Collaborative for Educational Services
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2021 at 6:30 - 9:00 PM
APPROVED

Join Zoom Meeting: https://collaborative.zoom.us/j/83857331043
Meeting ID: 838 5733 1043

Present from the Board: Dan Hayes, Heather Klesch, Erica Jacob, Jill Pelletier, Collin Black, David Lubbers, Mallory Ellis, Mike Knapp, John Cotton, Patrick Davis, Lyn Roberts, Suzanne Crawford, Bill Tomb, Keith McFarland, Sarah Hall, Cathy Englehardt, Laura Fallon, Denise Storm, Julianne Tauscher, Jonathan Schmidt, Alli Schlachter, Heather Hala Lord, Don Sluter, Susan Hollins, Johanna Barlett, Maureen Nichols

Present from CES: Todd Gazda, Sarah Molloy, Karen Reuter, Megan Ronzio, Kathy Levesque, Barbara Siegel, Woody Clift

Call to Order and Introductions - Board Chair Dan Hayes

Dan called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. The Board did introductions.

Public Comment

Laura Fallon let everyone know that in Division 5 it is election year for MASC so October 1st is the deadline if anyone is interested in serving or running for a division officer position (for example, chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer) or interested in serving on the nomination committee. Anyone interested should email President Ellen Holmes. If you have any questions Ellen or herself are happy to answer them.

Approve Minutes of June 23, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting & August 21, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting (Votes Required)

- A copy of the minutes were included in the Board packet: June 23rd, 2021 Board of Directors meeting on pages 3-10 and August 21st, 2021 Finance Committee meeting on pages 11-13.

Dan noted that this is to put in our records so if you were not at the meeting you can still vote, but if you are inclined not to, just wait for the abstentions.

Don Sluter moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2021 Board of Directors meeting and the August 21, 2021 Finance Committee meeting. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. David Lubbers abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.
### Election of Officers (Votes Required)

#### Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- A copy of the description of officer and committee responsibilities was included in the Board packet on pages 14-16.

Dan explained that if anyone is interested in a position we have asked that you email Sarah Molloy, especially if anyone was not able to attend this meeting. Also, as opposed to doing just nominations, the easier way is to see who is interested in the position first. Dan turned it over to Todd Gazda for the election of the Chair.

Cathy Englehardt nominated Dan Hayes for the role of Board Chair. Laura Fallon seconded the nomination. No one else was interested and no other nominations were made.

*A roll call vote was taken to move forward the election of Dan Hayes as Chair of the Board of Directors. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Dan said he’s happy to be chair at least for the next year. It's been a pleasure to work with Todd and get him acclimated to the Board and it's nice to be part of the team.

Dan proceeded to lead the elections and noted that the Vice Chair needs to come from the other county. He asked if anyone has expressed interest and Sarah Molloy informed the Board that Cathy Englehardt has expressed interest and no one else has.

*Mike Knapp nominated Cathy Englehardt for the role of Vice Chair. Laura Fallon seconded the nomination. A roll call vote was taken to move forward the election of Cathy Englehardt as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

#### Election of At-Large Members of the Executive Committee

Dan explained the role of the Executive Committee. Essentially, when a meeting takes place if there is no quorum and business needs to take place, then the committee votes, but the Board will still have input.

Susan asked if the committee makes financial decisions that affect the school systems who are members. Dan said no, it could make budget decisions, but the only way it would affect school systems is member rate which is pretty unusual.

*Johanna Barlett joined the meeting.*

Don Sluter from Franklin County, David Lubbers from Hampshire County, and Susan Hollins from Franklin County volunteered to serve on the Executive Committee.
Don Sluter moved to approve the appointment of Susan Hollins, David Lubbers, and Don Sluter as the At-Large Members of the Executive Committee. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Woody Clift joined the meeting.

Appointment of Secretary (Vote Required)

Dan noted that the Executive Director is typically the Secretary and thinks we should keep it this way.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the appointment of Todd Gazda as the Secretary of the Board. Don Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Appointment of Treasurer (Vote Required)

Barbara reported that Don Scott has agreed to be the Treasurer for another year.

