

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**333 Market Street | 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126**

January 15, 2026

On Thursday, January 15, 2026, the 389th meeting of the State Board of Education (Board) was convened and called to order at 1:03 p.m. by Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn. Ms. Dungee Glenn facilitated the meeting in person on behalf of Chair Karen Farmer White, who attended the meeting virtually. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986.

Attending:

Hon. Carol Aichele	Yadira Cupeles	Robert Mitchell
Julia Antunes	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Rep. Peter Schweyer
Nathan Barrett	Ernest Hadrick	Monica Taylor
Naina Bhatia	Amanda Hetrick	Karen Farmer White
Katherine Christiano	Jeffrey Keeling	Lee Williams
Sen. Lynda Culver	Hon. Maureen Lally-Green	Benjamin Wilson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 13, 2025, meeting of the Board were approved on a **Mitchell/Taylor** motion.

COMMITTEE REPORT
SPECIAL AND GIFTED EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Hon. Maureen Lally-Green, Chair of the Special and Gifted Education Committee (Committee), reported that the Committee concluded its periodic review of Chapter 16 (Special Education for Gifted Students) at its meeting earlier that day. The Hon. Lally-Green said the Committee discussed issues related to gifted identification practices and reflected on recommendations related to gifted identification measures that were developed by a school psychologists advisory committee and presented to the Committee in late fall.

The Hon. Lally-Green said the Committee did not find it necessary to open Chapter 16 at this time. Rather, the Committee adopted recommendations intended to improve clarity in implementing the current regulations and to drive greater consistency in the gifted identification practices used by school districts across the state. The Hon. Lally-Green summarized the recommendations adopted by the Committee and entertained questions from the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORT
TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE

Dr. Monica Taylor, Member of the Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness Committee (TSLEC), shared that the TSLEC met earlier in the day to adopt recommendations on testing requirements for educator certification. Dr. Taylor summarized the TSLEC's recommendations and highlighted recommendations related to the development of an alternate performance-based assessment pathway and related to the forthcoming adoption of a certification assessment aligned with the new Primary level certification covering grades PreK through 6. Dr. Taylor said the recommendations will be transmitted to the Secretary of Education for consideration.

REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Rick Levis, PDE's Chief Talent Officer, presented updates on recent School Code amendments that changed the grades spans for certifications that will be issued by the Department of Education (Department). Mr. Levis said amendments to the School Code established a new Primary Certificate that will cover grades PreK through 6. The new Primary Certificate will replace the Early Childhood Certificate (grades PreK-4) and the Elementary/Middle Certificate (grades 4-8). Mr. Levis also discussed recent School Code amendments that reduced certification fees.

Dr. Lynette Kuhn, Deputy Secretary and Commissioner for Postsecondary and Higher Education, provided updates on activity related to postsecondary and higher education. Dr. Kuhn shared that the Department continues to work on updates to the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) and Professional Education Record Management System (PERMS). She shared that six more teacher apprenticeship programs recently were approved and provided additional updates on the PA EmpowerU and It's On Us initiatives. Dr. Kuhn also shared updates on FAFSA completion rates and PA State Grant applications.

Ms. Amy Lena, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, celebrated the successful SAS Conference held in December. She discussed the Department's continued support of implementation of recent School Code amendments that include new wellness check requirements for cyber charter schools. Ms. Lena also discussed structured literacy webinars and the Department's upcoming Special Education Conference that will honor the 50th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Dr. Carrie Rowe reflected on her recent confirmation by the Pennsylvania Senate to serve as Secretary of Education. She applauded Madeline Loring, a fourth-grade teacher at Jefferson-Morgan Elementary School in Greene County, who was named as Pennsylvania's 2026 Teacher of the Year. Dr. Rowe also announced that Pennsylvania recently received national recognition as the top ranking state in middle school career preparation in the *Extending the Runway* report and she acknowledged the work of the Board that contributed to this ranking.

Dr. Rowe discussed the most recent state assessment results and noted that the Department is seeing a mismatch between student achievement results on the state's PSSA and Keystone Exams and other indicators of statewide performance and success, such as the NAEP and the SAT exams. She noted that Pennsylvania ranks among the top states nationally on the NAEP based on the sample of Pennsylvania districts who participate in that assessment. She also noted that Pennsylvania has seen solid and improving student performance on the SAT. Dr. Rowe shared that, in recent discussion with Governor Shapiro, the Governor expressed support

for opening the academic standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts to get to the heart of the issue with ensuring proper alignment and to explore essential questions related to system design and validity. Dr. Rowe said it is essential that academic standards and assessments serve their intended purposes. As such, Dr. Rowe said she would like to begin a focused conversation on this issue with the Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee in March. She noted that accountability, continuous improvement, and public confidence are among the grounding elements that need to be considered.

Finally, Dr. Rowe celebrated Ken Bonkoski, a facilities manager in the Antietam School District, and Kimberly Lokhaiser, a bus driver and paraprofessional in the Butler Area School District, who were named Pennsylvania's 2026 RISE Award honorees.

DISCUSSION ITEM
2025 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ms. Dungee Glenn introduced a draft of the Board's *2025 Annual Report to the Governor and the General Assembly*. She invited discussion on the document and noted that the report was scheduled as a voting item for the Board's consideration.

DISCUSSION ITEM
REPORT FROM COUNCIL OF BASIC EDUCATION STUDENT MEMEBERS

Ms. Naina Bhatia and Ms. Julia Antunes, High School Student Members on the Council of Basic Education, provided an update on their outreach with peers through Students for Education in Pennsylvania (SEPA). They shared that recent SEPA discussions focused on the obstacles first-generation, low-income, and immigrant students face, especially during transition periods. Ms. Bhatia and Ms. Antunes spoke to the effectiveness of peer mentoring in supporting students during critical educational transitions and recommended that the Department develop a video series of student stories as a resource to support other students during these transitions. They suggested that the video series include a retelling of obstacles students faced during their educational career, how they persisted, and how they pursued their current endeavor as a means to both inspire and inform high school students through student-to-student content.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEM
2025 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A motion to approve the *2025 Annual Report to the Governor and the General Assembly* was made by Dr. Monica Taylor and seconded by Mr. Robert Mitchell.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:08 p.m. on a **Taylor/Lally-Green** motion.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant