**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, September 23, 2014  
8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Margaret McKenna**, Chair, Boston

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

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Karen Daniels**, Milton

**Matthew Malone**, Secretary of Education, Roslindale

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**David Roach**, Millbury

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

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

Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

Chair McKenna called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Secretary Malone introduced the members of the Board recently appointed by the Governor: Mary Ann Stewart, Katherine Craven, and Chair Margaret McKenna; and Donald Willyard, the elected Chair of the State Student Advisory Council. He thanked the Board for its outstanding leadership.

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair McKenna welcomed Board members to the meeting and the start of the new school year. She said she is delighted to be on the Board and shares the commitment to providing an equal opportunity for all students.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Chester welcomed new and continuing Board members. He reported on his two visits to the Lawrence schools this month, one with American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and the other with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Chair McKenna. Commissioner Chester informed the Board about the curriculum and instruction summit that the Department is hosting for school teams in October, upcoming school visits, and an anticipated report from the State Auditor on the charter school waitlist. He said the Department is working with the Rennie Center on a study of the uses of student assessments. The commissioner informed the Board that the Department has applied for an extension of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver for Massachusetts. Commissioner Chester said the U.S. Department of Education has a concern with allowing districts to choose to administer either PARCC or MCAS assessments in 2015 as part of our two-year try-out of PARCC. He also informed the Board that the Department will release the list of districts in the lowest 10% of statewide student performance shortly.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Malone updated the Board on his school visits around the Commonwealth. He informed the Board of the Governor’s Task Force Report on School Safety and Security. Secretary Malone said assistance teams and small state grants are available for school districts to implement the recommendations in the report. The secretary said his major areas of focus through December are: assessment, alternative education, early education, vocational-technical education, and transition planning for the new administration.

**Comments from the Public**

1. Yvonne Powell, Dearborn School volunteer, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, and Roxbury Presbyterian Church, addressed the Board on the Dearborn School (Boston).
2. Ann O’Halloran, President of Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board on the Dearborn School (Boston).
3. Elaine Miller, retired teacher, addressed the Board on the Dearborn School (Boston).
4. James Major, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools, addressed the Board on the proposed amendments to Regulations on Restraint and Seclusion.
5. Gerry Mroz, parent, addressed the Board on gifted and talented education and regionalization.

**Approval of Minutes**

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the June 9, 2014 Special Meeting, June 23, 2014 Special Meeting, and June 24, 2014 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**2013-2014 Achievement and Accountability Overview**

Chair McKenna gave an overview of the previous evening’s special meeting. She expressed concern about over-use of testing, stating that in Boston, third graders spend 20-25 days on testing, pre-testing, and practicing. She said the Board needs to understand who is mandating which tests and how schools are using the results. Chair McKenna also noted concerns about the impact of student mobility. Commissioner Chester said these issues are important. He added that schools should be less focused on test preparation and more focused on developing strong reading and mathematics programs. The commissioner said PARCC is less likely to cause schools to engage in narrow test preparation because of the emphasis on thinking and applying knowledge.

Commissioner Chester said the latest MCAS results, which the Board reviewed last night, show that a growing number of students are succeeding, although more progress is needed. The commissioner said the promising results in Lawrence and Revere demonstrate that poverty does not doom students to low achievement. He noted that Boston’s Burke High School emerged from Level 4, along with three other schools, but the schools remaining in and newly designated as Level 4 are troubling. Commissioner Chester said he is working with local officials in Boston and Springfield to develop aggressive turnaround plans for schools that have been stuck, but he will maintain discretion to intervene via Level 5 if necessary.

Mr. Morton asked how information on successful turnaround work is disseminated. Commissioner Chester said the Department is working on this. Vice-Chair Chernow said testing overload is commonly felt across the state. She asked for more information on the relationship between districts and educational management organizations. Ms. Noyce thanked the commissioner for informing the Board early on about the details of the potential Level 5 schools.

Mr. Willyard said his school recently spent a week on practice testing. Ms. Craven said the 1993 Education Reform Act infused significant new funding in public schools in return for standards, assessment, and accountability. She noted vocational-technical schools with high results and two commended Level 1 schools in Boston. Ms. Noyce reminded members that education pre-MCAS was not uniformly excellent and creative for all students. She said testing done right is learning, and what is unfair is not educating students. Ms. Daniels said PARCC has the potential to remedy this problem with enhanced items, real world applications of knowledge, critical thinking skills, and timely information.

Chair McKenna expressed concerns about early literacy and flat third grade reading results. She suggested the Board hold a special meeting on this topic. Secretary Malone added that the Board should connect with the Early Literacy Commission and the Board of Early Education and Care.

