**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden MA**

**January 24, 2023, 9:05 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Tricia Canavan,** South Hadley

**Darlene Lombos,** Boston

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton (via remote participation)

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Paymon Rouhanifard,** Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Martin West,** Newton

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

**Eric Plankey,** Westford, Student Member

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

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., and members introduced themselves. She stated that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being [livestreamed and recorded](https://livestream.com/accounts/22459134).

**Public Comment**

1. **Gerry Mroz,** Melrose,addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
2. **Ed Lambert, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE)** addressed the Board on Item 2:Student Opportunity Act Update and Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
3. **Deb McCarthy, Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) Vice President** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act and use of MCAS exams
4. **Noah Berger, Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) Director, Center for Education Policy and Practice** addressed the Board on inflation calculations for Chapter 70 state aid funding
5. **Thabiti Brown, Head of School, Codman Academy Charter Public School** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
6. **Superintendent Dianne Kelly, Revere,** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
7. **Superintendent Steve Zrike, Salem,** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
8. **Superintendent Priya Tahiliani, Everett,** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
9. **Superintendent Tim Piwowar, Billerica,** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act
10. **Superintendent Jason DeFalco, Blackstone-Millville Regional School District,** addressed the Board on Item 3: Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven asked for a moment of silence in honor of former Senate President Thomas Birmingham, who passed away unexpectedly this week, and discussed his legacy, dedication, and contribution to education reform in Massachusetts. Chair Craven then introduced the new Secretary of Education, Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, and welcomed him to the Board.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler said he is thrilled to be in the role and looks forward to learning from and partnering with the Chair, the Commissioner, fellow Board members, and most importantly the students, families, and educators in schools and districts across the Commonwealth. He gave a brief introduction about himself and his experience as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. The Secretary said he views education as a key driver of equity, and he is eager to move forward on initiatives that will benefit students, families, and educators.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Riley welcomed the Secretary and echoed the comments from Chair Craven in tribute to the late Tom Birmingham. He introduced Phylitia Jamerson, the new Executive Director of Early College at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE). Commissioner Riley voiced his concern about news that Boston Public Schools teachers are not getting paid on time and said he hopes the city will resolve this promptly. He said he will update the Board on the Boston Public Schools’ systemic improvement plan at the February and March meetings.

**2023 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year: Danielle “Dani” Charbonneau**

Commissioner Riley said each year, the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year program honors an educator who exemplifies excellent teaching in the Commonwealth. He introduced the 2023 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, Danielle ("Dani") Charbonneau, who teaches English language arts in Project Vine, the alternative program within Martha's Vineyard Regional High School in Oak Bluffs; she is also a program coordinator for Project Vine.

Ms. Charbonneau expressed her appreciation for being chosen and said she plans to use her platform to promote alternative education. She described the alternative education program and her experiences with the "at-risk" students she serves. Ms. Charbonneau noted this student population has grown, particularly since the pandemic. She explained that Project Vine, Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School’s embedded alternative program, is a voluntary, limited enrollment program that engages students in community participation and hands-on learning and fosters a sense of belonging. Ms. Charbonneau recommended that the state use grant funds to promote the development of more alternative education programs. She responded to questions from Board members, several of whom commented that aspects of this alternative education program should be incorporated into all K-12 education. Chair Craven commended Ms. Charbonneau and thanked her for her presentation.

At 10:20 a.m., Chair Craven assembled the Board for a photo with Ms. Charbonneau and a brief break. The meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.

**Student Opportunity Act: Update from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Commissioner Riley introduced Komal Bhasin, DESE’s Chief Schools Officer, to update the Board on DESE’s ongoing work with districts under the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) and how districts are using SOA funds to accelerate learning and close gaps in opportunity and achievement. Ms. Bhasin reviewed the goal of the SOA and its fiscal and policy components, the implementation timeline, and the impact of the pandemic. She summarized the requirements for districts’ three-year gap-closing plans and guidance DESE provides to districts. She described the SOA dashboard, which allows public access to key elements of the plan, aligned to the legislation. Ms. Bhasin noted that districts’ SOA plans are focused on the student groups the legislation intended to benefit and she highlighted evidence-based programs in district plans. She introduced TNTP’s Crystal Harmon, Chief Consulting Officer, who discussed how evidence-based programs can support gap-closing and best practices for supporting change in a complex system like a school or district.

Mr. Rouhanifard noted the density of the information and asked the Chair if the update could be condensed to allow more time for Board members to engage in discussion. Chair Craven asked if that could be done. Commissioner Riley said it could and he wants to be respectful of Board members who asked for this update. He said Ms. Bhasin and her team could summarize the remaining material. Chair Craven suggested that Monday evening meetings via Zoom might be a good opportunity for presentations and discussions like this.

