Minutes of the Regular Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Tuesday, June 24, 2014
8:35 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose
Harneen Chernow, Vice-Chair, Jamaica Plain
Daniel Brogan, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Dennis
Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Milton
Karen Daniels, Milton
Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education
James O’S. Morton, Springfield
Pendred Noyce, Weston
David Roach, Sutton

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

Comments from the Chair

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. She welcomed Donald Willyard, newly elected chair of the State Student Advisory Council, who will serve as a member of the Board in FY2015. She acknowledged the work of Board member Daniel Brogan, outgoing chair of the council, and thanked Ruth Kaplan for her service on the Board as an advocate for parents, students, and special education. Chair Banta reviewed highlights from the Board’s June 23 special meeting on educator preparation and school and classroom culture.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Chester noted that outstanding educators were honored at the State House on June 12, including the 2015 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, Dr. Jeffrey Shea of Belmont High School. He welcomed Donald Willyard to the Board and thanked Mr. Brogan for his service. Commissioner Chester acknowledged outgoing Board member Ruth Kaplan. He informed Board members of a recent article in the Boston Globe on students’ plans after high school. Commissioner Chester said Massachusetts was recently highlighted by the U.S. Department of Education for its focus on special education outcomes, rather than solely on compliance and process. The commissioner informed the Board he expects to present proposed amendments to the regulations on restraint and seclusion in September. He noted the booklet that was distributed about seniors at Dean Vocational Technical High School in Holyoke. Commissioner Chester introduced three new Department staff members to the Board: Jackie Reis, media relations coordinator; Jessica Leitz, director of external partnerships; and Russell Johnston, senior associate commissioner for accountability, partnerships, and technical assistance.
Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Malone noted President Obama’s recent commencement address at Worcester Technical High School. Secretary Malone said the state budget is in conference committee and highlighted the IT bond bill and economic development bill. He said he attended the inclusive concurrent enrollment program (ICE) graduation at Bridgewater State University; ICE programs are funded through the state budget to support high school students with disabilities on college campuses. He thanked outgoing Massachusetts Teachers Association President Paul Toner for his partnership with the state.

Comments from the Public

1. Paul Toner, outgoing Massachusetts Teachers Association President, addressed the Board.
2. Lisa Guisbond, executive director of Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board on PARCC.
3. Jen Rosewood, a teacher at Brookline High School, addressed the Board on PARCC.
4. Senator Pat Jehlen addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
5. Representative Denise Provost addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
6. Paul Georges, President of United Teachers of Lowell, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
7. Ann O’Halloran, of Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
8. Shannah Varon, Executive Director of Boston Collegiate Charter School, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
9. Janine Matho, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
10. Mary Battenfeld, a parent from Jamaica Plain, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
11. John Griffin, a former SSAC member, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.
12. Linda Noonan, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, addressed the Board on school and district accountability and weighting of achievement and growth.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the May 19, 2014 special meeting and the May 20, 2014 regular meeting.

The minutes were approved 9-0-1. Vanessa Calderón-Rosado abstained.

Annual Performance Evaluation of the Commissioner: Report from the Committee on Commissioner’s Evaluation

Ms. Noyce, who chaired the Committee on the Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation, presented the committee’s report and recommendation. She provided an overview of the evaluation criteria, which include: his work as Chief State School Officer; his leadership of the
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; his management of external relations; his interactions with the Board; and his national leadership. Ms. Noyce said the committee gathered data from various sources, including the Department’s actual performance results, the Commissioner’s self-assessment, input from the Commissioner’s leadership team, and input from leaders of selected education associations. She said the committee concluded that the Commissioner’s performance in FY2014 has been outstanding, receiving very high marks, 4.85 in total.

Chair Banta noted the Commissioner’s leadership, openness to feedback, collaboration with the field, and high regard nationally. Ms. Calderón-Rosado said she admires the Commissioner’s leadership over the years. She said he has the ability to hear dissenting voices, for example, today’s discussion on achievement and growth. Ms. Daniels said the Commissioner exhibits grace under fire and always reminds Board members that we are working for the children. Mr. Roach said he is pleased with the Commissioner’s response to concerns from the field regarding the pace and array of initiatives. He said he shares those concerns and has been impressed at the way the Commissioner has responded in a positive and constructive way. Mr. Roach added that he admires the Commissioner’s commitment to justice and opportunity for students.

