# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

# of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Tuesday, April 24, 2018

# 8:35 a.m. – 10:50 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

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Amanda Fernandez,** Belmont

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Hannah Trimarchi**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead

**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeffrey C. Riley**,Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Vice-Chair Morton called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. He said he is chairing today’s

meeting at the request of Chair Sagan, who is participating remotely in the meeting by video

conference. Vice-Chair Morton noted that this is the first meeting for Commissioner Riley. He

welcomed the Commissioner and said he looks forward to working with him. The members of

the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) introduced themselves.

Commissioner Riley thanked Board members for their welcome and the support he has received since starting at the beginning of April. He said that at his swearing-in at the State House, he spoke about the need to bring students and teachers to the forefront. Commissioner Riley reported on a few items including the announcement of the Lawrence Alliance for Education assuming the duties of Receiver for the Lawrence Public Schools, his giving the keynote address and presenting awards at the Outstanding Vocational Student Awards held at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, and the upcoming meeting on April 25 of the Early College Joint Committee.

## Statement from the Public

1. **Lisa Guisbond**, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board to present copies of a book by Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor Daniel Koretz.

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

## Approval of Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of March 26, 2018 Special Meeting and the March 27, 2018 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

### John Kelly, Student, Quincy High School: Civic Engagement

Vice-Chair Morton introduced John Kelly, a senior at Quincy High School, who served as Governor a few weeks ago on Student Government Day at the Massachusetts State House. Mr. Kelly introduced his U.S. Government and Politics teacher, Ms. Mary Ellen McMillen, and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He said it was an honor and a great experience to serve as Governor on Student Government Day. Mr. Kelly discussed the definition of civics, which some people confuse with politics. He said many believe that students of his generation lack an understanding of civics, but what he experienced on Student Government Day was a step in the right direction. Mr. Kelly said the lack of formalized civics education in middle school did not stop him from learning about the framework of government and the fundamental principles of American democracy. He said he sought opportunities outside the traditional classroom, noting that no one could fully experience the lessons of civics solely from a textbook. Mr. Kelly said Ms. McMillen is a dynamic teacher who brings civic experience to the classroom, as well as bringing the classroom to the experience. Mr. Kelly thanked the Board for recognizing the importance of civics education at an earlier age and continuing it through high school. He concluded by stating that increasing civic engagement is key to our democracy.

Vice-Chair Morton thanked Mr. Kelly and commended him for taking advantage of the opportunities available to him. The Vice-Chair thanked Ms. McMillen for providing her students with opportunities for civic engagement.

### Cara Pekarcik, North Quincy High School, Quincy: Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, 2018

Vice-Chair Morton welcomed the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, Cara Pekarcik, and congratulated her and thanked her for her great work. Ms. Pekarcik said she is honored to represent teachers in the Commonwealth as Teacher of the Year. She said she started her career as a marine biologist working off the coast of Massachusetts studying whales. She added that she never thought she would be a classroom teacher but she took the exams and after she started teaching biology, she fell in love with it. Ms. Pekarcik explained that her mindset changed from a marine biologist teaching science to a biology teacher with a background in marine biology.

Ms. Pekarcik said she believes teachers need to have personal goals. She shared her priorities, which include doing, not just seeing; scientific literacy; personal growth; being a connected educator; and empathy and social and emotional learning. She said focusing on this list helps her provide a safe, structured, dynamic, engaging learning environment for her students and herself. She added that she looks beyond the four walls of her classroom for opportunities for her students to expand their knowledge and become part of the real world.

Ms. Pekarcik said she encourages her students to do projects that expand their creativity, which makes the students excited to learn. She described making learning memorable by bringing in experts from the field, sometimes accompanied by animals. She said she also likes to take students outside the classroom and encourages all teachers to reach to their communities and find organizations and places where students can get involved. She highlighted the importance of exposing her students to scientific literacy. Ms. Pekarcik said she hopes all teachers have the opportunity for professional development in their field, to enrich their teaching and keep them current in their topics. She encouraged recognition of teachers beyond the Teacher of the Year. Ms. Pekarcik thanking the Board for acknowledging her and celebrating teaching.

