*****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:**  | December 7, 2021  |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the December 17, 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 **Friday, December 17, 2021**, at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Malden. The meeting will start at **9:00 a.m.** and should adjourn by **1:00 p.m.** The Board will meet in person, following the Commonwealth’s current health and safety guidelines, 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**

An update on Mass Literacy, the Department’s initiative to promote evidence-based early literacy, is the first topic on our agenda this month. We have invited educators who are active in the initiative to join the presentation. I will then update the Board on actions the Department has taken and is taking to support schools, students, and families with in-person learning, as well as current data on school enrollment in Massachusetts. We will hear from the Board’s Budget Committee and the Board will discuss and vote on priorities for the FY2023 state education budget. I will present a proposed student achievement award program for discussion and vote. The Board will get an update on our initiatives to diversify the educator workforce in the Commonwealth. I will present my recommendations for phasing out, as of spring 2024, two of the four MCAS high school science and technology/engineering subject tests. The final item on the agenda, for discussion and vote, is a modification of conditions for a charter school.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven will report on current issues and activities.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

1. **Vocational school admissions policies.** Districts with Chapter 74-approved career vocational technical education (CVTE) programs are currently in the process of submitting their admissions policies to the Department, in accordance with the new regulations on CVTE admissions. The policies that districts have submitted to date are posted on the Department’s CVTE Admissions [webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/admissions/submitted-admissions-policies.html). Given the timing of the regulatory change, a number of districts requested an extension to submit their policies by mid-December. I will report to the Board in January on the status of the admissions policies.
2. **Genocide education legislation update: Governor Baker Signs Genocide Education Bill**

This week, Governor Baker signed S 2557, [An act concerning genocide education](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/S2557), into law. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, this law requires every school district to, for the purpose of educating middle and high school students, provide instruction on the history of genocide consistent with the content standards in the Massachusetts History/Social Science Curriculum Framework.

The bill also establishes a competitive grant program to provide support for instruction on the history of genocide; and directs DESE to assist schools in facilitating access to curricular materials and professional development relating to genocide education. A Genocide Education Trust Fund has been created to support the grant program and other initiatives administered by the Department. Funding for the Trust Fund is established through criminal fines for violations of constitutional rights and for assault and battery.

More information on any resources or grant opportunities from DESE will be shared as it is available.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Peyser will report on current issues and activities.

**Routine Business: Approval of the Minutes of the October 19, 2021 Regular Meeting**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **Early Literacy: Mass Literacy Update – Discussion**

At the June and November 2020 Board meetings, we reviewed the Department’s [Literacy Strategic Plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/literacy-plan.docx) and introduced Mass Literacy, the Department’s initiative to promote evidence-based early literacy. In October 2021, I presented my goals for the current school year, which include our continued focus on early literacy. This month, Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske and Director of Literacy and Humanities Katherine Tarca will update the Board on the Mass Literacy initiative. Massachusetts educators who are active in the Mass Literacy initiative will also speak to the Board.

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

I will update the Board on the Department’s recent and ongoing actions to provide support for schools, students, and families. Dr. Frinny Polanco Walters, attending physician in the Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital, will join the presentation. I will also brief the Board on our latest data on school enrollment in Massachusetts.

1. **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2023 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board’s Budget Committee – Discussion and Vote**

The Board’s budget committee, chaired by Matt Hills, will report at our meeting. Based on the committee’s recommended priorities, the Board will discuss and vote on its FY2023 education budget proposal. Consistent with Mass. General Laws c. 69, § 1A, I will transmit the Board’s recommendations to the Secretary of Education, who “shall then prepare and submit a budget request on behalf of the department to the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on education, and the secretary of administration and finance.”

1. **Educator Diversification Update *–* Discussion**

Our initiatives to diversify the educator workforce in the Commonwealth are continuing, and we are pleased to be working with the Board’s Educator Diversification Committee, chaired by Amanda Fernandez. At the meeting on December 17, Deputy Commissioner Regina Robinson and Shay Edmond, acting senior associate commissioner for strategic initiatives, will discuss the Department’s educator diversification initiatives and answer questions.

1. **Proposed Student Achievement Award Program – Discussion and Vote**

I am recommending that the Board discuss and approve a student achievement award program that would recognize high needs students who demonstrated high achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts or Mathematics tests. The program would start this year, based on the spring 2021 MCAS administration. The enclosed memorandum provides details. Deputy Commissioner Robinson and Acting Senior Associate Commissioner Edmond will be available to address questions.

1. **High School Chemistry and Technology/Engineering Assessments – Discussion**

I will present my recommendations for phasing out, as of spring 2024, two of the four MCAS high school science and technology/engineering subject tests that are currently available to students to meet the competency determination requirements for graduation. The memorandum in your materials provides details. Rob Curtin, chief officer for data, assessment, and accountability, along with Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel and Lucy Wall of our legal staff, will be available to answer your questions.

1. **Charter Schools: Modification of Conditions for City on a Hill Charter Public School – Discussion and Vote**

In February 2020, the Board placed City on a Hill Charter Public School (CoaH) on probationand imposed conditions on its charter to remedy areas of concern. The Department continues to monitor CoaH. Due to the cancellation of the 2020 MCAS and resulting changes to district and school accountability in 2021, I recommend that the Board vote to modify the conditions on the charter of CoaH to grant the school additional time to demonstrate academic improvement. I further recommend that the Board modify four additional conditions to ensure the school remedies areas of concern identified during its 2020 renewal. Details are in the enclosed memorandum. Alison Bagg, director of our office of charter schools and school redesign, will be at the meeting to answer questions.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

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

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

1. **Charter School Authorizing Activities for 2021-2022**

Between now and June 2022, the Board will take a number of votes related to its statutory role as a charter school authorizer. Similar to prior years, the enclosed memorandum summarizes the statutory framework for charter schools and the Board's responsibilities as the state's sole charter school authorizer and provides a schedule of charter school items for the year. Also enclosed is an article from the August issue *of Phi Delta Kappan*, “Charter schools and equity: the power of accountability” by Helen Ladd and Edward Fiske, which profiles the Department’s work in this area. Massachusetts charter authorizing practices have been recognized as some of the strongest in the nation.

1. **Report on Scheduling of Comprehensive Audits and Reviews**

The enclosed memorandum explains how the Department is addressing the provisions of M.G.L. c. 15, section 55A, regarding the scheduling of major reviews to reduce administrative burdens on schools and districts. The Board voted in December 2010 to delegate this scheduling task to the Commissioner, and I am submitting this report for FY2022 comprehensive audits and reviews in accordance with that vote.

1. **2020-2021 Annual Report of the Educational Personnel Advisory Council**

Enclosed is the 2020-2021 annual report from the Educational Personnel Advisory Council, adding to the FY2021 reports from various statutory advisory councils that the Board received in September.

1. **Student Opportunity Act Data Advisory Commission: 2021 Annual Report**

Enclosed for your information is the 2021 annual report of the Data Advisory Commission, established by the Student Opportunity Act.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you on December 17.