**Update on PARCC**

Commissioner Chester reminded Board members of the two-year “test drive” of PARCC that the Board endorsed in November 2013. He said he recently attended a TeachPlus professional development session with 250 educators focused on PARCC items. Commissioner Chester said as of the most recent decision data, 60% of districts have chosen PARCC for 2015 and 40% have chosen MCAS. Bob Bickerton gave a presentation. He noted that MCAS high school tests continue to be used for the competency determination.

In response to Mr. Willyard’s question, Mr. Bickerton said 75% of students who participated in the PARCC field test in the spring of 2014 finished in the allotted time and 98% finished in the allowed time-and-a-half. In response to Ms. Noyce’s questions, Commissioner Chester said all students and parents will receive student results from the spring 2015 administration on either test, and PARCC districts will be held harmless for accountability purposes. Commissioner Chester said he would ask these kinds of questions to judge the value of the PARCC assessments: Is this assessment doing a good job measuring the new frameworks and learning? Do students find it engaging and doable? Are the expectations as strong as or stronger than MCAS? What is the feedback from districts? Is the assessment providing more accurate information for students and parents about how students are doing in relation to college expectations?

Vice-Chair Chernow said she would like more information on the national picture on PARCC. Mr. Roach expressed concern about students’ unequal access to technology. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said the Department shares that concern, and the Massachusetts IT bond bill and Federal Communications Commission funds will assist districts in expanding students’ access to technology. Mr. Wulfson said the main use of technology is not for assessment, but for instruction. Commissioner Chester said he will not ask the Board to decide on PARCC until we have sufficient data to make the decision. In response to Chair McKenna’s question about the multi-state consortium, Commissioner Chester said Massachusetts has been very involved; he chairs the governing board and Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland chairs the higher education PARCC group. Chief Financial Officer Bill Bell said the operational contract between the consortium states and Pearson is close to final.

**Status Report on Current Level 5 Schools**

Commissioner Chester said this report is his first monthly update on the four Level 5 schools, and includes a more detailed quarterly report. Commissioner Chester introduced Deputy Commissioner Alan Ingram and Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston. Dr. Ingram reminded Board members of the decision to place four schools into Level 5 status last fall - Dever Elementary School and Holland Elementary School in Boston, Parker Elementary School in New Bedford, and Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke. He said this is an unprecedented opportunity to improve outcomes for students.

Mr. Johnston said the turnaround work has included hiring teachers and other school staff who are committed to the mission; creating school structures to ensure collaborative planning and learning time; and providing leadership opportunities for staff. Mr. Johnston said each school provided two to four weeks of summer professional development for staff. He said all schools developed curriculum guides, defined the use of instructional time, created schedules that protect instructional time, and established additional supports for struggling students. Mr. Johnston said the schools realize the importance of family and community engagement. As part of the engagement work, schools sent mailings, made phone calls and home visits, hosted family orientation sessions, and created new partnerships with community organizations. Mr. Johnston added that facilities were updated and reorganized to meet the needs of students and teachers.

Mr. Roach commented that school culture and supports for teachers were a large part of the discussion at the Level 5 appeal hearings. Mr. Johnston responded that, in addition to tasks outlined in the turnaround plan, students also had their own orientation before school to set expectations and familiarize them with the schools. Vice-Chair Chernow asked for more information about teacher turnover and demographics, experience levels, and school site councils. In response to Ms. Stewart’s question, Mr. Johnston said the math fellows are college graduates who are trained and paid as tutors. Commissioner Chester said the operators have experience engaging with parents and the community and use deliberate strategies to do so. Ms. Noyce asked for more information about preschool enrollment.

**Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Restraint and Seclusion, 603 CMR 18 and 603 CMR 46**

Commissioner Chester said the discussion and vote today would launch a public comment period, after which the regulations would come back to the Board for consideration for final adoption. He said the Department is proposing to update the current regulations to align with national best practices and policy recommendations. Commissioner Chester said in drafting the proposed amendments, Department staff consulted informally with the Disability Law Center, Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Administrators of Special Education, Massachusetts Urban Special Education Directors, Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools, Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association, Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association, and representatives from other state agencies.

Marty Mittnacht, State Director of Special Education, said the regulations apply to all students, not just special education students. She said 603 CMR 46 applies to all schools, and 603 CMR 18 applies to residential schools. Mr. DiTullio said the Department did an excellent job of seeking stakeholder input even before the public comment period. He said the current regulations need revision. Mr. Morton requested more information on the types of restraints that schools use. Ms. Noyce said she would like more information about the students who are in private special education day and residential programs. Ms. Craven cautioned that the regulations should not be so restrictive that schools resort to calling police when a student needs to be restrained.