Cathy Englehardt moved to approve the appointment of Don Scott as the Treasurer of the Board. David Lubbers seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Appointment of Finance Subcommittee (Vote Required)

Dan explained that the Finance Committee meets before every Board meeting. The committee reviews finances and has the opportunity to give feedback before the information goes to the Board for a vote.

Cathy asked who the Superintendents were on the Finance Committee. Dan said Rick Martin and Anne McKenzie.

Dan added that Barbara is great at providing information in an easy to understand format.

David Lubbers from Hampshire County expressed interest in serving on the Finance Committee.

Susan Hollins moved to approve the appointment of David Lubbers as member of the Finance Committee. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion.

Denise Storm from Franklin County expressed interest in serving on the Finance Committee.

Don Sluter moved to approve the appointment of Denise Storm as member of the Finance Committee. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion.
Heather Hala Lord asked if her service ends should she abstain from joining the committee. Dan let her know she can join if she would like and if we need to fill the position that's fine, but if someone is not running for school committee again it might not be a good idea.

*A roll call vote was taken to approve the appointment of David Lubbers and Denise Storm as members of the Finance Committee. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Maureen Nichols joined the meeting.

**Appointment of Warrant Subcommittee (Vote Required)**

Dan noted the way this works is that warrants are sent electronically to committee members and you can get it sent to your phone. It’s really a legal formality. Don Sluter confirmed it’s not difficult.

Don Sluter said he is willing to keep serving and Dan Hayes and Maureen Nichols said they are as well.

*Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the appointment of Don Sluter, Dan Hayes, and Maureen Nichols as members of the Warrant Committee. David Lubbers seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

**Appointment of Policy Subcommittee (Vote Required)**

Dan explained that this committee meets around policies that are reviewed or thought about. These policies are then brought to the Board for vote, but it helps expedite things to have people familiar with policy writing or to hammer things out before they come to the Board. The Board can change things, but sometimes this saves time and energy.

David Lubbers, Cathy Englehardt, and Don Sluter expressed interest in joining.

*Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the appointment of David Lubbers, Cathy Englehardt, Don Sluter, and Dan Hayes (as an ex-officio member) as members of the Policy Committee. Collin Black seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Dan noted that Allison LeClair and Jen Culkeen are the superintendents on the committee.

**Hires and Separations for 6/16/21-9/15/21 (Vote Required)**

- A copy of the hires and separations report for 6/16/21-9/15/21 was included in the Board packet on pages 17-20.
Dan explained that Collaboratives are required by law to have the Board approve hires and separations, which are listed in the Board packet. There are a lot of different reasons why people are hired and leave. As a formality we are looking for a vote to approve them.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the hires and separations for the period of 6/16/21-9/15/21 as presented. Cathy Englehardt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Authorizations

Executive Director

Dan explained that this is also a required vote, giving authorization for signing contracts and such.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the Executive Director of the Collaborative for Educational Services (Todd Gazda) is authorized, empowered and directed on behalf of the Collaborative to sign, seal, execute and deliver any and all contracts, agreements and other documents on behalf of the organization, as allowed by law. Don Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Deputy Director & Director of Finance and Operations

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the Deputy Director (Karen Rueter) and Director of Finance and Operations (Barbara Siegel) are each authorized, empowered and directed to act in place of the Executive Director to sign, seal, execute and deliver any and all contracts, agreements and other documents on behalf of the organization, as allowed by law, if and only if the Executive Director is unable to fulfill these duties in a timely manner sufficient to meet specific deadlines. Don Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Financial Update & Vote on SpEd Evaluation Rates (Vote Required)

- A copy of the SpEd Evaluation Rates was included in the Board packet on page 21.

Barbara Siegel gave the following financial updates to the Board.

- On Monday we begin the annual audit.
- The fiscal year looks to have ended in a much better position. We began last year with a $1,125,065 deficit and poised to end the year with a surplus of around $150K in the General Fund before depreciation and about a $100,000 deficit after depreciation.
- We currently have a surplus in the Special Revenue Fund so overall it will create a surplus.
- HEC Academy had a loss that we have discussed all year long that would have been eliminated with three additional students. Mount Tom Academy’s loss would have been eliminated with one additional student. Those are understandable and COVID related.
- We’ve also experienced a loss in the Licensure Program and are dedicated to taking a closer look at that and how we might turn that around. Todd has a lot of ideas.
- For several years Related Services has been running at a large loss. This year it was a $3K loss with credit for this going to the Board for getting involved in helping find solutions, Sherry Smith and the specialists in Related Services, and Karen Reuter who helped Sherry to come up with creative ways to tighten those costs. It was an amazing year for all of the struggles we’ve had and for all the efforts staff did to reduce that deficit significantly.

