**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, May 19, 2015**

**9:05 a.m. –12:45 p.m.**

**Pioneer Charter School of Science**

**51-59 Summer Street, Everett, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Paul Sagan,** Chair, Cambridge

**David Roach**, Vice-Chair, Millbury

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**James Morton**, Boston

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education

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

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

Board member absent:

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

Chair Paul Sagan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He thanked Pioneer Charter School of Science for hosting today’s meeting.

Commissioner Chester congratulated Margaret McKenna on her recent appointment as president of Suffolk University. He announced that the 2016 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year is Audrey Jackson, who teaches at the Joseph P. Manning School in Boston. Commissioner Chester informed the Board about the extension of the Lawrence turnaround plan and receiver’s contract and the recent study by the Donahue Institute of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

**Comments from the Public**

1. Christina Shaw Fitanides, of Massachusetts Advocates for Children, addressed the Board on the proposed autism endorsement regulations.
2. Elizabeth Stringer Keefe, Assistant Professor of Special Education, Lesley Graduate School of Education, addressed the Board on the proposed autism endorsement regulations.
3. Erika Ebbel Angle, member of the Board’s STEM Advisory Council and biotechnology business owner, addressed the Board on the proposed revised Science, Technology/Engineering standards.
4. Christos Zahopoulos, member of the standards development committee and Governor’s STEM Advisory Council, addressed the Board on the proposed revised Science, Technology/Engineering standards.
5. Judy Paolucci, Leicester Public Schools Superintendent and member of the Board's STEM Advisory Council, addressed the Board on the proposed revised Science, Technology/Engineering standards.
6. Gerry Mroz addressed the Board on gifted and talented education.
7. Richard Cowan addressed the Board on Dracut school finance and net school spending.

**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 April 27, 2015 Special Meeting and April 28, 2015 Joint Meeting and Regular Meeting.**

**The vote was unanimous.**

**Welcome from Pioneer Charter School of Science**

Chair Sagan and Commissioner Chester commended Donald Willyard for his service on the Board and the State Student Advisory Council and presented him with a certificate. Mr. Willyard thanked Board members for welcoming him to the Board and working with him. He introduced Barish Icin, Chief Executive Officer, and Sanela Jonuz, Executive Director of Pioneer Charter School of Science, who presented a brief report on the school’s programs, facilities, and students.

**Proposed Revised Science and Technology/Engineering Standards**

Chair Sagan said this agenda item is for discussion only today so the Board can carefully consider the revisions. Commissioner Chester introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Brooke Clenchy, STEM Director Marilyn Decker, and Assistant Director Jake Foster. He said it is industry practice to revisit standards approximately every five years; these proposed revisions would be the first major revisions to the framework since 2001.

Mr. Foster said the revision process started six years ago and has involved about 55 educators and considerable stakeholder input. He said the typical revision and adoption process involves establishing a review panel, recommending needed changes, receiving input from the Board and public, revising the standards, and soliciting public comment, after which the Board adopts revised standards and the Department publishes standards, frameworks, and crosswalk documents. Mr. Foster said in 2011 Massachusetts joined the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) development as a lead state. The NGSS standards were released in April 2013 and the Department developed draft revised STE standards for Massachusetts. In October 2013 the Commissioner informed the Board that the Department would make the draft revised STE standards available to the field and the public for an extended period of review during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. Mr. Foster outlined some key differences between the NGSS standards and the draft revised Massachusetts standards.

Secretary Peyser said he is concerned about an imbalance between too much focus on practice and too little on knowledge and content. He said students need to be able to explain, not just apply, and expectations for content knowledge should be explicit in the standards, not assumed. Ms. Noyce said the standards appear to have more specificity as you move up through the grades. Ms. McKenna said she applauds the flexibility given to educators and the focus on students having to apply their knowledge. Chair Sagan asked the Commissioner to send a sample crosswalk document to the Board. Secretary Peyser said the Board would benefit from more information about the standards and implications for assessment and accountability, among other things, before it adopts new standards. Commissioner Chester said he appreciates the work of the standards development committee and he will provide additional information to the Board for review and discussion at a future meeting.

**Update on Holyoke Public Schools**

Commissioner Chester said he continues to update the Holyoke community and Board through frequent communication, weekly messages, and the team of staff who are on-site in Holyoke. He said he has met with community groups, the Holyoke Literacy Partnership, parents, and districts administrators. Commissioner Chester said the members of the local stakeholders group have been named and the receiver will be named shortly. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston said his team on the ground has been establishing processes for concluding the school year and ramping up planning for the next school year. He said they are gathering information for development of a turnaround plan.

