# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

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

**Tuesday, April 18, 2017**

**8:30 a.m.-12:50 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

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Pendred Noyce,** Boston

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

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

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

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

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Board members introduced themselves. Chair Sagan noted the planned absences of Mr. Moore and Ms. Stewart at this month's meeting. He acknowledged the recent resignation of Board member Roland Fryer and thanked Dr. Fryer for his valuable work on the Board. Chair Sagan informed the Board that he has discussed with legal counsel a possible amendment to the by-laws that would allow members to participate in Board meetings remotely, consistent with the Open Meeting Law and the Attorney General's regulations. It would permit a member to vote and be counted as attending, but a member who participates remotely would not be counted towards a quorum. Chair Sagan said he would recommend certain limitations along with those set forth in the Attorney General's regulations, such as limiting remote participation to once per year for each member and one member per meeting, requiring prior approval by the Chair, and using video conference technology rather than audio alone. He said he would be participating in a video demonstration after today's meeting to check out the technology. Chair Sagan said if Board members are interested in pursuing this, he would bring a proposal to the Board next month for further discussion and a possible vote. Board members indicated their interest.

Mr. Moriarty arrived at 8:40 a.m.

Chair Sagan reported on the first convening of the Early College Joint Committee on April 12. The joint committee includes Chair Sagan and member Margaret McKenna, Board of Higher Education Chair Chris Gabrieli and member Paul Toner, and Secretary Peyser. Commissioners Chester and Santiago are non-voting members. Chair Sagan said the joint committee reviewed an outline of the High Quality Career Pathways and Early College High School Program designation, timeline and process. The joint committee discussed a plan for the Early College designation process, criteria, and next steps. Chair Sagan noted the goals for the Early College initiative are ambitious, to have the programs up and running in a year. The second meeting of the joint committee is scheduled for May 31.

Katherine Craven arrived at 8:45 a.m.

Commissioner Chester invited Board members to attend the Department's second annual Conference on Civic Engagement and Learning, which will be held on Monday, May 8, 2017 at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate. The Commissioner informed members that the Office of the Child Advocate plans to issue a report regarding oversight of private special education schools. Commissioner Chester also reported on the regional community education forum recently held at the Nipmuc Regional High School in Upton. This was the third regional forum at which the Commissioner spoke directly to community members, parents, educators, and elected and appointed officials on a variety of federal and state education issues.

Commissioner Chester informed the Board that he and Governor Baker signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan that the Board discussed at last months' meeting and on April 3rd the Department submitted the plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USED). The USED has posed follow-up questions and the Department is preparing a response. A peer review is expected in May, with the hope that the plan will be approved before the beginning of the 2017- 18 school year.

Commissioner Chester updated the Board on spring 2017 MCAS testing, which began on Monday, April 3. He said other than a few isolated technical issues, the testing has gone smoothly and no widespread, systemic technology issues have been reported. Also, the Rhode Island Department of Education is in talks with ESE to use the next-generation MCAS for its students in grades 3-8 starting in spring 2018. Commissioner Chester said this speaks well of the reputation Massachusetts has earned for our high quality student assessment program.

Commissioner Chester invited the Board to attend a celebration in honor of Sydney Chaffee of Codman Academy Public Charter School, who is one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year awarded administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The announcement is expected on Thursday, April 20 and the celebration in honor of Ms. Chaffee is being held on Friday, April 21 at the Huntington Theater in Boston.

Commissioner Chester noted that the materials under Tab 6 relate to financial literacy and the recommendations of the Lexington High School students who presented to the Board in March suggesting that the Board consider recommending to school districts that they voluntarily implement the Council of Economic Education (CEE) standards. Chair Sagan commented that alignment of frameworks does not necessarily answer the question the students posed about adoption of specific standards. Commissioner Chester noted that materials under Tab 7 respond to questions from Board members about gifted and talented education. Chair Sagan said the Board might discuss these issues further after concluding today's business agenda.

# Statements from the Public

1. Justin Norton, 8th Grade Humanities Teacher, Boston Latin Academy, addressed the Board on civic learning and engagement.
2. Carol Lach, Ph.D., addressed the Board on gifted and talented education.
3. Tyrone Mowatt, Managing Director of Ed Inquiry, LLC, addressed the Board on gifted and talented education.
4. Gerry Mroz, parent, addressed the Board on gifted and talented education.
5. MaryGrace Stewart, Longmeadow, MA, Gifted Education & Enrichment Specialist, Academy Hill School, Springfield, addressed the Board on gifted and talented education.