Barbara asked if there were any questions. Dan commented that having been on the Finance Committee as well, a lot of effort has been put into approaching the deficit and there has been great effort from the team to increase revenue and reduce expenses. One thing that is remarkable about CES is the entrepreneurial piece. CES is providing a service and if it's not good or competitively priced customers will go elsewhere. The Collaborative always looks and focuses on all of the different services they provide to monitor progress whether there are deficiencies and for ways to be more efficient. People from the Board getting involved has been helpful and supportive, but ultimately it's a fee-for-service and CES always tries hard to be the best and competitively priced and that's what's making the budget better and CES successful.

Barbara reminded the Board that in November when the auditors come to present any findings we will at that time ask for a final vote on the FY21 budget. Each time she brings the actual financial report the Board will vote and approve that budget as it’s a requirement of the Collaborative legislation. Because we don’t meet in the summer she’ll bring that in November.

For FY22 underway we have some promising figures. At our SPED high school we budgeted for 22 students in order to have a balanced budget and we currently have 21 students. We could also hear any moment that another student has been accepted so that’s a great way to begin the year. We have $800K in contracts booked for Professional Services and that’s more than we typically have by year end so that’s a wonderful piece of news so things are going in the right direction.

Lastly for FY22, in most years when we create the budget and are looking at grant revenue we derive from that revenue the indirect that funds our operations and Shared Services departments. We typically add some unknown grants that we will spend the year trying to achieve and we usually surpass this goal. This year was the most modest goal, to increase by $10,741 of indirect revenue. At this point we have yet to crack into that but we do have adjustments to our current grants and that was a positive move of $1,155 so again in the right direction. She would be surprised if we don’t achieve that by the end of this calendar year.

Regarding the vote, after the Board passed the FY22 budget last June, our SPED Director realized we neglected to discuss our evaluation rates. It’s actually perfunctory as the Board
voted on the hourly rate and there is no change to the number of hours for each evaluation, but it’s the Board’s responsibility to know and vote on the rates. Barbara asked if there were any questions.

Dan added that being on the Finance Committee, he did want to check in with the superintendents around the rates and how they felt about the increase and both of them were supportive and noted we should continue to look at those rates moving forward as we may be slightly underpricing.

There were no questions.

Collin Black motioned to approve the Special Education Evaluation Rates for FY22 as presented. Cathy Englehardt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Barbara thanked those joining the committees and let them know that she will send calendar invites for the Finance Committee meetings.

Presentation

Todd introduced the presentation and noted that for each Board meeting we’ll have a presentation from staff. For this meeting he asked Woody Clift to give a brief overview of the new DYS (Department of Youth Services) contract and process.

Woody thanked Todd for the opportunity to brief the Board on the new contract and negotiations with DYS. He started with a broad overview and some basic facts about where we stand.

- We were issued an award letter on June 15th for a proposal that spans four years of service to the Department of Youth Services and extends seventeen years.
- In this contract we’ll be acting as the lead agent, which is a change from prior contracts.
- We are in the final phases of negotiations and hope to wrap things up soon.
- The contract overall funds approximately 157 FTE. This includes, for example, teachers, teacher coordinators, and staff akin to guidance counselors.
- There are currently 38 programs across the state. These are placed across 5 regions of the state.
- We run a 180 day school year as well as a 30 day summer program.

That's a broad overview of the fundamentals of where we are in our contract and the service we provide. Woody then shared a story of a student who arrived in handcuffs at one of their facilities and through the hard work of dedicated teachers, ECC’s (Education & Career Counselors) and coaches and otherwise, this young man is scheduled to take his HiSet exams next week. Woody had shared a story of how he wasn’t a great test taker in high school. And this student said I’m not you and I plan to pass this thing. That confidence, sense of hope, and engagement happens through rapport and relentless support of dedicated quality educators, as
well as the team of caring adults that work with him. He hopes he can report back that this young man passed.

