

**Minutes of the Special Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**August 13, 2009
9:15 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

**Bridgewater State College
Dunn Conference Room
Bridgewater, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose
Harneen Chernow, Vice Chair, Jamaica Plain
Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge
Michael D'Ortenzio Jr., Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley
Thomas E. Fortmann, Lexington
Beverly Holmes, Springfield
Jeff Howard, Reading
Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Dana Mohler-Faria, Bridgewater
Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Worcester
Sandra L. Stotsky, Brookline

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

Chair Maura Banta called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Comments from the Chair

Chair Banta welcomed new student member Michael D'Ortenzio Jr. to his first official Board meeting. The chair thanked Board member Dana Mohler-Faria for hosting the meeting at Bridgewater State College. The chair said it has been a busy month preparing for the retreat, and thanked members of the planning committee, facilitators, and Department staff for their contributions to the organization of the day. Chair Banta said she represented the Board during a presentation she made to the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association on 21st century skills.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Chester expressed his appreciation to Dr. Mohler-Faria for hosting the Board, and noted the impressive campus of Bridgewater State College. The commissioner said he had spoken recently to the Massachusetts Teachers Association leadership group in Williamstown, joined Mr. D'Ortenzio at the State Student Advisory Council's summer retreat, and yesterday returned from a meeting of the Knowledge

Alliance, a coalition of education research labs funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Commissioner Chester provided the Board an update on the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School and recent correspondence from and to Governor Patrick. The commissioner said it is important that we are upfront with the community on what is and is not possible.

Commissioner Chester updated the Board on his plans to respond to the Fall River School District's proposed Recovery Plan. The commissioner said he would ask the district to address a number of elements. He said there are hopeful signs, but the district has a long way to go. The commissioner also provided an update to the Board on Greenfield Public Schools' negotiations with a private company, K12, to establish a virtual school, noting that such action would first require legislative action. He said he intends to be deliberative about how to bring online schooling to Massachusetts.

The commissioner said the Department and the Executive Office of Education are gearing up to apply for federal Race to the Top funds, while awaiting additional information from the U.S. Department of Education. The commissioner said he expects the final application will be released in October, and our proposal will be due in December. The Gates Foundation has funded the Bridgespan organization to work with Massachusetts to help manage the application process. Commissioner Chester said he would keep the Board informed and would seek input from the Board as a draft is developed. He noted that the federal priority areas – high standards, educator policy, school turnaround, and effective use of data – are entirely consistent with our priorities.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Reville provided a budget update, and noted that to close out FY09, the Administration used ARRA funds to cover the last rounds of cuts to chapter 70. The secretary said the good news is the state had the funds to cope with the budget crisis this year, while the bad news is the ARRA funds will be largely expended by FY11. Secretary Reville said the FY11 budget will be very challenging without the federal cushion. Secretary Reville said the Governor's filing of legislation on Readiness Schools and the charter school cap lift was designed to complement the Board's work and create more options in underperforming districts. The secretary said there will be a legislative hearing on the bills on September 17.

Secretary Reville said the Governor is concerned about the continuing divisiveness in Gloucester, which led him to consider the possibility of calling for a hearing – which is actively under consideration. The secretary said the Governor asked him to go to Gloucester to work with public officials and the board of the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School to talk about options. Secretary Reville said he spent half a day there earlier this week meeting with Senator Tarr, Representative Ferrante, the mayor, the superintendent, and the school committee chair to talk about ways the parties involved can work more closely together. The secretary said he will meet with representatives from the charter school in early September.

Secretary Reville said that the Executive Office will host the first retreat of the chairs of the respective four boards (EEC, ESE, DHE, UMass) and CEOs of those systems later in August. The secretary said the retreat will focus on thinking together about achieving an ideal system that operates in a more cohesive way. The secretary said that Race to the Top is a promising opportunity both in a fiscal sense and also as a vehicle to pull together a comprehensive plan for the future.

Comments from the Chair

Chair Banta asked Dr. Mohler-Faria to tell the Board about Bridgewater State College. Dr. Mohler-Faria said that of the 104 universities and colleges in Massachusetts, Bridgewater State is the ninth largest at just under 11,000 students. He said there are four different schools, with 308 faculty and 1,100 staff. Dr. Mohler-Faria said the college was founded by Horace Mann in 1840. The college has been active in initiating international programs. Dr. Mohler-Faria said that its history has been teacher education, and last year the college graduated more science and math teachers than the rest of the system combined. He said the enrollment of students of color has increased to 11% from 1.5% eight years ago when he started, and student achievement has improved dramatically.

