**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)  
Tuesday, November 21, 2023, 9:02 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.**

**This meeting was held virtually and**[**livestreamed**](https://livestream.com/accounts/22459134)**.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

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

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Ela Gardiner,** Wellesley, Student Member

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Paymon Rouhanifard,** Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Tom Moreau,** Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning(designee for **Secretary Tutwiler**)

**Martin West,** Newton

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

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., and members introduced themselves. She announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board/BESE) meeting, like all regular meetings of the Board, is being [livestreamed and recorded](https://livestream.com/accounts/22459134).

**Statements from the Public**

* **Noah Berger,** Director, Center for Education Policy and Practice, Massachusetts Teachers Association, addressed the Board on Item 1: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2025 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee
* **Sandra Makhlouta** addressed the Board on Item 1: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2025 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee
* **MaryGrace Stewart** addressed the Board on Item 1: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2025 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee
* **Gerry Mroz** addressed the Board on Item 1: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2025 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee
* **Deb McCarthy,** Massachusetts Teachers Association Vice President, addressed the Board on Item 2: Statewide Measures of Progress and Commissioner's Goals
* **Yuval Levy,** a senior at Brookline High School, addressed the Board on the rise of antisemitism in Massachusetts
* **Sarah Marzugi,** a sophomore at Holliston High School**,** addressed the Board on the rise of antisemitism in Massachusetts
* **Dr. Maria B. Serpa,** Professor Emerita of Education and TESOL Bilingual-Special Education, Director Assessment of B-SWDs and Biliteracy-Dyslexia Projects, Lesley University Graduate School of Education**,** addressed the Board on English Learners in the Boston Public Schools and the resignation of members of the BPS EL Task Force
* **John Mudd** addressed the Board on the Boston Public Schools' plan for Inclusive Education of English Learners and English Learners with Disabilities and the resignation of members of the BPS EL Task Force
* **Fabián Torres-Ardila, PhD.**, Associate Director, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts, Boston**,** addressed the Board on the Boston Public Schools' plan for Inclusive Education of English Learners and the resignation of members of the BPS EL Task Force

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven thanked Board members for their participation in the retreat earlier this month and noted the Board’s continuing focus on early literacy. She thanked today’s student speakers for their comments about the troubling rise of antisemitism and added that the curriculum frameworks and guidance on History/Social Science and Civics, and on addressing bullying and harassment, could be resources for schools. Chair Craven also commented on the ongoing interest in state graduation requirements. She concluded by stating that the Board looks forward to receiving an update on the Boston Public Schools in December.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Assistant Secretary Tom Moreau, on behalf of Secretary Tutwiler, said that as is customary he would abstain from voting on the Board’s FY2025 budget proposal because the budget recommendation goes to the Secretary.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Riley updated the Board on the office move of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department/DESE) from Malden to Everett. He discussed his recent visits to schools in Fall River and Plymouth, where two teachers were awarded the National Milken Award, and his recent visit to Lexington with Chair Craven and Ms. Stewart, where De'Shawn C. Washington, a fourth-grade inclusion teacher at Maria Hastings Elementary School, was named the 2024 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Commissioner Riley said Boston Public Schools will be on the agenda for the December meeting; he has invited Mayor Wu, School Committee Chair Robinson, and Superintendent Skipper to attend, and DESE will present its report. The Commissioner agreed that the rise in antisemitism is very troubling and noted that yesterday, he and Governor Healey announced new grant opportunities to address hate crimes in our schools. He confirmed that DESE provides resources for schools on genocide education and related matters and he would provide further information to the Board.

**Approval of the Minutes of the October 24, 2023 Regular Meeting**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the October 24, 2023 Regular Meeting.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2025 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee**

Ms. Mohamed, Chair of the BESE Budget Committee, said the committee met in October and November to discuss the priority areas of focus for the Board’s FY25 state budget priorities for presentation to the full Board. She explained that the committee’s discussions recognized the current state of K-12 public education funding, noting the Commonwealth’s commitment to the funding schedule called for in the 2019 Student Opportunity Act. Ms. Mohamed said that as always, the committee recommends that the Board support the maximum funding available to support the state education accounts: Chapter 70, special education circuit breaker, charter school tuition reimbursement to districts, and other district transportation reimbursement accounts.

Ms. Mohamed explained that recent budgets have included substantial tranches of federal funding support related to pandemic recovery, and that these resource infusions will taper off in the coming months. She said most of the state budget is programmed through specific formulaic aid distributions; the largest share is automatically allocated to fund Chapter 70, circuit breaker reimbursements, district transportation reimbursement accounts, and rural aid. She said that in the committee’s discussions in October and November, they supported the concept of funding a strategic commitment to and investment in three crucial areas that underpin a foundation for broader student success: early literacy teacher training; systems of support for social emotional learning, mental and behavioral health, and wellness; and teacher diversification and pipeline.

In closing, Ms. Mohamed thanked other members of the committee: Dr. Fisher, Ms. Gardiner, and Mr. Moriarty. She said the committee recommends that the Board authorize the Commissioner to work with the Secretary, Governor, and Legislature to finalize an FY25 state budget for elementary and secondary education that supports our collective priorities for the 2024-2025 school year.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED**: **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws chapter 69, § 1A, approve the budget priorities for the FY2025 education budget as recommended by the Board’s Budget Committee and the Commissioner, and direct the Commissioner to convey these recommendations and priorities to the Secretary of Education, the Governor, and the Legislature.**

The vote, by roll call, was 9-0-1. Assistant Secretary Moreau, on behalf of Secretary Tutwiler, abstained.

