# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

# of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Tuesday, April 26, 2022

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148**

**9:03 a.m. – 12:24 p.m.**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Amanda** **Fernández**,Belmont

**Matthew Hills**, Newton

**Eleni Carris Livingston**, Wellesley, Student Member

**Darlene Lombos,** Boston

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Paymon Rouhanifard,** Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeffrey C. Riley**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m., and members introduced themselves. Chair Craven noted that today’s Board meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being recorded.

**Statements from the Public**

* **Suleika Soto,** Parent Organizer, Boston Education Justice Alliance, addressed the Board on Item 1: Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families
* **Lisa Jeanne Graf** addressed the Board on Item 1: Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families
* **Gerry Mroz** addressed the Board on Items 2-4: Competency Determination and Related Matters
* **Sugey Scannell,** Boston Public Schools parent, addressed the Board on Item 9: Chronically Underperforming Schools
* **Sarah Grimmett,** Charlestown High School teacher, addressed the Board on Item 9: Chronically Underperforming Schools
* **Justin Perez, Charlestown High School student,** addressed the Board on Item 9: Chronically Underperforming Schools
* **Jaden Pinet, Charlestown High School student,** addressed the Board on Item 9: Chronically Underperforming Schools

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven said the topic of mental health and schools is a continuing concern, and she has asked Commissioner Riley to set up a taskforce.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Peyser said the House is considering the FY23 state budget this week and noted several education items. He invited all to the Annual STEM Summit on April 28, which will be done in a hybrid format with various events livestreamed. Secretary Peyser congratulated the individuals and teams from DESE who were honored recently at the Performance Recognition awards ceremony hosted by the Governor.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Riley recognized Taylor Thai, a kindergarten and first-grade teacher of multilingual students at Donovan Elementary in Randolph, who is the state’s 47th Milken Award winner. The Commissioner noted that DESE is collaborating with the Attorney General’s office, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the Massachusetts School Administrators’ Association on a call to action for administrators, athletic directors, and coaches to address instances of bias and hate in school athletics. He said a statewide Zoom conference on April 5 launched the initiative, and more programs and trainings will follow. Commissioner Riley commended Rob Leshin, director of DESE’s Office for Food and Nutrition Programs, who was recently honored by Project Bread with the organization’s Patrick Hughes Award for Social Justice. The Commissioner noted the success of Massachusetts students and schools in the Advanced Placement (AP) program: The College Board ranks Massachusetts first in the nation for the percentage of graduating high school seniors that scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam.

**Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families:**

Commissioner Riley welcomed a panel of school superintendents – Patrick Tutwiler from Lynn, Diane Kelly from Revere, and Timothy Piwowar from Billerica – to report on issues in their school districts.

Superintendent Kelly thanked Chair Craven and Vice-Chair Morton for reaching out to superintendents, particularly urban superintendents, to discuss challenges they have been facing and ways they can partner with the Board to advance public education in the Commonwealth. She thanked Commissioner Riley and the DESE team, adding they have been consistently open and highly responsive throughout the pandemic. Superintendent Kelly listed four critical issues that superintendents have identified: the mental health of students and staff; staff recruitment and the educator pipeline; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and the need to reframe the narrative about the meaning and purpose of public education.

Superintendent Tutwiler said the Lynn Public Schools’ theme is stabilize, heal, and transform. He said the district has used federal funds and state funds under the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) to address students’ mental health and staffing, noting the challenges remain significant. Superintendent Piwowar discussed similar issues in Billerica, including the pressures on students’ and adults’ mental health, the educator pipeline, the interest in having more flexibility, and the need to promote positive narratives about education. In response to Board members’ questions, the superintendents said they have used SOA and other funding to hire more clinicians and are expanding community partnerships to help meet the needs of students and families. Chair Craven thanked the superintendents for their presentation and for all their work on behalf of the students of the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Riley presented a brief update on DESE’s pandemic-related work. He said DESE and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services recently notified districts about the extension of statewide COVID-19 testing options and DESE will follow up with districts later this spring with more information, including steps for the summer and fall. He noted the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved Massachusetts to provide certain pandemic EBT benefits for the current school year to eligible households through the Department of Transitional Assistance. Commissioner Riley said Congress has not extended the universal free meals program past the June 30 deadline and DESE is continuing to monitor the situation and work with districts. The Commissioner thanked Tom Scott, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the superintendents who spoke today.

Chair Craven called for a break at 10:45 a.m. and reconvened the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

**Approval of the Minutes of the March 22, 2022 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the March 22, 2022 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

***Competency Determination and Related Matters:***

Chair Craven introduced Rob Curtin, chief officer for data, assessment, and accountability;

Matt Deninger, chief strategy and research officer; Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel; and guest presenter John Papay, associate professor of education and economics at Brown University, to discuss the competency determination and research on student outcomes.

**Brown University Study Update**

Dr. Papay presented on his ongoing study, in partnership with DESE, of nearly two decades of data on the competency determination (CD) in relation to long-term outcomes for students. He highlighted four key takeaways from the study: (1) high school MCAS scores predict long-term success and appear to reflect students’ academic skills, not simply socio-economic status or school characteristics; (2) students scoring near the passing cutoff do not fare well and do not appear to be college- or career-ready, on average; (3) most students who fail do retest and pass, and barely passing does improve longer-term educational attainments; and (4) students who earn their CD on retest or appeal have similar outcomes to students who barely passed on their first try. Dr. Papay reviewed the longitudinal data and patterns, discussed how raising graduation requirements can influence students and educators, and responded to questions from the Board. In response to a question from Mr. Moriarty about eighth grade MCAS data, Dr. Papay said some schools use the data as an early warning system, identifying students who need help and intervening to strengthen their academic skills so they can be more successful in high school and earn the CD. Mr. Moriarty commented that this should be common practice.