Comments from the Public

No individuals sought to address the Board.

Approval of the Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the June 23, 2009 regular meeting and June 22, 2009 special meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Update on State Education Budget and Federal Stimulus Funding for Education

Commissioner Chester said this was the first meeting since the FY10 budget was finalized, and referred members to the spreadsheet behind Tab 1 showing the initial FY09 budget, the FY09 budget after the 9C cuts, the FY10 budget, and the difference between FY09 and FY10. Vice Chair Harneen Chernow asked about charter school reimbursement. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson said that normally cuts in chapter 70 would reduce what districts spend, but that the cuts in chapter 70 were made up in federal stimulus funds. As a result, per pupil spending did not go down, and since charter school tuition is based on per pupil spending, charter school reimbursement was not adjusted.

Board member Sandra Stotsky asked about the WPI School of Excellence line item. Secretary Reville said the line item originally included funding for another school as well as gifted and talented grants, and his understanding is that the school was level funded or experienced only a small cut. Mr. D'Ortenzio asked why the Franklin Institute was funded for \$1. Associate Commissioner Wulfson said the line item was necessary to show the program is getting state funds and can qualify for computer services through the UMass system.

Secretary Reville said July revenues were down \$24 million, and around October 15 Administration & Finance would consider whether 9C cuts were necessary.

Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.14(g): Final Action on Emergency Amendment to Set Transition Period for Mathematics Subtest for Elementary and Special Education Teachers

Chair Banta said the Board in May voted to adopt an emergency amendment to have a transition period for a qualifying score on the Mathematics portion of the General Curriculum MTEL test. Commissioner Chester provided Board members with the comments received on the regulation, including one written comment and a summary of two speakers who addressed the Board during public comment at the May 2009 Board meeting. The commissioner recommended that the Board adopt the regulation on a permanent basis.

Board member Ruth Kaplan asked about a concern from some teacher representatives about which test is appropriate, MTEL or Praxis. Board member Sandra Stotsky noted that there is no independent Praxis math test for prospective elementary teachers. Commissioner Chester said the MTA's interest is that the Board adopt Praxis rather than our own test. The commissioner said the time to revisit this is next year, when the current contract expires. Vice Chair Chernow said she had heard a concern that the math test is hard. Board member Stotsky noted that it was important for candidates to take math courses to prepare for the test. Commissioner Chester said he and DHE Commissioner Richard Freeland have met to plan and make sure the right kind of supporting coursework is provided as part of teacher preparation programs, and to include not only education faculty but also math faculty. A conference with higher education is being planned for the fall. Dr. Mohler-Faria said everyone is on the same page about the goal, and the concern is about how we get there. Board member Thomas Fortmann said he visited a workshop at Lesley College for aspiring teachers taking the MTEL math test. Dr. Fortmann said it was an excellent workshop, but the math knowledge of the prospective teachers was only at the 4th or 5th grade level.

Ms. Kaplan asked for regular reports on how many people are passing the test. Associate Commissioner David Haselkorn updated the Board on the recent administration of the MTEL math subtest, and said the provisional pass rate rose from 39 percent in March, to 50 percent in May, to 55 percent in July. He said the Department will in the future have more data by license area and institution. Associate Commissioner Haselkorn said the

percent scoring at or above the 240 level rose from 27 percent in March to 39 percent in May.

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, § 1B and c. 71, § 38G, and having solicited and reviewed public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c.30A, § 3, hereby amend the Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, by adding, after section 7.14(f), the following provision as presented by the Commissioner:

Section 603 CMR 7.14(g):

Between March 7, 2009 and June 30, 2012, candidates for the following preliminary or initial licenses who earn a scaled score of at least 227-239 on the Mathematics portion of the General Curriculum test: Elementary, Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities, Teacher of Students with Severe Disabilities, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing and Teacher of the Visually Impaired, will be deemed to have passed the Mathematics portion of the General Curriculum test. All candidates who are licensed under this provision must earn a scaled score of 240 or above on the Mathematics portion of the General Curriculum test in order to be eligible for the next stage of licensure or to renew their initial license.

The vote was unanimous.

Chair Banta referred Board members to Tab 4, the commissioner's report on grants. Chair Banta then closed the business portion of the special meeting at 10:35 a.m..

Board Retreat

Chair Banta said the purpose of the retreat was to have Board members talk about where they are as a Board and how they move forward. The chair thanked the retreat committee (the chair, Vice-Chair Chernow, Jeff Howard, and Dana Mohler-Faria) and Department staff for their planning efforts. The chair said that session one of the retreat would focus on why Board members signed up for this work, how the Board spent its time, and what that tells the Board about how it might do its work differently.

