

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Tuesday, December 20, 2016
8:30 a.m. – 1:05 p.m.
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Paul Sagan, Chair, Cambridge
James Morton, Vice-Chair, Boston
Katherine Craven, Brookline
Ed Doherty, Boston
Roland Fryer, Cambridge
Margaret McKenna, Boston
Nathan Moore, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate
Michael Moriarty, Holyoke
Pendred Noyce, Boston
James Peyser, Secretary of Education
Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington

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

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. He noted this is the second Board meeting to be live-streamed. Commissioner Chester welcomed Board members and reported on the curriculum framework revision process. He said the proposed revisions to the English Language Arts and Mathematics frameworks are out for public comment through February 17, and the Department is beginning the revision process for the History/Social Science curriculum framework, starting with convening a review panel and posting an online survey through February 6 to gather public input. The Commissioner said the proposed amendments to the Educator Evaluation regulations are out for public comment through January 27, and the Department continues to meet with various professional education organizations to discuss the amendments. He added that the proposed regulations on Recovery High Schools are out for public comment through January 17.

Commissioner Chester reported on an issue regarding the American Sign Language (ASL) educator license that was raised during the public comment part of the Board's November meeting. He said since 2011, ten people have sought the ASL license, which is one of several educator licenses for which there is no subject matter MTEL test (others include teachers of Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, library and instructional technology specialist). Commissioner Chester said creating a new test for ASL is not a priority, because candidates have alternative routes available to demonstrate competency through college coursework, seminars/workshops, or school-based mentored employment/peer coaching. The Commissioner also noted that the Board has received a copy of his transmittal to Secretary Peyser on the Board's FY18 education budget priorities.

Statements from the Public:

1. Amy O'Leary, Strategies for Children, addressed the Board regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and early learning.

2. Daniel Downs and Ellen Driscoll, MassCUE board members, addressed the Board regarding the instructional technology specialist license.
3. Tina Fitandes, Mass Advocates for Children, addressed the Board regarding the autism endorsement for educators.
4. Jack Gillette, Lesley University, addressed the Board regarding the instructional technology specialist license and the computer science license.
5. Barbara Madeloni, Massachusetts Teachers Association, addressed the Board regarding student assessment.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the November 15, 2016 Retreat and November 29, 2016 Regular Meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Progress Report on Holyoke Public Schools

Commissioner Chester introduced Holyoke Receiver/Superintendent Stephen Zrike; Alyson Lingsch, Principal of the Morgan School; Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston; and Ventura Rodriguez, Director of the Department's Office of Strategic Transformation.

Dr. Zrike presented the district update, including the Holyoke Public Schools vision, values, and strategic priorities. He reported on instructional improvements, secondary school redesign, family and community engagement, breakfast in the classroom, and systems integration. Alyson Lingsch, who is in her third year as principal at the Morgan School, presented a report on the school's progress since it was determined to be Level 5 in October 2013. She highlighted key levers for improvement at the Morgan School and the gains students have made in English language arts and mathematics since the implementation of the turnaround plan in 2014.

In response to Chair Sagan's question, Dr. Zrike said performance for all Holyoke Public School students would increase with continued attention to tight systems for instruction, use of data on student learning, and effective use of instructional time. Commissioner Chester noted that the first district placed in Level 5, Lawrence, has been in receivership for five years and has made great gains and expanded opportunities for students but still has a long way to go. He said we know what it takes to move a district from floundering to functioning; now we have to move it from good to great.

Member Moriarty thanked Dr. Zrike for focusing on grade three reading. Mr. Moriarty said the Morgan School community has a high concentration of poverty and he appreciates the school's parent outreach and home visits. He added that consistency of leadership is important. In response to questions, Dr. Zrike said the secondary redesign initiative includes middle school as well as high school students, and the district uses grades and attendance data to determine individual students' risks and opportunities. Member Stewart commended the family outreach efforts.

Member McKenna commended Dr. Zrike on expanding breakfast in the classroom and asked about addressing summer learning loss. Dr. Zrike responded that the district is planning summer programs and acceleration academies and will seek to eliminate summer school fees for at-risk

students. Member McKenna said the National Summer Learning Association, whose board she chairs, can provide useful resources. Member Moriarty said he has seen the positive impact of summer programs in Holyoke and the YMCA has been a great partner in this work.

Chair Sagan thanked Receiver Zrike and Principal Lingsch for their presentation and commended their work. He said the Board would resume hearing statements from the public because those who had signed up to speak about the Boston School Committee's decision to close the Mattahunt School were delayed in arriving at today's meeting.

