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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Board Documents - Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Regular Meeting Agenda
Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Oxford High School
495 Main Street
Oxford, MA 01540
9:00 a.m.

Comments from the Chairman
Comments from the Commissioner
Statements from the Public

Routine Business:

Approval of the Minutes of the April 29, 2008 Regular Meeting and the April 28, 2008 Special Meeting - **Vote**

Items for Discussion and Action:

1. [Update on Randolph Public Schools](#) - **Discussion**
2. [Districts' Plans for Commonwealth Priority Schools](#) - **Initial Discussion**
3. Approval of Grants - **Vote**

Other Items for Information:

4. Education-Related News Clippings
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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Update: Randolph Public Schools

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner

Date: May 14, 2008

Background

In November 2007, the Board voted to designate the Randolph Public School District as an underperforming district. The Board further directed the Department to conduct a review of current leadership within the school community to determine whether the capacity to address identified problems and improve the quality of educational services to Randolph students was present. To that end, a team of three educational consultants appointed by the Commissioner visited the district in December, where they reviewed data and documents provided by the Department and by the district and conducted a series of interviews with individuals and groups across the community.

The team prepared a District Leadership Evaluation Report, which we presented to the Board at the February 2008 meeting. As a result, the Board took the following actions:

- The Board voted to defer action on the question of chronic underperformance and state receivership for the district for a period of 120 days in order to allow district leaders, School Committee members and the Board of Selectmen to prepare a focused Turnaround Plan to guide next steps. This plan must have the demonstrated support of all the parties and must be submitted to the Department no later than May 30, 2008.
- The Commissioner appointed a District Support Team to assist the parties noted above in their efforts to define priority actions to be taken during the next 24 months, and in the community-wide, consensus-building effort that is needed in order to create the conditions for positive change and collaboration.

Update

Following the Board's vote at the February meeting, I appointed a District Support Team:

- Joan Connolly (Chairperson), retired superintendent of the Malden Public Schools
- Erline Belton, consultant
- Michael Contompasis, retired superintendent of the Boston Public Schools
- Ron Walker, consultant and principal in DWJ Solutions, LLC

In late February, Department staff convened the Randolph District Support Team to set out the objectives of the assignment and share pertinent information. Since that time, the Team has been engaged in a variety of activities in the district. Team Chairperson Joan Connolly has prepared a brief progress report for the Board's information. That report is enclosed.

It is important to note that on April 1, 2008, the voters in Randolph approved an override to the municipal budget, directing an additional \$5.5 million dollars to be allocated to the school district to restore previously eliminated instructional and support services.

Associate Commissioner Juliane Dow and Lynda Foisy will be at our meeting on May 20th to respond to any questions Board members might have about the work of our District Support Team in Randolph. Representatives from Randolph will be expected to present their Turnaround Plan to the Board at its June 24, 2008 meeting.

Enclosure: [Progress Report - Randolph District Support Team](#)

last updated: May 16, 2008

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Recommendations from State Review Panels on District Plans for School Intervention - Commissioner's Districts

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Date: May 12, 2008

Background

The Board's Regulations on Underperforming Schools and Districts, 603 CMR 2.00, call for schools with NCLB aggregate status of *Corrective Action* or *Restructuring* in either English language arts or mathematics or both to be identified as Commonwealth Priority Schools. Districts with Commonwealth Priority Schools are called upon to develop a *District Plan for School Intervention* that sets out the priority needs of, and the actions district leaders will take, to support improvement in these schools. The regulations further call for the district to submit its plan to a State Review Panel, a group of highly qualified individuals appointed by the Board on the Commissioner's recommendation. At the Board meeting on January 22, 2008, 18 nominees were appointed to serve as 2008 State Review panelists.

The Department has worked collaboratively over the last year with leaders in each of the nine Commissioner's Districts to examine data, identify key areas for improvement in their Commonwealth Priority Schools and develop agreements on how districts should deploy state and federal resources in order to create or improve their systems for supporting student achievement. In each case, these collaborations resulted in the development of a customized Memorandum of Understanding articulating the agreed upon priorities and the strategies to be supported by these resources. This work built the foundation for the development of each district's *Plan for School Intervention*.

State Review Panel Process

Over a five week period from March through May 2008, the Department convened nine State Review Panels to review district Plans for School Intervention submitted by leadership teams from the nine "Commissioner's Districts:" Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester.

