Minutes of the Regular Meeting

of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

November 19, 2013

8:34 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street**

**Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose

**Harneen Chernow**, Vice-Chair, Jamaica Plain

**Daniel Brogan**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Dennis

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Karen Daniels**, Milton

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education**

**Pendred Noyce,** Weston

**David Roach**, Sutton

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**James Morton**, Springfield

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 8:34 am.

# Comments from the Chair

Chair Banta welcomed members of the Board and asked them to introduce themselves. Chair Banta introduced a special guest, Kelley Brown, a history teacher from Easthampton High School. Ms. Brown presented an abbreviated lesson to the Board on the Gettysburg Address to demonstrate how the new Massachusetts frameworks, incorporating the Common Core State Standards, are being implementing in classrooms.

Chair Banta asked Board members and others in attendance to observe a moment of silence in memory of Anne Serino, the Department's adult basic education director, who passed away recently. Chair Banta said the Board's Proficiency Gap Committee, which Vice-Chair Chernow chairs, would meet this fall to discuss Level 4 and 5 schools. Chair Banta said she recently attended a meeting of the National Association of State Boards of Education, of which Massachusetts is a member. Chair Banta encouraged other Board members to take advantage of the association's resources and opportunities to participate in study groups and committees.

# Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Chester thanked Easthampton High School teacher Kelley Brown for her impressive presentation. The Commissioner noted that this week marks the 150th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address and the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy. Commissioner Chester said the Department recently held a well attended conference for charter schools focused on equity, access, and excellence. The Commissioner said the RETELL (Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners) initiative is moving forward, 10,000 educators have signed up for training this year, and the recent supplemental state budget provides additional funding that that the Board had sought for this purpose. Commissioner Chester said he was pleased to attend a surprise ceremony for this year's Milken Award winner from Massachusetts: James Moonan, a Milton middle school mathematics teacher. The commissioner was joined at the ceremony by Board members Vanessa Calderón-Rosado and Karen Daniels.

Commissioner Chester said the state's educator evaluation model has gained attention nationally for the progress in improving feedback and goals for educators. Commissioner Chester said the state will release 2012-13 data on educator evaluation ratings later in the week. The Commissioner said he recently attended the Department's annual Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summit, which was a successful and encouraging convening of over 900 educators from 184 districts across the Commonwealth. Survey responses from the attendees were very encouraging about the level and quality of work going on in districts to integrate the new curriculum standards and educator evaluation goals.

# Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Malone said Kelley Brown's presentation was a wonderful lesson on how to use the new standards to build literacy through content. The Secretary said there has been a lot of attention placed on the state's 4th grade reading results, and rightly so because early literacy is vital. He thanked K-12 educators for the work they are doing and noted the role of Early Education and Care in getting young children ready to succeed in school. Secretary Malone said he continues to visit schools throughout the Commonwealth and he recently visited Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, where students are making hands-on connections between disciplines. The Secretary said he is encouraged by the partnerships between K-12 and higher education to provide multiple pathways to higher education. Secretary Malone said the Administration is busy developing House 2, the Governor's budget recommendation.

# Public Comment

1. Gerry Mroz, a Melrose parent, addressed the Board on regionalization and the Smarter Balanced assessment.
2. Tracy O’Connell Novick, a member of the Worcester School Committee, addressed the Board on PARCC.
3. Jason Williams, Massachusetts state director of Stand for Children, and Steve Koczela, President of MassINC Polling Group, addressed the Board on results of a Stand for Children/MassINC survey.

# 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 October 22, 2013 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was 8-0-1. Ms. Kaplan abstained.

**Lawrence Public Schools: Progress Report on Full First Year of Receivership**

Commissioner Chester said he is pleased with the tremendous gains the district is making. The commissioner said on this second anniversary of the Board’s vote on receivership, the district is on the right track.

