

**Minutes of the Meeting of the New Jersey State Board of Education**  
**In the Conference Room on the First Floor**  
**100 River View Executive Plaza**  
**Trenton, NJ**  
**January 7, 2026**

**Presiding:** Kathy Goldenberg, President

**Secretary:** Kevin Dehmer, Commissioner

**Present Constituting a Quorum**

Dr. Nedd Johnson  
Dr. Ronald Butcher  
Mr. Arcelio Aponte  
Ms. Mary Bennett  
Dr. Claudine Keenan  
Mr. Ahmed Shehata  
Mr. James Williams

**Absent**

Dr. Joseph Ricca  
Mr. Jack Fornaro  
Ms. Mary Beth Berry  
Ms. Jeanette Peña

**Convening**

State Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg convened the public meeting at 9:15 a.m. with the reading of the statement pertaining to the public session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

The Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the State Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Department of Education (Department), Secretary of State's Office and notice also having been given to the State House Press Corps, the Governor's Office and the State Board agenda subscribers.

And seeing there was a quorum, the meeting of January 7, 2026, was called to order.

**Adjourn to Executive Session**

President Goldenberg then read the resolution pertaining to the executive session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**Whereas**, in order to protect the personal privacy and to avoid situations wherein the public interest might be disserved, the Open Public Meetings Act permits public bodies to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which certain matters are discussed, now therefore be it

**Resolved**, that consistent with the provision of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12.b, the State Board Education will now adjourn to executive session to discuss personnel and legal issues. The State Board immediately adjourned to executive session on January 7, 2026.

## **Reconvening**

President Goldenberg reconvened the open meeting at 10:25 a.m. with the reading of the resolution pertaining to the resumption of the public session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**Whereas**, consistent with the provision of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12.b, the State Board will now adjourn from executive session to resume the open session of this meeting.

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by State Board member Ronald Butcher.

## **Swearing in of State Board Member(s)**

President Goldenberg introduced the Honorable Robert Lougy, a judge of the New Jersey Superior Court in Mercer County. Judge Lougy administered the oath of office to State Board member Mary Bennett of Essex County, and new State Board member James C. Williams, IV of Camden County. Ms. Bennett's term expires June 30, 2030. Mr. Williams' term also expires June 30, 2030.

## **Welcome**

President Goldenberg stated the State Board meetings are accessible to the public for viewing on YouTube Channel and would like to advise that YouTube provides readily accessible language translation options for closed captioning. She further stated if you are viewing this simulcast now, you can use the settings option in YouTube for information about sub-titles, auto translations and closed captioning in multiple languages.

President Goldenberg also announced that former member and past president of the State Board of Education Maud Dahme was in audience today.

## **Approval of Minutes of the Meeting**

On a motion duly seconded and carried, the State Board members approved the minutes of the public meeting conducted on December 3, 2025.

## **President's Reports**

### **Public Testimony**

President Goldenberg stated that the State Board will receive testimony from registered members of the public on any educational topic of their choice today as January is an Open Topic Public Testimony Session. She stated the proposed amendments to Chapter 9B related to school nurse endorsements also is a topic for January. She further stated that she, Vice President Nedd Johnson, State Board members Ron Butcher, Ahmed Shehata, and Claudine Keenan, will hear public testimony today.

President Goldenberg stated the State Board will also be receiving regional testimony on the draft revisions to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. She stated the first session will be in the southern region on Tuesday, January 13, at Camden County College in the Connector Building. She further stated State Board members Jeanette Peña and Claudine Keenan are scheduled for public testimony and registration for this session closes tomorrow at noon.

President Goldenberg stated the second session will be in the northern region on Wednesday, January 28, at Essex County Donald M. Payne Sr. School of Technology in the Father D. Leahy Auditorium. She stated State Board members Mary Bennett and Ahmed Shehata are scheduled for public testimony and registration for this session closes January 22 at noon.

President Goldenberg stated the third session will be in the central region session and will be held here at the Department on February 4. She stated State Board members Arcelio Aponte, Claudine Keenan and Joseph Ricca and she are scheduled for public testimony and registration for this session will close at noon on January 29.

### **Permanent Student Representative**

President Goldenberg stated that this year's student representative to the board is Kailynn DuRose, a junior at East Brunswick High School in Middlesex County, and that her advisor is Bonnie Benkard.

Miss DuRose spoke about end of semester exams and potential solutions for alternative formats that would be beneficial to students.

### **State Board Committee Reports**

There were no committee meetings reports.

### **Resolution in Honor of New Jersey School Board Recognition Month**

President Goldenberg requested that the State Board adopt a ceremonial Resolution in Honor of New Jersey School Board Recognition Month. The State Board unanimously adopted the following resolution read by State Board member Claudine Keenan recognizing January as School Board Recognition Month.

