Collaborative for Educational Services  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 29, 2020  
12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA 01301


Present from CES: Bill Diehl, Barbara Siegel, Sarah Molloy, Heather Warner, Melinda Calianos

Call to Order and Introduce New Members

Dan Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM.

The Board did introductions.

Public Comment

Laura Fallon announced that on March 24th MASC is hosting a meeting with Tracy Novick called 70 (Minutes) on (Chapter) 70, which will be about how Chapter 70 works and what’s being done to change it. Laura will send announcements to the school committees. May 5th is the day on the hill for advocacy in Boston. More info will be sent out on this as well.

Approve Minutes of November 13, 2019 Board of Directors Meeting & January 21, 2020 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes (vote required)

Dan reminded the Board that you didn’t have to attend the meeting in order to approve the minutes, but that you can abstain from voting on them if you would like. Dan thanked Sarah Molloy for taking the minutes.

A copy of the Board of Directors meeting minutes and the Finance Committee meeting minutes are included in the Board packets.

Michael Knapp moved that the Board approve the minutes of the 11/13/19 Board of Directors meeting. Don Sluter seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed. Suzanne Crawford and Carole Bergeron abstained from voting.

Jonathan Schmidt moved that the Board approve the minutes of the 1/21/20 Finance Committee meeting. Michael Knapp seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed. Keith McFarland, Maureen Nichols, Carole Bergeron, Steve Sullivan, and Gene Stamell abstained from voting.
CES Presentation - Vaping and other substance abuse prevention work from CES

Heather Warner introduced herself and Melinda Calianos. Heather is the coordinator of the SPIFFY (Strategic Planning Initiative for Families and Youth) Coalition. Melinda is the Director of the Hampshire Franklin Tobacco Free Community Partnership at CES. Melinda recently moved her grant from the Hampshire Council of Governments to CES.

Heather and Melinda presented on vaping and other substance abuse prevention work at CES. A copy of their presentation is attached to these minutes.

Melinda mentioned that she is available to present at schools and school committee meetings as requested. They also offer workshops, professional development, and more.

They are collaborating with Joe Comerford on a survey.

The spreadsheet of resources starts on page 41 of the packet. A third document with resources was also passed out to the Board and is attached to these minutes.

**ACTION STEP:** Send the Board the list of resources, Heather and Melinda's contact information, and information about SPIFFY.

**Vote to Authorize the Executive Director to Sign a Contract with Boston (Vote Required)**

Dan asked if the Board is willing to add an agenda item that was unforeseen. The Board is willing. Bill Diehl explained that Boston sometimes sends their foster kids west and right now there is a student who lives in Greenfield and is enrolled at HEC Academy, but Boston is in charge of the student. The Board has to approve a certificate of authority to authorize Bill to sign the contract with Boston.

*Gene Stamell moved that the Board authorize Bill Diehl to sign the contract with Boston.*
*Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. All Board members were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.*

**Financial Report**

Dan noted the Finance Committee met last week before this meeting to review the financials and they didn’t find any issues and moved it forward unanimously.

**Vote to approve the FY20 Statement of Activities and the Change in Fund Balance for the period ending 11-30-19 as presented.**

**Statement of Activities**

A copy of the FY20 Statement of Activities for the Period 7/1/2019 through 11/30/19 is provided in the Board packet.

Barbara Siegel told the Board that the position at 11/30/19 is a deficit of $364,524 in the general fund. This is within reason as compared to the last two years. In FY19, at 11-30 the deficit was 125,188 and in FY18 it was 513,250. Both of those years ended favorably. We have $400,000+
PD contracts in Salesforce. These contracts alone could offset that deficit. Licensure revenue is posted at the start of each semester. At this point we have only recognized the fall term, representing only \( \frac{1}{3} \) of their revenue. We’ve had low enrollment at HEC Academy which contributes to that deficit significantly because we based it on 32 students. Currently we have 28 students and we have 6 in the pipeline.

**Fund Balance**

Compared to last year, the major change is within Birth to Age 22. We expect to see that improve as the enrollments pick up. Typically we see a negative number in Operations & Business Development. We have had an unusually high number of folks on medical leave. We continue to pay their salary and we have to bring in temps to do the work. We expect to get back within normal by year end. The PD deficit is typical and should be covered by the contracts on hand. The previous five years shows that we come back into line as we approach the end of the year.

