*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000

## TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  *Commissioner* |  |

September 30, 2016

Tommy Chang

Superintendent

Boston Public Schools

2300 Washington Street

Roxbury, MA 02119

Dear Superintendent Chang:

As you know, I am deeply concerned about the status of the educational program at the Mattahunt Elementary School. The reason for this letter is to inform you that I am allowing you until October 31, 2016 to develop and submit a plan that gives me confidence that this school will move from underperforming to a high performing school. If the plan you submit does not give me confidence that the school will provide for significantly better outcomes for students, then I am committed to using the means at my disposal - including, but not limited to, state receivership for this school - to secure a better educational future for the students at the Mattahunt.

The trajectory of progress at the Mattahunt leaves me unconvinced that the conditions are in place that will lead to successful school turnaround. The fact that less than one-in-five students are proficient in either ELA or mathematics is illustrative of my concerns. Without expeditious and dramatic action, it is unlikely this school will be able to both build on the modest progress to date and dramatically increase the pace of improvement.

Below are some specific elements that would give me confidence that the plan for the school is likely to succeed. These elements are based on successful turnaround efforts in schools in the Commonwealth and across the nation. These elements include districts establishing the following conditions and developing relevant systems to enable:

* School leaders to:
  + Establish the school calendar and schedule
  + Hire and dismiss staff and be exempted from bidding and bumping staffing restrictions
  + Exercise authority over an agreed-upon school-based budget
  + Determine the school's curriculum and programming
* Students to benefit from a minimum of 1330 hours/year (including enrichment time)
* Staff to receive a minimum of 15 additional days for professional development and collaboration
* A performance based compensation system to be established that:
  + Provides a career ladder for teachers with opportunities for the most effective teachers to take on leadership roles without having to leave the classroom
  + Eliminates the steps and lanes and longevity-based pay model
  + Considers individual effectiveness, professional growth, and student academic growth as key factors
  + Creates an affordable model by compensating teachers as professionals and moving away from an hourly pay model
* Working conditions to be established at the school level
* The use of a dispute resolution process that ensures that issues relating to working conditions and the turnaround plan are resolved quickly and fairly

In addition to these elements, I further urge the district to take this opportunity to revisit all other autonomies and flexibilities available in the law (G.L. c. 69, § lJ(d) https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/Partl/TitleXII/Chapter69/SectionlJ), and identify any additional conditions that would support the district in taking the necessary steps to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students at the school.

Please contact Russell Johnston [(RJohnston@doe.mass.edu](mailto:(RJohnston@doe.mass.edu) or 781-338-3564) with any questions. Please also feel free to reach out to Susan Berglund or Ventura Rodriguez, ESE's liaisons to Boston Public Schools, for any assistance that they can provide to support you in this process.

It is my hope that Boston commits to a decisive plan for significant and dramatic change. We can and must do better for the students of the Mattahunt, and we have a professional and moral obligation to use the tools at our disposal to secure rapid improvement for their benefit. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Chairman Michael O'Neill

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| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  *Commissioner* |  |

November 28, 2016

Superintendent Tommy Chang

Boston Public Schools

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building

* 2300 Washington Street, 5th floor Boston, MA 02119

Dear Superintendent Chang:

I am writing in response to your letter dated November 18, 2016, informing me of the November 16, 2016 vote of the Boston School Committee to close the Mattahunt Elementary School ("Mattahunt") on June 30, 2017. As a result of the School Committee's vote, the Mattahunt's accountability designation of "Under Review" will be changed to Level 4.

The statutory requirements for an underperforming school will continue to apply to the Mattahunt for this school year. In the circumstances here, where the School Committee has voted to close the school, the Mattahunt's current turnaround plan will remain in effect for the remainder of the school year, subject to the following: the turnaround plan must include an addendum that will address the closing procedures for the school, with a particular focus on the supports that will be provided to Mattahunt families. Specifically, the addendum should describe the process for identifying priority school transfer choices for Mattahunt students, and what consultation and other support will be provided for Mattahunt students and families. Please provide the addendum to the Mattahunt's turnaround plan to me within 30 days.

I know you share my conviction that students at the Mattahunt need and deserve a stronger education. I look forward to continuing to work with you so that these students are provided with the educational opportunities to perform at high levels and reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D. .

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education