A State Review Panel, usually a group of three appointed individuals, was convened to review each district's Plan for School Intervention and make findings regarding the adequacy and viability of each plan for transmittal to the Commissioner and the Board. This process is designed to advise the Board's decision-making as members decide whether to accept, reject, or direct that specific amendments be made to a district's Plan for School Intervention.

In each instance, State Review Panel members examined the district's Plan for School Intervention, various district and school level documents, teacher and administrator survey results and student performance data in advance of the panel sessions. At the individual sessions, panel members heard presentations from district leaders regarding their planning work. The Panel engaged superintendents, district administrators and principals of the Commonwealth Priority Schools under review in conversation using an inquiry-based process that explicitly focused on the substance of the plan, the process by which it was created and the conditions in the district to support its successful implementation. In most cases, district leadership teams included a local union representative. In a few instances, a local school committee member was also present. At the conclusion of the review process, State Review Panel members deliberated and reached consensus on their recommendations regarding the sufficiency and appropriateness of each district's Plan for School Intervention.

At this month's meeting, the Board will be asked to review the findings and recommendations each State Review Panel has made after reviewing the plans submitted by the nine urban districts on behalf of a total of 53 newly identified Commonwealth Priority Schools. At the June meeting, we will ask the Board to either accept, reject or direct changes to each of the districts' Plans for School Intervention.

State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations

In all nine cases currently before the Board for action, the State Review Panels have recommended Board approval of the districts' Plans for School Intervention. State Review Panels determined that the improvement initiatives and strategies set out by each district leadership team in their written plans and in their presentations to panelists demonstrate appropriate consideration of the needs in their Commonwealth Priority Schools.

Using the 10 conditions set out in the Board's regulations as guideposts to assess the needs of each of their Commonwealth Priority Schools, each district has focused on a few, high-leverage strategies. At this moment in time, some districts are more focused on creating the infrastructure to build more effective instructional systems and practices. In these cases, where the focus is on creating the conditions for improvement, some of the targeted strategies include:

- teacher content training in mathematics and literacy,
- establishing safety net programs for struggling students,
- creating formative and interim assessment systems,
- developing systems to collect data on the progress and impact of improvement strategies,
- planning ways to monitor and support improvements in instructional practice,
- identifying ways to recruit, retain and support teachers,
- creating structures and time for teacher collaboration
- training for instructional leaders
- developing specialized approaches and materials for teaching LEP students in literacy and mathematics

In districts where some of the structural conditions are already in place, initiatives are more focused on strategies to help them make effective use of those structures. In these cases, where implementation is more the focus, some of the targeted strategies include:


- developing capacities to use data to drive changes in instructional practice
- developing coaching/assistance models to support instructional leaders and teachers
- using teacher collaborative time effectively

In five of the State Review Panel meetings, (Brockton, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell and Worcester), panelists determined that no further clarifications or edits were required. In four of the districts, (Springfield, Holyoke, Boston and New Bedford), panelists have requested further written clarification. Although panelists agree that the priority initiatives identified in these four plans are appropriate, they have recommended that more information be added to the plans. The clarifications are identified in the *State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report* that is provided under each specific district section. District leaders will be expected to submit written clarification to the Department no later than June 13, 2008. This clarification will be reviewed by Department staff and made available to the Board at the June meeting.


In all of the State Review Panel meetings, the interactive nature of the panel session caused panelists and district leaders to consider a range of challenges, some likely to be affected by the improvement initiatives identified in the plan and others that will require further consideration by district leaders. All nine panel sessions led panelists to identify issues to be noted in their recommendations. The issues are also identified in the *State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report*.

State Review Panel members have consistently raised questions regarding the transitions in top-level leadership in seven of the nine Commissioner's districts. In Boston, Lowell, New Bedford and Springfield, new superintendents have been appointed. In three other districts, Brockton, Holyoke and Worcester, sitting superintendents have announced their intent to seek other positions or to retire. Panelists expressed concern that the momentum of initiatives being developed and/or refined in these districts to address the instructional systems and practices may be interrupted by major leadership transitions. Panelists feel it is important to acknowledge that, although current district leaders have made critical decisions regarding improvement needs in their Commonwealth Priority Schools, the Department's review process must allow new leaders the latitude to review and possibly amend plans based on their own analysis of needs. The Department will need to be responsive to potential changes and work with new district leaders to guide and support transitions.