Ms. Kaplan said the Board is a healthy mixture of different opinions and views, and the Commissioner’s weekly emails and monthly phone calls with members are very helpful. Mr. Morton said he feels well advised at every meeting by the Commissioner and his team, and noted the Commissioner’s clear commitment to educational equity. Mr. Brogan said he appreciates the Commissioner’s dedication and passion. Vice-Chair Chernow said she is grateful for the open communication with the Commissioner, and that even if she disagreed on a topic, she never felt any pressure to change her position. Secretary Malone said the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is the highest functioning state board with an independent voice. He said the Commissioner prepares thorough information for the Board and listens to concerns from the field. Secretary Malone encouraged the Board and Commissioner to plan a strategic planning retreat.

Commissioner Chester said he appreciates all the comments and is humbled by the experience. He said he feels an intense sense of mission and an urgency to serve all students well. The Commissioner said he works with a Board that is supportive, credible, provides excellent leadership and policy direction, and asks tough questions. He added that the accomplishments the Board has noted are all a credit to his great staff.

VOTED: that that Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Commissioner’s FY2014 performance rating of “outstanding” as recommended by the Board’s committee. Further, that the Board approve a salary increase for the Commissioner of 3 percent, effective July 1, 2014, as well as a mid-cycle review in early 2015.

The vote was unanimous.

Educator Evaluation: Progress Report on Development and Piloting of Staff/Student Feedback Instruments

Commissioner Chester introduced Malden Superintendent David DeRuosi and Lincoln Superintendent Becky McFall. Claire Abbott, of the Department’s Office of Educator Preparation, gave a presentation and explained that during the 2014-2015 school year, teachers will collect student feedback and administrators will collect staff feedback. She said feedback could include surveys, exit slips, written narratives, interviews and focus groups, or other tools.
In July 2014 the Department will release model student and staff surveys, guidance on the use of student and staff feedback, and recommendations on the use of parent feedback in educator evaluation. She added that the survey data will remain in the schools and districts; the Department will not collect it. Ms. Abbott said the Department is piloting the model surveys with eight districts and one collaborative.

Superintendent DeRuosi said educator evaluation was a major cultural shift in schools. He said Malden offered to be part of this pilot to give educators time to learn and become comfortable with this part of the evaluation process. Superintendent McFall said the Department worked with her district to meet its needs for student surveys to ensure they are a useful and valuable tool. She said the survey is an additional opportunity to know if the district is reaching all students.

In response to Vice-Chair Chernow’s question, Ms. Abbott said the Department recommends that surveys be completed during the second half of the year, but districts have flexibility. Superintendent McFall confirmed that there is confidentiality built into the student survey. Commissioner Chester noted that while the Department is providing models, districts are free to use their own surveys if they wish. Secretary Malone commended the superintendents for taking the initiative to have their districts participate in the pilot of the model survey instruments.

**Weighting of Achievement and Growth for Accountability Purposes**

Secretary Malone read a statement recusing himself from the discussion and vote on this matter, consistent with the conflict of interest law, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A, because the vote may have an indirect financial impact on Boston. He said Governor Patrick has assigned Undersecretary James DiTullio to vote in his absence. Secretary Malone left the meeting at 11:20 a.m. and Mr. DiTullio took his seat for the remainder of the meeting.

Commissioner Chester said the Department and the Board received a lot of input on this topic. He clarified that the discussion is not about the charter school cap lift. He said when he arrived at the Department in 2008, the accountability system did not include a growth measure at all, and he asked the staff to develop one, using student growth percentiles, SGP. Commissioner Chester said the Department spent years reviewing data and created the current system, which uses a four-to-one ratio of 80 percent achievement and 20 percent growth. He said he is recommending a formula with a three-to-one ratio of achievement to growth: 75 percent achievement and 25 percent growth.