Session 1

The session one facilitator was Board member Dana Mohler-Faria. He said this is a Board in transition, and this is a good time to review the past year. Dr. Mohler-Faria

asked Board members what struck them about the time analysis of how the Board spent its time in 2008-2009.

Board member Jeff Howard said the amount of time spent on charter schools is striking, but seems right based on what the Board had to do. Dr. Howard said what he signed up for was more analysis of low performing districts and schools, accountability, and how to move those areas forward. Chair Banta said the Board spent a fair amount of time on accountability and assistance, and less on educator excellence or student supports. Board member Gerald Chertavian said we have priorities but not necessarily goals or levers linked to the priorities.

Board member Beverly Holmes said her issues include charter schools, alternative schools, achievement gaps, and leadership. She said the Board itself did not have goals, the Department had priorities. Ms. Holmes said the goals need to be measurable. She said she would like to have a way to measure whether the Board was being effective.

Board member Tom Fortmann said part of what we see and do is handed to us by statute. He said the Board has discussed delegating more to the commissioner. Other things have been handed to us, such as taking over the functions of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability. Dr. Fortmann suggested the Board pay more attention to how it uses its discretionary time. He said his major interest is in math, and he now sees how it intersects with school performance, accountability, educator preparation, and everything else. He advocated placing educator quality high on the priority list.

Dr. Mohler-Faria said as we look at time, we need to consider how much is regulatory and required, and what is discretionary.

Vice Chair Harneen Chernow said education is one of the remaining areas where people from different backgrounds mix. She said the Board should ask itself what its role with the Department is, and whether it has a relationship with the Legislature and Governor. She noted differing opinions among members about how deeply to get into micro issues. Dr. Howard said the Board has never discussed its role vis-à-vis the role of the Department.

Dr. Mohler-Faria asked how the Board conceptualizes policy, and where does it come from. He asked if the Board views itself as a group of 11 education experts, or if it is the commissioner's role to bring ideas and proposed policies to the Board. He suggested a need for ongoing dialogue between the Board and the commissioner.

Board member Ruth Kaplan said she sees herself as representing ordinary people and she tries to represent every parent. She said the Board may have too many priorities, and that it might be helpful to check with NASBE about the board-department relationship in other states.

Board member Michael D'Ortenzio Jr. said he directly represents students, but is uncertain what the individual role of Board members is. He said he would like to know more about how to bring about changes as an individual and as a Board.

Mr. Chertavian said great organizations take time to step back and plan. Secretary Reville said he has been on the Board a couple of times, including in 1991-96 during the most dramatic change in state education policy in a century. He said the Board played only a modest role in the Education Reform Act but then a shift occurred where the Board took a major role in implementing the law. The secretary said the Board sets policy in a framework that includes the legislative and executive branches and federal as well as state law. It is a misinterpretation that we set policy in a vacuum. Unlike the board of a private organization, this Board does not necessarily have the final word because of the matrix in which it operates. He said both the Board and Department have multiple functions. The Board has a leadership role as chief advocate for K-12 education. The Board is a forum through which the public has opportunities to engage in issues of education policy. The secretary said the Board has a huge regulatory responsibility, which could be managed differently, but cannot be avoided. He said the Board's role is to hire top leadership and to guide and support that leadership. The Department is responsible for operational and technical assistance functions. The secretary said since 1993 the Board has become more steadily active and influential, and that the Board has more to do than it has time to do.

Commissioner Chester said that the Board's vote today on the MTEL mathematics subtest is an example of significant statewide education policy, and that the Legislature did not dictate a separate math test for teachers. He added that policy and regulation may be intertwined.

Board member Sandra Stotsky said a citizen board is appointed to serve as a rational check, and that the CEO proposes while the citizen board disposes. She said a citizen board is not expected to get into the weeds. Dr. Stotsky said there may be more advanced expectations of what state boards can do than reality.

Ms. Kaplan asked about the Board's relationship with the Legislature. Secretary Reville said there is a public education function this Board plays, and that the Department represents us in meetings with the Legislature. The secretary said there is a difference between a formal statutory relationship and having an influence. Commissioner Chester said in Massachusetts, there is a fair amount of deference to the Board's role to implement policy broadly and a healthy respect for the role of the state board, which is not the case in every state.