# Approval of Minutes

Chair Sagan noted a typo in the minutes relating to a comment Mr. Doherty made and asked that it be corrected. The Commissioner said the correction has been made.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the March 28, 2017 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

# Civic Learning and Engagement: Progress Report on Review of History/Social Science Curriculum Framework and Other Activities

Commissioner Chester presented an overview of the Department's work relating to civic learning and engagement, including the revision process for the History and Social Science curriculum framework; the second annual civics literacy conference scheduled for May 8; the revised definition of college and career readiness, which was adopted in 2016 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary and the Board of Higher Education, to include readiness to participate in civic life; and the Civic Learning and Engagement Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Chester introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske, who updated the Board on Student Government Day, which was held in early April. Ms. Peske introduced David Buchanan, Assistant Director for Literacy and Humanities, Jason Hilton, History Social Studies Specialist, Alan Melchior, Associate Director of Center for Youth and Communities - Brandeis University (who served on the Civic Learning and Engagement Task Force and Working Group on Civic Learning), and Nadine Ekstrom, Superintendent, Berlin-Boylston Public Schools (who represents MASS and served on the Civic Learning and Engagement Task Force) to discuss the Civic Learning and Engagement Strategic Plan with the Board.

Mr. Buchanan presented highlights from the Civic Learning and Engagement Strategic Plan, including three key elements: develop a communications strategy, highlight best practices, and strengthen the teaching and learning of civics. He said he anticipates the curriculum framework revision panel would work through the fall and the Commissioner would present a draft revised framework to the Board in January 2018 to send out for public comment, so that the Board could adopt the revised· framework in June 2018. Secretary Peyser asked about development of a History and Social Science assessment. Commissioner Chester said the Department did some assessment development work ten years ago and then paused it because of funding issues; that work should be revisited as the curriculum standards are updated and then we can determine what additional assessment development is required. Secretary Peyser noted that the FY2019 budget proposal will be moving forward only nine months from now, so it is not too early to start figuring out the plan and budget for developing and field testing the History and Social Science assessment.

Secretary Peyser said civics is already woven into the History and Social Science framework quite strongly, so there is no need to start over. Mr. Buchanan agreed and said the revision panel is building on the current core content, aiming to support educators to teach it effectively. Mr.

Moriarty noted several pending bills relate to civics requirements and may result in unfunded mandates.

At 10:10 a.m., Chair Sagan called for a ten-minute break. The Chair reconvened the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Ms. Peske introduced Alan Melchior of Brandeis University and Superintendent Nadine Ekstrom, Berlin-Boylston Public Schools. Mr. Melchior voiced his appreciation for the Board's engagement in the discussion of civics and civic engagement and his support of the strategic plan. He discussed the importance of reinforcing the study of civics and promoting active learning in the classroom to engage and challenge students to become active citizens. Ms. Ekstrom discussed ways in which she has incorporated global initiatives in her relatively small school district by finding ways to use existing resources differently. She highlighted learning trips for students and educators, the global studies program, and international partnerships.

Ms. Noyce commended Ms. Ekstrom on her district's initiatives and asked how success in civic learning could be measured. Mr. Buchanan discussed developing an inventory of civic learning and engagement and a research statewide data reporting system. Vice-Chair Morton voiced his support for civic learning and asked what resources are needed to make it successful. Ms. Ekstrom said that shifting funds from programs with less impact is one way her district approaches it. Mr. Melchior noted costs are minimal when civic learning is integrated into a district broadly and can connect across all the disciplines. Vice-Chair Morton said he has seen the impact the YMCA Youth in Government program has had on its students, with 100% of those participating graduating from high school and 95% heading to college. Mr. Doherty said he is struck by the fact that people applying for US citizenship must pass a civics test, but we do not have the same requirements for high school graduates. He suggested consideration of a voluntary test on civics. Ms. McKenna said civic participation matters to democracy; she noted the YouthBuild program encourages civic engagement and those participating have increased attendance and graduation rates. Mr. Moriarty said the Holyoke High School restorative justice program provides a great civic engagement experience for the students who participate in it, and he advocated broadening such programs. Commissioner Chester thanked the presenters and the Board for an excellent discussion and commended Supt. Ekstrom for her leadership.

# Level 5 Schools: Third-Quarter FY2017 Reports and Update from UP Academy Holland, Boston

Commissioner Chester welcomed Tim Nicolette, President of the UP Education Network, Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Ventura Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation, to update the Board on UP Academy Holland which was designated a Level 5 School in the fall of 2013. Commissioner Chester noted that this is the third of four presentations to the Board on the status of the Level 5 schools. The Commissioner said he recently visited the school and was encouraged to see good things happening. Mr. Johnston noted that he has observed how the teachers are actively engaging the students.

