

## Minutes of Mississippi Board of Education Meeting

October 15, 2020

The members of the Mississippi Board of Education met in a regularly scheduled Board meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 15, 2020, via teleconference and video means pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-5 for the purpose of conducting the Board meeting.

The meeting was available to the public by live stream.<sup>1</sup> Board members present: Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman (Central High School, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Jackson, Mississippi), Dr. Angela Bass (Central High School, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Jackson, Mississippi), Dr. Jason S. Dean (Central High School, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Jackson, Mississippi), Dr. Karen J. Elam (Central High School, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Jackson, Mississippi), and Mr. Glen East (Ellisville, Mississippi). Student Representatives: Mr. Omar G. Jamil (Hernando, Mississippi) and Ms. Amy Zhang (Starkville, Mississippi). Dr. Carey M. Wright was present at Central High School, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Jackson, Mississippi. Board member absent: Dr. John R. Kelly.

I. Dr. Jason S. Dean called the Board meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Dr. Dean noted that the meeting of the Board of Education was being held via teleconference and video means pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-5 and that the notice of this meeting included the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting. Dr. Dean also stated that an audio recording was being made of the meeting, this meeting is being live streamed and that a quorum of the Board existed at the locations stated for the purpose of conducting a meeting through teleconference and video means.

II. Dr. Jason S. Dean led the Pledge of Allegiance and Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman gave the Invocation.

III. On a motion by Dr. Karen J. Elam, seconded by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, the Board voted unanimously to approve the September 24, 2020, Board meeting minutes.

IV. On a motion by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, seconded by Dr. Karen J. Elam, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

V. Dr. Carey M. Wright gave the following report as the State Superintendent of Education:

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the recommendations of the CDC and the Mississippi Department of Health, gatherings should be restricted to no more than 10 people. To protect the public health, the State Board of Education met via teleconference and video means and the meeting was available to the public via video means (live stream). The SBE exercised their authority granted by the Governor in his Proclamation of a State of Emergency. See Miss. Code Ann. § 33-15-31.

- Dr. Wright stated that the National Assessment Governing Board continues to meet since the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is scheduled to be administered in spring of 2021 but not sure if it will be a full scaled NAEP. Dr. Wright stated that she will keep the Board posted.
- Dr. Wright stated that she met with the Teacher’s Advisory Council which has about 400 members and it was a positive meeting. Dr. Wright stated they are thrilled about getting new devices, connectivity, and professional development.
- Dr. Wright stated the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast Governing Board met, she is the Vice-Chair, and the discussion was on the different pieces of research that Florida State University is producing. Dr. Wright stated they produce a lot of research for the states that are a part of the REL Southeast and that is a good place to go to get the latest information.
- Dr. Wright stated the Science of Learning and Development of the National Advisory Committee met and talked about future actions around the science of learning and development and what could be done as a national advisory group to advise other states in the nation.
- Dr. Wright stated that she had two interviews. Dr. Wright stated that she was on the Paul Gallo Radio Show where they discussed Mississippi Connects and she was interviewed by Education Week who wanted to know the status of Mississippi’s reopening and any other future projects that should be looked at as the year proceeds.
- Dr. Wright stated that she had three different presentations this past month: (1) the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi with the focus on early childhood; (2) MDE held a virtual meeting with Kentucky with everybody from K-12, institutions of higher learning, and legislators and their whole focus was how does Kentucky get to where MS is and what was the overall pre-K through grade three strategy; and (3) a webinar for Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) where discussions surrounded accountability and what would accountability look like across the nation this year. Dr. Wright stated they had assessment on the first day and accountability on the second day.
- Dr. Wright introduced Mr. John Kraman to give an update on Mississippi Connects. Mr. Kraman stated that they have been putting out information on Mississippi Connects and the Senate Bill 3044 which is the devices, software, and professional development. Mr. Kraman stated that they have released information around the House Bill 1788 which is the connectivity money and my team and Dr. Gavin’s team have been working with districts to get that information out. Mr. Kraman stated that the allocations have been distributed to the public schools, private schools, and the Choctaw tribal schools. Mr. Kraman stated that they have been working with Mr. Pete Smith’s team regarding communications not only with media and legislators who have been very excited to go to schools in their districts where the devices have been arriving. Mr. Kraman stated they are