Next, Woody shared a couple of priorities that stand out in the new contract that are focus areas and a few of the strategies to implement them.

- At the core of our focus is our workforce. We need to recruit, develop, and retain an effective and diverse workforce that is reflective of the population we serve. And that begins with strengthening our compensation package and related incentives. It includes a strong professional development system consisting of between 5-7 days of PD for all teachers provided through our instructional coaches and other consultants. We also proposed a grow-your-own initiative to bring in more diverse candidates, some of whom may be working with our teachers as direct care staff and interested in the field of education. We hope to build that out over the next couple of years.
- We are committed to strong coupling with our CES diversity, equity and inclusion plan and retaining our workforce.
- Last and most importantly, is cultivating a stronger relationship with our union and non-union members.
- Another area of focus is our integration. We know our success is built on working collaboratively with our stakeholders, external partners, and partners that work inside the system. This includes working with SEIS, another contract we manage; an initiative around direct care workers who are serving as not quite paraprofessionals, but who work to support teachers and students in the classroom because an engaged classroom equals a safe classroom; as well as working with clinical staff.
- We are emphasizing a new curriculum that focuses on career exploration. This is going to incorporate clinical stuff in the classroom at least once a week to ensure language and treatment skills the kids are learning.
- We have been partnering with Break Free to offer opportunities for young people to engage in activities that are mastery focused and allows them to share their voice on a national stage and we continually have winners.
- Additionally we have arts residencies. A partnership with Petey Greene that offers in person tutoring. Wherever possible we engage in career exploration opportunities with partners and communities.
- Last area he wants to focus on is youth success. Our students are multi grade level - some are in high school and some are in college and some haven’t decided what to do and they are all in the same classroom together. Accordingly, we have designed four concentrations of study. Students can change their minds and often do - they can pursue a high school diploma or its equivalent. We also offer a range of career exploration opportunities. The state is moving to issue a contract for more robust career exploration in the future.
- We rely heavily on Google Suites for technology and in order to personalize it’s helped us make sure each student can make progress while they’re with us.
- Another area we need to focus on is curriculum review and modifications to make sure our curriculum provides opportunity to see themselves.
● We are also excited about the opportunity to partner with an organization on passion projects where young people, through a project-based approach, work on items in their community that they’d like to understand or research and then present a solution to either their family, peers, as well as caring adults in the program.
● Lastly, he wanted to emphasize parent and family engagement. Currently DYS hosts up to three engagement opportunities a year. The pandemic threw a wrench in that work. We have often deferred communication through clinical services and we want to be more engaged and invite parents, families and other caring adults to see what their child is experiencing and their growth and success so we plan to strengthen this.

Todd followed up that he is continually in awe of the work our staff and teachers do in DYS and SEIS. These educators serve students who need us the most and he is considerably proud of our work. For those of you who have been on the Board, it’s not a surprise there is a strain on relations with the union and his goal is to reset that and let them know that they are valued members of the Collaborative. It’s been a good start. He started in September with a meeting with union leadership and committing to first, ensuring every teacher has a safe, both physical and mental, working environment; second, to increasing and improving lines of communication so information flows back and forth so we can resolve issues while they stay small and problem solve how to best serve students; and third, to really work through collective bargaining to appropriately compensate them for their work. Essentially, we are bound by the limitations of the contract and have to negotiate both ways with DYS and the teachers. It adds a layer of complexity to the dialogue, but we need to do something because retention and recruitment is difficult across the Commonwealth. For us it can be a little more challenging because teachers don’t come out of educational programs saying I want to work for DYS so we have to be better at marketing and honoring teachers that are already there. We’ve had our first collective bargaining session and it was productive. He doesn’t see the union as an adversary. There is tension and that is the nature of the relationship but it doesn’t have to be strained. As long as you have open conversations and actively listen, progress can be made and that’s what he is committed to. By working together we can collaboratively resolve problems and support kids and staff. The first round of bargaining was extremely productive. It’s an opportunity to discuss concerns and codify that in language so there are no misunderstandings going forward. They have a second session coming up and he is looking forward to continuing a productive dialogue.

