*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | February 14, 2020 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the February 25, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be onTuesday, February 25, 2020, at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's offices at 75 Pleasant Street in Malden. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. (coffee will be available at 8:30 a.m.) and should adjourn by 1:00 p.m. If you need overnight accommodations or any additional information about the schedule, please call Helene Bettencourt at (781) 338-3120.

# OVERVIEW

We have four business items on our agenda for discussion and action this month. First is the Student Opportunity Act – specifically, a presentation on the three-year evidence-based plans that the SOA requires each district to develop and submit by April 1, 2020. Given that very challenging timeline, I am recommending that the Board vote this month to adopt regulations on SOA district plans, on an emergency basis. The second item on our agenda is a discussion and final vote on amendments to the regulations on vocational technical education. Following that, we will discuss potential changes to 2020 district and school accountability reporting. The last item for discussion and vote relates to City on a Hill Charter Public School in Boston: renewal of a charter and request to consolidate two charters.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven will brief the Board on current issues and activities.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

1. **Competency Determination Advisory Committee.**

I informed the Board last month thatI have set up an advisory committee on the competency determination, chaired by Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, former president of Bridgewater State University. Members include Marty West and over a dozen other representatives from K-12 and higher education. The committee will recommend to me what level of achievement students will need to demonstrate on the next-generation high school MCAS tests in order to earn their CD and be eligible to graduate from high school. The committee will also review and recommend policies related to alternate pathways to the CD (e.g., retests and appeals) as well as timelines. This work will inform the recommendations that I will be presenting to you later this spring, regarding high school graduation requirements for students in the class of 2024 and beyond.

The committee held its first meeting on February 3. The committee heard information about the history of the CD and the introduction of the next-generation MCAS tests, and began initial discussions about the current requirements for high school graduation and the process for revising those requirements. The committee will meet again during the first week of March and the first week of April to continue the work to formulate a full set of recommendations for the Commissioner.

1. **U.S. Census.**

The 2020 Census is less than 50 days away and is the foundation that determines how much federal funding the Commonwealth receives for the next decade. Each year, over $675 billion is distributed to the states through federal programs, such as School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Title 1, Special Education, Medicare/Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, Affordable Housing, Pell Grants, and Federal Direct Student Loans, that affect the communities in Massachusetts. During the week of March 2 local districts are encouraged to participate in the Census in schools week. The Department recently held several webinar meetings for the K-12 community and urban superintendents. Local superintendents should contact my office if they need additional assistance in their communities.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Peyser will brief the Board on current issues and activities.

# ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

1. **Student Opportunity Act and District Plans to Close Gaps in Opportunity and Achievement: Overview and Proposed Regulations, 603 CMR 55.00, for Emergency Adoption – Discussion and Vote**

The Student Opportunity Act requires each school district to create and submit to the Commissioner – by April 1, 2020 – a three-year evidence-based plan to close opportunity and achievement gaps among student subgroups. Over the past month the Department has sent guidance to districts and I have met with superintendents and other education leaders throughout the state, in person and through webinars, to discuss the SOA plans and expectations. I look forward to presenting an overview to the Board at our February 25 meeting. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston will join us for the presentation.

To help school districts meet the extremely tight timeline and make effective use of the significant funds that the Commonwealth is committing under the SOA, I am recommending that the Board vote on February 25 to adopt regulations for the district plans on an emergency basis, as provided by the Massachusetts Administrative Procedure Act. The emergency regulations would be in effect for no more than three months, during which time the Department will solicit and review public comment. Following the public comment period, I expect to bring the regulations back to the Board for final adoption at the May meeting. Details are under Tab 1.

1. **Proposed Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00 (Phase I) –Discussion and Vote**

In November 2019, the Board voted to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to the vocational technical education (VTE) regulations, 603 CMR 4.00. The Department has reviewed the comments and incorporated some of the suggested changes, as outlined in the memo and accompanying documents under Tab 2. These amendments are the first phase of the proposed VTE regulatory changes. They are designed to support the creation of new VTE programs and expand access for students; strengthen program quality; and streamline the vocational educator licensure process. I recommend that the Board vote on February 25 to adopt the proposed amendments, including the additional changes, as presented. Department staff, including Senior Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang, will be available to answer your questions.

1. **Potential Changes to 2020 District and School Accountability Reporting – Initial Discussion**

In September 2019 the Department released the second year of results under the redesigned district and school accountability system. Since then, the Department has been considering improvements that could be made to the system. At our meeting on February 25, we will begin the discussion about an amendment to the system for 2020 reporting and review the timeline for public comment and further discussion and action by the Board. The memorandum under Tab 3 provides details. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston and Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin will be at the meeting to respond to your questions.

1. **Charter Schools: Renewal of Charter for City on a Hill Charter Public School Circuit Street and Request to Consolidate Two Charters – Discussion and Vote**

I recommend that the Board vote to renew the charter for City on a Hill Charter Public School Circuit Street (CoaH CS) in Boston, grant the request to consolidate the charters of CoaH CS and City on a Hill Charter Public School Dudley Square, with modifications, and place the resulting single CoaH CS charter school on probationwith conditions. The memorandum under Tab 4 provides details. Senior Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang and Alison Bagg, Director, will be at the meeting to answer your questions.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Report on Grants and Charter School Matters Approved by the Commissioner**

I am presenting information on grants and charter school matters that I have approved since the last meeting, under the authority the Board has delegated to the Commissioner.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.