Mr. Nicolette presented an overview of the school's demographics, assessment results, mission, and focus areas. Ms. Craven asked what percentage of the students live in the vicinity of the school. Mr. Nicolette said more than 50 percent are from the neighborhood. In response to a question from Ms. McKenna, Mr. Nicolette said Scott Given left as UP' s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in January 2017 and Nicole Dom has become the interim CEO. He said within the first two years, UP Academy Holland has stabilized and strengthened the school culture by developing strong systems and routines, has accelerated student learning, and has built strong relationships with families and the community.

In regard to statewide assessment result, Mr. Nicolette said while there is still a lot of work to be done, UP Academy Holland increased its proficiency in English Language Arts by 26% and in Mathematics by 16%. Mr. Nicolette said the focus areas for this school year include: deepen conceptual understanding, develop capacity to help children learn to manage their emotions, and establish meaningful partnerships with family and community. In closing, Mr. Nicolette extended an invitation to all members to visit the school.

Ms. McKenna asked about staff diversity. Mr. Nicolette estimated the staff is approximately 45- 50% people of color. Chair Sagan inquired about staff turnover. Mr. Nicolette said a few staff members from the Holland School chose to apply and about 10 percent of UP Academy Holland staff are from the previous school. He said the longer school day - eight hours for students and nine hours for teachers, with teachers reporting back in August for professional development and team building - makes a big difference for students and teachers commit to that schedule. Ms.

McKenna asked about leadership of UP now that the founder has left. Mr. Nicolette said Veronica Conforme will be a sustainer and builder going forward as the new CEO of UP Education Network. Chair Sagan thanked Mr. Nicolette for his presentation.

Mr. Johnston provided the Board with brief updates on the other Level 5 schools and noted that the Board will receive progress reports from the Level 5 districts at a future meeting.

# Amendment to Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for Districts and Schools, 603 CMR 2.00 (Limitation of Certain Provisions for 2016-17 School Year)

Commissioner Chester invited Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Robert Curtin, Associate Commissioner, to provide background information on the amendment to the Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for Districts and Schools. Commissioner Chester said that during the public comment period, which ended on April 5, 2017, ESE received three comments related to the proposed amendments: two from principals and one from the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). All three comments addressed the use of the 2017 MCAS results as a baseline. Commissioner Chester explained that the comments did not compel any changes to the proposed amendment. The Commissioner reviewed the comments from the MTA and summarized the response he included in his memo: the comments go beyond what the amendment is intended to cover. Mr. Doherty noted some confusion between the memo dated April 7, 2017 and the vote the Board took in November of 2016. Mr. Doherty questioned whether we are really holding schools harmless. Commissioner Chester responded that we are holding schools harmless for 2016-17 as agreed, and these results will be a baseline going· forward. Mr. Doherty stated that people in the field thought the 2017 tests would not be tied to the accountability system at all.

Chair Sagan asked what "baseline" means in this context. Commissioner Chester explained that the 2017 results would be the baseline for going forward and measuring progress, consistent with the ESSA state plan. Ms. Noyce said she understood the 2017 results could be used to measure growth but would not be factored into an average. Chair Sagan concurred and said he believed the Board's direction was to not average in the 2017 results. Mr. Curtin said the motion being voted on is about a reset for 2016-17 only and not how we would use the 2017 data going forward. Secretary Peyser said the discussion about the accountability system is a separate matter. Ms. Noyce said the Board expected districts to be held harmless for 2017 results not temporarily but forever. Chair Sagan asked that the Board's strong sentiment on this point be reflected in the minutes. Mr. Doherty voiced his support of Ms. Noyce's statement. Commissioner Chester suggested keeping an open mind on this point, that the 2017 grade 3-8 results would not have an impact on 2017 ratings but would be the baseline and could be combined to yield levels in fall 2018. He added that the accountability system has consistently combined years of data.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, §§ lB, lJ, and lK, and having solicited public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, § 3, hereby adopts the amendment to the Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools (603 CMR 2.00), as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

Ms. Craven said the memo should be clarified for districts and the public. Chair Sagan suggested that the Commissioner come back to the Board in May with a revised memo that explains the 2017 test results are a baseline but those results will not change future accountability determinations.