Dr. Fortmann talked about the interface between regulation and legislation, and said it might be productive to have a session like this one with the Education Committee chairs so we can understand each other's priorities. Ms. Holmes asked how the Board could measure its success. Secretary Reville said the Board can have an enormous impact, and it can be measured. The secretary said there is a difference between having authority and having influence. He said the Board has earned credibility as a leader in promoting high

standards for students, and it could be a leader in educator quality as well. He noted that the commissioner is widely respected and along with the Board has had a great influence on the Governor's bills and on the Legislature.

Dr. Howard said the Board will have no influence if it has no control of its agenda. Dr. Howard said that particularly with the EQA function, we have room for a great deal of influence, but we have to choose the things we want to influence. Secretary Reville said a lot of things are required of the Board, so it becomes a question of focus.

Dr. Howard suggested that the Board identify three or four policy areas that would have an impact on districts. He advocated delegating more charter decisions to the commissioner. He said the Board should have a day a month for its work, and that evening meetings could be the time for the Board to discuss policy. Chair Banta said that she and Vice Chair Chernow work with the Department on the monthly agendas.

Dr. Mohler-Faria said that the Board has eleven diverse opinions but a great deal of alignment. He said identifying three or four major policy issues is important. Dr. Mohler-Faria said that has to be driven by a synergy between the Board, the Department, and the public. He said that looking at where we spent our time and what we believe we should be doing, there is a mismatch. Dr. Mohler-Faria said this speaks to empowering the Department and delegating certain matters to the commissioner. He said the retreat is a great opportunity, and it is clear every member wants to improve the quality of education for every child.

Session 2

The session two facilitator was Sandra Stotsky, who asked Board members to reflect on the survey that was administered and focus on what issues are important for the Board to discuss. Board members mentioned the following issues:

- Special education and MCAS;
- Length of school day/year/calendar;
- Educator preparation, induction and retention;
- Quality of professional development;
- Reducing the dropout rate;
- Bringing social services into schools;
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing effective school leadership;
- Increasing matriculation rates to postsecondary, not just graduating students from high school;
- Achievement gaps, including recommendations to reduce the gaps and defining the Board's role in implementing a set of recommendations;
- Educator quality: licensure and preparation, retention, leadership
- Professional development;
- Attracting talent to the education profession and growing that talent;
- Meeting the needs of English language learners;

- Accelerating English language acquisition and academic achievement generally for English language learners
- Differentiating school time based on students' learning needs;
- Teaching and assessing 21st century skills;
- Inequities in the school finance system;
- Best practices from vocational technical schools, and how to disseminate these practices;
- Best practices from outstanding charter schools and regular public schools and how to disseminate these practices;
- Effectively engaging families and parents in supporting children's academic success.

Dr. Stotsky asked Board members what they would like to know and what kind of information they would like to have. Board members cited the following information:

- Educator licensure, a basic session on terminology, process;
- Process for licensing a teacher;
- Possible alternatives to the current educator licensing system, including models from other states and systems;
- Support for new teachers (mentoring, induction), career changers, alternative certification and its track record;
- Causality between licensure and effectiveness in the classroom;
- Clear explanation of the licensing regulations;
- Is there too much red tape?
- Review teacher testing program, procedures;
- How to increase the pool of teachers of color.

Professional Development

- What does the Department offer? What do school districts offer?;
- Improvement of professional development over the past few years;
- What is individual professional development plan;
- Criteria for deciding PD points;
- Criteria for professional development providers;
- What teachers think of current professional development (e.g., TeLLS Survey);
- How districts use professional development funds;
- Contract schedule, salary lanes, PD courses.

Dr. Howard proposed that a subcommittee of the Board be established to plan how to manage meetings.

Session 3

The session three facilitator was Gerald Chertavian, who said the goals of the session would be to look at the four organizational priorities and how the Board should move forward. Commissioner Chester said he had proposed three of the four priorities last year,

and as a result of the Board's discussion, a fourth priority (support for students and families) was added. Chair Banta commented that the Board cannot have different priorities than the commissioner and the Department; the Board needs them to do the work.

Dr. Fortmann said the first priority should read Educator Development and Retention. Secretary Reville said retaining teachers is not in itself a goal, but that retention is an indicator of working conditions and other factors. Dr. Stotsky, Ms. Kaplan, and Ms. Holmes said it would be helpful to know what was accomplished on these priorities this year. Secretary Reville said the most progress was made on accountability. Vice Chair Chernow said she was concerned that we should not end up with 20 priorities. Dr. Mohler-Faria suggested that the priorities would stay fairly constant from year to year but the goals probably would change annually. Mr. Chertavian said the Board and commissioner have a common set of priorities and goals.