Lawrence Public Schools Receiver Jeff Riley presented a slide presentation to the Board. He said the work in Lawrence is guided by six themes: (1) to build on excellence in Lawrence and add capacity through talented people and partners from across Massachusetts; (2) to focus on schools as the unit of change and aim to build a district of highly autonomous, high performing neighborhood schools; (3) to empower the individuals closest to the students, who know how best to meet their unique needs; (4) to examine investments to ensure they support initiatives that will produce the best results for LPS students; (5) to move with speed, and maintain momentum to drive continued progress over time; and (6) to focus on results rather than processes and adjust the plan based on results. Receiver Riley said the district has focused on the opportunity and achievement gap and has seen promising first year results, particularly in mathematics.

Receiver Riley discussed the reorganization of the school department's central office to shift resources directly to the schools. Receiver Riley said the district showed the highest growth on MCAS among all of the Gateway cities. The district has also implemented an extended day using targeted interventions and enrichment opportunities.

Commissioner Chester said Mr. Riley is leading a remarkable transformation; schools have developed their own individual plans based on their needs, and teachers and schools have been empowered by the redesigned contract. Mr. Riley said teachers are rewarded for their hard work, and have the opportunity to participate in a teacher leader cabinet. Receiver Riley discussed additional initiatives that include vacation academies, a family resource center, and work to update technology.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado congratulated Receiver Riley on the district’s progress. She asked about results for English language learners (ELLs) and special education students. Receiver Riley said there has been progress and mathematics scores for both groups have improved, while English language arts has seen more incremental improvements.

Ms. Daniels said the district is doing creative work and asked about the high school. Receiver Riley said the high school has made progress but has a long way to go. He said the school is creating a more structured program model for grades 9-10 and is encouraging students in grades 11-12 to become advocates for their own learning. In response to a question from Ms. Kaplan, Mr. Riley said Lawrence is participating in the PARCC field test in the non-MCAS grades. Mr. Roach asked if the principals have the capacity to implement educator evaluations. Receiver Riley said Lawrence is ahead of the curve, and other duties have been taken off principals so they can focus on important goals. Secretary Malone commended the strategies of empowering principals, streamlining their tasks, moving resources to schools, and providing time for teacher collaboration.

Commissioner Chester said the staff and leadership team in Lawrence are doing great work. The Commissioner said the district has historically been funded below foundation budget, and this is the first year the city is funding the schools at foundation level. Commissioner Chester said while much work remains, the receivership shows remarkable progress.

# Plan and Timetable for Administering MCAS and PARCC Student Assessments

Chair Banta provided a recap of last evening's special meeting where the Board heard from the Massachusetts educators who are serving as PARCC fellows to promote and engage other educators across the state on the new college and career ready standards and the development work associated with PARCC assessments. Board members also reviewed sample PARCC test items at the special meeting. She thanked the Commissioner and Department for facilitating such a rich discussion.

Commissioner Chester said MCAS is now in its 17th administration year (the graduation requirement is 14 years old), and while MCAS has served Massachusetts well, it is due for an upgrade. He described the PARCC development process, in which Massachusetts educators, as well as Higher Education Commissioner Freeland and the higher education sector, have played major roles. Commissioner Chester said he is proposing a two-year period to get to know PARCC, starting with the field test this spring. He said that under PARCC, students will receive more accurate signals about whether they are on track for the next grade level and, in high school, for college and careers. Commissioner Chester said he is aware of concerns from the field about the pace of reform, and that's exactly why he is proposing a two-year transition period to allow school districts to "test drive" PARCC before the Board votes on full implementation. He said he is forming a working group with the MASS and other associations to help integrate the curriculum, assessment, and evaluation initiatives.

Senior Associate Commissioner Bob Bickerton said approximately fifteen percent of students in grades 3-8, 9, and 11 will participate in this spring's PARCC field test. Mr. Bickerton said students will either take the performance based assessment or the end of year assessment in either English language arts or mathematics.

Dr. Noyce said she found the PARCC assessment questions to be more challenging than MCAS questions and was impressed by them. Dr. Noyce said we have seen surveys and heard from educators that the standards will improve instruction and advance the mission to prepare all students well for life beyond high school. She said she is glad we are not complacent about our current program and commended the Commissioner for his deliberate approach. Mr. Brogan said he is in favor of PARCC, but also concerned about the technological inequities across school districts. Mr. Brogan said he is convinced that within two years, students and teachers will be comfortable with the new test.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said she agrees with Mr. Brogan’s comment on gaps in technology. She said she is looking forward to the field test, and this opportunity should be used to advocate for technology funding. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said Level 4 schools, which have the neediest children, have the choice to be exempt from the field test. She encouraged the Department to have a representative sample for the field test.