**Proposed Amendment to Competency Determination Regulations, 603 CMR 30.00 (Standards for Students in the Classes of 2026–2029)**

Commissioner Riley noted that in February, the Board received an update on the CD and heard from Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, chair of the CD Advisory Committee. The Commissioner said there are good reasons to set a higher standard for the CD that would apply to students in the classes of 2026-2029 (students who are now in fifth through eighth grade) and setting it now would give schools and students adequate lead time.

Mr. Curtin presented an overview, including a timeline of CD milestones since the requirement was established by the 1993 Education Reform Act. He discussed the creation of the CD Advisory Committee and its charge and summarized the committee’s considerations. Mr. Curtin explained the rationale to establish new CD threshold scores on the MCAS tests and the proposed CD requirements for the classes of 2026-2029. He reviewed the current and proposed CD levels and discussed proposed changes to the Educational Proficiency Plan. Mr. Curtin also explained proposed changes to the regulations on the Certificate of Mastery and State Seal of Biliteracy, which would need to be aligned with MCAS achievement levels and the raised CD standard. He concluded by discussing the expected timeline for next steps if the Board votes today to invite public comment on the proposed regulations and answered questions from the Board.

Dr. West, Mr. Rouhanifard, and Mr. Hills asked about the CD standard that would apply to students in the class of 2030 and beyond. Mr. Curtin said it would be prudent to take action now for the classes of 2026-2029, gather information and review it, and then have the Board set the standard for subsequent classes. In response to questions from Dr. West and Ms. Carris Livingston about the Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP), Mr. Curtin talked about how the EPP would be strengthened and the importance of schools addressing gaps in students’ knowledge and skills before grade 10. Ms. Fernández commented that students who are not meeting the current CD standard are predominantly low-income and need comprehensive support. Mr. Moriarty said schools should be planning to help all students meet the new standard and suggested that an updated certificate of mastery could be a form of micro-credentialing. Secretary Peyser said he believes the Commissioner’s proposal is a thoughtful approach and added that he would like to invite public input on what the standard should be for the class of 2030 and beyond. He said he assumes we would want all students to be meeting expectations. The Secretary agreed with the equity considerations Ms. Fernández raised and said that for students who need additional attention, various supports and resources should be available, including the EPP, early college programs, and other structured pathways.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, §§ 1B and 1D, hereby authorizes the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. chapter 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Competency Determination Regulations, 603 CMR 30.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments concern the Competency Determination standards for students in the classes of 2026 through 2029.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Proposed Amendment to Certificate of Mastery Regulations, 603 CMR 31.00 (Standards for Students in the Classes of 2026–2029)**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, §§ 1B and 1D, hereby authorizes the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. chapter 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Certificate of Mastery Regulations, 603 CMR 31.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments concern the standards for students in the classes of 2026 through 2029.**

The vote was unanimous.

***Educator Licensure:***

Commissioner Riley said the Board and DESE have reviewed and modified educator licensure rules to provide more flexibility to schools and districts while continuing to diversify the educator workforce. He said he is recommending that the Board solicit public comment on two proposed regulatory amendments relating to educator licensure. Commissioner Riley introduced Cliff Chuang, senior associate commissioner; Liz Bennett, associate commissioner for college, career, and technical education; Brian Devine, director of educator licensure; and Attorney Lucy Wall to review the proposed regulations.

**Proposed Amendment to Regulations on Vocational-Technical Teacher Licensure, 603 CMR 4.00 (Option to Meet Subject Matter Knowledge Requirement Through Professional Industry/Trade License Exams)**

Mr. Chuang explained that the proposed amendments to the regulations on vocational-technical teacher licensure would eliminate redundant requirements by permitting applicants to rely on passing their professional licensure exams to demonstrate their subject matter knowledge, rather than taking a separate exam administered by DESE. He said this would save candidates money and increase the pool of qualified, licensed candidates for career/vocational technical education (CVTE) schools. Mr. Chuang noted the proposed amendment also aligns with DESE’s ongoing efforts to modernize the existing CVTE teacher testing program, with goals of improving access to test registration, increasing frequency of test administration, and lowering test fees. In response to a question, Mr. Devine said 21 vocational-technical teaching fields currently have a state licensing exam.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, §§ 1B and 1F and chapter 74, § 2, hereby authorizes the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. chapter 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.07(2)(d) and 4.13(3), as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments concern requirements for CVTE educator licensure.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Proposed Amendments to Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00 (Staffing Flexibilities for 2022-2023)**

Mr. Devine said the Commissioner is also recommending that the Board seek public comment on proposed amendments to extend certain educator licensure flexibilities through the 2022-2023 school year. He noted that these flexibilities do not apply to certain positions requiring a special education, English as a Second Language, or school nurse license. Dr. West asked about plans to evaluate these new options and whether the options might extend beyond the pandemic. Mr. Devine responded that 15 districts have significant numbers of educators teaching under the new flexibilities and could be the focus of a study. Ms. Wall added that DESE expects to have more data on emergency licenses later in the year.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with   
M.G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and c. 71, § 38G, hereby authorizes the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, M.G.L. c.30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments would extend certain staffing flexibilities through the 2022-2023 school year.**

The vote was unanimous.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:24 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board