Statements from the Public (Continued):

6. Aveann Bridgemohan, parent, addressed the Board regarding the closing of the Mattahunt School.
7. Peggy Wiesenber, Access to Justice Fellow, addressed the Board regarding the closing of the Mattahunt School.
8. Barbara Fields, community member, addressed the Board regarding the closing of the Mattahunt School.
9. Lincoln Larmond, community member, addressed the Board regarding the closing of the Mattahunt School.

Additional Information Regarding the Mattahunt School in Boston

Chair Sagan noted that the Board spent considerable time on this item at the November meeting, although the school closure is within the Boston School Committee's authority, not the Board's. He asked the Commissioner for an update. Commissioner Chester said that as he stated at last month's meeting, he is comfortable with the decision of Superintendent Chang and the Boston School Committee to close the Mattahunt School. He noted that his previous discussions with the Boston Public Schools regarding a Level 4 school concerned the Dearborn School, and Mayor Walsh, the superintendent, and the school committee took a different approach there, not closing the school but rather engaging an in-district receiver. For the Mattahunt, the Boston officials decided closure was the best decision. The Commissioner said the key question in these situations is whether the next step will result in better education for the students. He said he spoke with Superintendent Chang and the Boston School Committee Chair after the November Board meeting, per the Board's direction, and also met with the Mayor's education advisor. He said the local school officials' decision stands and cautioned against second-guessing it.

Commissioner Chester said 30 percent of the students enrolled at the Mattahunt School are English language learners. He commented that he and U.S. Education Secretary John King recently visited the Mildred Avenue School in Boston, which has made great progress, and in an English language arts 7th grade class, students who had been at the Mattahunt talked positively about their current school in contrast to their previous experience. Chair Sagan said the community members who spoke this morning appear to be saying the situation is not as presented by the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Commissioner Chester replied that the Department is in close contact with BPS officials, who have been forthright about how they are operationalizing the plan. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston distributed BPS documents describing how BPS is working with Mattahunt parents to make school choices for next year. Mr. Johnston said the Department has asked BPS to report on activities at the Mattahunt this year. He said among other things, the district is running an acceleration academy for 75 Mattahunt students over February vacation.

Member Noyce asked if parents and community members are adequately informed about the progress or lack of progress of a Level 4 school during its three-year turnaround period. Mr.

Johnston said he has spoken with BPS officials about this, and noted that the Dearborn School has a twice-yearly community meeting and uses a data dashboard. He added that annual outside evaluations of turnaround schools provide additional information.

Member Doherty stated that the superintendent and school committee have made their decision and the Board has no authority to override the decision. He noted that the speakers asked the Department to seek additional information from BPS. Chair Sagan encouraged the parents and community members who spoke during public comment to talk with Russell Johnston or Helene Bettencourt if there is further information they would like the Department to obtain from BPS.

Member Craven commented that this situation reminds her of the closure of the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School in June 2016. She asked if the Department could provide information on where those students enrolled, and eventually provide the same information for the Mattahunt students. Commissioner Chester said the Department would do so. Member Craven also suggested inviting Superintendent Chang to present to the Board sometime, to give the Board a broader view of issues in the Boston Public Schools.

Member McKenna said the Board and the community need early warning regarding Level 4 schools that are at risk of moving into Level 5. She asked for an update next month on the Holland and Dever Schools, including suspension data. Mr. Johnston noted this topic is on the January 2017 Board agenda. Commissioner Chester commented that the Supreme Judicial Court has made clear the state has an overarching duty with respect to K-12 education, and the system relies on a balance between the state and local management and leadership. The Commissioner added that the accountability system, per the 2010 law, identifies the bottom 20 percent of schools and gives additional authority to districts at Level 4; the Department provides support but does not run those schools.

PISA Results for Massachusetts

Commissioner Chester presented highlights from the 2015 Massachusetts PISA results, which were released on December 6, 2016. In response to a question from Member McKenna, the Commissioner said the Commonwealth participated in this international student assessment because PISA is aspirational and we expect Massachusetts students to be as well prepared as students in other nations with high aspirations. He said he believes the \$600,000 cost to participate is well worthwhile. Commissioner Chester presented student results in science, reading, and mathematics, noting that science was the focus in 2015. He said the data and findings reaffirm our work in Massachusetts and provide focus for policies going forward. Commissioner Chester suggested that Member Fryer might do a further analysis of the data.

Chair Sagan and Member Noyce commented that Massachusetts earns back the PISA investment in terms of business and reputation as well as ideas for educational policy and practice. In response to a question from Member Doherty, the Commissioner said the Massachusetts schools that participated were a stratified sample, selected to be representative of 15-year-olds in the Commonwealth. Secretary Peyser asked how the PISA information compares to another international exam, TIMSS. Commissioner Chester said TIMSS tests grade 4 and grade 8 science and mathematics, focusing on content, and PISA tests 15-year-olds on their application of knowledge in mathematics, science, and reading to problems with a real-life context. He said TIMSS is administered every three years and Massachusetts last participated in 2009.

