

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

**March 26, 2013
8:40 a.m. – 1:10 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
Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Milton
Ryan Casey, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Franklin
Harneen Chernow, Jamaica Plain
Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge
Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education
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
Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Pendred Noyce, Weston

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

Chair Banta welcomed Board members. She reported on a recent visit to Switzerland in which she represented Massachusetts on a delegation organized by the Pathways to Prosperity Network to examine the system of education and career pathways. She noted their focus on helping students apply knowledge and make connections to college and careers earlier in school. Ms. Calderón-Rosado reported that the Commissioner's Evaluation Committee is proceeding with the commissioner's evaluation and will be interviewing the commissioner's direct reports as part of a 360-degree process. She said the commissioner will complete a self-assessment and the committee expects to report to the Board in May. Secretary Malone reported on his recent visits to Codman Academy Charter School, Worcester Vocational-Technical High School, and the STEM Academy at Doherty High School. Secretary Malone announced his new communications director, Matthew Wilder. The secretary commended the commissioner for his communication practices with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and said he is encouraging other education boards and commissioners to follow that model.

Public Comment

1. Josh Golin and Marilyn Segal of the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood addressed the Board on the shared learning collaborative.

2. Maureen Vacca of the Massachusetts Family Institute addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
3. Andrew Beckwith of the Massachusetts Family Institute addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
4. David Stormberg, M.D., addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
5. William Gillmeister of the Tantasqua School Committee addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
6. Reverend John Grothjan of the North Shore Community Baptist Church addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
7. Vickie Henry of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
8. Athena Edmonds, a parent, addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
9. Zach Kerr, a student, addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.
10. Roger Bourgeois, Superintendent of Essex Agricultural and Technical School, addressed the Board on the guidance on gender identity.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Chester said gender identity was made a protected classification by the General Court in the law that was enacted in 2011, which included public school facilities for students. He noted that the Board adopted amendments to the Equal Educational Opportunity regulations in 2012. The commissioner said the Department then convened school officials, advocates, and others with experience in these issues to prepare guidance that would respond to questions from school administrators. Commissioner Chester said guidance means guidance, and the core idea is to use common sense to address individual situations and ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Responding to statements from some speakers that the Department had shown courage in issuing the guidelines, Commissioner Chester said students such as Zach and the parents and educators who are working with them are the ones who should get credit for courage.

The commissioner noted that the college and career readiness definition has now been adopted by both the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education. He said he has convened a Career and Vocational Technical Education Taskforce to review policies concerning these schools and programs and the Board will receive a report later in the year. Commissioner Chester also reported on two recent conferences, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession and the Council of Chief State School Officers legislative conference.

Approval of the Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the February 25, 2013 Special Meeting and February 26, 2013 Regular Meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Report on EEC-ESE Joint Initiatives and EEC’s Early Learning Challenge Grants under Race to the Top – Discussion

Commissioner Chester welcomed Tom Weber, Acting Commissioner of Early Education and Care (EEC). Mr. Weber introduced his staff members Chau Ly, Sarah Harding, and Brad Kramer. Ms. Ly gave the Board an overview of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. She said EEC’s priority areas are program quality, educator quality, screening and assessments, family and community engagement, and infrastructure.

Bob Bickerton, Senior Associate Commissioner of Assessment and Learning at ESE, outlined EEC- ESE collaborations as birth-to-grade three strategy development; the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment; aligning preschool standards to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks; developing preschool science, technology and engineering learning standards and guidelines; an adult, child and family literacy partnership with IBM; and early childhood special education. Donna Traynham, Coordinator of Learning Support Programs at ESE, said the Department has been working with EEC since its creation to develop a strategy to close achievement gaps and reach grade three literacy goals. Ms. Traynham said Massachusetts was the first state to add preschool standards into the curriculum frameworks and noted that the kindergarten assessments would help inform a teacher’s instruction. Mr. Weber said EEC-ESE collaboration is happening at a very high level of quality and commitment.

Chair Banta asked about the role of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) in preparing early childhood teachers. Ms. Ly said the Race to the Top grant allowed EEC to partner with DHE to train educators on the Massachusetts frameworks and align the curriculum of certificate programs. Ms. Harding said there are education provider support grants for professional development and certificate pathways to an associate’s or bachelor’s degree for early education providers. Ms. Calderón-Rosado said her organization offers a bilingual preschool program and that retaining educators with higher qualifications is challenging because early education programs often lose them to school districts. Mr. Weber said a professional development registry is being developed to track data on workforce preparation and Governor Patrick’s budget proposal would put \$30 million towards compensation for early childhood educators, which is key to retaining them.

Mr. Bickerton said the prekindergarten-higher education longitudinal data system would allow educators to see how their students are doing at every level. Mr. Kramer said EEC is collaborating with the MA Department of Mental Health on an early childhood mental initiative. In response to a question from Ms. Chernow, Acting Commissioner Weber said there are 441,000 children age 0-5 in Massachusetts, 230,000 are connected with EEC, 51,000 receive subsidized care, and 30,000 are on the waiting list. Secretary Malone said the ongoing collaboration among EEC, ESE, and DHE will make Massachusetts more likely to meet its goal of having students achieve reading proficiency by grade three.

Progress Report on Integrating College and Career Readiness – Discussion

Commissioner Chester gave an overview and introduced Patricia Gregson, Associate Commissioner of Vocational, Workforce, and College Readiness Programs, and Keith Westrich, Director of College and Career Readiness Programs, who reported on the

Department's work since October 2012 to implement the recommendations of the Board's Taskforce on Integrating College and Career Readiness. The taskforce was chaired by Board member Gerald Chertavian. Ms. Gregson and Mr. Westrich went through a presentation that included: defining the career development spectrum, developing a delivery plan to realize the taskforce recommendations, working to increase the number of high schools offering career development activities, increasing employer sponsors, and establishing an advisory group.