Chair Craven thanked Ms. Mohamed and the members of the Budget Committee.

**Statewide Measures of Progress and Commissioner's Goals**

Commissioner Riley outlined his goals that will guide his work, and the work of the Department, in 2023-2024. He said that based on comments from Board members, he is now proposing five statewide measures of progress that are aligned to our [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf) and strategic objectives. He reviewed these five statewide measures:

1. By 2026, the state will return to pre-pandemic levels (or higher) of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the MCAS:

a. Increase grades 3-8 ELA by 10 percentage points to 52 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

b. Increase grade 10 ELA by 5 percentage points to 63 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

c. Increase grades 3-8 Math by 8 percentage points to 49 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

d. Increase grade 10 Math by 9 percentage points to 59 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

2. By 2026, the state will return to pre-pandemic levels (or lower) of the percentage of students who are chronically absent:

a. Decrease the non-high school chronic absenteeism rate by at least 9.4 percentage points to 9.0 percent.

b. Decrease the high school chronic absenteeism rate by at least 9.1 percentage points to 17.3 percent.

3. By 2026, at least 85,000 high-school students will be enrolled in a designated high school college-and-career pathway or program (e.g., Career and Technical Education, including Chapter 74 and “After Dark” programs, Innovation Career Pathways, and Early College).

4. By 2026, the percentage of diverse staff in schools and districts will increase by at least 4 points to 17.9 percent.

5. By 2027, the state will offer structured professional learning on evidence-based practices for literacy for all teachers and administrators with responsibility for early literacy.

Commissioner Riley explained that these proposed measures were developed with the Board’s input and are supported by the initiatives and strategies outlined in the 2023-2024 goals document that he presented to the Board at the October 24 meeting. He noted that achieving these measures, especially #5, will take a significant financial commitment.

The Commissioner responded to questions from Board members. Vice-Chair Hills thanked the Commissioner for putting the metrics together and agreed that budget support will be critical.

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, having received the Commissioner’s 2023-2024 goals, endorse the statewide measures of progress, as recommended by the Commissioner.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Chronic Absenteeism and Accountability Reporting**

Commissioner Riley said he is presenting the process he will be undertaking to propose increasing the weight of chronic absenteeism in the district and school accountability system. He said the intent is to highlight the importance and urgency of addressing chronic absenteeism.

Rob Curtin, Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability presented information on the rates of chronic absenteeism from 2019-2023 in various grade spans. He said close to 200,000 students in Massachusetts schools were chronically absent (missing 18+ school days) in school year 2023. Mr. Curtin discussed the MCAS achievement results for chronically absent students. He explained that along with increasing the weighting for this factor for 2024, DESE would offer seed funding to districts to address the issue and would sponsor a public service campaign.

Mr. Curtin explained the process and timeline for bringing forth a recommendation to the Board on this change to the district and school accountability system, including soliciting feedback from BESE’s Accountability and Assistance Advisory Committee (AAAC), getting feedback from BESE on the proposed changes, inviting public comment (the length of the public comment period is discretionary because it is not a regulatory change), coming back to the BESE for a vote, and then submitting the changes to the U.S. Department of Education for approval. Mr. Curtin answered questions from the Board.

Vice-Chair Hills thanked the Commissioner for outlining the proposal and process for the Board in advance of a vote. Commissioner Riley said he also wants to engage the State Student Advisory Council in this work and gather promising practices from districts and schools to share with the field.

**Early Literacy Update**

Commissioner Riley opened the topic, noting that early literacy is an area of great focus for the Board and DESE. He introduced Katherine Tarca, DESE’s Director of Literacy and Humanities, who said today’s presentation is on curricular materials, one aspect of the early literacy initiative. She updated the Board on curricular materials in use across the Commonwealth for early literacy instruction, as well as the funding DESE is providing to assist schools and districts in adopting and/or implementing high-quality curricular materials. Ms. Tarca discussed the characteristics of high-quality curricular materials for early literacy and noted that 87 districts reported using high-quality instructional materials for ELA/Literacy in at least one elementary grade in 2023. She explained that DESE has provided numerous financial supports for High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) adoption including the GLEAM grant, Accelerating Literacy grant, HQIM Implementation grant, HQIM Purchase grant, and the Student Opportunity Act–EBP grant. Ms. Tarca also noted other supports and resources that DESE is providing.

Ms. Tarca introduced Marie Morse and Magdalena Ganias of the Worcester Public Schools, who described the three-year process of moving their district to use of high-quality instructional materials for literacy. They said DESE’s support, through funding and technical assistance, has been essential. The presenters responded to questions from Board members. Chair Craven thanked all the presenters.

**Public Adult Education System Update**

Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, Adult Education State Director, provided the Board with an overview of the newly branded Public Adult Education System of Massachusetts. She described recent initiatives to promote equitable access to services with a focus on program quality and student outcomes. She presented brief videos highlighting students’ experience in adult education.

Chair Craven and Board members expressed appreciation to Ms. Stevens-Carter and her team at DESE for this work and thanked Ms. Stevens-Carter for her inspirational presentation.

Commissioner Riley suggested moving the Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub agenda item to a future meeting and Chair Craven agreed.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:20 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