburn) discussed the conflation of the EFA and independent home education.

Ms. Weeden (Rochester) GSHE and Christian Home Education of NH & So. Maine expressed her disappointment with the response to HEAC concerns that she communicated over the past few months. No online participants commented.

Non-Public Session: None.

Adjournment: At 4:35PM a motion for adjournment was made by Ms. Barker and seconded by Mr. Zuech. Voice roll call: All in favor.

Minutes DN