*Michael Knapp moved to approve the FY20 Statement of Activities and the Change in Fund Balance for the period ending 11-30-19 as presented. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. All Board members were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.*

**Vote to approve the FY20 Adjusted Budget for the period ending 11-30-19 as presented.**

In Operations and Business Development there is an additional $61,416 that reflects the indirect. We have met our goal and exceeded the goal $60,000 as we brought in $116,071. We start with what we believe are good solid contracts to build the budget, but sometimes there are cuts along the way. Ordinarily by this time we have our complete contract from DYS. We have a starting contract that is usually lower and then we have an adjusted contract that we don’t have yet. Barbara didn’t include that because she wanted to keep it as realistic as possible.

In Birth to Age 22, a correction was required to include the HEC Academy school year budget. The adjustment had no effect on tuition rates, it was an error that omitted a portion of the department’s budget when transferred to the final budget presentation.

In Special Revenue the changes reflect adjustments to the grants and contracts, new funding and reductions in funding.

Michael Knapp asked about the large negative number in Birth to Age 22 and asked what Birth to Age 22 is. Barbara explained that it includes After School, Early Childhood, HEC Academy and Mt. Tom Academy. It’s a lot of tuition-based programming and the related services.

It was asked if the reference to age 22 is in regards to the law that students can access special education services up to age 22. Barbara confirmed this and added that it also references direct services to students. It does not include the grants we get to support them though. It’s fee for service and tuition based.
Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the FY20 Adjusted Budget for the period ending 11-30-19 as presented. Michael Merritt seconded the motion. All Board members were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Vote to approve the FY21 HEC Academy Summer tuition rates as presented, effective July 1, 2020.

A copy of the HEC Academy Summer School Budget FY21 and proposed rates are provided in the Board packet.

The budget as presented does not include a COLA. The intention is to bring a COLA request with the full budget in May. If a COLA is included in the full budget it would be retroactive for the summer school staff.

There is an increase of 2.69% to the member rate and a 7.63% increase to the non-member rate. The statewide average increase has been 2.63% for the past two years. The administrative rate charged to non-members increased to 20%, the maximum under our current Collaborative Agreement. CES has increased that to 25% in the new agreement but that cannot go into effect until the agreement is approved by DESE. The intention is to keep member rates as low as possible. Our non-member rates are still below the state average.

Dan confirmed that Barbara is recommending voting to approve the rates of $5,998 for member districts and $6,898 for non-member districts.

Suzanne Crawford moved to approve the FY21 HEC Academy Summer tuition rates as presented, effective July 1, 2020. Don Sluter seconded the motion. All Board members were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Hires and Separations (Vote Required)

Dan informed the Board that voting on the hires and separations is a regulation set by the state for collaboratives. The hires and separations are listed in the Board packet. It was noted that most are related to teachers. Suzanne Crawford asked if it was common to have mid-year separations through DYS or if the number is higher than average. Bill said it depends on the time of the year and that it’s similar or lower than typical. Barbara also noted that we also had retirements mid-year.

Don Sluter moved to approve the hires and separations for dates 11/1/19 to 1/15/20. Gene Stamell seconded the motion. All Board members were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Legislation Update (The “SPED Gap” and other legislative priorities)

The following documents were passed out to the Board or included in the Board packet:
Bill explained that CES tries to educate legislators on important legislative matters. On Friday some CES employees are going to a forum with legislatures put on by the Human Services Forum. They will get to talk to legislatures and give them the CES Legislative Talking Points handout (starts with “Our Mission is to”). This is our first iteration of the handout. Bill noted that he thinks some of the things that happened this year were largely due to our legislatures (e.g. reimbursement for transportation in the circuit breaker). Bill would like to open it up to the Board to see if there are any other priorities. For instance, one priority is to restore the the $1 million in rural aid that was cut by the Governor.

Dan noted he doesn’t think Bill is giving himself and CES enough credit. Legislators couldn’t have done that work effectively without information, organization, and structures, including all of the hard work done here to give them data. Having this information was vital for them to make a case and defend what we’re looking for.

