**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, October 25, 2016**

**8:30 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Roland Fryer**, Cambridge

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Nathan Moore**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

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

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

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioner Chester welcomed Board members and reported that the Department received a federal charter school grant and state budget funding for the student assessment program. He said Massachusetts is competing for phase two of the New Skills for Youth federal grant to strengthen career-focused education. He updated the Board on his visits to Dean Vocational Technical High School, Revere High School, Bentley Academy Horace Mann Charter School, and Holyoke High School. He said the Department is hosting a charter school dissemination event for traditional public schools and charter schools to share best practices. Commissioner Chester said the New Heights Charter School (Brockton) is fully enrolled in a temporary facility and has received local approval for the parking plan at the school’s anticipated permanent location.

**Statements from the Public:**

1. Gerry Mroz addressed the Board regarding high-achieving students, the state’s accountability system, and computer adaptive assessments.

Commissioner Chester commented that the state system does not impede schools from accelerating students beyond grade-level expectations.

Margaret McKenna arrived at 8:50 a.m.

**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 September 26, 2016 Special Meeting and September 27, 2016 Regular Meeting.**

The minutes were approved. Vice-Chair Morton abstained.

**Progress Report on Southbridge Public Schools**

Commissioner Chester introduced Southbridge Receiver Jessica Huizenga and Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston. The commissioner said Dr. Huizenga has transformed the culture at the high school and middle school, which was evident when he visited the district. He said there is still much to be done to improve the instructional program.

Dr. Huizenga said the district turnaround plan, released in June, outlines five priority areas:

* ensuring an inclusive and supportive school community with high expectations and rigorous, equitable, and personalized instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners;
* developing a district-wide professional culture of highly effective teaching and leadership;
* creating the conditions to enable and apply evidence-informed decision-making;
* establishing systems and processes to cultivate and leverage family engagement and community partnerships; and
* organizing the district and reallocating resources to ensure high-quality management, accountability, system-wide coherence, and sustainability.

Dr. Huizenga said the first six weeks of implementation have been focused on academic and instructional improvements, family and community engagement, social and emotional learning, and systems. She outlined academic and instructional improvements, including: development of district-wide evidence-based literacy practices, school-based literacy action plans, development of a K-12 math curriculum and common assessment, structured professional development, teacher coaching, credit recovery programs, and a partnership with AeroVentures.

Dr. Huizenga said the district is engaging with families and community members and has instituted community meetings, a superintendent’s roundtable, a parent-teacher organization, corporate and community partnerships, and an early college program with Quinsigamond Community College. She said to support students’ social-emotional learning, staff have participated in training, the district has launched breakfast in the classroom at two schools, a district climate committee and district wellness committee have been formed, and two family resource centers with food pantries are opening. She said district systems have also been improved, such as business transactions with the town, a new website, safety training drills with fire and police, a new student information system, and distribution of 1,300 Chromebooks for students.

In response to Chair Sagan’s question, Dr. Huizenga said teacher turnover is a concern, and she is working to hire and retain effective educators. She said teachers who need improvement go through a receiver review to identify ways to improve and provide support. In response to Mr. Moriarty’s question, Dr. Huizenga said a dual language program is being developed, which many families are excited about. In response to Mr. Fryer’s question, Dr. Huizenga said she has developed relationships with faith-based organizations and assisted a church with summer food programming. Chair Sagan thanked Dr. Huizenga for her presentation and ongoing work.

**Update on Level 5 Schools**

Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston said the Level 5 school reports showcase three themes: summer professional development, use of data, and family engagement. He said the Level 5 receivers continue to meet quarterly and their last meeting was held at the Morgan School in Holyoke where they toured and debriefed about the practices and systems in place.

In response to Ms. McKenna’s question, Mr. Johnston said he was onsite at the Dever School with the Blueprint team, and he has seen some progress at the school, including the new principal, changes to the school leadership model, and an improved climate and behavioral practices. He said Blueprint is aware that improvements must be made this year. In response to Mr. Fryer, Commissioner Chester said in the case of Level 5 schools, potential receivers are vetted and monitored, and we have seen positive results in the other schools under receivership. He said Blueprint has had success with turnaround at other schools, but Dever is struggling. The commissioner said he will provide the Board with the AIR evaluation report and interim assessment data.

