Minutes of the Regular Meeting

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

**Tuesday, October 30, 2018**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline (participating remotely via video conference)

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Amanda Fernandez,** Belmont

**Maya Mathews**, Student Advisory Council, Newton

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeffrey C. Riley**,Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

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

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

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Chair Sagan convened the meeting at 8:35 a.m. He announced that Ms. Craven is participating remotely, Vice-Chair Morton is unable to attend, and Ms. Mathews would be arriving shortly. Members then introduced themselves.

Commissioner Riley reported that Jennifer Gordon, a librarian at the Benjamin Banneker Charter School in Cambridge, was honored recently as the state’s 45th winner of the prestigious Milken Educator Award. He informed the Board about three federal grants the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has received to strengthen support for social-emotional learning and student health. Commissioner Riley said he is hopeful the state school funding formula will be reviewed in the coming year. He noted his recent visit to the Colegrove Park Elementary School in North Adams, where he taught a class, and his visit to Wellesley High School with Representative Alice Peisch, Co-Chair of the Committee on Education, and Board member Maya Mathews. The Commissioner said he visited several schools to celebrate STEM Week and was impressed with the high quality of the students’ projects.

Secretary Peyser informed the Board there were over 500 events in schools around the Commonwealth during STEM Week and congratulated and thanked all who participated. He said Governor Baker recently signed legislation that directs the Department, in consultation with the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC), to issue guidelines for districts on screening students for dyslexia. The law also adds a dyslexia advocate to the existing early literacy expert panel. Secretary Peyser said the panel has been working on these issues already and will continue to collaborate with the Department and DEEC on guidance for school districts.

Ms. Mathews arrived at 8:41 a.m.

Chair Sagan noted there were no requests for public comment this month. To accommodate Ms. Craven’s schedule, Chair Sagan moved up the report from the Board’s Budget Committee to the second business item on the agenda.

Chair Sagan acknowledged the tragic event in Pittsburgh this past Saturday.

**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 the September 18, 2018 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Presentation by STEM Educators**

Commissioner Riley introduced Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner, to

moderate a panel of STEM educators and students. Ms. Peske briefly reviewed eight practices that are included in the Science and Technology/Engineering standards that the Board approved two years ago and said these practices are at the heart of STEM Week activities. Ms. Peske introduced the panelists: Ann Ritchie, Director of Science, pre-k-12, Everett Public Schools; Janice Gauthier, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Everett Public Schools; Chakara Cardillo, Randolph Community Middle School, with Randolph Public Schools students; and Geoff Rose, Principal, Perry K-8 School, Boston Public Schools.

Ms. Ritchie and Ms. Gauthier reviewed activities in the Everett Public Schools to raise students’ awareness about STEM careers and build their skills. They described students’ visit to the Novartis Community Lab in Cambridge to conduct a biotechnology investigation, a STEM event for English learners in grades 8 and 9, and an activity in which students partnered with engineers from the EPA. Ms. Ritchie and Ms. Gauthier said the students benefited from the schools’ partnerships with various companies and organizations.

Ms. Cardillo said every week is STEM Week at the Randolph Community Middle School. She described the Project Lead the Way curriculum, in which students learn about and solve real-life challenges. Ms. Cardillo introduced three students who discussed their project to design a boot for a child with cerebral palsy, how it promoted teamwork, and how they resolved problems they encountered. Secretary Peyser said he visited the class and saw how engaged the students were in addressing this design/engineering task. The Secretary noted that Ms. Cardillo received the Project Lead the Way “Rookie of the Year” award and said she is an outstanding example of a STEM educator in Massachusetts.

Mr. Rose discussed his school’s partnership with i2 Learning, which provides standards-based curriculum materials and professional development for teachers. Mr. Rose described some STEM projects the Perry School students conducted. He said the students are engaged in productive struggle with challenging tasks, and their project-based STEM work connects well with their social-emotional learning.

Ms. Peske concluded by noting how these educators and schools are using the practices from the state standards to engage students in cognitively demanding work and close gaps in opportunity and achievement. Chair Sagan thanked all the presenters.

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY20 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board’s Budget Committee**

Chair Sagan introduced Bill Bell, Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO, and Julia Jou, Budget Director, and asked Katherine Craven, Chair of the Board’s Budget Committee, to present the committee’s report, which was distributed to the Board. Ms. Craven thanked the members for accommodating her remote participation at today’s meeting. She said the committee met last week to discuss what to include in the annual letter to the Secretary. Ms. Craven said the committee discussed the review of Chapter 70 and the foundation budget formula, the Holyoke Public Schools budget, and priorities including targeted assistance to close achievement gaps. She invited other members of the committee to comment.