Suzanne Crawford noted that many rural districts that have declining enrollment are not getting any extra money from SOA. Also, there are some towns that don’t belong to a vocational technical school and right now the reimbursement rate for out-of-district transportation has been 5%. If that was brought up to the same rate of regional transportation that would make a big difference. She thinks maybe 100 towns in this state are not part of a vocational technical school.

Gene Stamell brought up that rural aid is based on mean or average family income in the town (this is a part of the formula). He doesn’t understand why it’s not the median since two or three families in town can skew the entire data and make them ineligible.

Laura Fallon said she spoke with Senator Comerford’s aide regarding the SPED gap and the aide recommended sending a letter of support, even tomorrow, that states what the numbers are for your district. This could show that the formula assumes a 16% rate when in reality these are the numbers for our school. Laura also brought up that she doesn’t see anything about Charter schools. She noted that Senator Lewis formed the charter school working group for the Senate. Comerford is a member and they keep hearing about money going into their districts, but they just approved three new Charter school expansion requests. Laura wants to keep pushing that we need to address how we fund our charter schools and stop expanding until we figure that out. Laura then asked about the programs to build a robust pipeline to create a diverse teacher workforce. Bill said we are founding members of that and that he is aware of them so he'll make sure they comment.

Michael Merritt mentioned responsible waste streams. He saw the Breakfast After the Bell bill. In his district, five or six fifth graders sent a proposal to the principal about removing plastic straws from the cafeteria. They used the math they learned in class and it persuaded the principal to contact the food services director who said it was reasonable. They changed the policy, but
recognized that elementary students might need them so they will use paper straws. Michael worries about the Breakfast After the Bell bill if it means there will be a lot of plastic waste. He also wanted to bring up recycling.

Dan noted if you have additional thoughts to email Bill.

Regarding the SPED bill, the estimate of the percentage of students with special needs is lower than the actual SPED percentages in most of our districts, so there is a Special Education funding gap. Senator Comerford and Representative Carey asked CES to help organize a listening session about this. They want to learn more about how it impacts Western Massachusetts.

Jennifer Mallette asked how they came up with the guidelines for Special Education funding in the state formula. Bill’s not sure how it originated, but right now the formula is based on 16% students with special needs and that these students account for an average of 25% of a teacher’s time. In most districts, these are very low estimates. Stephanie Conrod gave an example from her school - they have around 500 students and the formula estimates they have 22 SPED students, but it’s more like 157 SPED students. This is an old formula and hasn’t changed for a number of years.

Regarding the Student Opportunity Act, SPED transportation can be counted as money going towards the circuit breaker. DESE is having sessions around the commonwealth with business managers and SPED directors. Bill noted that there’s a session on March 2nd at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC). We’ll send out information to business managers and SPED directors.

DESE Approval of Annual Audit and Annual Report

Bill informed the Board that CES received the approval of the annual audit and annual report from DESE. We sent these audits and annual report to school committee chairs and we’ll also send them out to superintendents.

Executive Director’s Report

A copy of the Executive Director’s Report is in the Board packets. Bill went over some highlights from it, mentioned below.

On Monday, Bill received an email from Frontier Regional with signatures approving the revised Collaborative Agreement. These 5 signatures give us a ⅔ approval, which is what we needed to submit to DESE. We now have 28 signatures and we needed 25 so we have enough to move it forward. Although we have met that ⅔ requirement, we still need all member school committees to vote on the revised Agreement.

This is the year when new proposals need to be written and submitted for two contracts we have with the state (DYS and DESE for SEIS). We haven’t received the RFP’s yet, but we are preparing for them.

Bill pointed out the mini annual highlights document that was passed out to the Board and attached to these minutes. Rather than printing out the larger annual report we decided to make this a highlights document. One thing that is mentioned in the highlights document is the
Transforming Education for Social Justice conference. A flyer for the conference was passed out to the Board and is attached to these minutes as well. Dan said it’s a phenomenal conference. It has been really centered with a student-led focus and has had lots of good information. It’s a very enlightening and moving experience. Bill noted that because it’s at UMass we have more capacity than in the past. Regarding cost, students come for free and Board members pay for the cost of the meals. Jonathan said your school committee might be able to pay for it in their school committee budget line.