Commissioner Chester noted the Board adopted regulations in March 2014 aligning the calculation of the lowest performing 10 percent of districts with a weighting consistent with the Department’s approved methodology for the state accountability system. The Board continued the discussion of this issue in April and May. Commissioner Chester stated three foundational principles for the formula: it should incorporate fair and ambitious, but achievable targets; it should assist the Department in directing limited resources to schools that most need them; and it should yield results that represent more signal (results of practical significance) than noise (results of little practical significance). Commissioner Chester said a key consideration for schools is the ability to distinguish among relatively low performing schools, and while it is important to add growth to the system, for fairness, the weight should be heavily on the side of achievement. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said calculations will be based on 2013 and 2014 data, and the Department cannot predict which districts will fall in or out of the lowest 10 percent.

In response to Ms. Noyce’s question, Rob Curtin, Director of Education Data Services, said there is little movement in and out of the lowest ten percent from year to year. Ms. Chernow said she
appreciates the background information and the work of the Board and Commissioner to look at this topic thoroughly. She said most data show that achievement correlates with family income, and she therefore values growth being added to the formula. Mr. Roach confirmed his support for the new formula, but said he prefers a seventy percent to thirty percent ratio. Mr. DiTullio said the decision around the formula was not rushed and the Commissioner’s recommendation is sensible and aligns with the language and intent of the statute. Ms. Kaplan confirmed her support for the recommendation.

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopt a three-to-one ratio of achievement to growth (75 percent achievement, 25 percent growth) for school and district accountability calculations, as presented in the Commissioner’s memorandum dated June 20, 2014. Specifically, this three-to-one weighting of achievement and growth indicators shall be used for calculation under the school and district accountability system, per Mass. General Laws chapter 69, sections 1J and 1K, and 603 CMR 2.00 (Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools) and for calculations to identify the lowest performing districts for purposes of the charter cap lift, per Mass. General Laws chapter 71, section 89 and 603 CMR 1.00 (Charter School Regulations).

The vote was unanimous.

Update on PARCC

Commissioner Chester said as part of the two-year MCAS-to-PARCC transition plan, the Department asked districts to choose whether they wish to administer MCAS or PARCC in 2015 to students in grades 3-8; districts will report their decisions by the end of June and again in October.

In response to Ms. Kaplan’s question, Bob Bickerton said special education accommodations for PARCC testing are similar to those for MCAS, and accommodations such as read-aloud are built into the online items. He said while PARCC does not provide an alternative assessment, the Department plans to upgrade the MCAS alternative (portfolio) assessment to mesh with PARCC standards. In response to Mr. Roach’s question, Commissioner Chester updated the Board on the state IT bond bill, which passed the Senate Committee on Bonding and included language on matching funds. Commissioner Chester said the Board will continue discussions and policy decisions on PARCC in the year ahead.

Extension of Current Competency Determination Standard through Class of 2019

Commissioner Chester reminded Board members of their vote in November 2013 to maintain the use of the MCAS tests for students to earn the competency determination for high school graduation at least through the graduating class of 2018. He said students in the graduating class of 2019 will be eighth graders in the coming school year and the Board will not vote on PARCC adoption until these students have begun their ninth-grade year. Commissioner Chester said he is recommending the Board extend the current policy through the class of 2019 so these students will know, before they enter ninth grade, the state standards and assessments required for their high school graduation.

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with its authority under General Laws c. 69, §§ 1B and 1D, and in order to provide fair notice to students and schools, endorses the Commissioner’s
recommendation to continue the use of MCAS tests for students to earn the Competency Determination for high school graduation, through the graduating class of 2019.

The vote was unanimous.

**Update on Level 5 Schools**

Commissioner Chester said a lot of work has been put into moving these four schools forward and implementing the turnaround plans for the upcoming school year. He noted that the statute seeks to expedite the turnaround process, while also allowing time for input and appeals, and that led to some frustration. He asked Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, to discuss the process with the Board.

