

MINUTES – Board Meeting
Thursday, December 11, 2025

Teams

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 8:00am by Board Chair Cory Steiner. Board members present by video conference were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman.

Dustin Hager, Angela Nagel, and Superintendent Levi Bachmeier were absent.

Also present were ESPB Executive Director Becky Pitkin, Assistant Director Mari Riehl and Amy Bigelow from ESPB, Mark Openshaw from Office of Attorney General, Arlene Wolf from DPI, Erin Jacobson and Marijke Leibel from ND RISE, and other online guests.

Introductions were held.

Motion to Include Additional Agenda Items – No additions.

Motion to Ratify October and November Licensure Lists – Patti Stedman made a motion to ratify the October and November licensure lists. Motion seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

CASES

Keaveny, Lisa – A Request for Inquiry was received from Southeast Region CTE Center for breach of contract. At the October 2025 meeting the Board passed a motion to send Ms. Keaveny another Request for Inquiry seeking additional information. She'd received the first notification of the Request for Inquiry and made contact with the office the morning of the October meeting. A second copy of the RFI with request for her response was sent and the certified card indicating Ms. Keaveny had received the complaint on October 27, 2025, was returned to the office. As of today, no response to the second mailing has been received.

Attorney Mark Openshaw reviewed options the Board has available for action. Normally with breach of contract a settlement agreement has been issued with a letter of reprimand that is entered into the NASDTEC Clearinghouse. The Board can choose to add additional items to the settlement agreement such as noting that she's been unresponsive to requests, which should be included in the motion, or to suspend the license. To take any action, a settlement agreement or hearing would need to be in place. Patti Stedman noticed in the documents that the district has already taken Ms. Keaveny to court. She wondered if that would change things for the Board. Mark noted Ms. Keaveny also defaulted on that judgement.

Mark recommended a settlement agreement be offered. He also recommended that the Board avoid language like "curing the breach". He said if the settlement agreement gets ignored then the case will proceed to an administrative hearing. At that point, there's been due process and the board can take action.

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Patti Stedman made a motion to send Ms. Keaveny a settlement agreement with a letter of reprimand for being in violation of NDCC 15.1-13-25(1)(g,j) and Administrative Code 67.1-03-01-03(10). Motion seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Evan said it seems there is an element of avoidance happening and educators have an obligation to fulfill their professional responsibilities. Cory Steiner said he's in support of the motion and feels there is no choice but to issue a settlement agreement. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Kollman, Alexandra – Ms. Kollman's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received from Fargo Public Schools for breach of contract.

Cory Steiner has a conflict of interest and has recused himself from this case. He's been involved with this situation in his district. Dena Venneman also disclosed that she knows Ms. Kollman and is going to recuse herself from the case. Both turned off their cameras and Vice Chair Evan Kritzberger led this portion of the meeting.

Siri Coleman pointed out that this contract did not have a liquidated damages clause. Patti Stedman also said there seems to be an overload of job duties/responsibilities that Ms. Kollman wasn't expecting when she signed the contract. There isn't a lot of follow-up materials from the district included in the information submitted to the board. Patti wondered if additional information is needed. Evan Kritzberger said he wondered the same.

After further discussion, Patti Stedman made a motion to send Ms. Kollman a settlement agreement with a letter of reprimand for being in violation of NDCC 15.1-13-25(1)(g,j) and Administrative Code 67.1-03-01-03(10). Motion seconded by Siri Coleman.

Patti said she's a little conflicted with this one and feels the district could have communicated better, but Ms. Kollman still breached her contract. Siri agreed. Evan said he doesn't feel he has enough context, as many teaching contracts have the statement "other duties as assigned". Patti wondered if that's the Board's job to determine, and the fact is that she did breach the contract. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, and Patti Stedman. None opposed. Motion carried.

LeClerc, Melissa – Ms. LeClerc's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received from Grafton Public Schools for breach of contract. Since the RFI was sent to Ms. LeClerc information has been received from Darren Albrecht, Superintendent in Grafton, that her liquidated damages have been paid. Mr. Albrecht sent an email stating he feels the payment settles the release from her contract.

Siri Coleman asked the difference between this case and the previous two. The contract

was still breached. The difference is that the administrator has notified the Board that the district does not wish to pursue. Evan Kritzberger also said whether right or wrong, if there are liquidated damages and they're paid, that lets the person out of the contract. On the district side, if liquidated damages are paid many districts don't report. Becky said the board can look at this as an FYI and choose to dismiss.

Sarah Lerud made a motion to dismiss the case. Seconded by Evan Kritzberger. Cory Steiner believes that when most districts put in the liquidated damages option, they use this as a manner for individuals to be released from their contract. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Mayer, Ryan – Mr. Mayer's file was reviewed due to self-disclosed background offenses on his application for renewal. Mr. Mayer is employed by West Fargo Public Schools. Patti Stedman is a school board member in West Fargo and stated she does not know of this individual, so has no conflict. Attorney Mark Openshaw noted that everything from the 2022 offense has been satisfied.