Mr. Roach said when we made the decision to go with new frameworks, it was inevitable that the state would need to update its assessment system and align it to the new standards. Mr. Roach said the Board needs to think about what is in the best interest of our students, and the potential of PARCC is something that cannot be ignored. He said work is being done to close opportunity and achievement gaps, and we must close the technology gap over the next two years.

Secretary Malone said he sees the issues with technology inequity and the Governor is committed to improving the infrastructure. Secretary Malone said he is in favor of field testing the assessment, and he is pleased that the Department is engaging the field on this matter.

Ms. Chernow said she has great concerns about technology inequities in schools and classrooms. Ms. Chernow said she does not see how the paper-and-pencil test would have the same features as the online version, which could lead to additional inequity for those without access to the computer-based version of the assessment. Ms. Chernow asked how data would get back to teachers in a timely way. Mr. Bickerton said Massachusetts has been building a data system, Edwin analytics, for educators to access their student data directly.

Ms. Kaplan said this is a weighty decision and despite this only being a field test, it seems we are moving in the direction of PARCC. Ms. Kaplan said she did not see much difference between MCAS and PARCC items. She said districts need more time to implement the curriculum frameworks and she shares the concern about inequities in technology. Ms. Daniels said she has struggled with this decision and she supports raising the level of rigor to ensure our students are successful, which is what Massachusetts has always done.

Commissioner Chester said the proposed two-year transition plan will ensure that we have adequate time to judge if PARCC is a value-added choice. He said schools need to upgrade their technology not because of PARCC but because all students deserve to have 21st-century classrooms. The Commissioner said the advent of PARCC has gotten the bonding committee to move additional funding for technology in schools. Commissioner Chester said the driving factor should be the goal of providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and the workplace.

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

**VOTED:        that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. General Laws chapter 69, sections 1B and 1I, hereby adopts the two-year MCAS-to-PARCC transition plan, as presented by the Commissioner, and directs the Commissioner to implement the plan.**

**Consistent with the Commissioner’s recommendation, the Board anticipates that the two-year pilot will:**

* **provide for a robust comparison of the MCAS and PARCC student assessment programs, so the Board can decide in the fall of 2015 whether to sunset the MCAS English language arts and math assessments for grades 3-8 and employ PARCC as the state testing program for these subjects beginning in the 2015/2016 school year;**
* **give teachers and schools additional time to continue implementing the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in English language arts and math adopted by the Board in December 2010 and to become familiar with new online test administration procedures before full-scale implementation of PARCC;**
* **permit a smooth transition in using assessment results for accountability while maintaining trend lines that link back to pre-PARCC performance;**
* **reserve for a future date the Board’s consideration of options for English language arts and math assessments at the high school level (grades 9-12); and**
* **maintain continuity in the use of MCAS tests for students to earn the Competency Determination for high school graduation, at least through the graduating class of 2018 (this year’s eighth graders).**

**Based on the results of the two-year pilot, the Commissioner will recommend and the Board will decide, in the fall of 2015, whether to sunset the MCAS English language arts and math assessments for grades 3-8 and employ PARCC as the state testing program for these subjects beginning in the 2015/2016 school year.**

The vote was 6-3. Ms. Kaplan, Ms. Chernow, and Mr. Brogan voted in opposition.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado left the meeting at 11 a.m.

**Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7 (Professional Standards for Teachers)**

Commissioner Chester introduced Heather Peske, Associate Commissioner for Educator Quality, Liz Losee, Assistant Director of the Office of Educator Preparation, Policy, and Leadership, and Debra Comfort, Associate General Counsel. Ms. Peske said the purpose of these regulations is to better align our system of professional standards for preparation and licensure to the standards for educator evaluation. Secretary Malone said this vote is timely because it helps to align the K-12 and higher education sectors through preparation standards that shape our future educators.