communicating right now about a truck that is on its way to Canton and the legislators are there awaiting the arrival of the devices. Mr. Kraman stated they have been putting a lot of information out on the Mississippi Connects web page including the webinar today about the statewide filter that has been put up for this program so that all districts can put any devices purchased through this program and the devices they already have so all traffic can be protected to keep the students safe online. Mr. Kraman stated the big news is the deliveries. Mr. Kraman gave an update on the deliveries from CDW-G (Chromebooks and Windows laptops) and Apple products (MacBooks and iPads). Mr. Kraman stated that all but about seven percent of the Chromebooks are in the United States. Mr. Kraman stated that 205,000 Chromebooks were ordered and over 136,000 are in the United States and already have delivered 55,000 units. Mr. Kraman stated that on the Windows laptops there are a total of 65,000 and we have a little over 60 percent of these and the remaining devices are on their way and should be here in a couple of weeks. Mr. Kraman stated that 50,000 Apple products were ordered and about half of these are in the United States now and the other devices should arrive soon. Mr. Kraman stated that after next week twenty percent will be delivered to the districts. Mr. Kraman stated that the devices come in and must be enrolled in the various software solutions. Mr. Kraman stated that the contract delivery date is November 20, 2020, but he is hoping that most devices will be delivered by end of October or first of November. Mr. Kraman stated the reimbursement deadline is December 1, 2020. Mr. Kraman stated that Apple updated the iPads that were ordered to the latest versions, with no paperwork from MDE. Mr. Kraman stated that he and Mr. Pete Smith, Chairman Bennett and several members of the House visited the warehouse and they got to see and put their hands on the devices that are slated for the districts in which they represent. Mr. Kraman stated they had a chance to walk through the operation and interact with the senior executives from TIG which is a partner company with CDW-G to manage the last mile of the configuration. Mr. Kraman stated that senior leadership has come to Mississippi and set up shop to make sure we are maximizing our efficiency and are trying to get to 10,000 units processed a day. Mr. Kraman stated that they have thought through everything so that when the devices arrive at the schools, they are ready to be used.

Dr. Dean asked that when the devices are delivered to make it a big deal with the media on the steps of the Capitol. Dr. Dean asked Mr. Glen East to give an update about how this program is being received and are there any issues that need to be addressed. Mr. East stated that everyone was excited about getting the devices and getting them set up. Mr. East stated that they like the early deadline and they have done an outstanding job getting this process in place as quickly as possible. Mr. East stated that the superintendents outside of Mississippi have said that Mississippi is ahead of many of them so thank you for that work and the paperwork as well. Mr.

East stated kudos to that Department. Dr. Dean stated that when Jackson Public Schools are to receive their devices to please invite the Board and legislators to the delivery.

