**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Tuesday, October 29, 2019, 8:45 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street**

**Malden, MA 02148**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Amanda Fernandez**,Belmont

**Matthew Hills**, Newton

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Paymon Rouhanifard**, Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Matthew Tibbitts**, Student Advisory Council, Ludlow

**Martin West**, Newton

**Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Jeffrey C. Riley**,Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Vice-Chair Morton convened the meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) at 8:45 a.m., noting that Chair Craven was on her way. Members introduced themselves. Mr. Morton welcomed Mr. Rouhanifard to his first meeting as a Board member.

## Public Comment

* Gerry Mroz addressed the Board on education for gifted students.

**Comments from Commissioner Riley**

Commissioner Riley welcomed Mr. Rouhanifard to his first meeting as a member of the Board. The Commissioner commended all who participated in the second annual STEM week and said he was pleased to visit schools where students were engaged in deeper learning connected to our state STEM standards. Commissioner Riley said the district review of Boston Public Schools is underway; classroom observations began on September 30 and concluded on October 11. He said over 900 classrooms in approximately 100 schools were observed. The Commissioner said he expects to have the report finalized in the winter of 2020.

Commissioner Riley briefed the Board on the FY2019 supplemental budget that the House Ways and Means Committee reported out. It would increase funding for regional and homeless transportation, circuit breaker, charter school tuition reimbursements, and targeted assistance. The Commissioner said he would inform the Board about final appropriations after the budget process concludes.

Commissioner Riley reported that several hundred schools and districts have expressed interest in the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning (KCL) pilot program. He said the formal application process has begun; the deadline is November 15, and decisions will be made by January on which schools and districts will join the first cohort. The Commissioner announced that Tera Carr has joined the Department as associate commissioner for KCL and Komal Bhasin will join in early November as senior associate commissioner leading the KCL initiative.

**Comments from Secretary Peyser**

Secretary Peyser welcomed Mr. Rouhanifard to the Board and thanked him for taking on this assignment. Secretary Peyser added his appreciation for all who participated in STEM week. He thanked the Commissioner and Department for their engagement and the Governor and especially the Lt. Governor for their leadership in making it happen.

**Approval of Minutes**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the September 24, 2019 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Strengthening Instructional Materials: Report on Two Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Initiatives**

**a) Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE)**

**b) Middle School Science Curriculum Development (OpenSciEd)**

Commissioner Riley introduced the topic, noting he has seen a lot of variation in curriculum that schools are using. He said the CURATE program is designed to help districts make well-informed decisions about curriculum materials that are aligned to state standards.

Heather Peske, senior associate commissioner, introduced Ron Noble, associate commissioner, who presented an overview of two Department initiatives focused on supporting teachers’ access to high-quality instructional materials: CURATE and OpenSciEd. He explained that CURATE stands for Curriculum Ratings by Teachers and helps districts cut through the noise in the curricular materials marketplace for ELA and math, while OpenSciEd aims to address the dearth of high-quality science materials that meet our 2016 science, technology, and engineering standards through new materials that are open-source.

Mr. Noble introduced Maria Hernandez and Rachel Bradshaw of the Department, who described the CURATE process. They explained that CURATE fellows are current Massachusetts teachers who work together to reach consensus on ratings of curriculum products using the CURATE rubric; the Rennie Center for Research and Policy facilitates the review process and summarizes the findings in user-friendly reports. Ms. Bradshaw reviewed an example from the report for a grades K-2 literacy product, noting that the two main components of the CURATE rating are the product’s alignment to Massachusetts standards, and classroom application. She said if a product earns a “meets” rating, it qualifies for inclusion in a state master service agreement, which is helpful to districts and schools seeking to purchase materials. Ms. Bradshaw added that the publisher/vendor can write a brief response to the rating, which is posted online as an addendum to the report.

Mr. West asked if the Department is able to document curricula that schools and districts are using. Ms. Bradshaw said the Department has begun publishing curriculum “heat maps” in an effort to collect and report the data in a way that supports cross-district collaboration. Ms. Fernandez asked if curriculum designed by teachers fits into this initiative. Mr. Noble said CURATE does not currently address those types of curricula because the project relies on initial screening by EdReports of curricula that are more broadly available in the marketplace. He added that the Department is starting to look at teacher-developed curricula through other approaches, and has connected 14 districts with researchers from Johns Hopkins to review what their teachers have developed and compare it to other options. Ms. Fernandez said she would be interested in hearing more about this at a future meeting. Commissioner Riley said if new Chapter 70 monies become available, districts will have an opportunity to purchase new curriculum materials and CURATE will help them use the funds wisely.