Secretary Reville said the list of priorities highlights areas of continuing work, recognizing that the Department has other work it must do as well. He said the key question for the Board is what does it particularly want to promote – e.g., educator quality – and then identify what and how over the next year the Board would do so.

Mr. Chertavian asked Board members about where they see the Board spending time in the future. Commissioner Chester said that in pulling together the Race to the Top application, it would be helpful to him to get some quality time to discuss the issues with the Board, particularly since educator quality will be a key part of the proposal. On the Governor's proposals (Readiness/Charter Cap Lift), the commissioner said if those bills get traction, the Board will have an important implementation role.

Chair Banta said in the not too distant future, the Board should look at proficiency gaps. Dr. Fortmann suggested that reducing the proficiency gap is an overarching goal, and other items, such as educator quality and the accountability system, are tools to achieve the goal. Secretary Reville said he hopes the proficiency gap committee will present recommended strategies for action. Dr. Stotsky mentioned the national standards issue. Chair Banta mentioned accountability and the new framework reflected in the inverted pyramid. Commissioner Chester said the Board should look at not just gaps, but are students getting to a level of achievement to prepare themselves for success in college and careers. Issues mentioned by Board members included:

- Ensuring preparedness for higher education and the workforce;
- Leadership/educator development;
- Race to the Top application;
- Readiness/charter cap lift legislation;
- Proficiency gap, including a focus on early literacy and English language learners;
- National standards;
- Accountability system and technical assistance;
- College/career readiness.

Mr. Chertavian presented a PowerPoint with a four-part schema to indicate various roles the Board could play (make a decision, ratify a decision, input, or notification), using the accountability system as an illustration. Dr. Howard and Dr. Fortmann said they found the framework very helpful. Secretary Reville said the Board has multiple, complex responsibilities in the portion of its time that is discretionary. The secretary said the Board should try to stay focused on what it wants to do.

Mr. Chertavian divided Board members into three groups and asked them to respond to the following two questions: (1) How can we plan time and allocate resources as we go forward – and how should we assess how we are doing against that; and (2) List three things you think we should do.

Group 1 was very interested in Monday night meetings, but was not sure whether the topic should be tied to the Tuesday meeting or separate. The group also was interested in a quarterly or semi-annual meeting of this type (retreat) to assess the Board's status in priority areas. The group was open to option #2 from the commissioner's May [memo](#) on charter school agenda items and the Board's work process. They suggested for renewals without conditions that a hearing might be scheduled for those who want some public audience with the Board. The group said it was important to retain the public nature of the charter renewal process, and that people should have a forum in which to present their views. The group said the Board adopt option #2 on a pilot basis and see how it works.

Group 2 agreed on Monday night meetings that should be classified as special meetings not counting toward the attendance requirement. The expectation would still be that those Monday night meetings are as important as the Tuesday meetings. The group proposed to the Board chair that she enforce the 9 a.m. start time for regular meetings. The group also said that it was okay for a member to make more than one brief comment on a matter, as long as they speak in sentences rather than paragraphs. The groups recommended that Board members should self-regulate and police their own behavior to check one another and use time wisely. For charters, they suggested that once a year the Board should hear an extensive report from one of the state's best charter schools.

Group 3 said it supported option #2 from the commissioner's memo on charter school agenda items. The group suggested a single meeting (rather than two) to deliberate charter school issues, but a member should be able to move that an issue be discussed over two meetings. The group proposed holding some full-day meetings to add extra time, and endorsed the idea of the Board meeting with legislators. The group also said the Board should hear from advisory councils and those reports should be put on the agenda in a more regular way.

Mr. Chertavian said that perhaps the orientation for new Board members could help them get better oriented to be successful and understand their role by explaining more about the context of legislature and executive branch action on education.

Commissioner Chester said he would bring back to the Board in September a motion to revise charter school protocols along the lines of option 2.

Secretary Reville said the advisory councils should be working with the Department and Commissioner; the councils can inform the Board's policy deliberations without appearing before the Board. He added that he heard no real challenge to the four priority areas, and the real question is where the Board will put its energy.

Chair Banta thanked all the members. She said the Board's retreat exceeded her expectations and provided time for open discussion among Board members and a clear idea for what to do going forward. Commissioner Chester said he enjoyed this session and that the Board's discussion has great potential to move us ahead. The commissioner said we have a challenging, exciting year ahead with incredible opportunity, and he takes the Board's feedback very seriously. Secretary Reville said all members came to the Board wanting to make a difference, and today the Board was able to focus on how it does that.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 4:45 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