# Delegation of Contract Approval Authority to Commissioner for Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School, Community Day Charter Public School-Gateway, Community Day

**Charter Public School-Prospect, and Community Day Charter Public School-R. Kingman Webster**

Chair Sagan invited Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner and Alison Bagg, Director of Charter Schools and School Redesign up to panel to discuss Item four on the agenda. Chair Sagan noted this is a fairly standard request for the Board to delegate authority to the Commissioner to approve such contracts in order for the work of the schools to move forward on schedule.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorize the Commissioner, in accordance with General Laws c. 15,** § **lF, paragraph 3, to act on behalf of the Board in approving the management contract between Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School and Old Sturbridge, Inc., and the management contracts(s) between Community Day Charter Public School-Gateway, Community Day Charter Public School-Prospect, and Community Day Charter Public School-R. Kingman Webster and Community Day Charter Management Organization, as required by General Laws chapter 71, section 89 (k)(S), and 603 CMR 1.00, following his legal and technical review of the contracts and a vote by the boards of trustees of these charter schools. Such approval shall also operate to amend the charters granted to Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School, Community Day Charter Public School-Gateway, Community Day Charter Public School­ Prospect, and Community Day Charter Public School-R. Kingman Webster to include these management contracts.**

The vote was unanimous.

# FY2018 Education Budget Proposal from House Ways & Means Committee

Commissioner Chester invited Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson, Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO Bill Bell, and Julia Jou, Budget Director, to update the Board on the House Ways and Means Committee's (HWM) budget recommendation for FY 2018. Mr. Bell stated the highlight was the increased focus on local aid but in all it was reasonably consistent with Governor's House 1 budget proposal. HWM's proposed appropriation was a $27.4 million increase from House 1. Mr. Bell noted that some line items were reduced, including the Literacy Program and the After- School Grant Program. HWM did not support the Governor's proposal to create a consolidated Targeted Assistance and Innovation account. The House will debate the budget during the week of April 24.

In response to a question from Ms. Craven, Deputy Commissioner Wulfson explained that the low-income metric continues to be an issue for a few districts, and we will use another transition year to get more accurate data.

At 12:05 p.m., Chair Sagan announced a ten-minute break. The meeting reconvened at 12:15 p.m.

Chair Sagan asked to revisit Item three on the accountability regulations. Secretary Peyser said he is concerned that the message to districts could be misunderstood as being that the 2017 scores do not count at all or you should score as low as you can. He suggested one approach would be to average 2017 and 2018 results, compare the average to 2018, and use the higher score. Ms. Noyce said that would be consistent with the Board's intent on hold harmless: the 2017 results should not hurt but could help. Chair Sagan concurred with Secretary Peyser's statement and noted that the Department does plan to publish the 2017 results. Ms. McKenna stated the Board wants districts to take the testing seriously and has no reason to believe they would not do so. Commissioner Chester said he will clarify the issues based on this discussion and will communicate to the field that the 2017 results cannot harm a district in 2017 or beyond in the accountability system, and the results will be published. The Board expressed agreement with that approach.

# Financial Literacy

Chair Sagan stated that the Board was interested in the students' presentation about financial literacy at last month's meeting and appreciated the additional information the Commissioner had provided. Secretary Peyser noted there may be a natural connection to financial literacy in the economics strand of the history and social science framework, which could be coupled with suggested resources and national standards. Chair Sagan concurred, noting that neither the students nor the Board are looking to impose a new mandate. Ms. Noyce endorsed Secretary Peyser's comment and added this relates to a larger question about the proper balance between mandating vs. inspiring good practice based on experience from the field. Chair Sagan agreed that is a great question for the Board to keep in mind.

# Gifted and Talented Education

Chair Sagan said the Board is not taking action on the topic of gifted and talented education but is interested in how the Commissioner might frame the issues. Commissioner Chester invited Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, to provide a brief history about legislation on this topic. The Commissioner said one thing that struck him about the parent's comments about their children's experience was that it appeared the school districts were not using common sense in addressing these situations. Commissioner Chester added these were school based stories and less so policy based stories. The Commissioner referenced the work of Joe Renzulli at the University of Connecticut and Commissioner Chester's own experience with advocates for gifted and talented children during his tenure in Ohio. He said there is considerable debate about definitions, identification, and other aspects of gifted and talented education.

Ms. Noyce suggested offering examples of best practices to schools and encouraging a broad range of options and greater flexibility. Ms. McKenna said we may need to differentiate between students who are motivated and well prepared and those who are prodigies. Commissioner Chester said sharing best practices from school districts might be a productive route and that he would discuss it with the MASS and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

Chair Sagan mentioned that we are looking at the schedule for Board meetings in the upcoming 2017-2018 year and will have a proposed schedule to review at the next meeting.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:50 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