Chair Craven arrived at 9:10 a.m.

Erin Hashimoto-Martell, the Department’s director of STEM, gave an overview of OpenSciEd. She said the 2016 STE standards that the Board approved promote deeper conceptual understanding and opportunities for students to engage in the practices of what scientists and engineers do, and teachers have told us there are limited materials to teach science in the way outlined in the standards. Ms. Hashimoto-Martell said the Department has partnered with a consortium of science education experts to meet this demand by guiding the design of high quality curricular materials and professional learning resources. She explained that OpenSciEd uses a research-based instructional model through which students drive the questions and investigations that lead them to a deep conceptual understanding of the content.

Holly Rosa, director of K-12 Science, Technology, and Engineering for Boston Public Schools, described the impact of the OpenSciEd pilot in her district. She said she sees a positive shift in teachers’ practice after they attended the professional development sessions and piloted the OpenSciEd units. She showed a video interviewing a BPS middle school teacher and his students about their thoughts on the OpenSciEd curriculum. Vice-Chair Morton thanked Ms. Rosa for bringing the voice of students to the Board.

Commissioner Riley said educators are always looking for good ideas that work in the classroom, and this is another opportunity for the state to collaborate with educators to improve teaching and learning. Vice-Chair Morton asked how the seven districts in the OpenSciEd pilot were selected and why no districts from western Massachusetts were included. Ms. Hashimoto-Martell explained that while it was widely publicized, the pilot was an opt-in and these were the districts that expressed interest. In relation to CURATE, Mr. Rouhanifard asked what percentage of districts are using ELA and math curriculum that meets state standards. Ms. Bradshaw said it is hard to tell because the data are limited right now; the heat maps represent only a third of districts. Mr. Hills asked about curriculum in history/social science. Ms. Peske responded that the Department is building Massachusetts-specific curriculum materials and recently released civics guidance and examples of high-quality student tasks.

Chair Craven apologized for her delay in arriving. She welcomed Mr. Rouhanifard to the Board.

**Competency Determination Standard for High School Graduation: Planning for Class of 2024 and Beyond**

Chair Craven welcomed Jeff Wulfson, deputy commissioner, and Michol Stapel, associate commissioner. Commissioner Riley noted the memo in the Board packet, which presents background on the Competency Determination (CD), and said the Board will have to determine what the CD will be in the future. Mr. Wulfson said the Board would have a series of discussions and briefings throughout this year, leading to what is likely to be a very significant decision. He explained that the regulation change that the Board sent out for public comment last month would, if adopted, extend the interim CD standard through the class of 2023 (current 9th graders). He added that any new standard would apply to the class of 2024 and beyond. Mr. Wulfson noted the memo outlines major events and the timeline for this year, and if all goes according to plan, the Board would take a final vote, based on the Commissioner’s recommendation, in September 2020.

Mr. Wulfson said a key element in this process would be the Commissioner’s appointment of an advisory committee to study the issues and advise him as he prepares his recommendation to the Board. He said the Department is now assembling names for that committee and would welcome suggestions from Board members. He added that the Commissioner and Chair Craven would discuss whether Board members themselves should be on the committee. Mr. Wulfson pointed out that a team of academic researchers, headed by John Papay from Brown University, has been doing some statistical analysis to determine the relationship between students’ MCAS results and their success after high school; they will present preliminary findings from that study at the Board’s joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education in December. Mr. Wulfson said this will be an important and sometimes challenging conversation with the field, parents, and the community at large. He added that we are intent on making sure the CD, which is required by statute, reflects that students who have earned a Massachusetts high school diploma have the education, skills, and knowledge they need to succeed after graduation.

