

MINUTES – Board Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Teams

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 8:00am by Board Vice Chair Evan Kritzberger. Board members present by video conference were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. Dustin Hager joined the meeting at 9:05am. Cory Steiner 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, ellie Shockley from ND University System, Erin Jacobson and Marijke Leibel from ND RISE, Amber Haskell from NDUnited, Dr. Connie King Gottschall from NHSC, Michelle Griffin from UND, Preston Sundeen, and other online guests.

Introductions were held.

Motion to Include Additional Agenda Items – No additions to the agenda.

Motion to Ratify December Licensure List – Siri Coleman made a motion to ratify the December licensure list. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

DPI Shortage Report – Dr. Ellie Shockley from NDUS shared the teacher shortage areas as reported to the federal government for Fall 2025. Unfilled positions are reported by each district as part of a survey that is available in STARS. Long-term substitutes are integrated into the data also. Based on data collected on the survey, areas are then designated as critical shortage. It was noted that this is not tied to MIS03 data. ESPB Assistant Director Mari Riehl asked the percentage of LEAs who complete the survey. Ellie said there are a large number of LEAs who report nothing and do not complete the survey. She is aware that overall numbers are likely underreported.

Evan Kritzberger said it would be helpful to see how many qualified teachers there are in the state for these unfilled positions who may not be currently teaching. Jenny Bladow said higher ed has attempted to find this data, but it's difficult after people have left the state or are no longer teaching. Later in the meeting today, ESPB will also have data for the board showing how many alternative licenses have been issued in past years.

Board Education – Assistant Attorney General Mark Openshaw provided a training about breach of contract and the Board's role and responsibilities. Based on this education, it was noted that if an individual pays their liquidated damages to the district this does cure the breach. Becky asked if paying the liquidated damages also cures the ethical violation – it's the opinion that the contract is no longer breached if the liquidated damages are paid. Mark also noted in his presentation that if both parties agreed to early termination of the contract this would not qualify as a breach. An example would be if a school board approves a resignation.

If a breach did not occur it would be appropriate for the Board to dismiss. It's important for the Board to consider all factors when making a determination including, but not

limited to why the teacher broke the contract, timing, if the district was able to fill the opening, and if learner education interrupted. The Board should also consider if there are other consequences the teacher suffered and is there a pattern in the teacher's behavior with breaches. It's important to look at the case as a whole and weigh circumstances together. Mark would like to make sure the reasons for the motion are included in minutes from both the person making the motion, as well as the person seconding the motion. When motions are defended it makes the record very clear. Patti Stedman said her district has liquidated damages in their contracts and there are times the district chooses not to impose those fees based on various factors. She wondered if that's still considered a breach if there are no fees imposed. No, it isn't considered a breach if it's mutually agreed upon. She has concerns that makes things more difficult for districts, as it's a two-way contract.

CASES

Majerus, Kaitlyn – The file for Kaitlyn Majerus was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received from Anne Carlsen Center for alleged violation of Administrative Code 67.1-03-01-03. Mark Openshaw added it would be specifically Administrative Code 67.1-03-01-03(6). The RFI states that Ms. Majerus had falsified billing/service times to Medicaid. No other entity was pressing charges and Anne Carlsen Center has paid back all fees to Medicaid.

Patti Stedman made a motion to send a settlement agreement with a letter of reprimand to Ms. Majerus for being in violation of NDCC 67.1-03-01-03(6). Seconded by Siri Coleman. Patti believes the Board needs to do something, as falsifying billing/funds is never ok. She believes Ms. Majerus explained her circumstances at the time and did not make excuses for what she did. Patti believes a letter of reprimand is necessary, but nothing more. Siri agrees that since records were falsified disciplinary action is necessary, and with a settlement agreement and letter of reprimand in place it would be documented in case it happened again. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Roach, Ariel – The file Ariel Roach was reviewed due to a Request for Inquiry being received from Fargo Public Schools for alleged breach of contract under NDCC 15.1-13-25(g). It's documented in Fargo School Board minutes that Ms. Roach's resignation was approved on October 28, 2025. Assistant Attorney General Mark Openshaw believes this is a mutually agreed upon termination of the contract.

Siri Coleman made a motion to dismiss. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Siri believes that based on the board education today, both sides agreed and Ms. Roach's resignation from the district was approved. Sarah agreed that because the board approved her resignation, that means she should be able to resign with no problem. Evan Kritzberger added that he believes that when someone says they would like to be

done on a certain date, rather than just not returning at all, it is important. Patti Stedman added that from a school board perspective, many individuals are looking for board approval and will stay additional time. She believes that since there's still a contract it needs to be fulfilled. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

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. As of the December meeting no response had been received, and another motion was passed 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).

Becky reviewed the history of the case. A response email was received from Ms. Keaveny on January 2, 2026. Ms. Keaveny has received the settlement agreement that was sent, but the signed settlement agreement has not been returned. Mark said the Board has the options to either keep the settlement agreement as drafted, amend the settlement agreement now that a response letter has been received, dismiss, or if the signed settlement agreement is not received, to move to litigation.

Patti Stedman made a motion to leave the agreement as-is and to reach out to let Ms. Keaveny know that it either needs to be signed or will move to hearing. Patti also asked about timeline – the existing settlement agreement does allow for 14 days for it to be returned and that date has passed. Becky asked if, now that communication has been established, if she could reach out to Ms. Keaveny and ask her to return the signed settlement agreement. Patti said she does prefer this. After additional discussion, Patti rescinded her motion.