Ms. Schneider said the Board, Commissioner, and Department faithfully executed their roles under the statute. She said the tight timelines in the statute create an inherent tension between expeditious action and adequate process. The law directs the Commissioner to create the turnaround plan, with local stakeholder group input, and the Commissioner has to get the plans and receivers moving before the appeal process starts. The Board serves as an appellate body at the end, if the school committee, superintendent, or local union chooses to appeal, and the burden is on the appellant. She said the appeal comes late in the process, which understandably was a challenge for the Board. Ms. Schneider said under the statute, the Board’s role is not to design the plan or decide on receivers; rather, the Board has an appellate role and holds the Commissioner accountable for creating and implementing a plan that will lead to rapid improvement for the students in these schools.

Ms. Schneider said the Commissioner and his team have reflected on the process this year to see how it could be improved; one idea is to give the Board more detailed information at each step in the process so members will feel better prepared at the appeal stage. She asked the Board for its feedback. Ms. Noyce suggested a Board member could attend local stakeholder group meetings as an observer. Vice-Chair Chernow said the local stakeholder group process should be participatory and inclusive; some members of the local groups were disappointed with the process and felt that their views were not heard. The Vice-Chair added that it is helpful to clarify the Board’s appellate role, and noted that the hearings on June 9 were smoother than the first one.

Mr. Morton agreed that the process and structure were clearer in the latter hearings. He said the Board’s role is to hear objections to the plan and decide, not to debate operational details. He recommended the Commissioner take into consideration the concerns around local stakeholder group input. Mr. Roach commented that the timelines in the statute are daunting, and suggested it would be useful to build in more time for local input at the front end, if possible.

**Update on FY2015 State Education Budget**

Chief Financial Officer Bill Bell updated the Board on the state budget process. He said the legislative conference committee should release its report this week. Mr. DiTullio reminded Board members that the Legislature’s formal sessions end on July 31, and several important bills are still awaiting action.
Delegation of Authority to Commissioner to Take Necessary Action between Board Meetings

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 any matters that are not otherwise covered by the Board’s previous delegations of authority and that require Board action between June 24, 2014 and the next regular meeting of the Board in September 2014; provided that the Commissioner shall notify Board members in advance of any such action and shall report to the Board on any matters that have been so approved.

The vote was unanimous.

Schedule for Regular Board meetings through June 2015

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the schedule of regular meetings through June 2015, as presented by the Commissioner.

The motion was approved 9-0-1. Daniel Brogan abstained.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:55 pm, subject to the call of the chair.

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
and Secretary to the Board
Minutes of the Special Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Monday, June 23, 2014
5:05 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose
Daniel Brogan, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Dennis
Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Milton
Karen Daniels, Milton
Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education (by James DiTullio, Designee)
James O’S. Morton, Springfield
Pendred Noyce, Weston
David Roach, Sutton

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

Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Harneen Chernow, Vice-Chair, Jamaica Plain

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Chair Banta introduced Donald Willyard, the incoming chair of the State Student Advisory Council, who will join the Board in the fall. Chair Banta said she was recently at a national convening with Commissioner Chester and State Representative Alice Peisch to discuss educator preparation in Massachusetts.

Transforming Educator Preparation

Commissioner Chester introduced Associate Commissioner for Educator Quality Heather Peske and members of her staff; Rob Curtin, Director of Education Data Services; and Carlos Santiago of the Department of Higher Education (DHE), representing Commissioner Richard Freeland. Mr. Santiago gave an overview of DHE role in teacher preparation programs and its partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure preparation results in effective educators ready to support the success of all students. Mr. Santiago noted that in Massachusetts, two-thirds of students entering public institutions of higher education are placed into developmental mathematics courses, and the success of both students and educators is dependent upon each other.

Ruth Kaplan arrived at 5:10 p.m.

Associate Commissioner Heather Peske presented introductory material and Rob Curtin, Director of Education Data Services, reviewed educator preparation data, including enrollment by race of candidates and the workforce, enrollment by gender of candidates and the workforce, and preparation program completers. Mr. Curtin presented student growth data for preparation
program completers. He said educator preparation programs receive data on candidates and
completers to inform their practices. In response to Ms. Noyce’s question, Mr. Curtin said the
Department is exploring areas of critical shortages.