Ms. McKenna said the committee discussed the need to fund professional development for teachers relating to the new framework for civics and history/social studies as well as media literacy; and targeted support for out-of-school and summer programs that would help close achievement gaps.

Ms. Stewart said along with Holyoke’s school budget issues, the committee learned about 32 districts that are within five percent of net school spending. She noted other items the committee discussed: the charter school reimbursement account; annualizing an increase in targeted assistance funding; and budget challenges in gateway cities with growing student enrollment.

Mr. Bell said the Governor requested an additional $30 million in the supplemental budget for targeted assistance and the Legislature approved $5 million for this year, which we hope to annualize in the base. He noted the Governor has asked the Secretary and Commissioner to develop policy options regarding the foundation budget, and staff is currently working on that.

Ms. Fernandez suggested the final budget letter should list implementation of the LOOK Act and Civics Education as separate items. She asked whether the proposal to raise educator license fees might make it harder to recruit more diverse candidates into teaching. Mr. Bell said the LOOK Act and Civics Education items will be separated in the final report. On the proposed fee increase, he said the fees have not changed in 20 years and are low compared to other states. Mr. Bell said the increased fees would fund unmet needs in the Office of Professional Practices Investigations (OPPI) and improve customer service in the Office of Educator Licensure.

Mr. Moriarty expressed his gratitude for the attention to Holyoke’s fiscal situation and said the budget letter captures important concerns. Ms. McKenna recommended highlighting early literacy and summer programs under targeted assistance. Mr. West suggested including a statement about the need to reform Chapter 70.

Secretary Peyser said reforming the funding formula could address some of the issues affecting Holyoke and other districts, but Chapter 70 is general revenue and does not include spending requirements. For that reason, he said, line items like targeted assistance are a way to provide for more focused spending that influences school practices and addresses gaps. The Secretary said this is a balancing act and there is momentum around reforming the formula and increasing resources, but we also need to ensure that more money will bring about improvements.

Ms. Craven agreed with the Secretary’s comments. Mr. Bell said the Department will continue to work with EOE on policy options relating to Chapter 70. Chair Sagan said the funding formula has to be updated and at the same time, the Department has to have resources to address targeted needs as the Commissioner identifies them.

Ms. Craven concluded her participation in the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Chair Sagan called for a break at 9:40 a.m. He reconvened the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

**2018 Student, School, and District Performance Results**

Commissioner Riley said the panel will present high-level MCAS data results, noting this is a transition year with a new accountability system. He introduced Michol Stapel, Associate Commissioner; Bob Lee, MCAS Chief Analyst; Rob Curtin, Associate Commissioner; and Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner.

Ms. Stapel presented an overview of the spring 2018 assessment results, including the modes in which students took the MCAS tests. In response to a question from Secretary Peyser, Ms. Stapel said the percentage of students who take the MCAS-Alt has gone down slightly, consistent with ESSA requirements.

Mr. Lee reviewed the 2018 English Language Arts results for grades 3-8, which show some improvement from 2017. Chair Sagan noted that even with that improvement, only half of our students are meeting expectations. Mr. West said the change in grades 3-5 is about as large a single-year improvement as one could realistically expect, while the grade 7-8 pattern is less encouraging. Mr. Moriarty said the data show this test is a legitimate measure. He added that if we could bring up students’ reading proficiency at grade 3, all other indicators would improve.

Mr. Lee reviewed the 2018 Mathematics results for grades 3-8 and the MCAS legacy test results in grade 10 English Language Arts and Mathematics and grade 5 and 8 Science and Technology/Engineering. He concluded by highlighting changes in the demographics of the tested students, including a large increase in the English Learner population. Mr. Curtin noted that almost 3000 students from Puerto Rico enrolled in Massachusetts schools last year, which may have played a role. Chair Sagan it would be helpful to have actual data on these changes.

Mr. Curtin presented an overview of the components and data from the first year of the new accountability system, adding this is a baseline year. He noted the Commissioner is going to review the system, including through a survey to the field, to determine if any changes or refinements are needed. Mr. Curtin went over the 2018 data summary and a sample accountability report, and responded to questions from Board members about participation rates, subgroup performance, and chronic absenteeism. Mr. Curtin also presented a tentative calendar of items that will come before the Board.

Ms. McKenna said NASBE reported that 8-10 states include subgroup growth as an indicator in their accountability systems; she added that access to arts education is a continuing item of interest. Mr. West said at the school level, looking at growth for the bottom 25 percent is likely to be more effective than looking at subgroups. Mr. Curtin said the plan is to address access to arts education in the revised school and district report cards, which the Department will bring to the Board in December or January. Ms. Stewart asked Commissioner Riley how these accountability results inform his thinking. The Commissioner said he will be interested to see the results of the survey to the field about the system; he hears frequently that they would like to spend less time on state assessments and have the process be more efficient. In response to a question from Ms. Fernandez about getting input from families, Mr. Curtin said there has been a lot of public and family engagement around the school and district report cards.