- Dr. Wright introduced Ms. Patricia Guilfoyle to give an update on the work done on the Mississippi Connects Family Training and Resources digital learning plan. Ms. Guilfoyle stated that the work was done in collaboration with Ms. Corie Jones and Ms. Jean Cook in the Office of Communications and Government Relations and Ms. Melissa Banks in the Office of Academic Education. Ms. Guilfoyle stated that one of the benefits of the Mississippi Connects initiative is the professional development for teachers, families, and school staff to support device and Internet usage at home and in school provides needed support for success. Ms. Guilfoyle stated that family was chosen instead of parents because it includes parents, caregivers, grandparents, and other relatives that assist students. Ms. Guilfoyle stated the districts have been provided the tools to host a virtual family night to introduce those resources to the family on a local level. Ms. Guilfoyle stated a web page has been created for families to find general information about this initiative along with resources, tips, and videos. Ms. Guilfoyle stated that in the tool kit there is a sample agenda and it is like a meeting in a box including a PowerPoint framework, videos, and social media posts to promote the virtual meeting. Ms. Guilfoyle showed a tip sheet for supporting student learning at home. Ms. Guilfoyle showed a virtual training video for families with tips of how to help their children at home.
- Dr. Wright recognized Dr. Jason S. Dean for being selected as one of the Top 50 Most Influential in Mississippi for 2020. Dr. Wright congratulated him on this recognition.
- Dr. Wright stated the Spotlight for this Board meeting is “Mississippi Connects”. Dr. Wright stated that this video was created to tell the first chapter of the Mississippi Connects story and to give you a behind-the-scenes look at all the logistics and coordination that has gone into the first phase of device deliveries. Dr. Wright stated that by the end of this week, more than 46,000 laptops will have been delivered to Mississippi school districts, and about 300,000 more are being prepped for delivery as we speak. Dr. Wright stated that this has truly been an all-hands-on-deck effort. Dr. Wright stated you will see in this video why this project is so important to the students and teachers of Mississippi.

VI. Dr. Jason S. Dean, Chair of the State Board, gave the following report.

- Dr. Dean welcomed the two new Board members, Dr. Angela Bass and Mr. Glen East. Dr. Dean gave them an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Board. Dr. Bass stated that she is a native Mississippian and she is from Tunica County and attended high school in DeSoto County. Dr. Bass stated she currently lives in Jackson. Dr. Bass stated she has been a teacher in both Tunica and DeSoto County School Districts. Dr. Bass stated

she was an administrator in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. Bass stated that she had served as Policy Director at Mississippi First. Dr. Bass is currently Executive Director of Mississippi Early Learning Alliance and she stated that she has a great passion and is an advocate for early education. Dr. Bass stated that she has two small children, one a four-year-old and the other one is in the second grade at Jackson Public Schools. Dr. Bass stated that she is excited to be a Board member. Mr. Glen East stated that he grew up in south Mississippi and he attended Meridian Public Schools, Hattiesburg Public Schools, and Gulfport Public Schools. Mr. East stated that he graduated from Gulfport High School and graduated from Millsaps College and the University of Southern Mississippi. Mr. East stated that he brought the Career Pathways into the state and it is great to be working with a team of individuals in Gulfport that have worked to get these initiatives off the ground and move forward. Mr. East stated that he was glad to be a Board member and thanked the Governor for the appointment. Mr. East stated you will learn that after everything we do, I will ask the final question “is this best for children”? Mr. East stated that these are his watch words and he is looking forward to working with the Board on the strategic plan and helping grow the state’s education.

- Dr. Dean read an e-mail from Ms. Paula Brown, a teacher from Water Valley High School, who thanked him and the Board for their guidance during this time. Dr. Dean stated that Ms. Brown asked the he give a gold star to her principal, Mr. Drew Pitcock, at Water Valley High School for his true leadership during this time for her and the other staff. Dr. Dean stated that this is what it is all about and this is what our folks are going through.

## VII. Report of Student Representatives

Mr. Omar G. Jamil stated that he has been talking to his school and other schools across the state and that the Board needs to let schools and counties know that it is not an embarrassment nor is it a failure on their part if a school must go virtual if they have been going traditional for the time being. Mr. Jamil stated that the teachers and students are doing great, but the stress is starting to build up. Mr. Jamil stated that the mental health aspect is starting to build up with the work loads that are starting to increase with having to deal with either virtual and traditional or just traditional or virtual. Mr. Jamil stated that he wants the schools to know that it is okay to go back to virtual if you are still in school for the time being. Mr. Jamil stated that the teachers and students are buckling under the weight with the struggles that they have been going through, but if the State Board can just let everyone know that what we are doing as teachers, students, and administrators is amazing but just knowing that at a certain point going back to virtual is an option even if only for two or three weeks. Mr. Jamil stated that the work of the State Board has been phenomenal with delivering iPads and computers to every student or will be delivered to every student soon. Mr. Jamil stated that the services provided by the State Board and by the

companies of the State Board to get people adjusted to virtual with these learning opportunities has been doing great. Mr. Jamil stated that the only thing he noticed still is the mental health aspects which also comes from stress outside of school but a lot of it comes from stress in school. Mr. Jamil stated that just letting schools know that going back to virtual and communicating with the teachers and students what they believe to be the best outlook and future for the school even if less than a month that is really important.

