

**Minutes of the Special Meeting  
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**February 27, 2012  
5:05 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose  
**Beverly Holmes**, Vice Chair, Springfield  
**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton  
**Harneen Chernow**, Jamaica Plain  
**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge  
**James DiTullio**, Designee for the Secretary of Education  
**Matthew Gifford**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Brookline  
**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Jeff Howard**, Reading  
**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater  
**David Roach**, Sutton

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Chair Banta welcomed the Board to its special meeting. The chair said there would be two parts to the agenda: (1) hearing public comment on the new charter applicants; and (2) an initial discussion on the proposed regulations on educator preparation and training required for sheltered English immersion.

**New Charter Applicants**

Public Comment

1. Paul Georges, president of the United Teachers of Lowell, addressed the Board on the Lowell Collegiate Charter School proposal.
2. Jean Franco, Superintendent of the Lowell Public Schools, addressed the Board on the Lowell Collegiate Charter School proposal.

3. Roger Rice, executive director of Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, addressed the Board on the Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School and its proven provider status.

### **English Language Learners: Proposed Regulations on Educator Preparation and Training Required for Sheltered English Immersion (RETELL Initiative)**

Commissioner Chester said the Department is proposing amendments to three sets of regulations to ensure that teachers are prepared and trained to support academic achievement of English language learner (ELL) students. The commissioner said tomorrow the Board will vote on his recommendation to solicit comment on the proposed regulations. Commissioner Chester introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Robert Bickerton, Associate Commissioner Julia Phelps, Esta Montano, director of the Department's Office of English Language Acquisition & Academic Achievement, Dr. Nonie Lesaux of Harvard University, and Dr. Diane Staehr Fenner of DSF Consulting / UMass Boston Applied Linguistics Department.

Commissioner Chester made a PowerPoint presentation to the Board. The commissioner said ELLs are a major focus of the Board's Proficiency Gap Task Force, and closing this gap depends on teachers having the knowledge and skills necessary to instruct ELLs. The commissioner said that is what the Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) is about. He presented data about the growth of ELL enrollment in the Commonwealth.

Ms. Montano said there are two components of ELL education: (1) the actual learning of English as a second language (ESL) and (2) the more challenging part where ELL students have to learn academic content through English (sheltered English immersion or SEI). Ms. Montano said teachers have to deliver content in a way that is accessible. Ms. Montano said within the ELL population, there are many prototypes – some students are well prepared, while some have never been in school. Ms. Montano said until now, the Department has used category trainings to provide teachers with skills and knowledge for SEI. Those trainings were recommended but not required. Ms. Montano said while the category trainings were an excellent first step, the research has evolved since those trainings were introduced.

Ms. Montano said the three touchstones of this initiative are that it benefits ELLs, it is grounded in research, and it is feasible to implement. Ms. Montano said the Department is proposing that over a four-year period (September 2012 to June 2016), all core academic teachers and administrators will earn the SEI endorsement to their license. Ms. Montano said the rollout would start in the highest incidence districts. Ms. Montano said the endorsement would be earned through a course of study for all core academic teachers. There would also be a SEI endorsement for administrators.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado asked about the distribution of ELL students by grade. Ms. Montano said there is a higher incidence in K-5. Dr. Calderón-Rosado asked about licensure requirements for charter school teachers. Ms. Montano said the regulations will

apply to charter school teachers as well as teachers in traditional public schools. Ms. Kaplan said ideally every teacher and anyone engaged with ELLs, including guidance counselors, librarians and physical education teachers, should be included in this requirement. Mr. Bickerton said there will be two stages, the first with core academic teachers with ELLs in their classroom, and then additional professional development as part of licensure renewal that will have an impact on every educator in the Commonwealth. Ms. Kaplan asked if that includes vocational education teachers. Mr. Bickerton said teachers of core academic content in the vocational technical schools will need to obtain the required SEI endorsement.

Dr. Staehr Fenner said ELLs are heterogeneous. She said ELLs must develop language along with mastering academic content. Dr. Staehr Fenner said examples of factors that affect the heterogeneity of ELLs include level of literacy in a native language, culture, age at arrival to school, socio-economic, familial support and trauma. Dr. Staehr Fenner said RETELL will help give teachers skills to diagnose each child and adjust instruction accordingly. She said RETELL is tailored to ELLs but will help all teachers to instruct all students effectively in academic language.

Dr. Staehr Fenner said the overarching goals of the course will be: (1) all content teachers understand and accept responsibility to teach language and content simultaneously; (2) concepts that bridge World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) EDL standards and the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks incorporating the Common Core State Standards; and (3) develop academic language skills that enable students to access the content. Dr. Staehr Fenner said the focus will be on activating and building on students' background knowledge.

