

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

April 22, 2013

5:10 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose

Ryan Casey, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Franklin

Harneen Chernow, Jamaica Plain

Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge

Ruth Kaplan, Brookline

Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education

Pendred Noyce, Weston

David Roach, Sutton

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

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Beverly Holmes, Vice Chair, Springfield

Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Milton

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Chair Banta welcomed Board members and thanked Department staff for planning an update on educator evaluation, a topic that is of great interest to the Board. Commissioner Chester introduced Deputy Commissioner Alan Ingram and Associate Commissioner for Educator Quality Heather Peske. Commissioner Chester said all Race to the Top districts are in their first year of implementation and non- Race to the Top districts will begin implementation next school year. Deputy Commissioner Ingram said the new educator evaluation system brings great opportunities as well as some challenges, and the Department is working closely with the field.

Ms. Peske outlined the goals of the educator evaluation system. She said that educator evaluation in the past was inconsistent and was not focused on giving constructive feedback and highlighting best practices. Ms. Peske outlined the evaluation framework and described the priorities: place student learning at the center, promote growth and development, recognize excellence, set a high bar for tenure, and shorten timelines for improvement. She said that performance rating data from 2011-12 among cohort 1 Level 4 schools showed 86% of teachers received an overall rating of proficient or exemplary. Ms. Peske introduced the first panel speaking about the challenges and opportunities of educator evaluation: Michelle Davis, teacher and Co-President of the West Springfield Education Association; Russell Johnston, Superintendent of West Springfield Public Schools; and Kristan Rodriguez, Assistant Superintendent of Chelmsford Public Schools.

Ms. Rodriguez said Chelmsford chose to adapt the model system and the feedback from teachers has been very positive. She said the evaluation system allows for autonomy in setting goals and promotes collaboration among teams of teachers, teachers and administrators, districts with the state, and districts with each other. She said Chelmsford is partnering with 25 districts, 3 educational collaboratives, and the Northeast Regional Readiness Center.

Ms. Davis said educator evaluation discussions in West Springfield have been built on clear and open communication between teachers and the administration. She said collaboration between the teachers' association and the superintendent has proved to be successful. Ms. Davis added that frequent surveys allow teachers to be a part of the process.

Superintendent Johnston said trust, ongoing collaboration, and frequent meetings have been important factors in West Springfield. He said a teacher and administrator piloted the evaluation system initially and a steering committee of representatives from each school was formed. Mr. Johnston said any news or documents produced by the union or district administrators are shared. He said a suggested list of artifacts, research highlighting the standards, and alignment of teacher and principal elements have also been part of the collaboration, with a focus on elements specific to West Springfield. Mr. Johnston said the challenges include a lean administrative structure and building capacity to do frequent observations. He said WestEd has been a helpful partner for professional development.

Chair Banta opened the meeting up to questions. Mr. Roach asked what would help to address capacity issues. Mr. Russell said principals need to set priorities and understand what is critical and what is not. Ms. Rodriguez said in her district there is a ratio of about one administrator to twenty teachers. She said protocols were developed and principals and administrators organized their time and communications to cut down on administrators' meetings.

Ms. Chernow asked panelists about the size of their districts and special populations. Ms. Chernow also asked for clarification on the negotiation process and how student performance is incorporated. Ms. Davis described their negotiation process, in which a small team of teachers met with the superintendent and others over 5-6 days to tailor the document to the needs of the district. She said West Springfield's student population is 3,800 with 50 percent receiving free/reduced price lunch and 27 percent English Language Learners/Former English Language Learners. Ms. Rodriguez said Chelmsford's negotiations were similar, with an array of members and representatives present. She said several committees formed and they adapted the model evaluation system. Ms. Rodriguez said her district's student population is 5,500 students with 9.8 percent receiving free/reduced price lunch and 11 percent English Language Learners/Former English Language Learners.

Secretary Malone said he is seeing excellent collaborative work going on in districts. He said every system is at a different state of readiness, and in some cases implementation will be more difficult. Secretary Malone thanked the Department for its support to districts.

Mr. Casey asked if there was a format and standard for unannounced visits. Ms. Rodriguez described her observation of principals as they observed teachers. Ms. Kaplan asked about the time commitment expected from teachers. Ms. Davis said teachers in her district work in teams to write their goals for students and themselves. She said early adopters of the system were able to guide those new to the system. Ms. Rodriguez said her district used videos and professional development training to assist teachers with self-assessment. Commissioner Chester said West Springfield went at implementation as a group process and incorporated the evaluation process into each school's improvement goals, which is powerful.

Associate Commissioner Peske introduced the second panel, which included Beth Kaake, a teacher and President of the Fitchburg Education Association; Tara Clark, Principal of the Zanetti School in Springfield; Ross Wilson, Deputy Superintendent of Boston Public Schools; and Christina Porter, Director of Humanities, Revere Public Schools.

Mr. Wilson introduced himself as a former teacher and principal in the Boston Public Schools. He said Boston is in year one of full implementation, and has 5,500 teachers and administrators. He said Boston's previous educator evaluation system was inconsistent. Mr. Wilson said Boston tracks and measures evaluation results through an online system. He said the district is using the data to support teachers. Mr. Wilson said the Boston Educator Effectiveness team went to every school to ensure communications were clear.

Ms. Kaake said 5,000 students, 450 teachers, and 9 schools make up the Fitchburg Public Schools, with 80-90 percent qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Ms. Kaake said the district used interest based bargaining and established an educator evaluation committee comprised of teachers and administrators. She said training has been done by the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

Ms. Porter said Revere has 11 schools and 70 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. She said in Revere the teachers, union representatives, teacher leaders, and administrators have been involved in implementing the evaluation system and sharing ideas.

Ms. Clark said her Level 4 school in Springfield is in year two of the evaluation system, which has been challenging due to teacher turnover. She said teachers need specific feedback to improve their practice.

Mr. Gerald Chertavian excused himself from the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Ms. Noyce asked how administrators handle teacher observations when in unfamiliar content areas. Ms. Porter said in her district, administrators may be paired with department heads or others familiar with the content area for some observations. Chair Banta asked how unannounced visits are received. Ms. Kaake said as teachers become more accustomed to the process, the culture of the school changes and trust is built. Secretary Malone said he has visited the districts represented by the panel and encouraged them to share their practices with other districts. He thanked them for their presentations.

Ms. Noyce asked if other initiatives besides evaluation are included in professional development. Mr. Wilson said the professional development for educator evaluation

serves as a frame into which other initiatives can be incorporated. Ms. Clark said her district is connecting RETELL with the professional development on evaluation because both are about improving teacher practice.

Commissioner Chester thanked the district representatives for sharing their experiences and insights with the Board. He said the educator evaluation system is both a challenge and an opportunity for districts to create growth and development for their staff members as well as for their students.

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
and Secretary to the Board