**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148**

**Tuesday, October 20, 2020**

**9:03 a.m. – 12:08 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

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

**Amanda** **Fernández**,Belmont

**Matthew Hills**, Newton (participating remotely via video conference)

**Darlene Lombos,** Boston (participating remotely via video conference)

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Paymon Rouhanifard**, Brookline (participating remotely via video conference)

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Martin West**, Newton

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

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Chair Craven convened the meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) at 9:03 a.m. Board members introduced themselves.

**Public Comment**

* **Gerry Mroz**, parent, addressed the Board on Update on Commissioner Riley’s Goals for 2020-2021
* **Jack Livramento**, representing the Vocational Education Justice Coalition, United Interfaith Action of SE MA, and MA Communities Action Network, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Barbara Fields**, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Gladys Vega**, Chelsea Collaborative, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Nina Hackel**, Progressive Democrats of MA and owner of a remodeling business, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Ziven Drake**, North Atlantic State Carpenters Training Fund, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Timothy Kobba**, Center for Law and Education, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions
* **Lew Finfer**, Massachusetts Communities Action Network and the Vocational Education Justice Coalition, addressed the Board on state regulations and policies governing vocational school admissions

Vice-Chair Morton asked about the percentage of students of color currently in vocational education programs. Mr. Moriarty asked about student waitlists. Ms. Stewart asked if vocational school admissions could be added to a future Board agenda. Commissioner Riley said the topic will be on the agenda for discussion at an upcoming meeting and the Department will be providing information to the Board. Chair Craven asked that the Department include data on vocational school graduates who persist in vocational fields.

**Comments from Chair Craven**

Chair Craven asked members Morton, Fernández, and Moriarty to speak on what their community-based organizations are doing to supplement remote learning that schools are providing. Vice-Chair Morton relayed information from Chris Smith, Executive Director of Boston After-School and Beyond, about community learning centers in Greater Boston. Vice-Chair Morton said the Boston After-School and Beyond network has mobilized 250 learning and enrichment hubs, providing academic support and enrichment for students through community centers, museums, and other organizations. He said the youth development sector is an integral part of the learning ecosystem, noting that these community learning centers or “equity pods” are addressing critical needs.

Ms. Fernández said her organization is connecting with the Y, IBA, and others in a coalition to expand community-based services to students. She added that many of these programs offer educators and staff who reflect the diversity of their students and provide cultural competency and linguistic affirmation as well as enriching the remote learning experience.

Mr. Moriarty said the families in Holyoke that his community development corporation serves do not have resources to set up learning pods. Given the need, his organization partnered with Homework House, an established after-school tutoring organization, to set up “equity pods” to support children in remote learning. He added that the Department of Early Education and Care-Department of Elementary and Secondary Education joint guidelines have been helpful; for example, the city now has a designated municipal authority to oversee, coordinate, and support these programs.

Chair Craven said all Board members are committed to closing achievement gaps; in the short term we need to measure the efficacy of the learning that is going on and keep the gaps from getting wider.

**Comments from Secretary Peyser**

Secretary Peyser discussed a virtual event hosted by MIT on October 19 to kick off STEM Week; Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and Congressman Kennedy attended and celebrated high school science award winners. He noted the theme – *See Yourself in STEM* – is about sparking interest and expanding opportunities for diverse students to prepare for rewarding STEM-related occupations. Secretary Peyser said STEM Week includes over 100 events. He thanked Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito for making STEM a critical part of our education priorities.

**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 September 29, 2020 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**2021 Teacher of the Year Announcement**

Commissioner Riley said 120 educators were nominated for 2021 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and 12 became semi-finalists; of those, the teacher who was chosen was a unanimous selection, which almost never happens. Commissioner Riley introduced Jennifer Hedrington, a seventh-grade math teacher at Ferryway School in Malden, the 2021 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Ms. Hedrington is in her 16th year of teaching secondary school mathematics and her 10th year of teaching in Malden; she holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Atlantic Union College and a J.D. from the Massachusetts School of Law.