Chair Sagan asked Ms. Pekarcik about the support she received to create opportunities for students within and outside her classroom. Ms. Pekarcik explained that many guest speakers volunteer to come to her classroom, and she finds grants to pay for some of the programs. She added that if a fee is involved for an outside program and students cannot pay, she has paid for them herself because she wants to make sure all her students have that experience.

Vice-Chair Morton said the Commonwealth is fortunate to have Ms. Pekarcik as our Teacher of the Year. He said it is clear she loves her students and that they love her back; she goes above-and-beyond to make sure the students have a wonderful experience. Mr. West asked about the experience of being a career switcher into classroom teaching. Ms. Pekarcik said teachers who go through an educator preparation program know more about teaching that she did in her first year. She said the process to obtain the license was simple, but the mentoring program for new teachers twelve years ago was limited and she believes every new teacher needs to have good mentoring, especially around classroom management skills and curriculum standards. Ms. Pekarcik said many teachers are capable of providing strong mentoring for educators coming into the practice.

### Dan Adler, UP Academy Leonard Middle School, Lawrence: Milken Award Winner

Commissioner Riley said it was his honor to introduce Dan Adler from UP Academy Leonard Middle School in Lawrence and said he was proud to be at the ceremony at which Mr. Adler was presented with the Milken Award. Commissioner Riley said Mr. Adler has taught sixth-grade science at UP Academy Leonard for over four years and he is a superstar. Commissioner Riley welcomed and congratulated Mr. Adler.

Mr. Adler thanked the Board for the invitation to speak today and congratulated Commissioner Riley on his swearing-in. Mr. Adler expressed his deep appreciation to the Commissioner for all his work in Lawrence. He said he was humbled to be chosen as the Milken Award winner and that he will use this recognition as fuel to keep improving in the years to come. Mr. Adler said he is extremely proud to represent the Lawrence Public Schools and UP Academy Leonard, adding that while we have a lot to celebrate, there is a lot more work to do.

Mr. Adler explained that his approach to teaching science through singing, chanting, and gestures is known as total physical response, which promotes language acquisition and particularly helps English learners. He gave examples of how his students use this technique. Mr. Adler said he learned about total physical response when he attended a professional development conference in 2013 and had a great ESL teacher on his team. He said since then, he has received support and advice from ESL teachers on how to better support newcomers to strengthen their reading comprehension.

Mr. Adler noted that his school this year piloted a teacher professional learning community so teachers can collaborate and learn about best practices. He said he appreciates how his school embraces professional learning communities and trusts teacher leadership teams to make decisions. He said the teacher leadership opportunities in Lawrence bring out the best in the staff, and when schools provide support and opportunities, teachers rise to the challenge and students benefit.

Mr. Adler encouraged the Board to involve teachers in designing new programs for English learners under the LOOK Act and to play an active role in state education policy. Commissioner Riley said having teachers share best practices with each other is something we need to encourage. He added that teaching can be an isolating profession and we should make the time and space to enable teachers to share ideas and to work together.

Ms. McKenna thanked both Mr. Adler and Ms. Pekarcik for sharing their stories and said the Board needs to listen to teachers more. Ms. McKenna said she has been critical of teachers coming into the classroom with no experience and she believes it is our responsibility to see to it that teachers coming into the profession get support. She said she appreciated the teachers’ candor about what they need.

Mr. Moriarty congratulated both teachers and asked if the collaborative and professional learning culture at UP Academy Leonard is the exemplar or the norm in Lawrence. Mr. Adler said the experience of a new teacher is very different now than it was five years ago. Commissioner Riley said under the receivership, he relied heavily on teacher voice, and teacher leadership teams are core to success in the district. Commissioner Riley said he believes that getting people involved is the best way to bring about change, and the best professional development is among the teachers themselves.