Ms. Bhasin and the representatives from TNTP summarized key findings on effective practices, linked them to the work that districts and DESE are doing in Massachusetts, and responded to questions from Board members. Ms. Bhasin then introduced Fall River Superintendent Maria Pontes, who spoke about her district’s use of SOA funding to support early literacy programs, early college, acceleration academies, inclusion, expanding mental health support for students, and other evidence-based programs. She noted the district continues to address challenges in student attendance and staffing.

Mr. Rouhanifard asked if districts are using SOA funding to support high-dosage tutoring. Ms. Bhasin responded that about 150 districts are implementing tutoring, and districts also are making use of DESE’s early literacy tutoring grants. Commissioner Riley reminded the Board that about 85% of the additional state funding under SOA goes to 25 districts. Ms. Bhasin said DESE will be doing further analysis of SOA spending and progress in gap closing later this year. She said school improvement is complex and it takes time to create change in schools. Chair Craven thanked the presenters.

Dr. West left the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

**Goal Setting Process for Accountability System and Student Opportunity Act**

Commissioner Riley said this agenda item continues the discussion from the Board’s special meeting on January 3 about how DESE sets district and school accountability targets, as required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and the state Student Opportunity Act. He said the Board’s Advisory Council on School and District Accountability and Assistance and various stakeholders have vetted this approach, which he believes is both ambitious and attainable. The Commissioner introduced Rob Curtin, DESE’s Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability.

Mr. Curtin said DESE has considered the four concerns that were voiced at the special meeting. On whether the targets reflect urgency, he said further increasing the targets would not provide better information about progress. On whether the timelines are too long, he said many districts had unprecedented losses and DESE will report on actual progress. On the reference to student performance as of 2019, he said DESE needs to acknowledge that schools are recovering from pandemic losses and must cross the 2019 threshold to show improvement. On whether the targets focus enough on closing gaps, Mr. Curtin said the goal is to raise achievement of all students and devote special attention to those in greatest need. He noted that every school has a lowest 25%. Mr. Curtin said DESE is committed to reviewing its approach to target setting and will revisit it if it does not meet the standard the Commissioner has set, of being both ambitious and attainable. He responded to questions from Board members.

Ms. Lombos said she supports this plan. Mr. Rouhanifard thanked Mr. Curtin for the thought and care he has devoted to these discussions and commended Board members for raising the issues at the special meeting. Mr. Moriarty said he appreciates the healthy tension and commended the systems approach, adding that he advocates a continued focus on schools with the lowest performance in third grade reading. Ms. Canavan noted that the business sector could step up too. Mr. Curtin said DESE has made its best judgment on target setting and hopes schools will exceed their targets. Vice-Chair Hills said this has been a healthy conversation and he has high confidence in the Commissioner.

Mr. Rouhanifard left the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

**Special Education Update: IEP Improvement Project**

Deputy Commissioner Russell Johnston and Director of Special Education Planning and Policy Jamie Camacho presented a progress report on the Department’s initiative to improve special education services and outcomes for eligible students with disabilities through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Improvement Project. Chair Craven said as the parent of a student with disabilities, she has great appreciation for this work. Deputy Commissioner Johnston and Ms. Camacho said the project aims to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, give them meaningful access to the curriculum frameworks and the life of the school, and close opportunity and achievement gaps. Ms. Camacho noted the guidance DESE is providing on referral, evaluation, and eligibility for special education, described the ongoing stakeholder engagement, and highlighted some of the improvements to the current IEP form. Deputy Commissioner Johnston and Ms. Camacho responded to members’ questions.

**Approval of the Minutes of the Approval of the Minutes of the December 20, 2022 Regular Meeting and the Minutes of the January 3, 2023 Special Meeting**

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the December 20, 2022 Regular Meeting and the January 3, 2023 Special Meeting.**

The vote, by roll call, was 7-0-1. Secretary Tutwiler abstained.

**Charter Schools: Surrender of Charter for Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School**

Commissioner Riley said that on January 17, 2023, the board of trustees of Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School (PFSJCS) voted to surrender its charter upon completion of the 2022-2023 school year. The school has been unable to attract enrollment sufficient to maintain financial viability and has faced many other challenges. He said the school is committed to continuing operations through the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The Commissioner recommended that the Board vote to accept the surrender of the charter granted to PFSJCS.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with**

**General Laws chapter 71, section 89; General Laws chapter 30A, section 13; and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby accepts the surrender of the charter granted to Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School, effective July 1, 2023.**

**The Board of Trustees of** **Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School shall comply with all procedures, timelines, and conditions established or imposed by the Commissioner to effectuate surrender of the school’s charter, transfer of students into other schools, and an orderly closure of the Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Chair Craven noted the next regular meeting of the Board is on February 28, 2023.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:55 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board