

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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

May 7, 2026

On Thursday, May 7, 2026, the 391st meeting of the State Board of Education (Board) was convened and called to order at 9:22 a.m. by Chair Karen Farmer White. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986.

Attending:

Hon. Carol Aichele
Julia Antunes
Nathan Barrett
Naina Bhatia
Katherine Christiano
Rep. Bryan Cutler

Sandra Dungee Glenn
Ernest Hadrick
Amanda Hetrick
Robert Mitchell
Hon. Pedro Rivera

Monica Taylor
Karen Farmer White
Lee Williams
Sen. Lindsey Williams
Benjamin Wilson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 12, 2026, meeting of the Board were approved on an **Dungee Glenn/Williams** motion.

COMMITTEE REPORT
ACADEMIC STANDARDS/CHAPTER 4 COMMITTEE

Dr. Lee Williams, Chair of the Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee (Committee), provided an update on the Committee's meeting yesterday related to its review of the academic standards for Arts and the standards for Health, Safety and Physical Education. Dr. Williams said the Committee prepared feedback for the external advisory committees that were formed to develop recommendations on updating the standards and asked that the Committee's feedback be reflected in draft standards recommendations that the Committee expects to receive in July. Primarily, the Committee focused on ensuring that the draft standards recommendations reflect student learning objectives rather than instructional activities. Upon receipt of the standards recommendations, Dr. Williams said the Committee's next steps will be to hold public hearings to gather additional stakeholder input on the standards.

COMMITTEE REPORT
SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Mr. Nathan Barrett, Chair of the School and University Safety Committee, reported that the Committee met yesterday for a briefing from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) on work to transition the Board's Safe Schools regulations (22 Pa. Code Chapter 10) to PCCD's School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC). The transition of responsibility for these regulations was directed by the General Assembly in amendments to the Public School Code. Mr. Barrett said PCCD summarized the work it undertook to update the

regulations and shared that the proposed updates were approved by the SSSC last month and should be circulated for regulatory review and approval over the summer. Once the transition is complete, Mr. Barrett said the Board's regulations in Chapter 10 will be placed into reserve and PCCD's new regulations will become part of Title 37 of the *Pennsylvania Code* under the new designation of Chapter 410.

COMMITTEE REPORT **AD HOC COMMITTEE ON RECESS**

Ms. Amanda Hetrick, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Recess, reported that the Committee met on April 7, May 1, and May 6. The Ad Hoc Committee was formed to explore a request from Governor Shapiro for the Board to develop recommendations for schools to guarantee recess for students and to provide the Governor's Office with recommendations on the importance of recess in Kindergarten through grade 5.

To inform this work, Ms. Hetrick said the Committee reviewed research on the benefits of recess for students, reviewed best practices identified by Johns Hopkins University, and reviewed other state policies on recess. Ms. Hetrick noted that research demonstrates positive impacts of recess on students' physical health, mental health, social-emotional development, and cognitive function. Ms. Hetrick said the Committee also invited public comment on recess and considered input received from parents, teachers, and administrators in rural, urban, and suburban school districts, along with additional comments from charter and cyber charter school administrators, a nonpublic school administrator, and faculty in educator preparation programs.

Ms. Hetrick then reviewed in detail the recommendations on recess supported by the Ad Hoc Committee after its review of relevant research and consideration of issues raised in public comment. Ms. Hetrick requested that the Chair bring the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations before the Board for consideration and noted that the meeting agenda includes dedicated time for discussion on the recommendations that the Board might support.

DISCUSSION ITEM **RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO ACCESS TO RECESS FOR STUDENTS**

Chair Farmer White invited discussion among the Board on the recommendations on recess presented by Ms. Hetrick. In response to discussion about input from parents and teachers, Ms. Hetrick noted that commentators largely expressed support for recess being part of the school day at the elementary level and identified numerous other implementation considerations. Public comment reflected a strong response to guaranteed recess, requests from parents for uninterrupted recess to provide students with an opportunity to get outside and move, support from teachers for more time for recess, and mixed opinions on the use of recess as a disciplinary measure. Ms. Hetrick said the rationale for allowing parents to elect out of recess was based on parents choosing to permit their child to participate in an alternative enrichment activity, such as clubs, that may be offered periodically. Mr. Barrett addressed the introduction of students into different clubs and noted that, particularly at the secondary level, recess can take a variety of formats as brain breaks. He said the opportunity to participate in a variety of breaks is important. Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for adding a recommendation at her suggestion to have the Department of Education serve as a repository of best practices on recess with information on both structured and unstructured recess models.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Dr. Carrie Rowe, Secretary of Education, highlighted recent initiatives focused on expanding access, support, and opportunity for students and families across the Commonwealth. She provided updates on Parent Pathways grants, It's On Us PA grants, Hunger-Free Campus grants, continued investments in dual credit programming, and grants awarded to improve public library facilities. Dr. Rowe also discussed a new video series that the Department of Education will create in response to suggestions made by the Board's high school student members. The video series will focus on promoting transition supports for students moving from high school to college and will be centered around the PAEmpowerU framework.

