**Minutes of the Special Meeting/Retreat**

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

**1 Ashburton Place, 21st Floor, Conf. Room 1, Boston, MA 02108**

**Wednesday, November 1, 2023, 9:45 a.m.–2:00 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton (participated via Zoom)

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Martin West,** Newton

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

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

**Ela Gardiner,** Wellesley, Student Member

**Paymon Rouhanifard,** Brookline

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Chair Craven called the special meeting/retreat of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board/BESE) to order at 9:45 a.m. and Commissioner Riley led the members through an opening activity. After a break from 10:00-10:15 a.m., Chair Craven framed the agenda for the retreat, noting the state and local roles in Massachusetts public education and the role of the Board in the context of the Supreme Judicial Court’s 1993 decision in the *McDuffy* case.

Commissioner Riley presented on the Massachusetts educational landscape: historical overview and current status. He reviewed the history of education reform in Massachusetts from the 1993 *McDuffy* decision and the Education Reform Act of 1993 to the Achievement Gap Act of 2010 and the Student Opportunity Act of 2019. He discussed how education reform helped Massachusetts rise to the top and noted that progress has stalled for about a decade, other states are catching up, and large gaps persist among student groups. The Commissioner suggested we may need a new model.

Commissioner Riley and Board members discussed the role of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and its current core functions in a local-control context and how DESE could use its authorities to improve outcomes for students. He noted there is a national debate about local control of PreK-12 education. The Commissioner and Board members discussed possible levers for change, such as implementing high-quality instructional materials, changing assessment, evolving the accountability system, diversifying the educator workforce, reducing the variation in teacher quality, promoting differentiated instruction, and increasing student engagement. Commissioner Riley and members agreed it would be helpful to identify a few power goals that are measurable. The Commissioner suggested these might include specific reductions in the chronic absenteeism rate, increases in student performance on MCAS tests, and increases in educator diversity.

After a break from 11:40-11:50 a.m., Deputy Commissioner Russell Johnston presented a brief update on Mass Literacy, touching on facts about reading; the Mass Literacy vision; components of literacy instruction; focus areas of the Mass Literacy initiative; guidance, resources, and information that DESE has produced for the field; the Mass Literacy Guide; High-Quality Instructional Materials; CURATE and Appleseeds; professional learning; funding; educator preparation; and Mass Literacy’s momentum in trends. Over lunch, members viewed a video, “The Right to Read,” and then discussed ideas for building on the strengths of the Mass Literacy initiative to improve literacy instruction and student learning throughout the Commonwealth.

Chair Craven thanked members for participating in the retreat. She invited them to send any individual suggestions or feedback to the Commissioner as he prepares to bring proposed statewide measures of progress to the Board at its next regular meeting on November 21.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 2:00 p.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