Liz Losee, Director of Educator Preparation, introduced Massachusetts’ work with the Network
for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP). Ms. Losee outlined the implementation plan,
which includes projects within licensure, program approval, analyzing and reporting information
to improve preparation programs, and internal and external working groups. By October 2015
the Department will have built a performance-based licensure system, an evidentiary-based
educator preparation program review and approval system, and a strong data collection and
analysis system. Commissioner Chester said the goal is to establish a feedback loop that focuses
on actual teaching skills. He said the results of the pilot will be presented to the Board.

Meagan Comb, of the Office of Educator Preparation, gave the Board an overview of the revised
program review and approval process, stemming from the Board’s approval of revised
regulations in June 2012. She said the goal is to implement a review process that provides a
solid-evidence base for decision-making. Ms. Comb said establishing a strong review process
involves creating standardized, easy-to-use resources and tools, defining explicit criteria,
designing a reviewer evaluation tool, training a cohort of reviewers, and streamlining logistics of
the submission progress with a web-based review system. The review process began with
leadership reviews in the spring of 2013, informal reviews in spring 2014, and is piloting formal
reviews.

Ms. Calderón-Rosado arrived at 5:50 p.m.

In response to Mr. Morton’s question, Ms. Peske said the demographics of educators do not
currently match student demographics; at present, only about 7% of the people enrolled in
educator preparation programs are people of color. She said the data provided to preparation
programs should spur conversations around this issue, specifically around recruitment and
retention of diverse candidates. Ms. Peske added that alternative preparation programs, such as
the Boston Teacher Residency program, which has 30% enrollees of color, are making more
progress in this regard.

Mr. Roach said this is promising work with great potential. He added that the goals may be
overly ambitious. He said both the Department and the field should be patient with the daunting
task, and doing it well may be better than doing it quickly. Commissioner Chester said he
expects to update the Board in the fall on this initiative. Chair Banta thanked all the presenters as
well as Kathie Skinner of the MTA for her involvement with this project.

Mr. DiTullio left the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

School and Classroom Culture and Climate: Hearing from Stakeholders

Commissioner Chester said he wants to give the Board a sense of how the Department is knitting
together various initiatives involving outreach to the field. Deputy Commissioner Alan Ingram
outlined the upcoming discussion on the TELL Massachusetts survey as well as student
feedback. Cynthia Mompoint, of the Office of Educator Policy, Preparation and Leadership, said
the TELL-Mass statewide survey is an opportunity for educators to express whether or not
certain teaching and learning conditions are in place to support their effectiveness. The
Department worked with educator associations to promote the survey, which yielded 38,217
responses or 48% of educators statewide, and had over 50% participation at close to 1,000
schools. Ms. Mompoint said educators acknowledge that time is a major challenge, but are generally positive about their school leadership.

Chair Banta said she is pleased to see an evaluation of the data, and that the information is being used to improve. Ms. Daniels she would like to see support in areas with low results, especially in areas that are going to improve student results. Ann Maddock of the New Teacher Project said school-level conversations are very important. In response to Ms. Kaplan’s question, Ms. Mompoint said there is a core set of questions that all participating states use, with some individual state customization.

Associate Commissioner John Bynoe outlined the student data focused on culture, climate and health, which includes: a bullying survey, student surveys relating to educator evaluation, the youth risk behavior survey, wraparound zone school climate and culture data, the school safety and discipline report, and the behavioral health self-assessment tool for schools and districts. Mr. Bynoe presented the behavioral health and public schools framework and the legislation that established it. He reviewed recent changes such as the Legislature’s expansion of the anti-bullying law, new collection of bullying incident data, a student discipline webpage, and safe and supportive school action planning grants.

Mr. Roach encouraged the Department to promote the self assessment and behavioral tool and connect with school districts and organizations to share best practices. Ms. Kaplan said school climate and culture initiatives should be more visible and are essential to creating positive learning environments. Commissioner Chester said the Department expects to learn more from the grantees and from the school safety and security taskforce.

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

**VOTED:** that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm, 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