Ms. Fernandez congratulated all the teachers and asked about parent engagement. Mr. Adler said his school places a huge emphasis on it and requires teachers to reach out to parents. Ms. Trimarchi asked Mr. Adler about his use of the word scholar rather than student. Mr. Adler said when he says scholars, he is empowering them and indicating that he sees their hard work, their potential, and their role in driving their own learning.

At 9:25 a.m., Vice-Chair Morton informed members that they would take a short break. He reconvened the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

### Level 5 Schools: Third-Quarter FY2018 Reports and Update from UP Academy Holland,

### Boston, by Veronica Conforme

Vice-Chair Morton welcomed Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Veronica Conforme, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of UP Education Network, and Lauren Woo, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation, to the table. Mr. Johnston said this is the fourth year of implementation of the turnaround plan for UP Academy Holland and he is pleased that Ms. Conforme has taken on the role of CEO for the UP Network. Mr. Johnston said he appreciated what Mr. Adler said about UP Academy Leonard and added that the UP organization takes on schools that have been unsuccessful and is committed to providing students with a quality education. Mr. Johnston described a recent visit to UP Holland and said it was great to see the work they are doing to refine and improve the instructional experience for students.

Ms. Conforme provided her background in school turnaround. She said UP Holland is in the process of transformation and it is very exciting to be leading that work. Ms. Conforme presented an overview of UP Academy Network, explained that they transform schools into exceptional learning environments in partnership with families and communities*,* and described the student and educator makeup statewide. Ms. Conforme said UP Academy Holland is an in-district school serving 767 Boston Public School students in grades pre-K through 5. She said the community around the school has been a huge support and the school has built strong partnerships with organizations like College Bound Dorchester, Imagine That, and Boston Center for Youth and Families. Ms. Conforme noted that 44 percent of the students speak a language other than English as their first language, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, Haitian, Arabic and Bengali.

Ms. Conforme noted the vision statement for UP Academy Holland: to have the students in our school cultivate their sharp minds, share their kind hearts, and explore their path and potential. She said 40 percent of the students are on track to be reading above grade level by the end of the year, and the school is strengthening SEL programming to meet all students’ needs and improve student-teacher relationships. Ms. Conforme noted that this has resulted in a 44 percent reduction in suspensions. She said students are exploring their path and potential by participating in the Tiger Chorale, which is an afterschool choir that performs at UP Academy Holland and in network-wide events. Ms. Conforme said teacher professional development is central to the strategic plan. In closing, she spoke about family engagement and noted that UP Academy Holland increased family conference attendance by 69 percentthis year.

Ms. Fernandez asked if Ms. Conforme could provide more context regarding suspension rates, restorative conversations, and the mindset of teachers and staff. Ms. Conforme said most teachers were excited to learn how to facilitate these conversations, building on the skills the students already have, and the result has been a reduction in student suspensions. Ms. McKenna suggested that future school reports should provide numbers as well as percentages to provide context about progress and trends.

Chair Sagan and Vice-Chair Morton thanked Ms. Conforme for her work and her presentation.

Ms. Woo updated the Board on the Level 5 schools as outlined in the Commissioner’s memo.

She said School & Main Institute (SMI) has been appointed Receiver for the John Avery Parker

School in New Bedford, and SMI and Dr. Fran Roy will serve in an advisory capacity until July

1, 2018.

Ms. Fernandez and Mr. West suggested that future updates on the Level 5 schools should include

reports on the initial goals and priorities so that the Board can see the big picture as well as a

snapshot.

### FY2019 Education Budget Proposal from House Ways & Means Committee

Vice-Chair Morton welcomed Bill Bell, Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO, to provide an update on the House Ways and Means (HWM) Committee FY2019 education budget proposals. Mr. Bell explained that the House of Representatives (House) is debating the FY2019 budget this week. He noted a few new updates including the House restoring the assessment and curriculum line item to the Governor’s proposal of $32.1 million, and passage of amendments for smaller increases to regional transportation reimbursement and afterschool grants. Mr. Bell added that the House has continued the Governor’s efforts to increase funding to districts, and aid spending is up over $160 million in the House recommendations, with most in Chapter 70.