Ms. Craven commented that the Level 5 school reports from New Bedford and Holyoke are much different from the Boston school reports. She noted that Boston is a unique situation and suggested a stronger partnership with the district. Commissioner Chester said the Department works with the superintendent and his key staff on the Level 5 schools and other turnaround schools. He said Boston is using hybrid turnaround approaches with the Dearborn School, Mattahunt School, and English High School. Mr. Moriarty said while the state board is not a school committee for the Level 5 schools, the board does oversee the commissioner and the Department. He added that continuity of strong leadership in schools is vital.

In response to Ms. McKenna’s question, Mr. Johnston said the Department will receive suspension data later this fall. He noted that UP Academy Holland’s report highlights the school’s focus on social-emotional learning and outreach to families as ways to mitigate use of suspensions.

**Recap of Special Meeting: Proposed Revisions to Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics**

Commissioner Chester said the Board received a detailed report on the frameworks review at last night’s special meeting, including major themes of the revisions, specific examples of revisions, and a summary of the process to date. The commissioner said he will present a revised draft of the frameworks to the Board next month to send out for public comment.

**Update on Educator Evaluation**

Commissioner Chester said the Board heard an update at the September meeting on possible changes to the student impact rating portion of the educator evaluation system. He reported that the Department is continuing to discuss possible changes with the state education associations. He said he is concerned that the position of the teachers’ association is shifting despite the Department’s actions to address the associations’ proposal to incorporate student impact into the overall evaluation instead of a separate rating. He said he plans to bring the proposed regulations to the Board in November for discussion and a vote to solicit public comment.

Mr. Moriarty said the evaluation system should not be judged based on its potential misuse, and that the Department should stay the course with implementing the system. Mr. Fryer said he is perplexed by the debate, noting that observations of teaching are not correlated with student learning. Mr. Doherty said educators believe that performance evaluation, student achievement, and testing are important, but do not agree with the direct leap from student performance to teacher evaluation. He said if an educator is teaching and doing everything asked, but student performance is lagging, that is not necessarily the educator’s fault. Mr. Doherty said there should be evidence of something specific and observable, and one evaluator may give student impact a greater weight than another. He said an educator who is not proficient in standard two cannot earn an overall proficient on the evaluation.

Commissioner Chester said Massachusetts’s evaluation system does not have automatic decisions and algorithms built into it, allowing for professional judgment. He said the system requires multiple factors and to ignore student learning and performance goes against everything that educators do and believe in. Ms. Stewart said she was part of the educator evaluation taskforce and student learning was discussed but district-determined measures were not. Commissioner Chester said he would like to reach agreement on the matter, but cannot recommend excluding evidence of student learning from the evaluation system.

**Student Assessment and Competency Determination: Extending the Legacy 10th grade MCAS Test for One More Year, through the Class of 2020**

Commissioner Chester said he is recommending that the Board extend the legacy 10th grade MCAS tests for one additional year, to encompass the class of 2020, in order to prepare high school students for a new high-stakes test. The class of 2021, this year's eighth graders, will experience the new, computer-based test this coming spring. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said all stakeholders were consulted and no issues were raised. In response to Secretary Peyser’s questions, Mr. Wulfson said ninth graders will receive sample tests, and noted that the Department is working out further details so expectations will be clear.

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. General Laws chapter 69, sections 1B, 1D, and 1I, hereby endorses the Commissioner’s recommendation to maintain continuity in the use of the legacy high school MCAS tests for students to earn the competency determination for high school graduation, through the graduating class of 2020 (this year’s ninth graders).**

The vote was unanimous.

**Proposed Technical Amendment to Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for Districts and Schools, 603 CMR 2.00**

Commissioner Chester said the technical amendment makes explicit that a turnaround plan remains in effect until the statutory process to develop a new, modified or renewed turnaround plan is completed, or the school or district is no longer designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming. He said the proposed motion will send the regulations out for public comment. He noted that the proposed amendments will be shared with the Board's Advisory Council on School and District Accountability and Assistance and the amendments will be brought back to the Board in January 2017 for final adoption.

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69 §§ 1B, 1J and 1K, authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed technical amendments to the Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools (603 CMR 2.00).**

The vote was unanimous.

**FY18 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee**

Katherine Craven, budget committee chair, reported that the committee met prior to the special meeting and discussed the potential impact of the charter school ballot question, current fiscal projections, building on the best practices of the Level 5 districts, and innovative ways to address issues of poverty, such as partnering with other state agencies. Bill Bell, chief financial officer, said the Commonwealth’s financial projections are lower than expected, resulting in actions by the Governor to ensure a balanced budget. He said the Commonwealth is also offering a voluntary separation incentive for employees. The committee will meet again and report to the Board in November.

