**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**135 Santilli Highway**

**Everett, Massachusetts 02149**  
**Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 9:10 a.m. – 1:10 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

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

**Ioannis Asikis,** Brookline, Student Member

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Christina Grant**, Cambridge

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton, *participated remotely*

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

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

**Martin West,** Newton

**Russell D. Johnston,** Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., and members introduced themselves. Chair Craven announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being livestreamed and recorded. Chair Craven said that all votes would be taken by roll call because two members are participating remotely.

**Statements from the Public**

* **Senator Kelly Dooner** addressed the Board on Career Technical Education (CTE) admissions
* **Dan French, Board President, Citizens for Public Schools,** addressed the Board on Career Technical Education (CTE) admissions
* **Brian Dezurick,** **Staff Attorney, MetroWest Legal Services**, addressed the Board on Career Technical Education (CTE) admissions
* **Emily LaMarca**, **Parent,** addressed the Board on the Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 46.00 and 603 CMR 18.00 (Use of Time-Out Practices)
* **Stefanie Krantz, Senior Attorney, Disability Law Center, Inc.,** addressed the Board on the Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 46.00 and 603 CMR 18.00 (Use of Time-Out Practices)
* **Juan Cofield** addressed the Board on Career Technical Education (CTE) admissions
* **Gerry Mroz** addressed the Board on the Commissioner search
* **Melissa Ryan, Superintendent, Berkley Public Schools,** addressed the Board on FY26 school funding

Chair Craven thanked the public comment presenters. She welcomed new Board member Dr. Christina Grant to her first meeting. Dr. Grant offered brief remarks.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler welcomed new Board member Dr. Christina Grant. Secretary Tutwiler provided an update on the Statewide Graduation Council including an announcement of regional stakeholder listening sessions that will take place across the state this spring. Secretary Tutwiler thanked Commissioner Johnston for his service.

**Comments from the Acting Commissioner**

Acting Commissioner Johnston welcomed new Board member Dr. Christina Grant. He provided an update on the Power of Presence campaign that aims to reduce chronic absenteeism. As a part of the campaign, districts, schools, and students were invited to submit media demonstrating what “Power of Presence” means to them. He announced that Emergence Academy, a part of the Springfield Empowerment Zone, was selected as the winner of the competition. Acting Commissioner Johnston played the winning video for the Board. He also announced the finalists from the competition: a video montage submitted by Manomet Elementary School, a newscast submitted by Walnut Square School, a poem submitted by Blackstone Valley Regional Tech, a door decorating montage submitted by Rumney Marsh Academy, and an essay submitted by the Intergenerational Literacy Program.

Acting Commissioner Johnston provided an update on the Boston Public Schools Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP). He responded to questions from Board members regarding the SIP.

Acting Commissioner Johnston updated the Board on the Board meeting schedule through June.

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven noted public comment is coming in on proposed amendments to the regulations relating to Career Technical Education (CTE) and said she is asking Member West and the Career Technical Education (CTE) committee to review the public comment on the proposed amendments at a special meeting in May.

Chair Craven thanked Acting Commissioner Johnston for his service to the students of the Commonwealth. She presented him with a citation from Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll.

**Update on Commissioner Search Process**

Chair Craven updated the Board on the Commissioner search process. She said the preliminary screening committee completed their interviews last week and the Board plans to interview finalists publicly in April.

**School Counselor of the Year – Discussion**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced the Massachusetts School Counselor of the Year, Sugeily Santos, a 7th & 8th grade school counselor at Curley K-8 School in Jamaica Plain, Boston. He invited Lisa Harney, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE’s) Coordinator of Secondary Supports, and Bob Bardwell, Executive Director, MA School Counseling Association (MASCA), to the table to present with Ms. Santos. Ms. Santos presented on her experiences and responded to questions from Board members.

Chair Craven called for a motion and vote to approve meeting minutes from the February 24, 2025 special meeting, the February 25, 2025 regular meeting, and the March 10, 2025 special meeting.

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

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the February 24, 2025 special meeting, the February 25, 2025 regular meeting, and the March 10, 2025 special meeting.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**State Student Advisory Council Mid-Year Report – Discussion**

Member Asikis thanked Acting Commissioner Johnston for his service. Member Asikis presented a mid-year report on the work of the State Student Advisory Council (SSAC). He discussed the framework for identifying and addressing student concerns, reviewed key initiatives from the SSAC, and shared takeaways and policy recommendations from the SSAC. Member Asikis responded to questions and comments from Board members.

**Educational Vision Update and Advancing Student Learning**

Acting Commissioner Johnston gave a brief update on DESE’s Educational Vision and introduced the agenda item on the proposed amendments to the regulations on the use of time-out practices.

**Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 46.00 and 603 CMR 18.00 (Use of Time-Out Practices) – Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced the topic of proposed amendments to 603 CMR 46.00, the regulations for Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements If Used, and 603 CMR 18.00, the regulations for Program and Safety Standards for Approved Public or Private Day and Residential Special Education School Programs, for initial discussion and a vote to solicit public comment. He invited DESE staff Iraida J. Álvarez, Acting Executive Director of Special Education, Jamie Camacho, Acting State Director of Special Education, Janelle Roberts, Director of the Office of Approved Special Education Schools, and Johanna Wakelin, Associate General Counsel, to present on the proposed amendments. The presenters provided information on DESE’s work with stakeholders and gave an overview of the proposed regulatory amendments and anticipated next steps in the process. Acting Commissioner Johnston and the presenters responded to comments and questions from Board members. The Acting Commissioner said this is a timely and important action to update the 2016 regulations.

Chair Craven called for a motion and vote to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to 603 CMR 46.00 and 603 CMR 18.00.

**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, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37G(c), and M.G.L. c. 71B, §10, 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 603 CMR 46.00, the regulations for Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements If Used, and 603 CMR 18.00, the regulations for Program and Safety Standards for Approved Public or Private Day and Residential Special Education School Programs, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Commonwealth Virtual Schools Report on Conditions – Discussion and Vote**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced his recommendation to remove seven conditions imposed on Greater Commonwealth Virtual School **(**GCVS) and extend one condition related to academic results. Additionally, he presented his recommendation that the Board remove two conditions imposed on TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA), extend one condition related to academic results, and impose a new condition related to the school’s financial oversight.

Acting Commissioner Johnston invited DESE staff Deputy Commissioner Regina Robinson and Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign, to the table to address any questions about the recommendations.

Chair Craven called for a motion and vote on each of the two matters.

**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 94 and 603 CMR 52.12, hereby removes the seven conditions imposed on Greater Commonwealth Virtual School’s (GCVS’s) certificate and extends one condition that follows, as recommended by the Commissioner.**

**By December 31, 2025, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence of significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all students and all student subgroups.**

**In addition to meeting the terms of the condition, GCVS must comply with the terms of its certificate. Failure to meet these conditions within the timelines specified may result in the Board placing the school on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.**

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual school shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 94; 603 CMR 52.00; and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such conditions as the Commissioner or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the certificate.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 94 and 603 CMR 52.12, hereby removes two conditions imposed on the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School’s (TECCA’s) certificate, imposes a new condition, and extends one condition, as recommended by the Commissioner.**

**Condition 1: By July 1, 2025, the school will provide the Department with sufficient evidence that it has addressed all the commitments articulated in the Corrective Action Plan related to its audit for fiscal year 2024.**

**Condition 2: By December 31, 2025, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence of significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all students and all student subgroups.**

**In addition to meeting the terms of the condition, TECCA must comply with the terms of its certificate. Failure to meet these conditions within the timelines specified may result in the Board placing the school on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.**

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual school shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 94; 603 CMR 52.00; and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such conditions as the Commissioner or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the certificate.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Proposed Contract with Management Organization for Roxbury Preparatory Charter School – Discussion and Vote**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced his recommendation that the Board approve the contract proposed by the board of trustees of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School with its management organization, as outlined in his memorandum to the Board.

Chair Craven called for a motion and vote.

**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, and 603 CMR 1.00, approves the management contract between Roxbury Preparatory Charter School and Uncommon Schools, Inc., as voted by the Board of Trustees of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School on February 6, 2025. Such approval also operates to amend the charter granted to Roxbury Preparatory Charter School to include this management contract.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Member Fisher and Member West left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

**College Access: Update on ACARE and Increasing FAFSA and MASFA Completion – Discussion**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced DESE staff Associate Commissioner of College, Career, and Technical Education Elizabeth Bennett, Nyal Fuentes, Coordinator of College and Career Readiness, and Lisa Harney, Coordinator of Secondary Supports, and Department of Higher Education (DHE) GEAR UP Director Robert Dais. They presented an update on progress related to goals and activities to increase college access and affordability.

Mr. Fuentes presented an overview of the data related to trends in college going, college enrollment, and FAFSA completion. Mr. Fuentes presented the four DESE-related recommendations of the Advisory Council to Advance Representation in Education (ACARE) as well as the FAFSA report recommendations. Ms. Harney presented an overview of My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP). Mr. Dais presented an overview of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Secretary Tutwiler, Acting Commissioner Johnston, and the presenters responded to questions and comments from Board members.

With today’s agenda concluded, Chair Craven asked to adjourn the meeting in honor of Russell D. Johnston’s service to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 1:10 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

 Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Johnston

Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board