In terms of professional services, we have 32 contracts with our districts now and more coming up. Bill also mentioned the Statewide Systems of Support (SSoS) which provide support to low performing districts; we have a contract to provide assistance in the areas of special education and ELs. Also, we are continuing work with Belchertown and Amherst using the DESE model Planning for Success. We have a lot of PLC’s including PLC’s in the districts. We also re-launched our principals PLC and Smith Vocational is hosting it.

Other highlights that Bill referenced: information about the Title III consortium; a new two-year STEM@Work grant; several new projects and proposals for Healthy Families & Communities department.

In terms of our programs, Bill noted that there are 28 students at HEC Academy and 6 referrals. We have several students who are from non-member districts so they pay non-member rates. We have had improvements in the physical space to better support the programming and education of students.

Mt. Tom also went through some changes this year and right now has 15 students. It’s a good mix of students from member and non-member districts. There are also several more referrals in the works. Our goal is 14 students and we’re above that. The program is going really well.

Bill noted a couple of items from the DYS section of the report. First, we’ve done a lot more with providing college opportunities for youth. Also of note is that the state is considering raising the age of youth in custody to 22 so we will have to meet the needs of more students who already graduated. Bill also mentioned that DYS led a conference about addressing racial trauma that was really powerful.

**ACTION STEP:** Suzanne asked if Bill can forward the article on healing wounds of racial trauma.

In HR, we have undertaken a compensation audit. It started out by the state requiring looking at gender inequality. We expanded it more widely to also looking at jobs of similar types and making sure they are being paid equitably. We have a policy committee as well, which will be looking at our policies to make sure they support our work in equity and inclusion.

Laura Fallon asked for an explanation on our facilitating district strategic planning if that is the same as working on a district improvement plan. Bill said it is not – it’s for districts going through their strategic planning process that DESE has put forth.

Bill noted that Sarah will send out a copy of the Executive Director’s report to the Board so they can pass it on to their school committees.
ACTION STEP: Send out Executive Director’s report to the Board.

**Student Opportunity Act - Impact on Districts and Other Topics of Board Interest**

Bill walked the Board through the handouts related to the Student Opportunity Act (mentioned in the Legislative Update section of the minutes). The first page is what Governor Baker put out about it and the last page is what MASS put out about it.

Stephanie Conrod let the Board know that there is a chart of what the Chapter 70 increases are for everyone and it’s not much for our districts and others. She thinks Gill-Montague is getting a notable increase and Athol-Royalston is as well, but pretty much everyone else is only getting a $30 per pupil increase. They were told they would get almost $300,000 and they are not. Due to the new low income headcount expansion and since their district is so small and they have declining enrollment, there wasn’t an uptick in numbers so they didn’t get an increase in funding. But their SPED numbers are increasing, as is their homeless population. Bill said the advocacy from Orange is a real impetus for the Special Education Gap listening session, discussed earlier.

Michael Merritt commented on the nearing due date for the SOA three-year plans and asked if there is any support to figure out what this looks like. Bill said he may not have the most current info but the last he knew was DESE hasn’t figured out what this looks like or provided guidance. Laura noted on Saturday she met with Senator Lewis and he was saying it’s almost ready and for districts getting minimal aid it’s supposed to be a short and plan. It’s the districts who are getting more money that will have more work. The deadline will probably get pushed back, but it’s supposed to come out shortly.

Suzanne Crawford gave a shout out to Senator Adam Hines who has been tireless in his support.

Laura Fallon mentioned that in Northampton they are in the process of planning two budgets since they have a budget override vote in process. As part of that, it’s become clear that people don’t understand chapter 70 funding. They are making comparisons between their district and other districts. So not only is chapter 70 outdated and flawed, but there also has to be more education done as far as why we’re not getting more. That’s part of why MASC is hosting the “70 on 70,” as Laura mentioned in the Open Comments.

The Board continued its discussion of chapter 70 funding and how difficult it is to explain to everyone.

**Motion to go into Executive Session to review Executive Session minutes pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”) - Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g). The Chair does not anticipate going back into Open Session. (Vote Required)**

Dan explained that we will be going into Executive Session pursuant to Purpose 7 in order to approve executive session minutes and he does not anticipate going back into open session.
Jonathan Schmidt moved to go into Executive Session and Michael Knapp seconded the motion. A roll call vote was done and the motion passed.

Dan invited Bill Diehl, Barbara Siegel, and Sarah Molloy into the Executive Session.

After the Executive Session, the meeting ended.