

Home Education Advisory Council (HEAC) Meeting, April 21, 2022

Granite State College, 25 Hall St., Concord, NH

In physical attendance: Jen Pereira (co-presiding), Amanda Weeden (co-presiding), Mike Koski, Tim Carney, Sarah Cheek, Heather Barker (joined late)

In remote attendance by Zoom: Catie McLaughlin, Allison O'Neil, Althea Barton

Call to order motion 3:31 pm by Amanda, 2nd Sarah

Motion to approve minutes of February 17, 2022 by Amanda , 2nd Sarah

Chair's Report – Discussed meeting schedules to accommodate representatives. Will need a quorum in June to approve annual report.

Member Reports

- AAS, Sarah Cheek - Expanding facility to accommodate more students. Wants to make program more affordable.
- SCHE, Catie McLaughlin – Questions about YES scholarship that NH DOE has released. Families are told that homeschoolers qualify, but on the website there are only private schools on the drop down menu.
- NHHC, Althea – Question about whether equal access laws require public schools to inform homeschoolers of programs/activities, or only to allow access to them. Mike will research.
- CUHE, Jen – Confusion about new EFA program and distinction between homeschooling and other methods of education.
- GSHE, Amanda – Seeing a steady stream of families interested in home education, trending toward high school level.
- HAHG, Allison – Question about scholarship access. Is there a way for homeschoolers to access all community scholarships on one platform. Seeing interest in collaborative and online learning.
- NH School Administrators Assoc., Heather – Not present for member report.
- NH Assoc. of School Principals, Mike –Schools are working to get kids back up to speed after covid/remote learning. Nothing to report on homeschooling.
- NH DOE, Tim Carnie (Shireen's replacement) - Administrator of Educational Pathways - Administrator of Educational Pathways which include homeschooling, Learn Everywhere, nonpublic school approval, and innovation schools.

Legislative update - Rep. Erika Layon, prime sponsor of HB 1663 – Bill passed in the House. It removes the 40th percentile requirement, clarifies that portfolios are private, school boards shall have policy for equal access, and other amendments still in progress. The bill's sponsors are proposing to amend the bill further to eliminate the DOE's rulemaking authority over home education and allowing the current home ed rules to remain in effect until they expire. If HB

1663 passes, Erica said that during the upcoming years, the legislature would look at how some of the important parts of the home education rules might be added to the law. Senate Education Committee is scheduled to take it up next Tuesday.

Commissioner's Report – not present

Old Business

Equal application of requirements and rights to everyone notifying to home educate under RSA 193-A - A question was raised concerning whether the parent of a student participating in the Prenda Community Learning Pods Program who has sent a home education notification for their child under RSA 193-A must maintain a portfolio and provide for an annual educational evaluation. Prenda Community Learning Pods are complete educational programs that include student evaluations, so must parents do more than required by Prenda? The discussion surrounding this question was continued from the February HEAC meeting with the resulting following motion.

Motion: The council recommends the following clarification. All parents who send a home education notification for a child according to RSA 193-A should comply with the requirements of 193-A as their chosen pathway to fulfill compulsory attendance including the following.

1. "The parent shall maintain a portfolio of records and materials relative to the home education program." RSA 193-A:6 (I)
2. "The parent shall provide for an annual educational evaluation. . . ." RSA 193-A:6 (II)

Motion proposed by Jen, 2nd Sarah, all in favor and motion passed.

New Business

Homeschooled student's age waiver for the HiSET Test (High School Equivalency Test) requiring parent's signature and a sign-off from the Participating Agency. Member of the public Michelle Levell was asked by Amanda to speak about a participating agency with a concern that they are being asked to sign off for home educated students to take the HiSET test. DOE's Bureau of Adult Education staff told her the HiSET requires students aged 16 and 17 to have a parent and their participating agency sign-off to take the exam based in Ed rules 704.02 which references RSA 193:1,1(f)(2) which was last updated in 2013 and may be up for revision soon. Michelle said NH Youth Employment forms allow parents to sign-off to authorize youth employment, and it is parents who self-certify completion of a home education program in NH.

Motion: We recommend that the HEAC Council and the Department of Education research waiving the requirement for the participating agency to sign off to allow 16 and 17 year old home educated students to take the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test).

Motion by Amanda, 2nd Jen, all in favor and motion passed.

Add VLACs trial period issue to the discussion continuing from last meeting – requirements and rights of those notifying under RSA 193-A

Member of the public Michelle Levell was asked to inform the council about her communication with VLACs charter school. Clarified that NH home education law does not require parents to file a home education plan along with notification, and that students must officially terminate their home education program once they are accepted as a full-time VLACs student.

DOE website recommendation to clearly distinguish the educational options in NH – public, private, EFA, home education

Discussion continued around what educational models fit under the definition of home education under RSA 193-A. Jen noted over the past year the council has recommended that Prenda Community Learning Pods be clearly distinguished from home education because they utilize a specific curriculum aligned with NH Academic Standards, the annual evaluation is the NH Statewide Assessment, and they are fully publicly funded. HEAC had recommended previously that Prenda Community Pod students not be required to notify as home education students under RSA 193-A, but instead be designated as an alternate method of satisfying the compulsory attendance law. Discussion ensued about whether a motion about this distinction should be specific to Prenda Community Learning Pods or worded more broadly to also differentiate other educational methods that are not home education.

Announcements

Amanda – GSHE intro to homeschooling event, art show in Derry

Sarah - AAS children's business fair

Public comment

Mike Donnelly said HEAC has performed a valuable role supporting homeschoolers in NH over the years, and agrees with removing barriers to the HiSET test. J.R. Hoell commented on NH HB1663 and spoke in favor of HEAC providing answers to frequently asked homeschooling questions. Michelle Levell - see comments above.

Motion to adjourn 5:25 pm. Amanda, 2nd Heather. All in favor, motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Althea