Don noted that he’s been on the negotiation subcommittee at Franklin County Tech and for the last four years they have used interest based bargaining and it went from adversarial to collaborative. And it’s the best bargaining he’s ever done. Todd responded that his approach is very similar. He went in there and the ground rule was to be civil and listen and both sides were open to it. In the past the Executive Director didn’t participate and the last round took about 30 sessions. He also noted that we’re not using an attorney - it is himself, Art Scott, Kim Grady, and Woody Clift who are handling it so the decision makers are sitting at the table. That way there is no delay and we talk about why something might not work and then negotiate. It’s an open and dynamic dialogue. In our first session, which was close to 2 hours, we were able to get through the entire two proposals and came to a resolution on a number of issues that we were able to
come to a tentative solution with. That might not be all encompassing, but it’s a very similar process to interest based bargaining.

David Lubbers added that he’s been talking to a lot of people and one of the concerns is why aren’t there more people of color teaching students. Todd responded that as part of his past life, he sat on a committee of the Deans of the teacher prep programs across the state and this is something they were looking at across the state on how to increase this. It’s challenging to create that pipeline for them to come up into the teaching ranks. One of the ways we can help alleviate that is alternative pathways to becoming an educator and that is what one of our programs is geared towards. That’s one way we can really look to keep a diverse teaching force. It’s a problem and we are actively trying to solve the problem.

Dan added that in the Board packet, under HR’s section of the Executive Director’s Report (page 45), Cheryl was good about giving information on some of the avenues that CES takes to attract a diverse pool of candidates. There are specific examples of what CES does to live the SJE platform.

Susan commented that the program revision Woody mentioned really sounds wonderful and she was very glad to hear they are using blended learning. She asked if there are 38 programs in the state, how many are in Western Massachusetts in Franklin and Hampshire counties? Also, he mentioned around 150 staff and that they are CES employees - is there any long term benefit liability that could fall to member districts for the program? The districts are struggling with funding and long-term liability so she wondered if there is any connection to the districts’ liability.

Barbara responded to the second question that because CES does not offer health benefits in retirement, we are not part of that process so there is no liability because we have not assumed one. That was eliminated about 30 years ago through a Board vote. It’s also why we’re not eligible to participate in GIC. Todd added that there is no exposure in respect to DYS and SEIS since the financial obligations are contained within the parameters of those grants. The school districts are isolated from any potential fiscal liability.

Woody responded to her first question that we have four programs in Springfield, one in Chicopee, two in Westfield and one in South Hadley. That’s only DYS, not SEIS. One program is temporarily closed but should open in the near future.

Dan thanked Todd and team for really approaching this contract in how we can think outside the box since it is complicated as teachers work for us but are being paid through the contract. He also added he thinks Woody is being modest and would like him to talk about how wonderful the program is and what we’re doing with wraparound services and lowering recidivism rates and how the CES operates with constant reflection, revision, and thinking how to improve on a continuous basis.
Woody responded that this has been almost a 15 year commitment in his professional career to DYS and the young people placed in DYS and improving outcomes. When we first started this contract there were very few teachers who were licensed, there were packets of materials for students to work through, and it was essentially babysitting. This is not to say good things weren’t happening but it was a different time. Now we have very qualified teachers working, we have brought partners in, we have artist residencies who work with teachers, students learn to express and work through their traumas in creative ways and do so in a safe space with teachers who care and direct care workers who care. They are able to share their raw experiences and heal together as well as to make progress academically. Our work is academia and social emotion and creating opportunities where kids may not have ever seen, like where they are going to college. The college programming they introduced 5-7 years ago is contagious. They have students who come in and say it’s not for them and then they talk to their peers and that peer says give it a try or they see their peers doing it and next thing you know everyone is doing it. We were originally on a cohort model with a partner college and had to tell a student if we didn’t have 5 students by the following week we wouldn’t be able to offer that class. This student said we would. Come Monday we had more than 5 students. We were able to get that class running and more students than that one were able to participate. He also wanted to give a shout out to ECC’s (Education Career Counselor’s) who do an enormous amount of work coming into sessions and then supporting them when they go back into the community, such as with FAFSA forms.

Woody thanked Dan and Todd for the opportunity to speak from the heart, he’s seen so much change and because they can make that change happen, they should also be compensated, like Todd said, for that work.