**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, § 37G, 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 Physical Restraint Regulations (603 CMR 46) and conforming amendments to the Program and Safety Standards for Approved Public or Private Day and Residential Special Education School Programs, 603 CMR 18.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Presentation on Career and Vocational-Technical Education**

Commissioner Chester said today’s presentation is designed to provide an overview of career/ vocational technical education programs around the state. He said overall, Massachusetts has strong programs and many are oversubscribed. The commissioner added that he would present proposed amendments to the regulations later in the fall. Commissioner Chester introduced: **Judith L. Klimkiewicz, Superintendent of Nashoba Valley Vocational Technical High School;** Michael Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Blackstone Valley Vocational Technical High School; **Tom Hickey, President of the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA); and David Ferriera, Executive Director of MAVA.**

**Patricia Gregson, the Department’s Associate Commissioner of Vocational, Workforce, and College Readiness, gave a presentation on career/vocational technical education in Massachusetts, including the criteria for Chapter 74 state approved programs and non-Chapter 74 programs, data on number and types of schools, and student enrollment and outcome data. She said vocational technical programs are in high demand, and over 4,500 students are on waitlists for regional vocational schools.**

Mr. Fitzpatrick presented on the work of Blackstone Valley. He said successful vocational programs in Massachusetts are recognized nationally. Ms. **Klimkiewicz presented on the work of Nashoba Valley’s students and educators. She said students graduate from these programs with knowledge and skills for employment and a successful career. Thomas Hickey of MAVA presented on vocational programs and closing the skills gap.**

**In response to Ms. Noyce’s question, Mr. Fitzpatrick said the success of vocational schools can be attributed to integrated programs, applied learning, and adaptation to the current economy. Ms. Klimkiewicz said vocational schools do not “cream” students, noting that 30 percent of Nashoba’s students are in special education. Commissioner Chester said the topic of admissions and access to vocational technical schools has been controversial, and he plans to bring recommendations to this Board this fall. Vice-Chair Chernow expressed concerns about the application process and the role of gender in program selection. Ms. Craven cited Worcester Vocational Technical High School as a model for successful school turnaround with a dynamic advisory board. Mr. Roach and Chair McKenna suggested the Board discuss the successes and challenges that districts and vocational schools have working with community colleges.**

**Commissioner Chester said later this fall the Board will discuss proposed changes to the vocational-technical education regulations.**

**Report on Plans for Foundation Budget Review Commission**

**Commissioner Chester said the** Legislature established the **Foundation Budget Review** Commission through a provision in the FY2015 state budget. The commission is charged with reviewing the assumptions and factors used to set annual minimum spending levels and state aid allotments for every school district in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Chester said in Massachusetts $15 billion in funding from all sources – local, state, federal, and outside funding – is spent annually on K-12 education, averaging to about $15,000 per student. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson reminded the Board that the Department issued a report on the school finance system in 2013, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2013/07FinancingSystem.docx>. Mr. Wulfson said the Chapter 70 foundation budget formula grew out of the 1993 Education Reform Act and the landmark *McDuffy* decision of the Supreme Judicial Court. The Chapter 70 formula sets a foundation budget for each district based on student needs and sets required state and local shares, using a progressive formula. Mr. Wulfson said the formula has not kept up with the costs of technology and health insurance, and the Commissioner is interested in encouraging use of best practices with any new funding.

**Process and Timelines for FY2016 Budget**

Bill Bell, Chief Financial Officer, presented the budget process and cycle to Board members. He said since this is an election year, the current Governor will not present a budget for fiscal year 2016. Mr. Bell said the Board establishes priorities for the K-12 education budget, which allows the Commissioner to advocate for those priorities. Chair McKenna appointed Mr. Roach as the chair of the budget committee and appointed Karen Daniels, Katherine Craven, and Mary Ann Stewart to the committee, on which Chair McKenna also serves. Commissioner Chester said the Board will vote on its final FY2016 budget recommendations at the November meeting.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:55 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**

**Monday, September 22, 2014**

**5:00 p.m. –  7:00 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Margaret McKenna**, Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Karen Daniels**, Milton

**James DiTullio**, Undersecretary, Designee for Secretary of Education Matthew Malone

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**David Roach**, Millbury

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

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

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

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

Chair McKenna called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Chair McKenna welcomed Board members to the meeting and the start of the new school year. She said she is thrilled to be on the Board. Chair McKenna introduced other new members of the Board: Katherine Craven, Mary Ann Stewart, and Donald Willyard.