Dr. Dean stated that on the Consent Agenda today is an item to move forward with the Social Emotional Learning Standards. Dr. Wright stated that MDE is continuing to work with the medical professionals to expand the telehealth and teletherapy and this is ongoing.

Ms. Amy Zhang stated that expanding on what Mr. Jamil said about mental health so it is especially relative right now because of COVID besides the fact that we need to show interaction in order to thrive it is also harder for teachers and counselors to check on people when they are behind a screen or a mask. Ms. Zhang stated that many of her friends and classmates have struggled with adjusting not just through lifestyle but also their mindset during this pandemic. Ms. Zhang stated that many people that she has talked to including Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) students from all over the state of Mississippi have said that online school has taken a toll on their mental health. Ms. Zhang stated that isolation because of COVID can cause and exacerbate many mental health problems especially with COVID when we experiment with finding the right balance of classwork, homework, and free time and not giving students enough time for ourselves can make us feel even overwhelmed and alone. Ms. Zhang stated that the counselors and teachers at MSMS and residential staff know about our struggles and are even making efforts to reach out and connect with us online which we all appreciate, but sometimes it seems there are too many students and not enough faculty even without COVID there is still a problem with not keeping up with every student consecutively. Ms. Zhang stated that from what she has read about the MDE policies for academic school counselors and support services the focus on the teacher facility side seems to be on training teachers and she thinks that is necessary but she also thinks that too much training can shift a teachers time and energy away from the education which should be their overall goal. Ms. Zhang stated that not all students have a teacher that they can trust and they can confide in. Ms. Zhang stated that she has researched and found out there are organizations like Counseling Today in colleges in Georgia State University and the University of Massachusetts that recommend that counselors have more responsibility on checking in with students; however, school counselors can be busy with other responsibilities like helping with college applications, they also recommend that schools with enough resources hire mental health counselors. Ms. Zhang stated that they can focus on mental health while school counselors can work on other responsibilities. Ms. Zhang stated that not all schools can do this but those that can help build

stronger relations and trust between mental health counselors and students. Ms. Zhang stated that something else she checked upon goes back to an earlier report about training parents to help their students as well to check in on their child's wellness and mental health and she agrees that it is very important and she is glad that the Board recognizes that as well. Ms. Zhang stated that even though COVID has taken a toll on the mental health of some students we know that teachers and counselors are trying their best to help us through it and we are frequently reminded that we are not alone to reach out if we ever need help. Ms. Zhang stated that she likes that the MSMS counselors are checking in on students on one on one and she really appreciated that. Ms. Zhang stated that if MSMS had a mental health counselor they could check in on students more frequently but she knows that might not be possible right now. Ms. Zhang stated that teachers and counselors are trying their best under these circumstances and the interactions that we get from them is critical for having a sense of community, having people support you, and keeping our mental health afloat.

VIII. There were no reports on State Board of Education Subcommittee meetings.

IX. Discussion and/or Approval of Board Items

01. Information: Introduction to Mississippi Connects Professional Development for 1:1 Deployment [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Nathan Oakley)

Dr. Nathan Oakley presented information on the Introduction to the Mississippi Connects Professional Development for 1:1 Deployment.