Mike wanted to share that he suspects he may be one of few people on the Board who has seen inside of a DYS facility, not involving his family, but Woody took them there and he still remembers the residential facility and it was very moving. It felt like a place of growth. As someone who has seen a lot of educational institutions, this place was a very supportive environment and the kids were very supportive of each other.

Dan added that while attending graduations for DYS, when some of them speak, to hear the transformations of someone who never expected even to graduate high school having hopes and dreams - it’s phenomenal. We have to remember these numbers are people with hopes and dreams and the outcomes are to make them whole educationally, socially, and emotionally. The programs are wonderful but continuously improving. Dan thanked Woody for his years of dedication. He also mentioned the art show, to which Woody responded that we are waiting to see if it’s in-person or virtual in the Spring. Dan thanked Woody for coming and all that he and his staff do.

**Executive Director Evaluation**

a. Process and Timeline
b. Goals for 2021 - 2022 (Vote Required)
c. Evaluation Committee
Dan explained that the CES board has set up a process and timeline and as we move through the process we'll come back to getting people involved. This evening we wanted Todd to talk about his goals and those goals we do need to vote on.

Todd presented his goals. When he was thinking about his goals for this year he was struggling as he’s brand new so his goals are to learn the ropes. He wants to thank Dan who helped solidify his thinking and for his recommendation for this year. It's to get to know the area and organization. He felt it was important to build his goals around the goals of the organization. He has four goals to present and that he will periodically provide updates on. There are also two key components to the Executive Director evaluation that have been used in the past and he fully believes are the most important part and that is a survey of member superintendents and a survey of staff. He believes in service leadership and serving the staff he leads and the member districts. Therefore it will be based on how they feel he’s doing and the areas where they say he can improve and where he does well and can build upon moving forward. At the end of the day that's the evaluation that means the most to him.

His current goals are based on the current strategic goals, but we are in the middle of the strategic process so his goals will look dramatically different based on those.

His current goals are:

1. **Meeting Member District Needs by collaborating to build needed strength and capacity based upon recognition of current and upcoming demands and trends in education.** We are looking at trying to build capacity even before the need is anticipated. This also means having discussions with the Board and your superintendents to see what you need and what we can provide to you to make things easier for you and your districts. He was a superintendent for nine years and we need to take care of our people and our superintendents. They are getting beat up right now. Not a day goes by that he doesn't talk to one to share advice and be a sounding board or just an ear to vent to. He is here for them and so is CES. If we don’t directly have something that is responsive we will strive to create it.

2. **Fostering the Success of Children, Youth and Families Placed at Risk by providing educational programs, policies and practices that foster the success of families, youth and children.** At its core our business is taking care of kids whatever that need may be. It's not just improving math scores - it may be ensuring they get a meal in the morning. We can work to identify those programs and look for grants.

3. **Developing Exemplary Educators through the delivery of high quality and distinctive professional development.** This is again one of our core missions - to build an experienced seasoned professional workforce. By developing professional development that is immediately responsive to the needs in the classroom so they can use it immediately. That is what we are trying to develop. We are deficient in Math professional development so that's one of our areas where we need to partner with Business Development, Barbara, and Angela to formulate a plan to see what we can do, such as hire staff to generate the business and fill that need.
4. Innovative Practices - identifying and implementing evidence-based and innovative practices in teaching and learning, technology, and the use of data. During his interview process he shared that when he became a superintendent he was asked what his goal was and it remains the same - to reform public education. As a collaborative we are uniquely positioned to drive that change, to identify new areas of exploration, to explore new avenues of development that may be outside the bounds of our norm, and to bring their passion into the classroom.

*Cathy Englehardt moved to approve the Executive Director goals for 2021 - 2022 as presented. Heather Hala Lord seconded the motion.*

Susan said she'll support them, but wanted to add that we have fewer than 10 small rural schools and the two counties that are member districts include some of the smallest towns and at least two have lost their school. There’s a lot of research that when schools close in rural areas the town suffers. When he mentioned the first goal of talking with superintendents, she hopes that someday CES can have a dedicated look at rural towns and those that want to have schools but are losing them. There are specific ways that CES can someday be helpful and make sure the tiny schools still thrive.