Secretary Malone commended the work and the Department's ongoing collaboration with DHE, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Workforce Investment Boards on career-workforce development.

Secretary Malone left at 11:15 a.m.

Mr. Roach recommended outreach to superintendents and school principals about the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling. In response to a question about incentive grants, Mr. Westrich said 4-6 grants would be available to districts that will implement all the taskforce recommendations as a pilot so others can learn from them. Chair Banta said Employer Champions will be key to the initiative. Mr. Chertavian said it is important to lower transaction costs for businesses so more will get involved in working with schools and students. He added that there are ways besides internships to give young people exposure to work and career pathways.

Update on PARCC – Discussion

Commissioner Chester and Mr. Bickerton made a presentation on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The commissioner gave an overview of the Board's authority to set standards for academic performance, graduation requirements, and assessments, and discussed the progress Massachusetts students have made since 2002. Mr. Bickerton updated the Board on the transition to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English Language Arts and Mathematics and anticipated changes in assessment. Mr. Bickerton presented the PARCC design for a next-generation assessment system anchored in college- and career-readiness. He explained PARCC will provide an array of tools to support teaching and learning.

Chair Banta asked how the Department is helping educators implement the new curriculum frameworks. Mr. Bickerton said the initiatives to assist teachers include Edwin Teaching and Learning, model curriculum units, the partnership with WGBH, and curriculum-embedded performance assessments. Ms. Chernow asked if MCAS and PARCC tests will be administered at the same time. Mr. Bickerton said we do not intend to give students two sets of tests, and details will be worked out. Commissioner Chester said districts currently use a variety of student assessments beyond MCAS, and PARCC is designed to be an integrated system that will replace many existing parts for greater efficiency.

Commissioner Chester said MCAS was never designed to assess readiness for college and careers, and high school graduation will continue to be based on the grade 10 standards as provided in state law. The commissioner said Massachusetts higher education institutions have agreed to honor PARCC achievement at a certain level as an

for a college-readiness benchmark. Mr. Chertavian said there is a need for a secondary education assessment that is accepted by higher education, and he is glad to see this happening in Massachusetts. He noted that the Board set a high standard in 2003 and students have shown they can meet it. Mr. DiTullio asked if PARCC results would appear on a high school transcript. Commissioner Chester said this would require a regulatory change.

Ms. Chernow asked if the standards for the graduation requirement would differ from the standards for college readiness. Commissioner Chester said these are core questions, and the two standards would likely differ. Mr. Chertavian said the current situation is not good for students who graduate from high school and find they are not ready for college-level work. The commissioner said PARCC would give students early signals so they can prepare.

Mr. Roach asked what would happen to eighth graders in the spring of 2014 under the transition to PARCC. Commissioner Chester said some sample testing and comparative data would be needed to determine if PARCC is ready. He said PARCC should help with educator evaluation because it would be aligned with the new curriculum frameworks. The commissioner noted that student academic growth is only one factor in educator evaluation and MCAS is a vital barometer right now. Commissioner Chester said he expects the Board will be discussing many issues relating to PARCC in the months ahead. Mr. Chertavian said he is very supportive of this work, while recognizing how challenging it is. He asked the commissioner to keep the focus on career readiness as well as academic readiness.

Using Student Data to Improve Instruction: Report on State Initiatives to Assist Schools and Districts – Discussion

Commissioner Chester said a major strategy to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom is better use of student-level data. He introduced Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson, Robert Curtin, Director of Education Data Services, and Sharon Wright, Chief Information Officer at the Executive Office of Education. Mr. Wulfson said technology touches on all of the Department's core strategies. Mr. Curtin said the use of data is changing, including its incorporation into the classroom to improve instruction. Mr. Curtin gave the Board an overview of the Edwin teaching and learning system, the Edwin analytics system, and the Department's collaboration with InBloom. Mr. Wulfson said most districts already contract for services with a variety of commercial vendors, and the Department's initiatives have the potential to reduce costs and increase efficiency while meeting a high standard of data privacy consistent with legal requirements. Ms. Chernow asked for clarification regarding the access vendors will have to student data.

Mr. Curtin explained Massachusetts is one of nine pilot states in the inBloom initiative, which would provide a common platform for student data. He said the participating districts would retain full control over how their student data is to be used or shared. Ms. Wright said the project is still in the development stages. She clarified that the memorandum of understanding between InBloom and ESE has been extended and it requires compliance with FERPA data security requirements. Ms. Chernow said she still has further questions and needs more information as many parents have contacted her expressing concern about the use of student data under this program. Commissioner

Chester said the Department is trying to find the right role in an ever changing technology system, and some districts are far ahead of others. He said the discussion of data initiatives, including data security, will continue at future Board meetings.

Ms. Calderón-Rosado left at 1:00 p.m.

Update on State and Federal Education Budget – Discussion

Bill Bell, Chief Financial Officer of the Department, said the House Ways and Means Committee will release their FY14 budget in two weeks. He said federal departments are looking at the impacts of sequestration, including \$2.5 billion in cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, which would mean \$30 million in cuts to Massachusetts K-12 education. Commissioner Chester said the 5 percent across-the-board cut is not equal in all districts; some will have small reductions while others face double-digit cuts. He also noted the impact on Title I school turnaround funds and on the Department, where over half the staff positions are federally funded.

Chair Banta thanked Board members and presenters for the valuable discussion.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 1:10 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