Patti Stedman made a motion to have Becky follow up with Ms. Keaveny and if a signed settlement agreement is not received by January 31, 2026, that a new settlement agreement be sent. Seconded by Dustin Hager. Patti feels that if it's communicated with Ms. Keaveny what the board is looking for that it will hopefully resolve things. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Administrative Subcommittee – Called to order at 9:25am. Reviewed by Administrative Subcommittee of the Education Standards and Practices Board. Administrative Subcommittee members present were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman.

Peters, Kelly – Before discussion began Patti Stedman disclosed that Kelly Peters

used to be an administrator in her district, but she has no personal relationship with this individual and does not know him. She feels she can be impartial. She would like the subcommittee to determine if she should be allowed to participate in this case. Sarah Lerud made a motion to allow Patti to participate. Motion seconded by Dena Venneman. Sarah said that Patti has stated she can be impartial, so believes she can participate. Dena agreed that because Patti feels she can be honest and impartial she can continue with this case. Administrative subcommittee members who voted yes were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

The case for Mr. Peters was reviewed after a Request for Inquiry was received from a parent for failing to follow Title IX and mandatory reporting after an incident that occurred at Lakota Public Schools. Assistant Attorney General Mark Openshaw said this would specifically fall under Administrative Code 67.1-03-01-02(3).

No additional information, other than the initial RFI for failing to follow Title IX and mandatory reporting and the response provided by Mr. Peters. Patti Stedman asked if it's too early for ESPB to be hearing this. She's unclear if there was an investigation completed. Yes, there was an investigation completed at the district level and a detailed response was received from Mr. Peters. It's important to note that Mr. Peters was not the one who showed the image, but the complaint was that he didn't take the necessary steps to address the situation.

Patti Stedman made a motion to dismiss the case. Motion seconded by Sarah Lerud. Patti said these are never easy cases and it appears that Mr. Peters took steps to address the situation and did not fail to perform his duties as an administrator, though the person who filed the complaint may not have been privy to that information. Sarah feels the explanation from Mr. Peters was very specific to the corrective actions he took regarding the situation. Patti asked Sheila Schlafmann, as an administrator, her stance. Sheila feels, looking at the information submitted, that it appears Mr. Peters followed protocol. His response also states that the parent who filed the RFI never came forward and requested a Title IX complaint be filed. Administrative Subcommittee members who voted in favor of dismissing the case were Dustin Hager, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Administrative Subcommittee adjourned at 9:39am and the regular meeting resumed.

Director's Report – Becky asked Mark to review the Annual Statement of Interest from ND Secretary of State, required for Board members to complete under NDCC 16.1-09-02 as of January 1. It doesn't sound like Board members received the Secretary of State's email, so Amy will forward the email to them.

Additional shortage area data will be provided to the Board in March so the board can vote to designate shortage areas for the 26-27 school year. Becky met with Burgum

Foundation on December 22nd. She's given the Board an overview of upcoming program reviews/accreditation visits. Mari and Becky will be attending Professional Standards Boards meeting at the end of the month. Becky called the Board's attention to the option of ETS ProEthica, developed around the MCEE principles. Some states use this as a renewal requirement.

Becky asked Board members to think about a Board retreat, possibly in April with a face-to-face meeting/retreat. Legislative session will be happening again next year. Teachers of Tomorrow meeting upcoming for possible 2027 legislation. Additional information will be provided to the Board in March about Core menu of options and how this may affect applicants who earned their teacher education degrees outside of ND.

Licensure Update – Mari Riehl provided a licensure update. Few ND licensure graduates complete the Core because they utilize the NDUS basic skills alternative menu of options. This is allowed right now for ND graduates, but there is nothing in place for out-of-state graduates. For the last two fiscal years, just short of 200 people obtained licensure in North Dakota and do not have a valid license from another state. Approximately 70% of those people are from outside the US. She also reviewed the types of alternative licenses and endorsements that have been issued over the past 5 years.

ND RISE – ND RISE offering another training next week, January 13 and 15, 2026, to support late enrollments and teachers interested in mentoring in the future. Advanced Mentor Certificates have been sent out to recognize experienced mentors. The next Coaches Academy session will be in April. Stipends are being sent and the new workflow process continues to run efficiently.

December Meeting Minutes, Special Meeting Minutes, License and Financial Reports – Angela Nagel made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes, special meeting minutes, license and financial reports. Motion seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Board members who voted in favor were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Angela Nagel, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Dena Venneman. None opposed. Motion carried.

Becky provided an update on both special meetings held in the past couple of weeks. Neither of the individuals have council, so both settlement agreements have been sent to the jails. Neither have been returned as of today.

The December 2025 financial report showed \$59,118.41 in total income received, \$95,257.22 in total expenses, with a net income of minus \$36,138.81. The December 2025 license/financial items totaled 718. This number includes background checks, endorsements, late fees, licensing fees, and application fees.

Board Member Reports

NDACTE – Did not meet in December and have not met so far in January. Nothing to report.

Association of Non-Public Schools – Nothing to report.

Association of School Administrators – Superintendent Bachmeier is making his way around all school districts in North Dakota, so perhaps he's already visited your district.

School Boards Association – Next meeting in February, so nothing to report.

NDUnited – Nothing to report.

DPI – Not present.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:21am.

Chair

Secretary/Executive Director