**National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Update**

Mary Ann Stewart, who serves as northeast regional director for NASBE, updated the Board on the annual conference, which included discussions and presentations on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), education data and technology, student privacy, and equity. She said the conference was very informative, and encouraged members to attend the NASBE legislative conference in the spring.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 11:25 a.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, October 24, 2016**

**5:10 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:**

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Nathan Moore**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

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

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

**Roland Fryer**, Cambridge

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. and welcomed Board members and the public. Commissioner Chester said that in November 2015, the Board approved the Commissioner’s recommendation to review the English language arts and mathematics frameworks, in conjunction with the development of a next-generation assessment. He said the Department collected many comments and proposed edits from the field and the public, as well as from panels of educators and experts. He said the standards review set out to ensure that Massachusetts continues its history of ambitious, clear, and coherent standards. The commissioner said tonight’s discussion would update the Board on the process and highlight the proposed changes.

Associate Commissioner Heather Peske introduced staff overseeing the review: Rachel Bradshaw, ESE ELA/literacy specialist; Susan Wheltle, project consultant and retired ESE literacy and humanities director; Connie Varoudakis, ESE mathematics specialist; and Barbara Libby, project consultant and retired ESE STEM director. Ms. Peske reviewed the history of the Massachusetts standards and the process for reviewing them.

Ms. Wheltle said the review is encouraging educators to provide input after five years of implementing the standards. She said the review aims to preserve the Commonwealth’s ambitious standards, while at the same time looking at areas that educators flagged for improvement. She said these include: reading closely and writing about complex texts; addressing literacy concepts; increasing coherence, focus, rigor, and clarity; and providing resources. Ms. Wheltle said to address reading closely and writing about complex texts, the Department is suggesting making explicit cross-references among the standards, providing examples of effective teaching, expanding the glossary, and including explanatory material on qualitative measures of text complexity. She outlined specific examples of the revisions.

On the topic of addressing literacy concepts, Ms. Wheltle said Massachusetts educators found these standards difficult to implement because they were too genre-specific and restricted teachers’ choice of literacy texts. She said the proposed revisions include integrating the content into other reading, writing, speaking and listening standards; streamlining the standards for reading literature and writing; and deepening the importance of conceptual knowledge of literature by applying it to speaking, listening, reading, and writing. She outlined specific examples of the revisions.

In response to Secretary Peyser’s question on close reading, Ms. Wheltle said the proposed revisions add a section on reading closely that includes details. She said reading closely is a needed skill that should be used in moderation and in the right places. Secretary Peyser suggested adding more information on close reading in the introduction. In response to the Secretary’s question regarding grade-level reading, Ms. Wheltle said the curriculum standards set the floor for what students should know and be able to do, and educators can and do go beyond. Mr. Moriarty commented that the standards are aspirational versus prescriptive on getting students to grade-level but do not address remediation; he said remediation must be done but does not belong in the framework. Ms. McKenna expressed concern about reading in the kindergarten standards. Ms. Stewart expressed concern about schools’ ability to weave in other topics and ensuring that students have the essential skills they need after high school.

Ms. Varoudakis said the major recommendations for the mathematics standards include: options for course-taking sequences; increasing coherence, focus, rigor, and clarity; narrowing grade span descriptions; and updating appendices. She reviewed the organization of the mathematics framework and domains of progression. She said the Department’s separate guidance document, “Making Decisions about Course Sequence,” was helpful for educators but was not widely used, so the recommendation is to expand it and add it to the framework. Secretary Peyser suggested a crosswalk between the updated standards and widely used curriculum programs. Ms. Varoudakis reviewed examples of recommendations and rationales for recognizing patterns, consistent language and definitions, rates, and visual models. Ms. Libby said other states also grappled with the issue of knowing from memory and the need to recall quickly. She said the topics in the framework strike a good balance between memorization and flexible thinking about numbers.

Mr. Moriarty said he is pleased to see cursive writing included in the standards. Ms. Bradshaw addressed Ms. McKenna’s earlier question regarding kindergarten. She said the reference to reading in kindergarten was addressed by the panel, and the correction was made. In response to Mr. Morton’s question, Ms. Peske said ensuring that all students are served will be a focus of implementation. Secretary Peyser suggested preparing an explanation of the standards for parents and additional framing of themes and issues, such as close reading, information text vs. literary text, inclusion of pre-21st century text, and the importance of encouraging students to read a lot.

Commissioner Chester thanked members for their input and staff for the thoughtful presentation. He said the team will continue to incorporate revisions and bring the standards back to the Board in November for a vote to send them out for public comment.

**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