02. Action: Approval of the MDE Contracts [Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)

02.A. Action: Contract with GCR, Inc., to provide maintenance and support to the Division of Purchasing and Food Distribution Automated Food Purchasing System (APS) [Goal 1 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)

02.B. Action: Contract with Hanover Research Council, LLC to provide proprietary research information for education [Goal 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Nathan Oakley)

02.C. Action: Approval of Pupil Transportation Equipment Bids [Goals 1, 2, and 3 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

02.D. Action: Renew contract with The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. for the Fiscal Year 2021 for the Mississippi Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for

Statewide Assessment and Accountability [Goals 1, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, seconded by Dr. Karen J. Elam, the Board unanimously approved items 02.A., 02.B., 02.C., and 02.D. (copy attached).

03. Action: Approval of the MDE grant awards [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)

03.A. Action: Approval of grant awards for the School Nurse Intervention Grants, as identified in the Mary Kirkpatrick-Haskell, Mary Sprayberry School Nurse Program, Miss. Code Ann. § 37-14-3 and funded by legislative appropriation [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)

On a motion by Dr. Karen J. Elam, seconded by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, the Board unanimously approved item 03.A. (copy attached).

04. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of monthly expenditures for the Mississippi School of the Arts (Nathan Oakley)
- B. Approval of Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science Advisory Board appointments (Nathan Oakley)
- C. Approval of methodology to award grant funds to local school districts for the CTE Non-traditional Participation Grant Programs (Nathan Oakley)
- D. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To establish the Mississippi K-12 Social Emotional Learning Standards (Nathan Oakley)
- E. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process: To revise Process Standard 24 in Miss. Admin Code: 7-24, *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2020* and Process Standard 20 in Miss. Admin Code: 7-163, *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2020* (Paula Vanderford)
- F. Approval of educator preparation programs as recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification, and Licensure and Development September 11, 2020 (Paula Vanderford)

- G. Approval to establish Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 99.2, State Board Policy Chapter 99, Rule 99.2 – School Calendar Approval and Modification (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Nathan Oakley)

On a motion by Dr. Karen J. Elam, seconded by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, the Board unanimously approved items A., B., C., D., E., F., and G. (copy attached).

X. Consideration of Executive Session

Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman moved that the Board consider making a closed determination of the need to go into Executive Session. Mr. Glen East seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a vote of 4 to 0. Dr. Jason S. Dean asked Dr. Carey M. Wright, Ms. Erin Meyer, and the Executive Leadership Team to remain in the Executive Session.

Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, then moved that the Board go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(a) and (k) related to: (1) the approval of the appointment of an Educ-Bureau Director to serve as the Director of Compulsory School Attendance and Enforcement and (2) discussion of strategy session or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, litigation, or issuance of an appealable order, and investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(b) and (d) related to former MDE employees.

**Minutes of the Executive Session**

During the Executive Session, the Board discussed personnel matters in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(a) and (k) related to: (1) the approval of the appointment of an Educ-Bureau Director to serve as the Director of Compulsory School Attendance and Enforcement and (2) discussion of strategy session or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, litigation, or issuance of an appealable order, and investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(b) and (d) related to former MDE employees.

On a motion by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, seconded by Mr. Glen East, the Board voted 4 to 0 to come out of Executive Session.

The public came back into the Board meeting and Dr. Dean reported the action taken during the Executive Session.

1. On a motion by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, seconded by Dr. Karen J. Elam, the Board voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Dr. LaRenda J. Harrison

as an Educ-Bureau Director to serve as the Director of Compulsory School Attendance and Enforcement at a salary of \$92,000.00.

XI. State Board of Education

1. No report on meetings attended.
2. On a motion by Dr. Karen J. Elam, seconded by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, the Board unanimously approved for Dr. Jason S. Dean to attend the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) virtual meeting where he will present Mississippi Connects next week and permission to pay a fee of \$125.00.

XII. Other Business

Dr. Dean stated that the November Board meeting will be held on November 12, 2020, at the Central High School Building starting at 10:00 a.m.

- XIII. On a motion by Dr. Karen J. Elam, seconded by Ms. Rosemary G. Aultman, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

Approved:

  
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Jason S. Dean, Chair  
Mississippi Board of Education

  
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Carey M. Wright  
Executive Secretary  
Mississippi Board of Education