Dr. Noyce asked if the amendments would impede non-traditional candidates and career-changers from entering the teaching profession. Ms. Losee said there are 79 organizations in Massachusetts preparing teachers, including 50 institutions of higher education. She said the organizations will have time to shift by 2016, without having to increase the number of courses. Ms. Peske said the state's work with the Council of Chief State School Officers and its Network for Transforming Educator Preparation enables us to learn from other states and programs.

**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, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c.30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments would update the Professional Standards for Teachers, to align them with the standards in other initiatives such as the Educator Evaluation Framework.**

The vote was unanimous.

# Update on Level 5 Schools

Commissioner Chester introduced Lynda Foisy, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Liza Veto, special assistant to the Senior Associate Commissioner. Ms. Foisy provided an overview of the four schools that were designated Level 5 this fall and the implications of such a designation. Ms. Foisy and Ms. Veto reviewed the outreach to the school communities through roundtable discussions and engagement of a local stakeholder group for each of the designated schools in Boston, Holyoke, and New Bedford.

Ms. Chernow asked about Boston and Holyoke and both districts' interest in pursuing in-district options. Commissioner Chester said it is his responsibility to ensure a sound turnaround plan for each school and he has to appoint someone to implement it. The commissioner said he is considering the superintendents and other potential partners as leaders of the turnaround work, which could include a hybrid model, a district model, or an outside partner. Dr. Noyce asked what is happening in these four Level 5 schools while decisions are being made. Ms. Foisy said the expectation is that the schools will continue to implement their existing Level 4 plans.

Ms. Kaplan asked about the principals at these schools. Commissioner Chester said the Level 5 designation does not necessarily mean a change in the school’s leadership; if the superintendent were asked to implement the plan, the superintendent would choose who would lead the school. Secretary Malone said he is impressed with the thoughtfulness of this approach and with the hybrid model and the notion of empowerment and site-level redesign as catalysts for change. He commended the Department and its Accountability and Targeted Assistance team for their work. Chair Banta noted that increased school autonomy is what we are seeing in Lawrence. Commissioner Chester said the Department will draw on the Lawrence team as resources. He said he enters this first foray into school receivership with great humility and the conviction that we do not have to accept poor results for low-income students.

Secretary Malone left the meeting at 11:45 a.m. The Secretary's designee, Jim DiTullio, participated in his place for the rest of the meeting.

Dr. Noyce asked how long the school receivership will last. Commissioner Chester said it would be a minimum of three years, though it could be longer.

# Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Budget Proposal for FY 2015

Chair Banta said the Board's budget committee has met twice to develop a set of budget recommendations for the full Board. The Board's budget priorities include: small increases in key initiatives, administrative funding to support the Department in managing programs, using e-Rate dollars and the potential of an Information Technology Bond to finance technology improvements in school districts, and using increases in Chapter 70 aid as incentives for reform initiatives. Commissioner Chester said we are seeking to leverage the funds we have and find ways to encourage collaboration and support districts.

The Department's Chief Financial Officer, Bill Bell, outlined the Fiscal Year 2015 budget cycle. He noted that the FY14 supplemental budget provided the additional funding the Board and Department had requested for RETELL. He listed the areas of emphasis for FY2015 funding. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson discussed Chapter 70 and the possibility of using the expected increase to address some key issues. Chair Banta said this approach would help to address concern about unfunded mandates. Ms. Chernow expressed appreciation for the recommendation on the connecting-activities line item.

**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 FY 2015 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 was 7-0-1. Mr. DiTullio abstained.

**Spirit of Knowledge Charter School: Surrender of Charter**

Commissioner Chester said that since the Board's October meeting, the Spirit of Knowledge Charter School has closed. Commissioner Chester said the vote today is to accept the surrender of the charter, to ensure there is no ambiguity as to its status. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson said school closings are never easy, and the Department appreciates the school's board of trustees making the right decision rather than dragging out the process. Mr. Wulfson said Worcester Public Schools Superintendent Melinda Boone has committed to taking in any resident students who wish to enroll and to make that transition process a smooth one.

Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang said Superintendent Boone told him that so far, Worcester Public Schools has enrolled about 140 out of 170 students from the charter school. Ms. Kaplan asked about lessons learned from this charter school’s experience. Mr. Chuang said under-enrollment from the outset is a big risk factor, and the Department is now routinely gathering more data on demand for new charter applicants. Mr. Roach commended the Worcester Public Schools leadership for welcoming the students back into the district.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89; General Laws chapter 30A, section 13; and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby accepts the surrender, in lieu of revocation, of the public school charter granted to the Spirit of Knowledge Charter School, effective October 31, 2013.**

**The Board of Trustees of Spirit of Knowledge Charter School shall comply with all procedures and timelines established by the Commissioner to effectuate surrender of the school’s charter, transfer of students into other schools, and an orderly closure of the Spirit of Knowledge Charter School.**

The vote was unanimous.

**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,

 Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board

**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

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

**November 18, 2013**

**5:05 pm – 7:05 pm**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose

**Harneen Chernow**, Vice-Chair, Jamaica Plain

**Daniel Brogan**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Dennis

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**James DiTullio,** Secretary of Education's Designee

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Karen Daniels**, Milton

**Pendred Noyce,** Weston

**David Roach**, Sutton

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Chair Banta welcomed James Morton, the newest member of the Board. Mr. Morton resides in Springfield and is the president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Greater Hartford, working with low income youth and families. Mr. Morton said he is excited to join the Board and to provide insight from his work with young people.

Commissioner Chester said this is the third month the Board is discussing the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The Commissioner said the discussion tonight will inform the Board on the assessment and the two-year transition plan he is proposing. Commissioner Chester introduced two Massachusetts educators who are serving as PARCC fellows, Mary Beth Banios and Mark Healy.

Senior Associate Commissioner Bob Bickerton launched the presentation and said tonight the Board will look at assessment questions, challenges, and benefits of PARCC. Mr. Bickerton provided the Board with a recap of the September and October PARCC discussions. The PARCC transition plan will begin with a field test of the assessment in randomly selected schools across the state in the spring of 2014 and an analysis of the field test data in fall 2014. In 2014-2015, schools will administer either the PARCC operational test or MCAS; and in fall 2015 the Board will vote on the full adoption of PARCC.

PARCC fellow Mary Beth Banios, assistant superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools, presented an MCAS English language arts (ELA) grade 3 question and compared it to a PARCC ELA grade 3 sample item. Ms. Banios explained that the PARCC item checks students’ ability to analyze and think critically, find evidence to support their argument, and draw a conclusion. She noted that the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks guide students to decode text and teach them to analyze. Ms. Banios said the ability to find main ideas and supporting details in text, and the ability to use evidence to support an argument, are threads that run through all grade levels, while text complexity will change through the grade levels.

Mr. Bickerton said after the first operational year of PARCC, teachers will receive assessment results in June, which will assist them in planning curriculum decisions and changes to improve instruction and understanding for students. Ms. Kaplan asked if students would be able to look up the definition of words during the exam. Mr. Bickerton said accessibility features are being developed.

PARCC fellow Mark Healy, math coordinator for the Cambridge Public Schools, presented examples of shifts in mathematics grade 4 standards and assessments. Mr. Healy said previously the standards focused on a lot of items, but they were not in depth and did not have a grade-to-grade progression. He said the new standards focus on a conceptual understanding of what the formulas and processes mean, procedural fluency, and applying the topics to real world situations. Mr. Healy presented an MCAS mathematics grade 4 item and a PARCC grade 4 item. He also described shifts in grade 7 mathematics standards, an MCAS grade 7 constructed response, and a PARCC grade 7 mathematics sample using graphing technology.

Mr. Bickerton commented on technology readiness and said the key issue is 21st-century classroom readiness, not simply PARCC readiness. He said the Department is pursuing federal E-rate modernization, a state infrastructure bond bill, and a device-buying program. Mr. Healy said technology readiness concerns have been heard around the state, as well as excitement about the opportunities technology can bring to the classroom. Ms. Chernow said technology equity is a concern for her. She also noted an equity issue for some students taking the computer-based version of the assessment and others taking the paper-and-pencil version.