Mr. Bell expressed concern about federal funding, noting that in our school improvement area there could be a total of less than $6 million available, although the number is still fluid. He added that he knows the Commissioner is very concerned about being able to invest more in our low performing schools and districts. Mr. Bell concluded by saying the Legislature has shown interest in a supplemental budget for FY2018, and the Department continues to work closely with the executive office and legislative staff.

Commissioner Riley said we need to keep an eye on federal dollars, adding that while we are celebrating many great things in Massachusetts education, we also recognize that we still have gaps that need to be closed, students in poverty, students with special needs, and English learners who have historically benefited from these additional dollars.

Mr. West noted that under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the School Improvement

Grant was eliminated but he believes ESSA allows the state to set aside seven percent of Title I

allocations for similar purposes. He asked if that would be equivalent to past funding. Mr. Bell

responded that the seven percent would come after we take care of the set-asides in allocating the

main grant, so we are not sure we will have full access to the seven percent and cannot just take

it off the top.

Mr. Moriarty said he understands the current budget is a work in progress but when the budget is

complete, he would like to see an analysis of how responsive, if at all, the process has been to the

Board’s recommendations. He added that he is concerned about adequacy of resources to

implement the new standards for social studies, civics, and history, including the assessment that

the statute requires, as well as professional development for teachers.

Mr. Bell explained that there is funding in both the Governor’s and House FY2019 budget for the standards implementation and for professional development. Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske added that we are hoping the Board adopts the revised standards in June and in anticipation of that, the Department is planning a civics institute for teachers using federal Title II dollars. Commissioner Riley said he has asked staff to put together a historical perspective on the budget, adding that he wants to see what we can do to secure resources to serve high needs students.

Mr. Doherty said he recalls the mission of the Board is to provide a quality public education to all students and the Foundation Budget Review Commission found that education was being underfunded. He asked if it is appropriate for the Board to advocate for additional funds. Secretary Peyser said the Governor took into account the Foundation Budget Review Commission recommendations in his budget proposal, and we may be 30% of the way towards closing the gap as a result of the House amendments. Mr. Doherty asked if at a future meeting the Board might consider advocating for a ballot question like the millionaires’ tax. Chair Sagan said he would work with the new Commissioner and staff to review whether historically the Board has taken a position on ballot questions as well as related budget issues and follow up at a future Board meeting.

### Charter School Contract Approval Delegations to Commissioner (UP Academy Boston, UP

### Academy Dorchester, and Collegiate Charter School of Lowell)

Vice-Chair Morton welcomed Deputy Commissioner Wulfson and Alyssa Hopkins, School Development Manager, Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson began by informing the members that the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) issued its decision this morning in Doe v. Secretary of Education, in which five Boston students who were interested in attending charter schools challenged the constitutionality of the charter school caps in Massachusetts. He reported that the SJC ruled in favor of the Commonwealth’s motion to dismiss the case on grounds that the students do not have a valid claim under the state constitution.

Deputy Commissioner Wulfson gave the Board an overview of the Department’s process for reviewing and approving management contracts for charter schools that intend to procure educational services from educational management organizations (EMOs). The Deputy Commissioner added that because these reviews and approvals happen in the summer months when the Board does not meet, it is recommended that the Board authorize the Commissioner to approve the contracts and report back to the Board in September. He noted that the Board has followed this procedure in previous years. The current contracts relate to three schools: UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, UP Academy Charter School of Boston, and Collegiate Charter School of Lowell.

**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, § 1F, paragraph 3, to act on behalf of the Board in approving the management contracts for UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, UP Academy Charter School of Boston, and Collegiate Charter School of Lowell as required by General Laws chapter 71, section 89 (k)(5), and 603 CMR 1.00. Such approval will follow a legal and technical review of the proposed contracts and a vote by the boards of trustees of these charter schools to approve such contracts and to submit a request to amend their charters accordingly. Any such approval by the Commissioner shall also operate to amend the charters granted to UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, UP Academy Charter School of Boston, and Collegiate Charter School of Lowell to include these management contracts.**

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 10:50 a.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board