**2013-14 Achievement and Accountability Overview**

Commissioner Chester outlined the presentation for the meeting: an overview of statewide MCAS results, the process for classifying schools and making exit decisions for Level 4 schools, the determinations and next steps for the 13 Level 4 schools in Cohort 1, and an update on newly identified Level 4 schools. The commissioner reviewed the accountability system over the years, beginning with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, use of the MCAS exams starting in 1998, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the 2008 state law moving district accountability reviews to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Massachusetts Achievement Gap Act of 2010, and the approval of the Commonwealth’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver in 2012. He said the stability and continuity of education reform in Massachusetts is in contrast to other states. Commissioner Chester said the system in Massachusetts represents a grand bargain of standards, accountability, and financial support. He said the focus is not solely on test results, but on what the results represent, such as reading on grade level and mastering foundational mathematics skills. He said credit for our progress goes to our educators, who do not accept low results for their students.

Commissioner Chester presented grade 10 achievement results, which have increased consistently over a decade. He presented achievement gap data for grade 10 students, noting that while gaps in achievement remain, progress has been made. Commissioner Chester said third and fourth grade reading scores are flat, which is a concern in Massachusetts as well as in other states. In response to Chair McKenna’s question, Commissioner Chester clarified that the percentages for grade 10 students show students who took the tests, and the statewide data show that most students who drop out already passed the grade 10 MCAS tests.

Deputy Commissioner Alan Ingram provided insights into the accountability system as a former superintendent. He said it is easy to identify schools for low performance and needed improvement, but the support given to districts is what makes the difference. Dr. Ingram introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston, Rob Curtin, Director of Data Services, and Matthew Pakos, Title I Coordinator. Mr. Johnston reviewed the state’s accountability system under the ESEA waiver, which includes the goal of reducing proficiency gaps by half by 2017, a 1-5 leveling system for schools and districts, a progress and performance index (PPI), school percentiles, and a high needs subgroup. Commissioner Chester said our goal under the ESEA waiver was to create an accountability and assistance system that was both ambitious and doable. The commissioner noted the remarkable progress in the Revere Public Schools, a district with many low-income and English language learner students, in which all schools are now Level 1 and Level 2 schools.

Ms. Stewart asked about the District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs) services available to Level 3 schools. Mr. Johnston said Level 3 schools have the option to use DSAC services and resources to guide their work. In response to Mr. Willyard’s question, Mr. Curtin said the accountability system provides extra credit for schools and districts that re-engage dropouts. Mr. Roach noted that out of eight middle schools in Springfield, six are in Level 4. Dr. Ingram said the Department is taking a systems approach to the turnaround work with the middle schools. Commissioner Chester said he is deeply concerned with the Springfield schools and others that are currently designated as Level 4/under review. The commissioner said he is expecting to receive plans for the schools that will ensure rapid turnaround and success for the students. Chair McKenna asked if there were any surprises in the results. Commissioner Chester said there were no big surprises, and it is affirming that the majority of Level 4 schools exited and a growing number of schools are showing progress with high-needs students.

**Possible Topics for Special Meetings of the Board in 2014-2015**

Chair McKenna asked members to present possible topics for the Board to discuss over the next year. Mr. Willyard said the State Student Advisory Council is interested in civic engagement and college and career readiness. Mr. Morton suggested looking at successful turnaround work, successful urban schools, use of the school day and extra school hours, causes of the achievement gap, and third grade reading proficiency. Ms. Daniels suggested college and careers, specifically data on success rates of students attending college, and examining successful practices in urban schools and districts, including level 4 and Level 5 turnaround strategies. On behalf of Secretary Malone, Mr. DiTullio suggested a joint meeting with the Board of Early Education and Care, linking with the Early Literacy Panel, assessment, and alternative education. Ms. Noyce suggested early reading, partnerships with non-profit organizations, summer learning loss, career preparation, and English language learners. Ms. Stewart suggested advisory councils, educator evaluation, and family and community engagement. Mr. Roach suggested civic engagement, capacity of the Department to meet all its responsibilities in partnership with districts, and close-out of Race to the Top. Ms. Craven suggested special education, specifically measuring success and best practices, vocational education, and information technology in schools. Chair McKenna suggested third grade reading, summer programs, assessment and testing, alternative education, and hunger and poverty.

Chair McKenna said the Department will summarize the list for Board members. Commissioner Chester commented that the list is both appropriate and ambitious.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 7:00 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