Mr. DiTullio asked about the balance of multiple-choice and open response items. Mr. Bickerton said 45 percent of MCAS score points are from constructed response. He said PARCC will give students partial credit for showing their work; not just choosing the answer, but showing the process to get there. Commissioner Chester said technology readiness is a concern, and the advent of PARCC testing provides a unique moment to leverage 21st century technology into schools. He said the pilot period allows the Department to leverage options, such as the state technology bond bill and E-rate funding. Associate Commissioner Cliff Chang noted PARCC is driving the technology conversation, but it is not the main reason for schools to upgrade their technology. Mr. Chuang said the schools involved in the field test have sufficient technology to administer the assessment, and the readiness gaps will be more clearly identified in 2014-2015. He said PARCC will provide regional workshop trainings, site readiness planning tools and trials, and support.

With respect to the accountability system, Mr. Bickerton said the two-year transition plan allows a period to maintain trends in achievement and student growth. He said the Department will maintain accountability ratings for schools as they move from MCAS to PARCC while ensuring that schools are not disadvantaged by field test participation. Schools have been given the option to calculate their annual progress and performance index with and without the field-tested grades. They also have the option to avoid double testing in the same subject.

Ms. Chernow asked about the effect on educator evaluations. Commissioner Chester said until students are scored on their performance on PARCC tests, other district determined measures would be used for evaluations. He said a Department-wide cross-unit team has convened to analyze these issues and provide tools and support for districts. Ms. Kaplan asked how student scores would be affected. Mr. Bickerton said the field test is an opportunity for our students to test the PARCC items and no student scores will be available. He said students who participate in the field test and not in MCAS will not have a score in that subject. Commissioner Chester said the Department is making the field test as non-intrusive as possible.

Mr. Bickerton said PARCC will have five performance levels, including a college and career readiness standard. Ms. Calderón-Rosado said she is concerned about technology readiness. She asked if the field test selection was random, and if parents can opt out. Mr. Bickerton said schools were chosen randomly, with the option to withdraw if they do not have the level of technology specified by PARCC. He said parents were not given an option to decline the field test, which is part of the assessment system the Board has authority and responsibility to establish. Mr. Brogan asked about schools chosen for the paper-and-pencil field test and noted that some students may perform better in one mode or the other depending on their learning style. Mr. Bickerton said PARCC is doing studies on comparability.

Mr. Morton asked if the Department has seen a pattern with schools that have declined to participate in the field test. Mr. Bickerton said Level 4 and 5 schools could opt out of the field test, although some Lawrence schools, for example, are participating. Also, if a school without the proper technology was selected, in some cases another school in the district with the technology was substituted. Mr. DiTullio said he hopes there will be adequate representation of low-income students. Ms. Chernow asked how many schools are choosing to use MCAS and PARCC. Commissioner Chester said schools are being surveyed now.

Mr. Bickerton and Maureen LaCroix of the Department discussed communications and outreach. They said they have been presenting to professional associations, school committees, and superintendents. The Department hosted webinars with superintendents and principals participating in the field test. The Department is also producing a district toolkit and information for parents.

Ms. Kaplan asked about accommodations for special education students. Mr. Bickerton said the accommodations are built into the PARCC test and are based on Massachusetts accommodations for MCAS. He said if a certain accommodation needed by students with disabilities is not ready in time for the field test, those students will not be expected to participate. Mr. DiTullio asked if other states randomly chose schools for the field test and which grades are being tested. Commissioner Chester said all states randomly selected participating schools and grades 3-8, 9, and 11 will be tested. Commissioner Chester said the grade 10 competency determination will not change until 2018 or later. He said he expects that in 2014 the Board will start discussing how to approach the graduation requirement in the years ahead.

Commissioner Chester said the transition plan gives the Board two years to track and analyze the development of the assessment. He said MCAS has served us well but after a decade and a half, it is clear we need to upgrade. The commissioner said the PARCC assessment will give students, parents, and educators better signals of students’ readiness for the next grade level and ultimately for college and careers. Commissioner Chester noted the unprecedented partnership with higher education and the commitment to use PARCC for public higher education placement decisions.

Chair Banta thanked the PARCC fellows and Department staff for the informative presentation.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m., subject to the call of the chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

 Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board