*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | November 13, 2020 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the November 24, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be on **Tuesday, November 24, 2020**, at the Department ofElementary and Secondary Education’s office in Malden. The meeting will start at **10:00 a.m.** and should adjourn by **1:30 p.m.** As in September and October, the Board will meet in person, following the Commonwealth’s health and safety guidelines, including limiting the number of people in our meeting room. As always, the meeting will be live-streamed. Helene Bettencourt and Courtney Sullivan will assist with all arrangements; please email or call them if you have any questions.

**OVERVIEW**

Our business agenda leads off with a report and discussion on school reopening, enrollment trends, and proposed next steps, followed by an update on gifted education and an update on current plans for MCAS testing. With our continued focus on early literacy, the Board will hear about the Department’s new Mass Literacy Guide and related initiatives. The Board will take final action on amendments to the Educator Licensure regulations to provide added staffing flexibility in the current school year. Our business agenda concludes with an update on education budget matters.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

The Board congratulates Jasper Coughlin, a senior at Billerica High School who has been elected as chair of the State Student Advisory Council and will serve as a member of the Board through June 30, 2021. Welcome, Jasper!

**Comments from the Commissioner**

**Family engagement initiatives**. I am pleased to report on several new aspects of the Department’s family engagement-related initiatives, which we last discussed at the [March 2019 Board meeting](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2019/2019-03/item1.html):

* First, the Department’s cross-agency, prenatal through post-secondary [family engagement framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf) is now [posted](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs) as a resource to state agencies, schools, districts, and partners.
* Second, as part of our 5-year federal grant-funded, statewide family engagement center work, we are partnering with the Federation for Children with Special Needs and others to develop additional resources including a range of professional development offerings. To help inform this work, DESE facilitated nearly 50 listening sessions with practitioners and families. The upcoming offerings include four training modules,a three-day institute, a Training of Trainers series, and Culturally Responsive Family Engagement modules.
* Third, the Department is continuing to expand the Massachusetts Family Institutes for Student Success – nine-week institutes that help families and schools more effectively partner to support student success. This pilot effort began in Lawrence and New Bedford, and this year it has expanded to Brockton, Fall River, and Lowell.
* Finally, we have launched a Family Portal (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/families/>) on our website, with information for families and those supporting family engagement in education.

**Comments from the Secretary**

The Secretary will brief the Board on current issues and activities.

**Routine Business: Approval of the Minutes of the October 20, 2020 Regular Meeting**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes of the October meeting.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **School Reopening Update, Enrollment Trends, and Proposed Next Steps – Discussion**

Since our meeting on October 20, the Department has continued to inform districts of new developments related to COVID-19 and to support schools and districts as they serve students during the pandemic. The memo in your materials summarizes some key actions in the past month. At our meeting on November 24, I will update the Board on our analysis of the information that school districts have submitted on their learning models and school enrollments, and we will discuss possible next steps.

1. **Update on Gifted Education in Massachusetts – Discussion**

The enclosed memo updates the Board on current initiatives led by the Department to support gifted and talented education in the Commonwealth. Senior Associate Commissioner Ventura Rodriguez, Dr. Victoria Greer, chair of the Gifted and Talented Advisory Council, and Tyrone Mowatt, Founder of Ed Inquiry, will be at the meeting to address the Board and answer questions.

1. **MCAS Update – Discussion**

I will update the Board on current plans for MCAS testing this school year.

1. **Early Literacy: Update on Department Initiatives – Discussion**

At the June 2020 Board meeting, we discussed the [Literacy Strategic Plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/literacy-plan.docx) completed last year, and introduced the Department’s initiative to promote evidence-based early literacy. This month, Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske and Director of Literacy and Humanities Katherine Tarca will present on the new [Mass Literacy Guide](http://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy) and other initiatives the Department has undertaken to promote early literacy. Massachusetts educators who are active in the Mass Literacy initiative will also speak to the Board.

1. **Amendments to Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00, Re: Staffing Flexibility for 2020-2021 – Discussion and Vote to Adopt Permanent Regulations**

On September 3, I took action on behalf of the Board to adopt two amendments to the Educator Licensure regulations relating to staffing flexibility for the current school year – specifically, to increase the amount of time a teacher may teach “out of field” and increase the length of time an individual can be considered a long-term substitute. We needed to adopt the regulations on an emergency basis to allow them to take effect in advance of school reopening for the 2020-2021 school year. The Department solicited public comment on the regulations, as required, and I am recommending a few modifications based on the public comment we received. The enclosed materials summarize the changes and include all the public comments. I recommend that the Board vote on final adoption of the regulations at the November 24 meeting. Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske, Assistant General Counsel Lucy Wall, and Brian Devine, Director of Educator Licensure, will be available to answer your questions.

1. **Update on Education Budget Matters – Discussion**

Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO Bill Bell will update the Board on the latest information we have about federal and state funding for K-12 education in the Commonwealth.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Report on Grants Approved by the Commissioner**

Enclosed is information on grants I have approved since the last meeting under the authority the Board has delegated to the Commissioner.

1. **Chronically Under-Performing Schools Quarter 1 Reports**

Your materials include the first of four FY2021 quarterly progress updates to the Board on the four chronically underperforming schools’ implementation of their school turnaround plans, focusing on activities from July-November 2020. The schools are Paul A. Dever Elementary School and John P. Holland Elementary School (UP Academy Holland) in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker Elementary School in New Bedford. The report from each school outlines the reopening model, information about access to technology, and the professional development teachers received over the summer. Future quarterly updates for FY2021 will be presented in January 2021 and March 2020, and a final annual review in June 2020.

1. **Annual Reports from 2019-2020 Advisory Councils to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Enclosed are the 2019-2020 annual reports from eight of the Board’s statutory advisory councils. The councils advise the Commissioner and Board on matters relating to K-12 education in the Commonwealth and offer programmatic recommendations. Each report summarizes the council’s work in the past year and presents the council’s recommendations on various issues. The reports and recommendations are those of the councils and not of the Department. We thank the council members for their time, efforts, and constructive feedback.

1. **Commissioner Riley’s Testimony before the Joint Committee on Education Oversight Hearing**

Enclosed for your information is the testimony I presented on October 27, 2020 to the Joint Committee on Education’s oversight hearing about the status of K-12 education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Department’s work to support in-person and remote learning for students across the Commonwealth.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you in person on November 24.