Supporting Materials

 *Attachment A* is a copy of the *Board's Regulations on Underperforming Schools and Districts, 603 CMR 2.00*.

 *Attachment B* is a copy of a document that sets out the *Protocols Used for Assessing District Plans for School Intervention*.

 *Attachment C* is an overview of the cross-cutting issues raised in panel discussions that have implications for Board discussion and for the Department's assistance work in these districts.

 *Attachment D* is the list of appointees who were approved by the Board to serve on the 2008 State Review Panels.


Information on each of the nine districts is provided under Tabs 1-9. For each district, that information includes:


1. *District and School Profile* information, including a listing of the district's Commonwealth Priority Schools
2. *State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report*
3. A copy of the *District Plan for School Intervention*
4. A copy of the *District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions*

We are planning to conduct feedback sessions with the superintendents, panelists and moderators to discuss the State Review Panel process and invite suggestions for improvement.

Juliane Dow and Lynda Foisy will be present at the meeting to respond to questions Board members may have.

Boston Public Schools


  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report



  District Plan for School Intervention

  Phineas Bates Elementary School

  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Brockton Public Schools

  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report



  District Plan for School Intervention

  Using Standards and Data to Improve Achievement

  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Fall River Public Schools



  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

  District Plan for School Intervention

  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Holyoke Public Schools



  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

  District Plan for School Intervention

  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Lawrence Public Schools



  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

  District Plan for School Intervention

  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions



Lowell Public Schools

  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

  District Plan for School Intervention

New Bedford Public Schools















  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

  District Plan for School Intervention











  District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Springfield Public Schools

  State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report

-   District Plan for School Intervention
 -   Elias Brookings Elementary School
 -   Daniel Brunton Elementary School
 -   Chestnut Accelerated Middle School
 -   John F. Kennedy Middle School
 -   Van Sickle Middle School
-   District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

Worcester Public Schools

-   State Review Panel Findings and Recommendations Report
-   District Plan for School Intervention
 -   Analysis of School Improvement Initiatives Spring 2008
 -   Canterbury Street School Plan for Improvement Identified Needs
-   District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions

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EVENTS CALENDAR

June 2009						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11



Conference Directions

Oxford - Oxford High School

Oxford High School
495 Main Street, Oxford

From Boston and Points East

Take I-90 West / Massachusetts Turnpike
Take Exit 10 (290 East / 395 South)
Take 395 South (Norwich, CT)
Take Exit 5 (Depot Road - N Oxford)
At the top of the ramp, bear right onto Depot Road
Turn left onto Old Worcester Road (you'll see blue sign for "Oxford High")
Turn left onto Main Street (Route 12)
Continue 0.8 miles to Oxford High on the right side of the road

The high school building is located behind Oxford Middle (which you'll see from the street). Turn right off Main Street into the school driveway just past the "Oxford High" sign. Continue past the front of the high school to the right side of the building, where you'll see the Auditorium. Please park outside of the Auditorium and enter the building there. Please DO NOT park in the spots located outside the front of the building.

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Briefing for the May 20, 2008 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner

Date: May 13, 2008

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be on Tuesday, May 20, 2008, at Oxford High School in Oxford. The meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. and adjourn by 1:00 p.m. Coffee will be available at 8:30 a.m. If you need overnight accommodations or any additional information about the schedule, please call Belinda Wilson at (781) 338-3118.

Overview

We are meeting at Oxford High School in honor of Zachary Tsetsos, who in June will conclude his elected term as chair of the State Student Advisory Council and as a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Superintendent Ernest Boss, Oxford High School principal David Grenier, and other local officials will welcome the Board. Our agenda for the May meeting includes an update on the Randolph Public Schools, initial discussion of the District Plans for School Intervention submitted by nine districts that have Commonwealth Priority Schools, and approval of grants.

Regular Meeting

Comments from the Chairman

Each spring, it is traditional for the Board Chairman and the Commissioner to thank the outgoing student member for his or her year of service. Zachary Tsetsos has served with distinction as the chairman of the State Student Advisory Council and as a member of the Board for the past year. He will continue through June, when the State Student Advisory Council will elect his successor. We thank Zachary for his commendable service to the students of

the Commonwealth and wish him great success in college and beyond.

Chairman Reville will also brief the Board on current issues and activities.