#### **Resolution in Honor of New Jersey School Board Recognition Month**

**Whereas**, the New Jersey State Board of Education has established rigorous standards through its promulgation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, which set the expectations of academic achievement for 1.3 million public schoolchildren; and

**Whereas**, New Jersey's locally elected and appointed boards of education play a vital role in ensuring that their local school districts meet state standards and adhere to state and federal education statute and regulations, with the goal of preparing all students for college and the workplace, thereby enabling them to compete in a global economy; and

**Whereas**, New Jersey's 5,000 non-partisan district board of education members and charter school trustees are public servants who dedicate their time, without pay or benefit, to the oversight of school district operations, through sound financial practices and comprehensive policies on curriculum, staffing and other areas to ensure the well-being and academic achievement of all students in the district; and

**Whereas**, local boards of education, in conjunction with state education officials and local educators, have built a foundation of success that has led to New Jersey's status as a leader in student achievement, as evidenced by the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores; and

**Whereas**, the New Jersey School Boards Association has declared January 2026 to be School Board Recognition Month; now, therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the New Jersey State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education recognize the contributions of the state's local boards of education to the academic success of public school students and expresses its sincere appreciation to local board of education members for their continued focus on the achievement of children throughout New Jersey; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the New Jersey State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education encourage qualified New Jersey citizens to consider serving as members of their local boards of education.

### **Recognition of N.J. Education Professionals**

President Goldenberg presented opening remarks to the honorees and special guests invited in recognition of New Jersey's exemplary education professionals which included Dr. Raymond González, Superintendent of the Year, Ms. Corey Lowell, School Business Administrator of the Year, and Ms. Gisela Ciancia and Mr. Tony Cattani, Visionary Principals of the Year.

### **Commissioner's Reports**

Commissioner Dehmer stated there are no Commissioner's reports this month.

### **Items for Consideration**

*\*Items scheduled for a vote are marked with an asterisk.*

#### **\*A. Appointments**

- Unanimously adopted the following resolution to approve the appointment, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:4-32-35 and N.J.A.C. 6A:2-1.1 et seq.

#### **Resolution for Appointment**

#### **State District Superintendent for the State-Operated School District of the City of Camden**

**Whereas**, on June 5, 2013, the New Jersey State Board of Education issued an Administrative Order creating the State-Operated School District in the City of Camden effective June 25, 2013; and

**Whereas**, upon State intervention, and pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-15 and N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-15.1, the Commissioner of Education may recommend to the State Board of Education the appointment of a State District Superintendent of schools in the State-Operated School District of the City of Camden; and

**Whereas**, Dr. Davida Coe-Brockington, was appointed Acting State District Superintendent on July 2, 2025, while a comprehensive search for a full-time State District Superintendent was undertaken; and

**Whereas**, after a national and comprehensive search for a new State District Superintendent, the Commissioner of Education has identified Alfonso Q. Llano Jr. as the candidate best suited to serve as the Camden State District Superintendent; and

**Whereas**, the Commissioner of Education hereby recommends the appointment of Alfonso Q. Llano to serve as the Camden State District Superintendent; now therefore be it

**Resolved**, that, subject to an employment contract, the New Jersey State Board of Education hereby approves the appointment of Alfonso Q. Llano Jr. as the State District Superintendent of the State-Operated School District of the City of Camden effective March 1, 2026.

**\*B. Certification of School Districts**

- There were no districts for certification.

**\*C. Resolution to Accept Donated Funds**

- Adopted the following resolution approving the acceptance of donated funds to the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:4-26.

**Resolution to Accept Donated Funds**

**Whereas**, the New Jersey Department of Education, Marie H Katzenbach School for the Deaf is the recipient of donations from Paul N. Gould and Lou Parnas; and

**Whereas**, N.J.S.A. 18A:4-26 requires the approval of the New Jersey State Board of Education in order for the Commissioner of Education to accept donated funds; and

**Whereas**, donations were made by Paul N. Gould and Lou Parnas in the amounts of \$50 and \$100, respectively. These funds are intended to provide the Department of Education, Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf student activity resources which are for the sole use of supporting student activities such as field trips, yearbooks and student clubs; now therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the New Jersey State Board of Education approves the acceptance of the donated funds to the aforementioned specified purposes.

**\*D. State Board of Examiners and Certification**

- Approved for publication in the *New Jersey Register*, the amendments to the rules pertaining to the military science endorsement at N.J.A.C. 6:9B-7.5, 14.3 and 14.4, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:4-15 and 18A:26-2 and 2h; and N.J.A.C. 1:30-4.2(a)3,

**Work Session**

There was no work session.

**New Business**

There was no new business.

**Adjournment**

On a motion duly seconded and carried, the State Board of Education adjourned its January 7, 2026, public meeting at 11:43 a.m.

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Kevin Dehmer, Commissioner  
Secretary, N.J. State Board of Education