Mr. Johnston concluded the presentation by discussing the Department’s redesigned structure for assisting and supporting schools and districts, including the use of effective school turnaround practices and strategies.

**Chronically Underperforming Schools: First-Quarter FY2019 Reports**

Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, provided an overview and progress update, including FY2018 accountability data, on the following four schools: UP Academy Holland and Paul A. Dever Elementary School in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker Elementary School in New Bedford. Mr. Johnston noted that the report includes comparison data from FY2017. Mr. Moriarty said he appreciates the comparison information. Mr. Johnston said that at future meetings, the Board will hear directly from the receivers. In response to Mr. Moriarty’s question, Mr. Johnston said a school’s receivership could end based on the Commissioner’s decision that the school has demonstrated sustained improvement and the school and district have systems in place to keep it up.

**Update on English Learner Education: Implementation of the LOOK Act**

Commissioner Riley introduced Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Paul Aguiar, Director of the Office of Language Acquisition. Ms. Peske gave the Board a brief overview of the regulatory amendments the Board adopted in June 2018 after enactment of the Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) Act, including English Learner programs; the Bilingual Education endorsement; the State Seal of Biliteracy; the English Learner Parent Advisory Council, and the SEI Endorsement for career-vocational-technical educators. Ms. Peske reviewed the process for districts to start new programs for English Learners.

Mr. Aguiar reviewed what the Department is doing to support districts in designing and implementing new programs; it includes offering training and technical assistance, creating quick reference guides and forms, and updating guidance. Mr. Aguiar discussed the new regulations on the Bilingual Education endorsement. Ms. Peske discussed the State Seal of Biliteracy and the criteria for establishing two tiers, as decided by the Commissioner. She said the Department will publish guidance in November. Mr. Moriarty said he is pleased with the two tiers and hopes there will be a way to track outcomes for students who earn the State Seal. Mr. West said this could be a model for other states. Mr. Aguiar provided a brief overview of the English Learner Parent Advisory Council regulations.

Mr. Aguiar reviewed the regulations on the SEI endorsement for career-vocational-technical educators. Mr. Doherty questioned the rationale for requiring administrators to earn the endorsement. Mr. Aguiar said the endorsement applies to teachers who provide sheltered English instruction to English learners and to administrators who supervise and/or evaluate such teachers. Mr. Doherty said this places a burden on administrators who are not required to obtain other endorsements that teachers may have.

**Information on Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students**

Chair Sagan explained that Ms. Stewart requested that the Board discuss ballot question 3 relating to transgender rights, and he asked Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, and

Rachelle Engler Bennett, Associate Commissioner, to review its relation to the Board’s work, both directly and indirectly. Ms. Stewart thanked the Chair for allowing time to discuss the question.

Ms. Schneider noted that the Board’s by-laws permit a member to request that an item be placed on the agenda. She drew the Board’s attention to the Commissioner’s memo on the issue that Ms. Stewart raised. Ms. Schneider said ballot question 3 relates to the public accommodation law, not the education law that is under the Board’s purview. She discussed the 2011 amendment to the state education law that protects transgender students by including gender identity among the categories of discrimination that are prohibited in the Commonwealth’s public schools. Ms. Schneider noted that in 2012, the Board amended its Equal Educational Opportunity regulations to include protections for transgender students, consistent with the statute. She added that in March 2015, the Board continued its leadership in this area by voting unanimously to adopt Principles for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for LGBTQ Students.

Ms. Stewart said our Board and Department have been national leaders on these issues and we have heard from students, parents, and educators about the positive impact of this work. Ms. Mathews said students have to know that schools are a safe space and she appreciates the Board reaffirming its intent to protect students’ rights. Ms. McKenna commented on the disconnect that would result if students’ rights are protected while they are in school but not when they are in other public spaces. Chair Sagan expressed his view that these protections are non-negotiable.

Ms. Schneider concluded by acknowledging Ms. Bennett, who oversees the Department’s work to promote safe and supportive schools for all students.

Chair Sagan noted Commissioner Riley distributed his updated memo on his goals for 2018-2019, reflecting the suggestions that Board members offered at last month’s meeting.

Secretary Peyser mentioned the recent reports of the Latino Advisory Commission and Black Advisory Commission, which make several recommendations on education, including recommendations on diversity and recruitment that are very compatible with the Commissioner’s goals. The Secretary noted that the Latino Advisory Commission report also includes a priority relating to the LOOK Act. Secretary Peyser said all Board members will receive the reports.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 11:40 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