Todd asked her to give him a call as you don't get much smaller than Middlefield where he grew up. He knows the impact it had on the town and what it meant for him to change schools. For those small communities the elementary is the focal point. Susan added that there are just fewer than 10 left.

*A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Dan explained that the evaluation committee would help the process move along and make sure all of the information is gathered and put together. What you'll find unique about the process for the Executive Director is that the Board is evaluating the Executive Director, but we also have information you don’t normally get in districts. For example, there is a 360 evaluation done with the staff so we collect information from people who work directly with the Executive Director. We also survey superintendents and they work closely with the Executive Director so they also have an opportunity to have input in the evaluation and all of that information comes to the Board. We also look at the goals and any evidence as well as any artifacts that are presented. We collect that and then evaluate the Executive Director based on our own experiences and information coming from staff and superintendents. When we get closer to that, we'll talk more.

Cathy Englehardt mentioned that in the past we’ve had at least five members on the Evaluation Committee and she’d be happy to serve again. Mallory Ellis, Suzanne Crawford, Don Sluter, and Dan Hayes also volunteered to serve on the committee.

*Laura Fallon moved to approve the appointment of Cathy Englehardt, Mallory Ellis, Suzanne Crawford, Don Sluter, and Dan Hayes as members of the Evaluation Committee. Susan Hollins
seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report - Todd Gazda

- A copy of the Executive Director’s Report was included in the Board packet on pages 22-48 with additional details on pages 49-57.

Todd noted that he would like to start by saying he will keep it brief, recognizing where we are in the meeting as well as the fact that we provided a 27 page document of all of the exciting things we’re doing. He won’t go through it one by one as you can review it at your leisure. Todd proceeded to highlight the following:

- He thanked Karen, Cheryl, and Sarah for an incredible onboarding process. All of the Cabinet and staff have been wonderful and welcoming, but they really did a heavy lift where he had an opportunity to meet with each director and the staff of each department so he can really learn what the organization does and the individuals. It’s challenging coming into a new organization where we’re largely meeting like this. You have to be more thoughtful about forming those relationships.

- As he’s come on board one of the biggest shifts he had to make was from being a superintendent and running a school system to being an Executive Director essentially running a business. It’s a learning curve. We aren’t here to make money but to generate revenue to provide services and better more robust services to serve kids. That’s been a shift in his thinking. It’s exciting. He’s learning new things. After nine years as a superintendent you will never say you get comfortable and routine but you kind of know what to expect and how to respond. This is a new environment and he is finding it invigorating.

- We’re really looking to do everything we can so support our member districts. We have openings at Mt. Tom and HEC Academy and we can take up to 10 new students. This is important to realize because students are coming back into your buildings with trauma that is going to bubble up. We anticipate districts will run out of options on how to support their kids locally. Mt. Tom and HEC Academy are there if they need to provide additional support if they cannot do so locally.

- We are looking to promote and encourage use of our SJE trainers and facilitators. We have trainers that go in and work with districts in a variety of different ways - not just curriculum and training teachers, but it may be working with school committees on SJE issues. One of the things we’re doing is co-working with the community to facilitate a dialogue with groups of dramatically opposing viewpoints. This is a powerful tool to allow districts to gain control of their school committee meetings. They are not designed for an open dialogue so moving that to a facilitated discussion in the community with trained facilitators outside of that releases a pressure valve for people to feel they’ve been heard and can begin the process of discussions.

- In Professional Development, as Barbara pointed out, we are seeing an uptick in utilization of our services. Some of that is a reflection of federal money so districts have
finally had the opportunity to take on things that were on the backburner. We can then use that to diversify the services we offer. That work is ongoing.