In addition, Dr. Rowe recognized Pennsylvania's continued national leadership in education. She shared that Leon Smith was named the 2026 National Teacher of the Year, marking the second consecutive year a Pennsylvania educator has received that honor. Dr. Rowe's remarks concluded with an acknowledgement of the meaningful work of educators across Pennsylvania, marking the end of Teacher Appreciation Week.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Tata Mbugua, a professor in the Education Department at the University of Scranton, said she was joined at the Board meeting by 24 students enrolled in the university's educator preparation program. She thanked Mr. Barrett for facilitating their visit to provide an opportunity for future educators to experience advocacy and to move beyond classroom theory to see how policy is shaped. Dr. Mbugua said this experience empowers her students to see themselves not just as classroom teachers, but as individuals who will impact the future education landscape. Dr. Mbugua thanked the Board for its hospitality.

Dr. Gina Gullo, with the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), addressed the discussion on recess. She noted that public comments on recess submitted by PSEA reflect the voices of 170,000 educators in Pennsylvania. Dr. Gullo said PSEA strenuously opposes limiting teachers ability to withhold recess and that the recommendation to permit up to 10 minutes of recess to be withheld appears to be based on conjecture rather than research. She noted that in its recommendations the Ad Hoc Committee agreed that it is okay for students to miss recess sometimes upon parental consent, but not at the judgement of teachers. She said PSEA encourages the Board to recognize the professional judgement of educators and not adopt recommendations that preclude the withholding of recess.

ACTION ITEMS

RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO ACCESS TO RECESS FOR STUDENTS

A motion to approve the following recommendations pertaining to access to recess for students was made by Ms. Amanda Hetrick and seconded by Ms. Katherine Christiano:

1. All schools in the Commonwealth should provide 30 minutes of daily recess for students in Kindergarten through Grade 5, including Grade 6 in instances where that grade is

included in the same school building configuration. Consideration should be given to the following:

- a. Flexibility should be provided for the time dedicated to daily recess to be structured in non-consecutive periods.
 - b. Flexibility in the amount of time allocated to recess should be established for half-day kindergarten programs and for days when schools operate on a modified schedule, such as delayed openings or early dismissals.
 - c. A student may be withheld from recess in circumstances where the student's participation poses a threat to themselves or others.
 - d. Educators may utilize discretion for no more than 10 minutes of recess to be used for academic supports or as a disciplinary measure for violations of the code of student conduct.
 - e. If enrichment activities outside the general curriculum are offered during recess, a parent or guardian may voluntarily elect to have their student participate in an alternative activity.
2. Recess for elementary students should be defined to recognize its role as play-based learning, as time for physical activity and for social interaction, to encourage screen-free activities, and to encourage outdoor recreation whenever it is safe to do so.
3. In instances where recess is supervised by certified school employees, school entities should have flexibility to submit a plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education to have recess counted as instructional time provided that the plan describes how time dedicated to recess meets established requirements for instructional activities.
4. If a school entity determines that parts of the school day must be shortened in order to accommodate a minimum amount of time for daily recess, all subjects should be equally impacted in making adjustments to the school day schedule.
5. School entities should be afforded one school year to prepare for offering 30 minutes of daily recess to students in Kindergarten through Grades 5/6 if the school entity requires time to address needs related to staffing, supervision, and collective bargaining agreements.
6. The Ad Hoc Committee should continue to explore whether breaks should be provided for students at the secondary level during the school day. To inform the Committee's work, the Department of Education should conduct a survey to determine how many school entities currently provide secondary students with breaks and to understand the practices that are employed to build this time into the school day.

7. The Department of Education should make available a repository of best practices on recess that provides information to school entities on structured and unstructured recess models.

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

RESOLUTION HONORING NAINA BHATIA

A motion to approve a resolution honoring the service of Naina Bhatia, Senior High School Student Member, was made by the Hon. Carol Aichele and seconded by Dr. Lee Williams.

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

RESOLUTION HONORING YADIRA CUPELES

A motion to approve a resolution honoring Yadira Cupeles, Senior Postsecondary Student Member, was made by Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn and seconded by Hon. Pedro Rivera.

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

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION HONORING JAMES AGRAS

A motion to approve a memorial resolution honoring the late James Agras was made by the Hon. Pedro Rivera and seconded by Dr. Lee Williams.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Naina Bhatia, Senior High School Student Member, thanked the Board for its fellowship and for its work in advocating for students across Pennsylvania.

Chair Farmer White announced the appointment of Vice Chairs of the Board's two Councils. Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn was named Vice Chair of the Council of Higher Education and the Hon. Carol Aichele was named Vice Chair of the Council of Basic Education. Ms. Farmer White said the selection of Vice Chairs was made in consultation with the Chairs of each Council.

Finally, Chair Farmer White announced a location change for the Board's meeting in September meeting. Rather than meeting in Harrisburg, the Board will meet in southeastern Pennsylvania.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 a.m. on a **Dungee Glenn/Rivera** motion.

Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant