

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

**September 21, 2009
6:05 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**Massachusetts 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
Harneen Chernow, Vice Chair, Jamaica Plain
Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge
Michael D'Ortenzio Jr., Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley
Thomas E. Fortmann, Lexington
Beverly Holmes, Springfield
Jeff Howard, Reading
Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Worcester
Sandra L. Stotsky, Brookline

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

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Dana Mohler-Faria, Bridgewater
Ruth Kaplan, Brookline

Chair Maura Banta called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Board Planning Committee

Chair Banta said that the planning committee met and talked about what Board members heard and discussed at the August 13, 2009 Board retreat. The planning committee included Board members Maura Banta, Harneen Chernow, Gerald Chertavian, Beverly Holmes, and Tom Fortmann.

Dr. Fortmann presented the report of the planning committee. He said the committee was asked to review and summarize the priorities, and that was done in the context of the Commissioner's Working Goals & Priorities. Dr. Fortmann said the Board's discussion

had converged on three high level items: (1) educator quality or effectiveness; (2) English language learners; and (3) family engagement and student support.

Educator effectiveness was the most consistent and frequent theme that was raised at the retreat, was an overarching theme, and will be part of the Race to the Top application. English language learners have the largest proficiency gap, overlap with Latino students, and have the greatest potential for gain. Family engagement has the potential for impact while at the same time having a modest budget impact. Dr. Fortmann noted that the issues of ELLs and family engagement are under active study by the Proficiency Gap Committee. Given this, the planning committee recommends that the Board focus on educator effectiveness.

Dr. Fortmann said the commissioner agreed to provide the Board with a framework for educator effectiveness and a progress report on working goals and priorities. In the future the Board will also address benchmarks.

Dr. Fortmann said the planning committee also discussed the advisory councils, and noted that with 17 councils, there are too many to engage. The committee's recommendation is to ask key councils to report on specific items of high interest to the Board. Dr. Fortmann said the planning committee agreed on three other recommendations: (1) the commissioner should refine option #2 from the May 2009 charter school memo; (2) the Board should schedule another retreat in January or February 2010; and (3) the Board should initiate a discussion with the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Education.

Educator Effectiveness

Commissioner Chester said no single factor is more determinative to success than the quality of educators – leaders and teachers – who work with students. The commissioner said that enhancing that effectiveness will go far toward closing gaps. He said this is an area where we have much to be proud of and also much work to do.

Commissioner Chester said the Department's goal is to create a creative, systematic framework and to share it with the Board. Tonight's discussion will be the first of an ongoing discussion that relates to the state's Race to the Top application.

Associate Commissioner David Haselkorn made a presentation to the Board on educator effectiveness summarizing core propositions and identifying strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

Mr. D'Ortenzio Jr. asked about the five-year bubble for licensing. Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said licenses must be renewed every five years. Dr. Stotsky asked how many of 91 sponsoring organizations are district-based. Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said 61 are institutions of higher education (IHEs), and 30 are district-based. He said 92 percent of program completers come from IHEs, and 59 percent of sponsored, approved programs have zero completers this year.

Secretary Reville said there are a variety of levers to improve the quality of teaching. He said the challenges are to think about the application of levers across the system or in key categories (e.g., urban schools), and determining which are of the highest value added. Mr. Chertavian said that some things lend themselves well to measurement, and we should think about a sense of scale and what goals we are trying to reach in defining the problem. Commissioner Chester said the ability of the faculty to move student achievement is the ultimate metric. Dr. Howard said that gains made in standards and assessment and teacher quality are intricately united. He said this issue speaks to the powerful role of accountability. Dr. Howard said it would be interesting to have a case study of some initiative, to see how these tools interact and to get a feel for them in real life. Secretary Reville said that tonight's presentation was a good representation of various tools that can help to begin to develop a matrix of the kinds of schools and challenges across the system, and to ask where to focus (e.g., compensation, preparation, tenure during the first three years).

Commissioner Chester said the update on Fall River and the discussion of changes in the accountability system, on the Tuesday morning agenda, would make a good case study.

Vice-Chair Chernow said it would be helpful to have a picture of the current workforce. She asked how to address teacher quality when chronically underperforming schools are concentrated in nine or so districts. Commissioner Chester said schools in areas that are more heavily impacted by poverty have a greater challenge.

Chair Banta asked whether there are other states that Massachusetts should be emulating on this issue. Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said New Mexico has implemented a tiered system of licensing, but that we also need to look at international competitors. Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said no state has devised a perfect system.

Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said the proposed strategic goal is: Every classroom in the Commonwealth staffed by an effective educator, in schools and districts organized to support student achievement and success. Commissioner Chester said the state must work hard to find a dialogue that honors and relies on hard working professionals in the teaching force, while addressing places that are not measuring up and improving the trajectory of learning there.

Vice-Chair Chernow said she appreciated having focused attention on this issue. The vice-chair said this dovetails with the new accountability system. Dr. Stotsky said it would be useful to have information on teacher turnover, why teachers leave, and demand/supply. Mr. Chertavian said the direction and strategy have been laid out, and he hopes there will be a process to see how the data are distilled and what the leverage points are. Commissioner Chester said the state has a number of levers it can operate to influence educator effectiveness. This year, the work will be to look at the continuum and build a more intentional approach to support policy.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 8:30 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