Ms. Hedrington said she is grateful and humbled by the honor. She introduced and thanked her husband Jamal, children Ethan Dean and Isaiah, and thanked her family who are watching in Ghana. Ms. Hedrington expressed appreciation to DESE and her colleagues in the Malden Public Schools, her principal, Abdel Sepúlveda, and her students, who she said are the real reason she is here. She said what drives her every day is that she wants to become the teacher she needed when she was in school. Ms. Hedrington said the heart of her teaching is building relationships with students.

Board members congratulated Ms. Hedrington and commended her for her work with her students. In response to a question from Secretary Peyser, Ms. Hedrington said her strength is being in-person with her students and now that she is teaching remotely, she works harder to build connections, so they know she is still here for them. Board members warmly thanked Ms. Hedrington for her work, her commitment to her students, and her inspiring presentation.

**Language Interpretation Services Project**

Chair Craven introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Lauren Woo, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation,Dr. Alberto Vázquez Matos, Receiver/Superintendent of Holyoke Public Schools (HPS), and Nicholas Magnolia, coordinator of HPS interpretation and translation services, to discuss the Language Interpretation Services Project that the Department has launched with 20 districts across the Commonwealth to support them in engaging and communicating with limited-English-proficient (LEP) families.

Mr. Johnston described the state initiative, which he said is especially important as districts work with families on how to involve their children in online learning and access the materials they need. He said the Department used data to identify the communities in greatest need and plans to spend $500,000 this year to expand language access, interpretation, and translation in those districts. Ms. Woo explained that the Language Interpretation Services Project focuses on access and equity by providing a resource to school districts and LEP families to establish ongoing, two-way communication during remote and hybrid learning; expanding and enhancing school and district capacity to use interpretation services to engage and teach students; and expanding internal capacity to develop a district’s own cadre of trained interpreters. Ms. Woo reviewed the project participants and the factors that led to their selection, project components, and considerations to maximize these services.

Dr. Alberto Vázquez Matos and Mr. Magnolia presented on how HPS has worked with the Department to make this initiative part of a larger district-wide strategy around language access and equity for families. Dr. Vázquez Matos said 44% of HPS students live in homes where English is not the primary language. He discussed the language access initiative in relation to the district’s values and strategic priorities. Mr. Magnolia said the district has 175 interpreters and translators trained and available, and a new cohort is enrolled in UMass training. He presented information on the district’s centralized directory of interpreters, annual survey results, and other aspects of the system.

Chair Craven asked about scaling up this state initiative. Mr. Johnston said the work is intensive in 20 districts, but support is available more broadly; DESE is using a tiered model of support and professional training and is building on what we learn from HPS. Ms. Fernández commended the initiative and said she will be interested to hear about progress in the other districts. Dr. Vázquez Matos said HPS is identifying and using best practices, including creating a user-friendly parent web page and staffing the district’s remote learning help line with translators. Mr. West asked how this program could be adapted in districts with more language diversity than Holyoke. Ms. Woo said the UMass training workshops can accommodate various languages. Mr. Johnston added that the participating districts have access to Lionbridge on-demand telephonic interpretation, which provides translation for hundreds of languages and dialects.

Chair Craven thanked the presenters and said the Board looks forward to working with Dr. Vázquez Matos in his new role in Holyoke.

**Massachusetts STEM Week: Uxbridge High School Presentation**

In recognition of STEM Week, Michael Rubin, principal of Uxbridge High School and the 2020 Massachusetts High School Principal of the Year, and Dr. Frank Tiano, Uxbridge Superintendent, presented an overview of the Innovation Pathways program at Uxbridge High School. Principal Rubin said the school has about 600 students in grades 8-12, and the program gives them strong connections between academic and technical curricula and industry standards. He said as a result, about 60 students in 2018-2019 were able to graduate with post-secondary credit.

