

Dear Fellow Board Members,

Thank you for your service to the children of the Commonwealth, and I am honored to be your Chair and am grateful to Governor Maura Healey for allowing me to continue in this role. I would like to recognize the important contributions of two members whose service on the Board ended in 2023: Tricia Canavan, who provided valuable expertise in vocational education, and Darlene Lombos, whose perspectives on diversity and urban education centered all of our meetings. And, I am particularly grateful to former Secretary of Education James Peyser whose term ended at the end of 2022, and whose longstanding commitment to innovations in public education have resulted in many positive legacies throughout the Commonwealth. We welcomed Secretary Patrick Tutwiler and Dr. Ericka Fisher to the Board in 2023, both of whom bring deep and rich experience and perspective to the Board.

Our priorities remain consistent, with many opportunities to continue our work on the following:

* closing the achievement gap in math and English Language Arts learning attainment. The MCAS and NAEP continue to measure a persistent inequity, exacerbated by the disruption to education during the pandemic. Ensuring that all of our students have critical thinking skills is important to the very preservation of our democracy and is what President John Adams envisioned in his construction of public education as a basic right in the Massachusetts Constitution;
* building a diverse and culturally responsive educator workforce, and supporting our educator workforce and superintendents across the state;
* providing access and guidance for the implementation of high quality curricular materials, including reading and health and wellness education;
* cultivating safe and healthy learning environments, because children cannot learn effectively if they are worried about their safety or are hungry;
* And expanding our work in promoting access to science of reading based curriculum to all students in grades K-3. In September 2022, we voted to require early literacy screening twice a year for K-3 students starting in fall 2023—an act aimed at ensuring that students encountering difficulty in reading get the help they need as soon as possible. A wise person once told me, “you learn to read between grades K-3, and read to learn thereafter.” We want all of our children to have the basic right to read in order for them to achieve their highest potential.

I look forward to our continued work together in support of all our students, schools, and districts.

Sincerely,

Katherine Craven

Chair of the Board