Patti Stedman made a motion to issue Mr. Mayer's license. Motion seconded by Jenny Bladow. Patti said she appreciated Mr. Mayer's letter, and it looks like all court requirements have been satisfied. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Becky Pitkin left the meeting at 8:51am.

Kunze, Mark – Mr. Kunze's file was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was filed by a parent. Mr. Kunze is employed by Shiloh Christian School. Siri Coleman recused herself from this case due to her professional involvement with Mr. Kunze and the case.

Patti Stedman clarified that the school resource officer and ND Health and Human Services investigated the case and found no indication of abuse or neglect. She also confirmed that there has been no disciplinary action against Mr. Kunze in the past.

Patti Stedman made a motion to dismiss the case. Motion seconded by Jenny. Patti said when her district receives complaints like this, they work to ensure a thorough investigation is completed. The fact that Mr. Kunze said yes, he did touch the child on the shoulders. The school resource officer and ND HHS reviews of the case conclude the same, based on security video of the incident. There is not anything in the reports the board can act on. Board members who voted in favor of the motion were Jenny Bladow, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Applicant Request – Ms. Abbi Myers has requested she be allowed additional time to complete her teacher education plan of study due to extenuating circumstances. She currently holds an alternative access license, and renewal is typically contingent upon progress being made.

Cory Steiner is always appreciative applicants reaching out in advance. Patti Stedman made a motion to grant Ms. Myers extended time for hardship deferment. Seconded by Dena Venneman. Patti stated she also appreciated Ms. Myers letter and commends her for wanting to continue. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried. Sheila Schlafmann was absent for the vote.

Sub-Committee Report on Testing – A sub-committee has met to look at Core testing options. Very few states still require the Core. The pilot study is still ongoing with EPPs and when it has concluded the results will be reviewed. Since the pilot study allows in-state applicants to use a menu of options, the sub-committee wondered if the office should be able to develop a list of options for applicants who completed their teacher education programs outside of ND.

Cory Steiner asked if data could be collected to see how many individuals it would affect if a menu of options was developed. Mari will put that together for January.

Director's Report – Disability waiver sub-committee has reviewed and granted five waivers in the past few months. Becky and Mari continue to work with the CEEDAR group looking at special education licensure. They will be attending a national convening in February with other special education stakeholders.

The first few flipped-model special education teaching authorizations have been issued. This allows individuals who have completed their special education/education requirements to teach while they finish their general education requirements for their bachelor's degrees. The office has also issued the new military licenses to a few individuals.

Patti Stedman left the meeting at 9:15am.

ND RISE – As of December 1 there are 658 beginning teachers enrolled in mentoring. Enrollment remains open and mentor matches will continue as teacher placements change. ND RISE has facilitated multiple mentor switches due to role/building changes. So far this year, 190 new mentors have been trained either online or in-person. Erin Jacobson has included Kick-Up survey data from these trainings. Additional new mentor training is scheduled for January 13 and 15.

Advanced Mentor certificates are being sent out. There are currently more than 400

advanced mentors in North Dakota. Advanced mentors have mentored more than four teachers in the past five years.

Professional development opportunities with Jennifer Abrahms have been offered. Topics have been clarity in messaging and having hard conversations. ND RISE has received 100% positive feedback on this PD.

ND RISE is in a new office space that's slowly coming together. The new space allows them to work more collaboratively and have mentors meet with them in the office.

October Meeting Minutes, October and November License and Financial Reports

– Evan Kritzberger made a motion to approve the October meeting minutes, October and November license and financial reports. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Cory Steiner, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

The October 2025 financial report showed \$77,732.96 in total income received, \$96,439.40 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$18,706.44. The October 2025 license/financial items totaled 1001. This number includes background checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

The November 2025 financial report showed \$61,524.29 in total income received, \$78,235.38 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$16,177.09. The November 2025 license/financial items totaled 755. This number includes background checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

Board Member Reports

NDACTE – Jenny Bladow is part of a NDACTE sub-committee of common assessments used across ND EPPs to determine if they should be updated. If the assessments are updated, the validity and reliability will also need to be reviewed. NDACTE newsletter is included in Board materials. The newsletter allows EPPs to share what they are doing with teacher education candidates. This month focused on literacy.

Association of Non-Public Schools – Nothing to report.

Association of School Administrators – Cory Steiner thanked Supt. Baesler for her years serving the state of North Dakota, with optimism that she'll be able to make positive changes at the national level that will impact North Dakota students. He's also excited to welcome Levi Bachmeier as Superintendent of Public Instruction and looks forward to the continuing partnership with DPI.

School Boards Association – Not present.

NDUnited – Sarah Lerud was asked to help gather signatures for the school meal initiative so it can be put on the ballot for state voting. She also participated in a conference in Chicago to learn more about unions and being a member.

DPI – Arlene Wolf shared that Levi Bachmeier has started role as Superintendent of

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Public Instruction. He's focusing on getting to know DPI staff and also getting into schools to see what is happening. DPI is in the middle of desk audits.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:32am.

Chair

Secretary/Executive Director