Principal Rubin said the Innovation Pathways program has helped to drive school and district improvement. He said funding has come from Skills Capital grants, in-kind donations and partnerships, Project Lead the Way grants, and the district’s operating budget. Superintendent Tiano said under Principal Rubin’s leadership, the school has created pockets of innovation that are sustainable and replicable. Principal Rubin and Superintendent Tiano concluded by highlighting the students’ work during the pandemic to make personal protective equipment for hospitals and first responders. Chair Craven thanked the presenters for the creative approach they have taken to expand opportunities for students in this comprehensive high school.

Vice-Chair Morton left the meeting.

**Update on COVID-19 Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families**

Commissioner Riley said since the last Board meeting, the Department has made a shift from providing guidance to providing more support and monitoring for schools and districts. He discussed support in areas including technology, food services, resources for teachers, and grant funding. The Commissioner said he recently sent letters to several districts where there seemed to be misalignment between their learning model and the data and metrics. Commissioner Riley said he is pleased that most of the districts have begun to offer some in-person instruction or are in the process of offering it, and the DESE review team will be auditing two remaining districts.

Commissioner Riley said DESE will be reviewing districts for alignment with the metrics and other factors including each district’s learning model, student learning time, academics, family communication, and special student populations. He said the Department will continue to follow the evolving medical information and will update the guidance documents as needed. Commissioner Riley reviewed the weekly positive COVID-19 cases in schools since September 24, noting there is little evidence the virus is transmitted in schools.

Commissioner Riley informed the Board that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended the free meals program for children through June 30, 2021. He said he plans to present to the Board on vocational technical school admissions at the December 2020 meeting.

**Commissioner Riley’s Goals for 2020-2021**

Commissioner Riley reviewed his five goals for the upcoming year: COVID-19 response and support for districts and schools, support to students and families to address opportunity gaps, using evidence-based policies and practices to strengthen teaching and learning, advancing deeper learning and innovative assessments, and strategic planning for the Department. Ms. Stewart asked if the Board has a new strategic plan. Commissioner Riley explained that the strategic planning he referenced relates primarily to the Department. Mr. Hills asked about planning for MCAS. He also commented that the Commissioner and Department should not take on too many new initiatives this year. Commissioner Riley said MCAS is important and he will provide regular updates to the Board. With respect to the Department’s strategic planning, he said his focus is on adjustments that may be needed to address current issues during the pandemic. Mr. Moriarty suggested that literacy initiatives should target resources to early literacy and that gifted and talented education should also be included in the Department’s plans.

**Amendment to Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00 (Pilot Alternative Assessment for Licensure)**

Commissioner Riley said the Board voted in January 2020 to solicit public comment on the proposed amendment to the regulations to pilot alternative assessments to the existing Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL). He said he is recommending that the Board vote to adopt the amendment with one change relating to the timeline. Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Meagan Comb, Director of Educator Effectiveness, Center for Instructional Support were introduced. Ms. Peske explained the timeline for the pilot and said the Department is working with stakeholders to identify the alternative assessments that will be piloted.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with**

**M.G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and c. 71, § 38G, and having solicited and reviewed public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, M.G.L. c.30A, § 3, hereby adopts the proposed amendment to the Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The amendment adds 603 CMR 7.04(2)(e), creating opportunities to pilot and learn from alternative assessments for educator licensure.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Update on Education Budget Matters**

Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO Bill Bell said the Governor refiled the FY2021 budget and legislative leaders hope to finalize it in November. He said Chapter 70 and federal grant funds are set, and we are waiting to see if the U.S. Congress will provide further funding for state and local governments. Mr. Bell said the Department is actively working to support districts with grant funds and acquisition needs. Mr. Bell said the FY2022 budget is still in question and the Department will be working on it with the administration over the next few months. He added that we need more specificity before launching the usual Board budget planning process.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:08 p.m. subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board