- Personally he has committed to getting out of his office. This is hour 9.5 on Zoom for him today. He’s kind of Zoomed out. He’s committed to getting in the programs so people can see him and talk to him and get to know him. Again it comes back to relationships. So far he started visiting the Turner Falls 21st century program. In partnership with MMEP they did an amazing mural. One of his goals is to visit superintendents. His first one was in Hadley. And to pick her brain and use her as a sounding board. The most exciting visit was yesterday. One of the exciting things he gets to do is welcome teachers back just as he has for a number of years, this year in DYS and SEIS. For the first time ever he told them a story of a time when he was a teacher and about a student that impacted him. They connected on Facebook and got to see where his life was. He was a non-traditional student that he allowed in his AP class because of his passion. He talked about him (though changed his name) and how he impacted him deeply. After he gave that talk he got an email from one of his educators who also was a student in the AP Government class. This was the first time he’s told that story to a group of teachers. One of the other teachers in that program was also a Gateway graduate. It was great to see the program, see the kids, hear about their successes and challenges they face. So he can do a better job understanding them and agency in supporting them. He is no less busy but he does feel reinvigorated as a professional. He thanked everyone for serving on the Board and looks forward to our continued partnership.

Todd asked if there were any questions about anything in the packet.

Dan noted how you can see the breadth and depth of where the organization goes. Todd mentioned several local areas and there are several areas all over the country that the Collaborative has an impact on so reading that report you’ll find out where and why.

Dan brought up the comment in the SPED surrogate parent section about reaching out more and asked how we can do that. Karen let him know Megan is in the meeting, but it is a brand new program and we are really excited to have it with us. Megan introduced herself and explained that she’s the director and has been with the program since 2004 and the director since 2012. One of the things she’s been trying to do more lately is more outreach to organizations and agencies for students who are eligible but may not know they are eligible. She’s looking to get to youth that may not have DCF (Department of Children & Families) involvement, such as unaccompanied youth minors and students involved in DYS but maybe not DSF. This may not be a lot of students, but they are some of the most vulnerable youth. She’s been doing outreach to homeless liaisons and SEIS just to introduce them to the program and who we serve. Dan commented that as school committee members, we can help inform school committees and superintendents of this program so if there are students in need we can try and help advocate. Megan said she is more than happy to talk to people and they do training as well.
David Lubbers expressed interest and Susan asked if they need surrogate parents. Megan said they are always looking for surrogate parents, especially in the western part of the state, and noted that it’s a volunteer based agency. They also partner with districts if there is someone who is trained and you work well with, they are always happy to continue that partnership. For instance, if we have a student for that school they will call that volunteer that has a good relationship with the school to see if they are interested.

Dan then asked about the MMEP (MA Migrant Education Program) screener that they are encouraging districts to use and how CES is communicating that to districts. Karen responded that one of the things Todd is working towards is raising this issue with superintendents. The screener exists through the website attached to ours. The team can then determine eligibility very quickly and we are seeing an increase in eligible students. Dan concluded that it is important we are all aware that there are programs that can help and that we communicate with our districts.

**Topics of Board Interest**

Dan explained that Todd and himself work with Sarah to craft an agenda so if there is ever a topic of interest, please feel free to email any one of us. For instance, the question on Charter school expansion was a hot topic and while CES did not take a position, we looked at data and brought that information to state legislators and communities so people understand what will happen and how that will impact small and rural districts. CES has a role to play in many different ways and there really is strength in numbers. Todd has also been looking at a possibility of bringing other member districts on working with CES. There is a need in the Berkshires for instance. CES worked hard to open a school in North Adams to provide SPED services that were the best quality educational services but at a more affordable price so surrounding communities could send students. We helped them open this academy because they didn’t have the capacity to open it and now they run it themselves. So there are many ways we can look to see how we can expand, provide quality services, and help communities and families. Please feel free to engage in anything you feel or see and encourage superintendents to stay connected and informed.

Todd asked the Board to please reach out if you have a question or something on your mind, if you just want to get to know him he will make time and is interested to hear your concerns and see what we can do to address them.

Cathy brought up would love to meet in-person.

Collin wanted to give a tip for anyone who feels they need to have documents and the Zoom meeting on the same screen and are switching back and forth - two monitors is the easiest thing to handle this. If it's a cost problem he was just at Goodwill and there were four reasonably priced monitors. It's a really easy thing if anyone wants tips for how to do this he'd be happy to help. Dan asked Sarah to send an email to the Board with his contact information.
David Lubbers commented that he is pleased to meet everyone, you’re a very good inspiration for him and his school.

Cathy asked about the list of members and superintendents. Sarah directed the Board to where to find it on our website. Dan thanked everyone for their support of Todd and with onboarding. It shows when we work as a team we can show how strong and loud we can be.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.