In response to Mr. Doherty's question, Commissioner Chester said Superintendent Paez will stay with the district through the end of June to manage day-to-day operations, checking with the Commissioner as interim receiver on all decisions regarding budget, personnel, and planning. In response to Mr. Roach's question, Commissioner Chester said Project GRAD will no longer be managing the Dean and Morgan schools, since the entire district is now in receivership. In response to Ms. Craven's question, Mr. Johnston said Holyoke is facing a budget deficit although the city will meet its net school spending requirement. Commissioner Chester said we are learning more about the need to address basic systems in the district.

**Update on Level 5 Schools**

Mr. Johnston informed the Board about the planned June 2 meeting of the receivers, New Bedford superintendent, and principals to discuss the school turnaround work and share information among the Level 5 schools. He said Board members will receive the Level 5 school annual reports in June.

**Proposed Amendment to the Charter School Regulations, 603 CMR 1.04(9), to Enable Better Planning for School Districts and Charter Applicants**

Commissioner Chester said the proposed amendment is a narrow revision to the regulation that specifies the method for calculating the list of school districts that perform in the lowest 10% on statewide assessments, for purposes of the charter school statute. He said under the current regulation, the list is calculated and published fairly late in the charter application cycle and this year it would be published after final applications have been submitted. Commissioner Chester clarified that the amendment would not change the growth calculation or "not less than two" provision. He said he anticipates the Board would take a final vote on the amendment in the summer or September; meanwhile, districts and applicants would have notice of today’s vote.

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

**G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and c. 71, § 89, 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 amendment to the Charter School Regulations, 603 CMR 1.04(9), as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendment would enable better planning for school districts and charter applicants; it addresses the calculation of the list of school districts performing in the lowest 10 percent on statewide assessments for purposes of awarding charters and for determining the net school spending caps for individual districts.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Update on PARCC**

Chair Sagan said Board members heard public testimony on PARCC at Bunker Hill Community College on May 18 in lieu of the Monday evening special Board meeting. He said members heard helpful comments and observations specifically on the use of technology, as well as on the PARCC assessment overall. Commissioner Chester said members of the Department’s assessment staff have done a great job managing the operation of MCAS and PARCC and providing support to districts. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson said the consortium made a decision to consolidate the performance-based assessment and end-of-year assessment for English language arts based upon feedback from educators, administrators, and students. He said a college study, sponsored by the Executive Office of Education, is underway, as is outreach to the field regarding options for high school PARCC tests.

In response to Mr. Willard's question, Mr. Wulfson clarified that the cut score for the high school competency determination is made by the Board, college placement decisions are made by the higher education, and the performance levels of PARCC scores are determined by the PARCC governing board. Ms. Calderon-Rosado noted testimony regarding some confusing test questions and difficulty with technology. In response to Mr. Roach's question, Mr. Wulfson said he has confidence in Massachusetts’s ability to keep standards high. He said as with MCAS, the Department contracts with a vendor, but directs, develops, and has ultimate control over the assessment. Ms. Noyce suggested Board members have the opportunity to take the PARCC test.

**State Student Advisory Council End-of-Year Report**

Donald Willyard provided Board members with an overview of the council’s work. He said student representatives from five regional councils established a charge over the summer to work on college and career readiness along with civic education. Mr. Willyard presented national civics survey findings and intervention goals. He said the advisory council also established a mentor database, College Yoda, to provide high school students with the means to connect with college students and alumni. Mr. Willyard reviewed recent official stances of the council on policy or regulatory decisions, such as restraint and seclusion and the vocational technical education regulations. He said the Board will receive a full council report in June.

**Update on FY2016 State Education Budget**

Commissioner Chester said the House of Representatives proposed its budget recommendations for FY2016 earlier in the month and the Senate proposed its budget recommendations late last week. He said he is concerned that the Education Data Services account was eliminated from the Department’s budget. Chief Financial Officer Bill Bell said Chapter 70, circuit breaker, and regional transportation funds increased in the Senate budget. He said the Senate did not provide the funding needed to support the Board’s decision timeline for PARCC implementation. Mr. Bell said the Conference Committee will now begin its work and present a final FY2016 budget proposal to the Governor in late June for his review and signature.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:45 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