Board member Roland Fryer left the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Every Student Succeeds Act: Stakeholder Outreach, New Federal Regulations, and Next Steps

Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston, Associate Commissioner Robert Curtin, and Matthew Deninger, Manager of Strategic Planning, updated the Board on the Department's ongoing review of the school and district accountability and assistance system under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and summarized the preliminary analysis of feedback from stakeholders gathered at the five ESSA forums that the Department has held across the state. Mr. Curtin presented highlights from the recently released U.S. Department of Education regulations for ESSA. Mr. Johnston outlined next steps: further Board discussion in January, final review of the proposed accountability model in March, and submission of the Massachusetts state plan to the U.S. Department of Education in April. Secretary Peyser commented that the accountability model should continue to focus on outcomes and valid performance measures rather than inputs, noting that ESSA is not a vehicle to add new mandates to schools.

Board member Katherine Craven left the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Early College Programming

Chair Sagan said this month's report on early college programming tees up the topic for more extended discussion in January at the Board's joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education. Commissioner Chester introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang and Associate Commissioner Keith Westrich along with Kasia Lundy and Ali Huberlie from Parthenon-EY, who presented an overview of the Parthenon-EY study and report on early college high schools in Massachusetts. The Barr Foundation funded the study. Ms. Lundy and Ms. Huberlie responded to questions from Board members about various early college program models, whether the location of the program on a college campus or at a high school or online makes a difference, results for various groups of students, and transportation.

Chair Sagan said this initiative holds promise to help improve postsecondary completion rates, adding that the Commonwealth should not be paying twice for high school education. The Parthenon-EY presenters said the initiative does require some investment, and a critical mass of 300-400 students per school would produce economies of scale. Commissioner Chester said at next month's joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education, there will be a recap of this information and a proposal that the two boards establish a committee to map out a plan to identify funding for this initiative and launch an application process for interested parties, building upon existing programs as well as encouraging new programs. Secretary Peyser added that early college overlaps with the broader career pathways initiative that is underway.

Educator Licensure: Overview of Policy Issues and Potential Regulatory Changes

Commissioner Chester said the Department has been working, in collaboration with the field, to streamline the regulations on educator licensure and license renewal. Today's discussion is intended to provide background information in preparation for the Board to receive the proposed amendments at an upcoming meeting. Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske, Brian Devine, Manager of Educator Licensure, and Liz Losee, Director of Educator Preparation, presented an overview of educator licensure and responded to questions from Board members.

Member McKenna commented that the instructional technology specialist role and computer science are two different things, and suggested it is not necessary to drop the instructional technology specialist license to create a new one for computer science. Chair Sagan asked the

Department to review this issue further before bringing a proposal to the Board. Secretary Peyser said this raises the broader question of why the state licenses educators, presumably to establish a baseline of knowledge, competence, and skill and encourage ongoing professional growth. He added that licensure does not guarantee high quality teaching. The Secretary advocated minimizing the burdens of licensure, expanding pathways based on demonstrated competence, and focusing on outcomes: for example, reviewing educator preparation institutions based on how well their graduates perform on the job.

Next-Generation MCAS: Plans for High School Assessments

Commissioner Chester presented six recommendations relating to Next-Generation MCAS and high school testing: assessments should give accurate signals on whether students are on track for college, careers, and civic engagement; the Competency Determination for English language arts and mathematics should remain at grade 10; history/social science should be added to the Competency Determination; the high school chemistry and technology/engineering tests should be eliminated; an introductory physics re-test opportunity should be added; and a stakeholder group should be convened to identify and recommend options for a grade 11/grade 12 assessment to gauge students' readiness for success after high school. Commissioner Chester introduced Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson and Director of Assessment Michol Stapel.

Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said the discussion of high school assessment will continue in January at the Board's joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education, and the topic will be back on the Board's agenda for further discussion in the spring. Secretary Peyser noted the Board's Competency Determination regulations include a placeholder for adding the history/social science assessment. Commissioner Chester concurred and said the decision to put that test development on hold several years ago was based on reduced funding not only for test development but also, more significantly, for academic support for students. In response to questions from members, Commissioner Chester explained that re-tests are for students who need an additional opportunity to pass a high school test to earn the Competency Determination; that state law requires all students to take a course in U.S. history; and that the Department is launching the review of the history/social science standards in January 2017. Secretary Peyser asked about alternatives, such as an AP test, if the state eliminates the high school tests in chemistry and technology/engineering as options for students. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said the Department will review this question and others with the field and come back to the Board in the spring for further discussion.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 1:05 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