



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Maura Banta  
Chair

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
**From:** Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Chair of the Committee on Commissioner's Performance Review  
**Date:** June 24, 2013  
**Subject:** Commissioner's Performance Review for FY2013

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Once again this year, Board Chair Banta established a Board committee to evaluate the job performance of Commissioner Mitchell Chester during FY2013. Committee members Vanessa Calderón-Rosado (committee chair), Maura Banta, Harneen Chernow, Gerald Chertavian and Beverly Holmes established five (5) criteria to assess the Commissioner's performance. The criteria include indicators of performance in each of the following areas: (1) Chief State School Officer; (2) Lead the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE); (3) Managing External Relations; (4) Board Support/Effective Interactions; and (5) National Leadership. A detailed explanation of the criteria is enclosed as Attachment A.

The committee gathered data from various sources including the Commissioner's self-assessment, input from the Commissioner's leadership team, and the Department's actual performance results. This memo outlines some important highlights of success for FY2013 under the Commissioner's leadership. It also reviews the Commissioner's performance based on the Board-developed criteria and goals, and makes a recommendation to the Board in relation to his performance.

### **2012-2013 Highlights**

This year has been another active and productive one for the DESE, as we have continued to make great progress in improving students' performance, supporting districts and holding them accountable, ensuring educator effectiveness, and supporting new educational models through the approval of charter schools. This year was also an important one with various new policy implementation efforts that include the RETELL initiative.

Significant FY2013 highlights include:

- Educator evaluation – launched a statewide training on educator evaluation for administrators and teachers, including implementing new communication efforts and regional workshops to better inform and prepare the field on the evaluation requirements.

- RETELL: Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners – began training for core academic teachers of ELLs to earn the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement.
- PARCC: Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers – initiated planning to develop options for transition to and possible adoption of PARCC and oversaw test development for English language arts/literacy.
- Lawrence Receivership – implemented May 2012 turnaround plan in first full school year of receivership.
- Charter Schools – significant growth in this area with the opening of seven (7) new charter schools, award of five (5) additional new charters, renewal of 14 charters, and approval of 17 charter school expansions.
- Educational Collaboratives – developed and adopted regulations and designed a model collaborative agreement to help local officials carry out the new law.
- Integrating College and Career Readiness Task Force – launched plan to implement task force recommendations, and Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education adopted joint definition of college and career readiness.
- Non-discrimination based on Gender Identity – issued guidance to help school districts implement the 2011 law.

### **Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation**

The FY2013 performance criteria for the Commissioner’s evaluation are set forth in Attachment 1. Based on the criteria and our review of all the information, the committee evaluated the Commissioner’s performance as follows:

#### **Chief State School Officer**

1. The Commissioner maintained a visible public profile throughout the state with a busy schedule that constantly takes him directly into the field—schools, school districts, superintendents’ meetings, and statewide and regional association meetings, among others. The Committee recognizes the challenges of implementing new initiatives, and we believe that despite those challenges the Commissioner has made great efforts in explaining DESE’s goals and initiatives with a consistent message.
2. The Commissioner aligns DESE’s work with the Executive Office of Education initiatives as appropriate, and provides input and support to the Commonwealth’s goal of integrating early education, K-12 and higher education. An example of this is the collaborative work in support of the EOE’s Innovation Schools initiative.
3. The Commissioner has fully supported the development of implementation plans for the recommendations that resulted from the Board’s Integrating College and Career Readiness Task Force. The Commissioner provided important leadership and support in working with the Department of Higher Education to reach agreement on a joint definition of college and career readiness.

4. The Commissioner has led the work on several very significant initiatives this year, which are highlighted earlier in this memo.
5. The Commonwealth saw continued gains in MCAS scores. The 2012 MCAS scores showed the highest performance ever in English language arts, math, and science for high school students. Furthermore, students within groups that started furthest behind (i.e., race/ethnicity, low income, and disability status) made stronger gains in graduation rates, reduced dropout rates, and MCAS scores than students from groups that started ahead. These results are encouraging in the Commonwealth's efforts to close proficiency gaps. Finally, the state's high school graduation rate improved once again to 84.7%, and the dropout rate declined to reach the lowest in two decades, 2.5%.

**The Commissioner fully met the Board's expectations, receiving a rating of 4.75.**

#### Lead the Department

1. The Commissioner's ability to show progress in the DESE's goals and mission, as well as in the Board's goals, has earned him high praise and the confidence of the Board. His ability to juggle different priorities, to see the whole picture but also look at the details, is remarkable. We have seen him evolve as a leader in engaging, motivating and inspiring his leadership team and the Department. Overall, DESE's staff is inspired by his passion about education, skills, knowledge, problem-solving ability and presence.
2. His leadership team commended him, and described him as a deep and strategic thinker who is collegial, respectful, calm, and very open in listening to all perspectives in non-judgmental ways. They admire his passion for the education of the children in the Commonwealth, his dedication and intelligence, and his work ethic.
3. The Commissioner consistently has high expectations for his leadership team and DESE's staff. He knows his team's strengths and weaknesses and manages them well, supporting them to grow in areas where improvement is needed. He is described by his team as focused and incisive.
4. The DESE fully participates in the Commonwealth's affirmative action and diversity efforts. Nearly 23% of the current DESE staff are individuals who have self-identified in one of the categories as minority (i.e., race, ethnicity, veteran status). Similarly, 26% of DESE's managers are minorities, and of those an additional 10% identified themselves as individuals with disabilities. In the past four years, 19% of internal promotions were awarded to minorities.