Dr. Lesaux said English proficiency by grade 3 does not guarantee English proficiency in the middle grades or later, and struggles in the middle and upper grades are primarily language-based ones. She said all students need rich language learning environments and adequate support to accelerate learning.

Chair Banta asked what the Department has learned from other states. Ms. Montano said Arizona requires teachers to have four credit hours, or six credit hours for those hired after August 2006; in California, teachers must take 45 clock hours in an approved program and take a test to get their credentials; in Florida, there is different training for different categories of teachers; and in New York, teachers must take six credits. Mr. Bickerton said the states use different program models so comparison is difficult.

Ms. Holmes asked what would be different five years after this initiative is launched. Ms. Montano said all core academic teachers would know how to shelter content for ELLs and the students would be doing better academically. Dr. Lesaux said in classrooms, discussions will play a larger role, and writing will be a larger proportion of instructional time and more connected to the content. Dr. Lesaux said there will also be more opportunities to develop language.

Commissioner Chester asked Dr. Lesaux about the longitudinal study that found by the time students got to late middle school or early high school, many were lagging in academic performance. The commissioner asked how that relates to the question of how many years it takes students to become proficient in English. Dr. Lesaux said the key is the right instruction and richer language environments for these students. Dr. Lesaux said the rates of growth suggest this is not a learning problem; it is essential to embed language supports in the instruction of content.

Ms. Kaplan asked if the new educator evaluation regulations address the skills of teachers to teach ELLs. Mr. Bickerton said the goal is to have a unified professional development plan for educator evaluation and license renewal. Ms. Kaplan asked why it was fair to require ELLs to take the MCAS test as a graduation requirement. Commissioner Chester said if one group is held to a lower standard, their education and life chances would be diminished.

Mr. Bickerton reviewed the Department's plans to update educator preparation programs to meet the proposed new knowledge and professional practice standards and implement licensure changes. Ms. Phelps said the Department continues to discuss the plan with the Department of Justice. She said the Commissioner's Panel will review the implementation plan and pilot the course this summer and roll it out more completely in fall 2012. By July 2016, all ELLs will be taught by a SEI-endorsed teacher.

Ms. Chernow asked if we have the capacity to train 25,000 teachers and if the Governor's budget includes resources for this. Commissioner Chester said the estimated cost to prepare 25,000 SEI teachers and administrators at no cost to them is \$7 million over four years. The commissioner said he has been advocating for these funds and that they are not in the Governor's budget proposal because we did not know the amount at the time the budget was prepared. Mr. DiTullio said the Governor and ANF Secretary are well aware of this issue and the price tag involved. Dr. Calderón-Rosado asked about the first year budget, which the commissioner said was about \$900,000. Commissioner Chester said he understands this is a professional, ethical and legal obligation, and the budget process has a way to go. Dr. Calderón-Rosado asked how this would be integrated in teacher preparation programs. Mr. Bickerton said new approved courses would be expected to be in place by June 2013.

Ms. Kaplan asked whether the course will address the emotional and psychological aspects of being an English language learner. Ms. Montano said that is built into the curriculum, and teachers need to know their learners. Dr. Staehr Fenner said the first part of the course would help teachers see that ELL students are not deficient but have strengths that we need to value as educators.

Mr. Chertavian asked how many hours or credits the course would be. Mr. Bickerton said we believe this fits into a single graduate course, or three credits. Mr. Bickerton said we would look at hiring well qualified instructors and some of the course would be online. Mr. Chertavian said the projections seem low and work out to about \$93 per credit. Commissioner Chester said we would not be paying the overhead costs that factor into

college courses. Ms. Chernow asked about the mix of live instruction and the online aspect. Dr. Staehr Fenner said the plan is to have a blended course that is 50/50 online and in person. She said the online piece would be a guided interaction. Ms. Phelps said we will identify specific instructors who are qualified to teach the course. Ms. Phelps said that in addition to the course, other components of the RETELL initiative will include SEI coaching, data systems and evaluations, and reviewing current educator licensure regulations for ESL teachers.

Ms. Montano said Massachusetts would be the 28<sup>th</sup> state to join the WIDA consortium. This is a new system of standards, curriculum and instruction for ELLs, including a new English language proficiency state assessment (ACCESS), and will include technical assistance to districts.

Mr. Chertavian said the conditions to be productive in society have changed radically, and 25 percent of children in the U.S. under the age of 5 speak Spanish. Mr. Chertavian said this is a matter of justice and increasingly important for our global competitiveness. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said she was impressed that Brockton made literacy the core for every teacher and every subject, and even the physical education teachers had to work on literacy. Dr. Calderón-Rosado suggested that approach could be a model for other districts.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m., subject to the call of the chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education