In response to a question from Mr. Hills, Mr. Wulfson confirmed that the advisory committee’s role is to advise the Commissioner; the Commissioner will make his recommendation to the Board, and the Board will vote on the Commissioner’s recommendation. Mr. Moriarty said he believes the high school diploma should be an honest document, and expressed concern that students, families, and teachers may not fully understand how graduates do in life after high school. Chair Craven said the Board looks forward to continuing these important discussions.

**Students with Dyslexia – Update on Department Activities to Assist School Districts**

Chair Craven welcomed Russell Johnston, senior associate commissioner, to the table. She credited Mr. Moriarty for requesting that this topic be on the Board’s agenda.

Mr. Johnston gave a presentation on the dyslexia legislation that took effect in January 2019, and the actions the Department has taken to implement the law. It requires the Department, in consultation with the Department of Early Education and Care, to issue guidelines to assist districts in developing screening procedures or protocols for students that demonstrate one or more potential indicators of a neurological learning disability including, but not limited to, dyslexia. Mr. Johnston walked through the process that led to the Department’s current contract with Pivot Learning, Inc., a national organization that partners with states and school districts. He said the organization, which includes members affiliated with UMass-Amherst, is assisting the Department in working with stakeholders to prepare guidelines in the current school year, 2019-2020. Mr. Johnston highlighted various elements that will be included in the guidelines and presented the project plan and timetable.

Mr. Johnston noted that in addition to the work under the contract, the Department has offered a free professional development course on dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia to educators across the state. He said the course is highly sought after; it was offered twice last year and the enrollment will double this year. Mr. Johnston also called attention to the information and resources on dyslexia that the Department has posted on its website.

Mr. Moriarty said he appreciates the leadership that the Department has shown on this issue. Secretary Peyser commented that the issue is broader than screening and intervention, and broader than special education; it is about improving early reading instruction for all students and providing the support they need in order to become effective readers by the end of grade 3.

Chair Craven thanked Mr. Johnston for his presentation. She called for a short break at 10:20 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 10:30 a.m.

**Update on School Finance Bill**

Chair Craven introduced Jeff Wulfson, deputy commissioner, Russell Johnston, senior associate commissioner, and Rob O’Donnell, school finance director. Mr. Wulfson provided a brief overview of the House and Senate versions of the school finance bill, which are now before the legislative conference committee.

Mr. Wulfson said both bills reflect the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission and the funding provisions in both versions are similar, with technical differences that should be relatively easy to resolve. He added the most significant differences concern accountability measures and the Commissioner’s role. Mr. Wulfson noted this is not an appropriation bill; it will need to be funded each year in the state budget. In response to a comment from Chair Craven, he confirmed that because it is not an appropriation bill, the Governor’s options are to sign the bill, veto the bill, or return it with amendments.

Mr. West asked about Department oversight on how the new funding is used. Commissioner Riley said the 1993 Education Reform Act was a grand bargain of funding coupled with accountability, and this is less so. He noted that the Senate bill provides less oversight and accountability than the House bill.

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2021 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board’s Budget Committee**

Jeff Wulfson, deputy commissioner, and Julia Jou, budget director, presented on the budget process. Mr. Wulfson noted the Commissioner already gave a summary of the FY2019 supplemental budget, which includes additional education funding for cities and towns. He said the Board’s budget committee, chaired by Mr. Hills, has started developing recommendations for the Board to present to the Secretary for the FY2021 education budget. Mr. Hills said the committee met earlier this month and focused on the Department’s five core strategies, which the budget should reflect. Mr. Hills said the committee asked the Department about key priorities for FY2021; they are partnerships with districts to strengthen teaching and learning, targeted intervention, increased literacy resources, and professional development for the new arts and health frameworks. He said the committee would meet again in a couple of weeks before presenting its recommendations to the Board. Mr. Wulfson said at the November 19 meeting the Board will vote on the budget committee’s recommendation and then the Commissioner will transmit it to the Secretary and use it in working with the Legislature.

Mr. Moriarty noted that one of the Level 5 schools, the Dever School in Boston, has reached a milestone on grade 3 reading proficiency and math scores, and the Parker School in New Bedford is not far behind. He added this is exactly the trend we want to be seeing. Chair Craven thanked Mr. Moriarty for noting this good news. Commissioner Riley said he would pass it along to former Dever receiver Michael Contompasis.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board