*****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:** | May 17, 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the May 23, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will hold its **regular meeting** on **Tuesday, May 23, 2023**, 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 and recorded. Helene Bettencourt and Courtney Sullivan will assist with all arrangements; please email or call them if you have any questions.

**OVERVIEW**

Our business agenda for the regular meeting on Tuesday leads off with updates on Early College and early literacy. Then we will hear from a panel of school and district representatives about the use of electronic devices in schools. The Board will have an update on the Holyoke Public Schools receivership presented by Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto. The Board will vote on amendments to the regulations for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools and on delegation to the Commissioner of authority to approve contracts of three charter schools. We will conclude the meeting with a presentation on the Department’s Educational Vision and Strategic Objective Framework and an update on education budget matters.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

**Comments from the Secretary**

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Chair Craven, Secretary Tutwiler, and I will update the Board on current issues and activities.

Notably, on May 9, Secretary Tutwiler, Board member Mary Ann Stewart, and approximately 150 people from districts across the Commonwealth joined us at the Devens Conference Center to celebrate 23 teachers we have recognized over the past year. They included the 2023 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and finalists and semifinalists for that award, the History Teacher of the Year, the Milken Educator Award winner, and finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. I would like to thank everyone who attended and Lowell High School’s “Sound Impressions,” who performed at the event.

**Routine Business: Approval of the Minutes of the April 25, 2023 Regular Meeting**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **Early College Update – Discussion**

Early College is a key component of our ongoing work to promote equitable and effective educational opportunities for Massachusetts students. The enclosed memorandum provides an overview of some recent work to expand and strengthen the Early College initiative. At our May 23 meeting, Phylitia Jamerson, executive director of our Department’s Office of Early College, will give a brief presentation on the Early College initiative and respond to your questions.

1. **Early Literacy Update – Discussion**

Early literacy has been an area of focused activity and investment by our Department since 2019. The enclosed memorandum provides an overview of the work, which dovetails with the Board’s Special Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Literacy. At the May 23 meeting, Katherine Tarca, director of literacy and humanities; Russell Johnston, deputy commissioner; and Erin Hashimoto-Martell, associate commissioner of instructional support, will update the Board on the Department’s early literacy initiatives and answer your questions.

1. **Use of Electronic Devices in Schools – Discussion**

There is growing evidence of the negative impact of the use of electronic communication devices such as cell phones during class time and during the school day. In addition to the distraction from teaching, learning, and student engagement, research shows that cell phone use and social media have contributed negatively to mental health and poor sleep habits in teens. We have invited representatives from several schools and districts in Massachusetts to speak to the Board on May 23 about how they are approaching this issue.

1. **Holyoke Public Schools Update – Discussion**

To keep the Board well informed about the progress being made by schools and districts in state receivership, I am providing regular updates during this school year. This month, Holyoke Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto, Assistant Superintendent Stephen Mahoney, and Deputy Commissioner Johnston will present to the Board and respond to your questions. The enclosed memorandum provides a brief overview.

**5. Amendment to Regulations on Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools,**

**603 CMR 52.00 – Discussion and Vote**

In December 2022, the Board voted to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to the regulations for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools. Based upon the comments received, I recommend one additional change to the regulations. The enclosed memorandum provides details. I recommend that the Board adopt the regulations as presented. Alison Bagg, director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; Cliff Chuang, senior associate commissioner for educational options; and Ruth Hersh, manager of education collaboratives and virtual schools, will be at the meeting to answer your questions.

**6. Delegation of Authority to Commissioner to Approve Contracts Proposed by Three**

**Charter Schools – Discussion and Vote**

Under the charter school statute, the Board must approve contracts between charter schools and the entities from which they intend to procure substantially all educational services. The Board can delegate the approval of such contracts to the Commissioner and has done so on several occasions. I recommend that the Board vote on May 23 to delegate to the Commissioner approval of the contracts of three charter schools. The enclosed memorandum provides details. Senior Associate Commissioner Chuang, Allison Bagg and Alyssa Hopkins of our Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign, and Deputy General Counsel Kristin Valcourt will be at the meeting to answer your questions.

**7. Educational Vision – Discussion**

Deputy Commissioners Regina Robinson and Russell Johnston and Chief of Schools Komal Bhasin will present on the Department’s Educational Vision and Strategic Objective Framework. The Department began this work in spring 2022. It will enable the Department to produce more effective, aligned guidance, resources, professional learning opportunities, and grant offerings for the districts, educators, and students we serve.

**8. Education Budget Update – Discussion**

The House released its FY24 state spending recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year a few weeks ago, and on May 9, the Senate Ways and Means Committee released its FY24 budget proposal. Your materials include information about the items relating to elementary and secondary education in the Senate Ways and Means budget. At our May 23 meeting, Senior Associate Commissioner/Chief Financial Officer Bill Bell will review the proposals and next steps in the state budget process.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**9. Proposed Schedule for Regular Board Meetings through June 2024**

Enclosed for your review is a list of proposed Board meeting dates for the upcoming school year. The Board will vote on the schedule at the June meeting.

**10. 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 FY23 comprehensive audits and reviews in accordance with that vote.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you on May 23.