Comments from the Commissioner

1. **Proposed state budget for FY09.** The Senate Ways and Means Committee is scheduled to release its proposed FY09 budget on May 14th. We will keep all Board members posted on the budget proposal for education as the process continues.
2. **U.S. Department of Education.** Secretary Margaret Spellings visited Massachusetts on May 6th. Chairman Reville and I met with her, and Dr. Chester joined us by telephone. Also on May 6th we got word informally from representatives of the U.S. Department of Education on our proposed graduation rate standard as well as on our proposed changes for AYP reporting rules for 2008. (In January 2008, the Board adopted the following standard as the 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) graduation target for the state's high schools: a four-year graduation rate of 60 percent, or a five-year graduation rate of 65 percent, or a two percentage point increase in the four-year graduation rate compared to the four-year graduation rate for the previous year. The inclusion of a five-year rate and an improvement rate reflected the work of the Board's Graduation Rate Taskforce.) The U.S. Department of Education representatives indicated that the Department was reluctant to approve our use of the 60 percent four-year rate for 2008 AYP purposes, but may grant approval on a one-year basis. They also indicated that the Department would approve the two-percentage point improvement rate, but that the federal agency would not approve the use of a five-year graduation rate for all students. We are pursuing this and one other AYP reporting matter relating to special education with the U.S. Department of Education and should have additional information by the June 24th Board meeting.
3. **Transition.** This is my final Board meeting as Acting Commissioner and Mitchell Chester's first as Commissioner. It has been an honor to serve the Board and the students of the Commonwealth as Acting Commissioner for the past nine months. Thank you for your faith in me and thanks to all of my colleagues in the Department for their tremendous support. The Department's staff and I look forward to working with Commissioner Chester and the Board in the vital next phase of education reform.

Items for Discussion and Action

1. **Update on Randolph Public Schools - Discussion**

In November 2007, the Board voted to designate Randolph Public Schools as an underperforming district. In February 2008, the Board voted to accept my recommended actions and benchmarks for Randolph. The Board further voted to defer action on the question of chronic underperformance and state receivership for the district for 120 days, with the understanding that the Department would appoint a District Support Team to work with local school, municipal, and community leaders to define actions to be taken over the next 24 months and to assist in a community-wide, consensus-building effort. Our District Support Team, chaired by former Malden superintendent Joan Connolly, has prepared a progress report. Associate Commissioners Juliane Dow and Lynda Foisy will be at our May meeting to respond to any questions Board members might have about activities in Randolph. Representatives from Randolph will present their Turnaround Plan to the Board at the June meeting for discussion and possible vote.

2. **Districts' Plans for Commonwealth Priority Schools - Initial Discussion**

Last month the Board received a report on the work of the State Review Panels that have been reviewing the District Plans for School Intervention submitted by districts that have Commonwealth Priority Schools. The panels make recommendations to the Commissioner and the Board on the adequacy and viability of each plan. This month we are bringing to the Board the recommendations from the panels on plans from the nine Commissioner's Districts: Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. The panels recommend that the Board approve all nine districts' Plans for School Intervention.

Your materials include a summary of the review process and an overview of crosscutting issues the panels have identified, as well as the findings and recommendations as to the plans from each of the nine districts. The Board will have an initial discussion at this month's meeting, assisted by Juliane Dow and Lynda Foisy. At the June meeting, we will ask the Board to either accept, reject, or direct changes to each of the districts' Plans for School Intervention.

3. Approval of Grants - Vote

Presented for your approval this month are grants totaling \$2,339,130 under two state funded programs: Transportation Routing Software (\$400,000) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program and Staff Development Regional Support Centers (\$1,939,130). The first set of grants is funded from current year (FY08) funds. The ABE grants would be funded from FY09 funds. Since the FY09 state budget has not yet been enacted, the motion for the Board's vote on these grants is contingent on the appropriation. Even though these grants will not be funded until the start of the new fiscal year on or about July 1, we are proposing that the Board vote on them this month in order to provide some stability for programs and staff in the ABE support centers, which depend almost entirely on grant funding. We have reasonable assurance that the funding will be available, based on the level of this line item (7035-0002) in the House budget. I recommend that the Board approve the grants as presented.

Other Items for Information

4. Education-Related News Clippings

Enclosed are several recent articles about education.

5. Directions to the Meeting

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to seeing you in Oxford on May 20th.

last updated: May 16, 2008

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