*****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:** | April 9, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the April 20, 2021 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, April 20, 2021**, at the Department ofElementary and Secondary Education’s office in Malden. The meeting will start at **1:00 p.m.** and should adjourn by **4:00 p.m.** As in recent months, the Board will meet in person, following the Commonwealth’s health and safety guidelines, including limiting the number of people in our meeting room, and 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 on the Department’s recent actions to support schools, students, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by initial discussion and vote to solicit public comment on a proposed amendment to the vocational school admission standards regulation. The Board will discuss the revised World Languages curriculum framework and vote on approval of the updated standards. The Board will discuss and vote on four limited modifications to existing policies or regulations due to the COVID-19 emergency: a proposed modification to the competency determination (CD) requirement for students in the class of 2022 who have not yet earned the CD; a proposed modification to the policy on the certificate of attainment; a proposed amendment to the accountability regulations to allow the Department to refrain from issuing new accountability determinations for districts and schools for school year 2020-2021; and a proposed amendment to the charter school regulations relating to calculation of districts in the lowest 10 percent. The two proposed regulatory amendments would be sent out for public comment with the Board’s approval. We will conclude the meeting with a review of current education budget matters.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven will brief the Board on current issues and activities.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

1. **FAFSA Completion Campaign.** The Department,in collaboration with the Executive Office of Education (EOE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE), has launched a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion campaign, to address the concern that fewer Massachusetts high school students have completed a FAFSA this year than in the last two years. We want to make sure college is an option for students in the fall. While there is a particular sense of urgency this year, this public outreach effort will continue into the future.

* The Phase 1 website launched on April 1: [FAFSA: There's a Whole Community Ready to Help You Pay for College](http://www.mass.gov/financialaid), and it will be updated with resources and events in mid-April.

The updated version will include ways to access one-on-one support from student assistance partners, statewide and regional online events, videos showing the process, and helpful tips.

* 150 digital billboards across the state are amplifying our message during April and May.

From April 15 to May 31, a geofencing/mobile device ad campaign directing people to the site will target mobile device users in key ZIP codes (such as Gateway Cities), with a minimum of 1.3 million impressions. (Impressions is the number of times the ad will appear on mobile devices in the targeted area.)

* The Department, DHE, EOE, and FAFSA partners will leverage their social media networks to promote the campaign beginning in mid-April.
* Starting April 15, the Department will directly promote the FAFSA campaign via email to all public school counselors and teachers.

1. **Dyslexia Guidelines.** Recently the Department released the Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines. The guidelines were co-developed by DESE and the Department of Early Education and Care, to implement specific requirements of An Act Relative to Students with Dyslexia, [Chapter 272 of the Acts of 2018](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2018/Chapter272). The report can be found at this link: [Special Education - Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/).

**Comments from the Secretary**

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

**Routine Business: Approval of the Minutes of the February 22, 2021 Special Meeting, February 23, 2021 Regular Meeting, and March 5, 2021 Regular Meeting**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **Update on COVID-19 Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families – Discussion**

Since our meeting on March 5, 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 memorandum in your materials summarizes some key actions in the past few weeks. I will update the Board further at our meeting.

1. **Career and Vocational Technical Education**: **Proposed Amendment to Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00 (Admission Standards) – Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

The Board devoted its special meeting on February 22 to Career and Vocational Technical Education in Massachusetts, with a particular focus on vocational school admissions. This month I am presenting for initial discussion proposed amendments to the regulation on vocational admission standards, [603 CMR 4.03(6)(a)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr4.html?section=03). The enclosed memorandum provides background and details about the proposed amendments. I recommend that the Board vote to solicit public comment on the proposal. With the Board’s approval, the Department will invite comments, incorporate feedback, and bring the regulation back for a final vote in June 2021. Senior Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang, Associate Commissioner Elizabeth Bennett, and Caitlin Looby of our legal team will be at the meeting to answer questions.

1. **Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework – Discussion and Vote**

In December 2020, the Board voted to release the draft 2021 World Languages curriculum framework for public comment. The Department has revised the draft based on the comments. I recommend that the Board vote to approve the updated standards for the World Languages framework at the meeting on April 20. Your materials include the updated framework. Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske and World Language Acquisition Support Specialist Andy McDonie will present an overview of the revised framework and respond to questions.

**Proposed Modifications Due to the COVID-19 Emergency**

Items 4 through 7 are recommendations for limited modifications to Board policies or regulations prompted by the COVID-19 emergency. Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin will be at the April 20 meeting to review these four items and answer questions. Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel will join him for items 4 and 5.

1. **Proposed Modifications to Competency Determination Requirement for the Class of 2022 – Discussion and Vote**

At the [April 2020](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2020/2020-04/0428reg-minutes.docx), [May 2020](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2020/2020-05/0526reg-minutes.docx), and [January 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2021-01/0126reg-minutes.docx) meetings, the Board voted to approve modified competency determination (CD) requirements for students in the classes of 2020 and 2021 in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (STE), and for students in the classes of 2022 and 2023 in STE only. I recommend that the Board vote on April 20 to further modify the CD requirements in ELA and mathematics for students in the class of 2022 (this year’s high school juniors). The recommended modification would allow these students to receive their CD by earning full credit in an approved course and demonstrating competency in that subject, in lieu of earning a qualifying MCAS score. Juniors who still want to take the MCAS tests to qualify for scholarship programs may do so this spring or in fall 2021.

1. **Proposed Modification to Policy on Certificate of Attainment – Discussion and Vote**

The certificate of attainment (COA) is a state-endorsed credential that districts may award to students who have completed local requirements but who do not yet qualify for the high school diploma because they have not yet earned a competency determination (CD). The requirements for the COA were established as a Board policy in 2000 and amended in 2002. As is described in the enclosed memorandum, I recommend that the Board amend the policy on the COA for the class of 2021, in light of the cancelation of testing opportunities due to the pandemic.

1. **Proposed Amendment to Accountability Regulations, 603 CMR 2.00 (Modification to 603 CMR 2.03) – Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

I recommend that the Board vote to solicit public comment on a limited proposed amendment to the Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools, 603 CMR 2.00. The proposed amendment would allow the Department to refrain from issuing new accountability determinations for districts and schools for school year 2020-2021. With the Board’s approval, the Department will invite comments, incorporate feedback, and bring the regulation back for a final vote in June 2021.

1. **Proposed Amendment to Charter School Regulations, 603 CMR 1.00 (Modification to 603 CMR 1.04(9)) – Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

I recommend that the Board vote to solicit public comment on a limited proposed amendment to the Regulations on Charter Schools, 603 CMR 1.00. The proposed amendment addresses the calculation of the list of districts in the lowest 10 percent, which is required by statute. The amendment is needed because we lack MCAS results from last spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To deal with this unprecedented situation, the proposal would add one sentence to the current regulation, effectively freezing for this year the list that was released in spring 2020. With the Board’s approval, the Department will invite comments, incorporate feedback, and bring the regulation back for a final vote in June 2021.

1. **Education Budget Update – 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 and Charter School Matters Approved by the Commissioner**

Enclosed is information on grants and charter school matters that I have approved since the last meeting, under the authority the Board has delegated to the Commissioner.

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

Enclosed is the third quarter FY2021 progress update to the Board on the chronically under-performing schools.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you on April 20.