

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

**Monday, September 22, 2014  
5:00 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:

**Margaret McKenna**, Chair, Boston  
**Katherine Craven**, Brookline  
**Karen Daniels**, Milton  
**James DiTullio**, Undersecretary, Designee for Secretary of Education Matthew Malone  
**James Morton**, Springfield  
**Pendred Noyce**, Boston  
**David Roach**, Millbury  
**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington  
**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

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

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton  
**Harneen Chernow**, Vice-Chair, Jamaica Plain

Chair McKenna called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Chair McKenna welcomed Board members to the meeting and the start of the new school year. She said she is thrilled to be on the Board. Chair McKenna introduced other new members of the Board: Katherine Craven, Mary Ann Stewart, and Donald Willyard.

### **2013-14 Achievement and Accountability Overview**

Commissioner Chester outlined the presentation for the meeting: an overview of statewide MCAS results, the process for classifying schools and making exit decisions for Level 4 schools, the determinations and next steps for the 13 Level 4 schools in Cohort 1, and an update on newly identified Level 4 schools. The commissioner reviewed the accountability system over the years, beginning with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, use of the MCAS exams starting in 1998, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the 2008 state law moving district accountability reviews to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Massachusetts Achievement Gap Act of 2010, and the approval of the Commonwealth's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver in 2012. He said the stability and continuity of education reform in Massachusetts is in contrast to other states. Commissioner Chester said the system in Massachusetts represents a grand bargain of standards, accountability,

and financial support. He said the focus is not solely on test results, but on what the results represent, such as reading on grade level and mastering foundational mathematics skills. He said credit for our progress goes to our educators, who do not accept low results for their students.

Commissioner Chester presented grade 10 achievement results, which have increased consistently over a decade. He presented achievement gap data for grade 10 students, noting that while gaps in achievement remain, progress has been made. Commissioner Chester said third and fourth grade reading scores are flat, which is a concern in Massachusetts as well as in other states. In response to Chair McKenna's question, Commissioner Chester clarified that the percentages for grade 10 students show students who took the tests, and the statewide data show that most students who drop out already passed the grade 10 MCAS tests.

Deputy Commissioner Alan Ingram provided insights into the accountability system as a former superintendent. He said it is easy to identify schools for low performance and needed improvement, but the support given to districts is what makes the difference. Dr. Ingram introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston, Rob Curtin, Director of Data Services, and Matthew Pakos, Title I Coordinator. Mr. Johnston reviewed the state's accountability system under the ESEA waiver, which includes the goal of reducing proficiency gaps by half by 2017, a 1-5 leveling system for schools and districts, a progress and performance index (PPI), school percentiles, and a high needs subgroup. Commissioner Chester said our goal under the ESEA waiver was to create an accountability and assistance system that was both ambitious and doable. The commissioner noted the remarkable progress in the Revere Public Schools, a district with many low-income and English language learner students, in which all schools are now Level 1 and Level 2 schools.

Ms. Stewart asked about the District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs) services available to Level 3 schools. Mr. Johnston said Level 3 schools have the option to use DSAC services and resources to guide their work. In response to Mr. Willyard's question, Mr. Curtin said the accountability system provides extra credit for schools and districts that re-engage dropouts. Mr. Roach noted that out of eight middle schools in Springfield, six are in Level 4. Dr. Ingram said the Department is taking a systems approach to the turnaround work with the middle schools. Commissioner Chester said he is deeply concerned with the Springfield schools and others that are currently designated as Level 4/under review. The commissioner said he is expecting to receive plans for the schools that will ensure rapid turnaround and success for the students. Chair McKenna asked if there were any surprises in the results. Commissioner Chester said there were no big surprises, and it is affirming that the majority of Level 4 schools exited and a growing number of schools are showing progress with high-needs students.

### **Possible Topics for Special Meetings of the Board in 2014-2015**

Chair McKenna asked members to present possible topics for the Board to discuss over the next year. Mr. Willyard said the State Student Advisory Council is interested in civic engagement and college and career readiness. Mr. Morton suggested looking at successful turnaround work, successful urban schools, use of the school day and extra school hours, causes of the achievement gap, and third grade reading proficiency. Ms. Daniels suggested college and careers, specifically data on success rates of students attending college, and examining successful practices in urban schools and districts, including level 4 and Level 5 turnaround strategies. On

behalf of Secretary Malone, Mr. DiTullio suggested a joint meeting with the Board of Early Education and Care, linking with the Early Literacy Panel, assessment, and alternative education. Ms. Noyce suggested early reading, partnerships with non-profit organizations, summer learning loss, career preparation, and English language learners. Ms. Stewart suggested advisory councils, educator evaluation, and family and community engagement. Mr. Roach suggested civic engagement, capacity of the Department to meet all its responsibilities in partnership with districts, and close-out of Race to the Top. Ms. Craven suggested special education, specifically measuring success and best practices, vocational education, and information technology in schools. Chair McKenna suggested third grade reading, summer programs, assessment and testing, alternative education, and hunger and poverty.

Chair McKenna said the Department will summarize the list for Board members. Commissioner Chester commented that the list is both appropriate and ambitious.

**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