**The Commissioner exceeded the Board's expectations, receiving a rating of 5.**

#### Manage External Relations

1. The Commissioner continues to engage with schools, districts and state/regional professional organizations and unions at a high level. Additionally, he meets regularly with the Secretary, and with the Commissioners and Board Chairs of the Early Education and Care and Higher Education Departments. The Commissioner also meets with professional organizations and interest groups, such as MTA, AFT-MA, MASS, MASC, and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, among others. The Board believes these meetings have been critical in the progress and success of the various DESE initiatives. Simultaneously, these meetings create better communication channels with the field.
2. The Commissioner has demonstrated growth in developing strong and positive relationships with the Legislature and its leadership.
3. The Commissioner works hard in communicating the mission, goals and initiatives of DESE with multiple stakeholders at different levels. We have seen great improvement in this area. However, the Board believes there is still room for improvement. In the last couple of years, major DESE initiatives have been implemented, including but not limited to the educator evaluation system and RETELL. The Board has heard from various sources, including public comments at our meetings, that the implementation of these initiatives could have been better coordinated and communicated, and that some flexibility is needed to accommodate the needs of the field in the implementation process. The Board understands and recognizes that implementing these major new initiatives in the field is not an easy task. However, we believe that DESE must use all the lessons learned from these processes that can be applied to future program roll-outs.

**The Commissioner fully met the Board's expectations, receiving a rating of 4.5.**

#### Board Support/Effective Interactions

1. The Commissioner's support of the Board is outstanding. He is very responsive and accessible to Board's needs and requests. His ongoing communication with the Board fulfills our need for priority updates and better understanding of the DESE's initiatives.
2. The Commissioner fully supports all Board Committees and Task Forces, as demonstrated by his own support, and designated staff support, of the Charter School Committee and the Task Force on Integrating College and Career Readiness.
3. The Commissioner involves staff in his effort to keep Board informed, and supports them in their committee/task force work.

**The Commissioner exceeded the Board's expectations, receiving a rating of 5.**

#### National Leadership

1. The Commissioner, as the Chief State School Officer, executes his national responsibilities in a manner that enhances the Commonwealth's position as a national education leader, and creates tremendous opportunities for the Commonwealth to benefit from best practices. He is the Chair of the Governing Board of the PARCC. The Board believes his national profile and influence and his frequent travels have not interfered with his state responsibilities.
2. As the President of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Commissioner advocates for the Commonwealth and all other states on federal education policy, and provides states with analyses of federal education laws, policies and grant opportunities.

**The Commissioner exceeded the Board's expectations, receiving a rating of 5.**

**Conclusion and Recommendation:**

The Commissioner's performance in FY2013 has been outstanding, receiving very high marks (4.85 in total) in the criteria developed by the Board. Massachusetts continued to make steady and significant progress in its accomplishments in K-12 education in the past year. These accomplishments are in part due to Commissioner Chester's dedication, contributions and leadership. Based on the evaluation of his job performance, the Committee is recommending a 3.75 percent salary increase for Commissioner Chester.

The Committee on the Commissioner's Performance Review thanks the Commissioner for his contributions to the advancement of education for the students of the Commonwealth.

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education 2012 – 2013 Performance Criteria For Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education December 2012**

The following performance criteria are designed to focus on: Roles, Accountabilities and Goals while promoting measureable outcomes that are realistic and attainable. These criteria are important functions of the Commissioner. The Board is recommending setting these function areas into priorities that will set the Commissioner's work plan and distribution of his time and efforts.

#### **Chief State School Officer (25%)**

- Develop and implement clear strategy for Level 4 and 5 districts and schools
- Support the work of the Proficiency Gap Committee to secure:
  - greater understanding of DESE's efforts to close proficiency gaps;
  - clearer communication to the public;
  - strong tools for measuring success; and
  - effective policies and practices with respect to closing proficiency gaps
- Ensure effective engagement of district leaders by incenting, motivating, measuring and communicating progress of efforts to close proficiency gaps and raise student performance in underperforming districts

#### **Lead the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (25%)**

- Set the vision, approve the strategies, and establish a culture that promotes the Board's mission statement
- Manage within the parameters of DESE's budget to achieve goals, including:
  - Ensure that the DESE is structured, staffed and aligned across all affected centers to meet its annual operational targets and stated goals, within the limitations of DESE's budget and state hiring parameters
- Complete or make substantial progress on at least 75% of the strategic initiatives for the Board's five focus areas:
  - Educator Effectiveness;
  - Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
  - Accountability and Assistance;
  - Wrap-Around Supports and Engagement for Students and Families; and
  - School and Classroom Culture
- Oversee implementation of College & Career Readiness recommendations and strategy
- Increase diversity within the DESE staff, and within the Advisory Groups
- Implement delivery unit to establish a culture of managing for results

### **Managing External Relations (20%)**

- Manage relationships and communications to maximize alignment of external stakeholders (e.g., Legislature, Governor's Office/EOE, MTA, AFT-MA, MASS, MASC, principals' associations, business groups, foundations) with Board's overall priorities and goals
- Implement successfully RTTT plans in 75% of RTTT districts
- Effectively lead the discussion/communications regarding Massachusetts adoption of Common Core State Standards and Assessments
- Secure fiscal support for DESE initiatives from external organizations (e.g., federal government, state and national foundations)

### **Board Support/Effective Interactions (20%)**

- Effectively interact with members of the Board
- Keep the Board updated on:
  - events in general
  - subjects necessary for the Board to fulfill its role
- Receive high percent of positive feedback from Board members during annual performance review process

### **National Leadership (10%)**

- Chair the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Career Readiness Governing Board – articulate multi-state goals and work to accomplish them
- Participate in the Council of Chief State School Officers
- Position Massachusetts to benefit from best practices nationally and internationally

### **Rating Structure**

- Outstanding = 5
- Very Good = 4
- Satisfactory = 3
- Needs Improvement = 2