# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# September 26, 2006

**9:10 a.m. – 11:55 a.m.**

**Department of Education**

**350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts**

Members of the Board of Education Present:

**James A. Peyser**,Chairman, Milton

**Ann Reale**, Vice-Chair, Commissioner of Early Education and Care

**Christopher Anderson**, Westford

**Harneen Chernow,** Jamaica Plain

**Trevor Frederick**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Ipswich

**Patricia Plummer**, Chancellor, Board of Higher Education

**Roberta Schaefer**, Worcester

Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

**Henry M. Thomas, III,** Springfield

**David P. Driscoll,** Commissioner of Education, Secretary to the Board

Chairman James A. Peyser called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

## Statements from the Public

* Joan Connelly, Glenn Koocher, and Paul Toner of MassPartners addressed the Board on the accountability system for underperforming schools.
* Roger Harris and Jacqueline Sinclair of the Boston Renaissance Charter School, addressed the Board on a proposed charter amendment.

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman James A. Peyser opened the meeting by announcing that he has appointed a budget committee of the Board. Board member Christopher Anderson will chair the committee. Board Vice-Chair Ann Reale and Chairman Peyser will also participate. The committee will work with the Commissioner and Department finance staff on the FY 2008 education budget proposal, which will be brought to the Board this fall.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner David P. Driscoll said he is delighted to report that the Broad Foundation has awarded its 2006 Prize for Urban Education - including $500,000 for college scholarships - to the Boston Public Schools. The annual Broad Prize is an award created to honor urban school districts making the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while at the same time reducing achievement gaps across income and ethnic groups. Boston was a finalist for the prize in each of the last four years, receiving $125,000 for scholarships in each of those years.

Commissioner Driscoll also reported that the Department released the 2006 statewide MCAS results on September 20th. He said that tenth graders have made significant advances, but student performance in grades 3-8 was flat and in some cases declined. The Commissioner noted that a report being published this week by Standard & Poor's school evaluation services recognizes 30 school districts and 11 schools in Massachusetts as academic "outperformers" that have significantly narrowed the achievement gap between higher- and lower-performing student groups.

Commissioner Driscoll distributed to Board members an article on national standards written by Chairman Peyser. The article, Hoop Hassles: Incentives, Not National Control, was featured in the Fall 2006 edition of Education Next.

#### Approval of the Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the August 15, 2006 regular meeting, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 1. Teacher Preparation, Licensure and Professional Development

Following up on the discussion that Board member Christopher Anderson led at the March 2006 Board meeting, the Board has been looking at ways to improve the educator preparation and licensure system as well as strengthen professional development for all educators. Over the next several months, the Board and Department will have a series of discussions and the Commissioner will present recommendations for action relating to educator quality. At this month’s meeting, the Board focused on teacher preparation and licensure. Commissioner Driscoll presented some broad concepts to strengthen and simplify the system, which he said needs to be completely transformed, not just reformed.

The Board commended the Commissioner for the approach he is taking. Chairman Peyser observed that licensure ensures minimal competence, while excellence in teaching comes from experience, careful evaluation and ongoing development. He said teachers need strong content knowledge when they enter the profession, recognizing that they learn the most about how to teach by actual classroom teaching. He cautioned that teachers should not be burdened with course-taking requirements that do not translate into higher student achievement. Chairman Peyser added that some legislative amendments may be needed in order to transform the system along the lines the Commissioner is proposing.

Board member Chris Anderson said the licensure initiative is one part of the larger discussion about strengthening the education system as a whole, and the Board needs a long-term strategy as well as commitment from the Legislature and other partners. Chancellor Plummer suggested that the Department review models in other states, particularly on the issue of whether to have one or two levels of licensure. Board member Harneen Chernow asked about district-based teacher preparation programs and suggested that the Department review their results. Associate Commissioner Bob Bickerton said that Massachusetts currently has about four dozen district-based programs.

Based on the discussion, the Commissioner said he and Associate Commissioner Bickerton will continue working on this initiative in consultation with the Board's Educational Personnel Advisory Council. The Commissioner will bring more specific recommendations to the Board for action at a future meeting.

# 2. School and District Performance: Underperforming Schools Status Report

Commissioner Driscoll and Associate Commissioner Juliane Dow summarized the status and anticipated next steps relating to five groups of schools that either have been or may be determined to be underperforming. The Board discussed the high number of schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The Board also discussed how the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Underperforming Schools and School Districts (603 CMR 2.00) would change the current system. The Commissioner will present specific recommendations on some of the schools to the Board in October and November for discussion and action. The Commissioner will also bring the proposed amendments to the regulations to the Board for action at the October meeting.

# 3. Board of Education Legislative Proposals for 2007 Session

The Board discussed possible legislative proposals for the 2007 legislative session. By statute, the Board has discretion to file a legislative package in even-numbered years, preceding the first annual session of the legislature. The legislation is to be filed on or before the first Wednesday in November, which is November 1, 2006. The Board will make a decision on what, if any, legislation it will file at the October meeting.

# 4. Charter Schools

Commissioner Driscoll presented the Board with an anticipated schedule of charter school agenda items requiring Board actions in FY 2007. Massachusetts law provides that the Board shall authorize charter schools. Consequently, new charters, charter renewals, charter amendments and related regulatory actions must come before the Board for action.

The Board also discussed an amendment to the charter of the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School to reduce the school's maximum enrollment from 1,479 to 1,240, effective as of the 2007-2008 school year. Chairman Peyser said the Department will review the school’s performance in the current school year, and any action to expand the school’s grade levels in the future should be based on excellent performance in grades K-6.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89 and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amend the charter granted to the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School to provide for a maximum enrollment of 1,240 students beginning in 2007-2008 and in subsequent years.**

The vote was unanimous.

The Board discussed an extended loan term for Seven Hills Charter Public School. Under the charter school statute, a charter school may incur temporary debt in anticipation of receipt of funds but requires approval of the Board of Education if it wishes to agree to repayment terms that exceed the duration of the school's charter.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89(j)(6), approve the request of the Board of Trustees of Seven Hills Charter Public School to enter into a proposed loan agreement that extends beyond the terms of the school’s current charter and is not to exceed ten years. The Board’s approval is explicitly conditioned upon the inclusion of the language that follows in the loan agreement as executed by the school and its lender.**

**The [parties] explicitly acknowledge and agree that the Commonwealth, including but not limited to the Board and Department of Education, has no liability for any portion of the loan and provides no representations or guarantees with respect to the loan. Furthermore, the [parties] explicitly acknowledge and agree that the Board’s approval has no impact on any action the Board may choose to take in the future with respect to probation, revocation, or renewal of the school’s charter.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 5. Advisory Council Appointments

The Commissioner presented a list of proposed appointments and reappointments of members to various advisory councils, for the Board's initial review. The Board currently has sixteen advisory councils made up of volunteers who work to improve public education by providing advice and comment in specific program areas such as community service learning, educational technology, educational personnel, mathematics and science education, and special education. The Board will vote on the appointments and reappointments at the October meeting.

# 6. Approval of Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $1,545,472 under eight federal programs and five state programs. The state funded programs, totaling about $897,000 in five separate categories, will fund academic support services for students during the summer of 2007. The Board also discussed grants under the new state appropriation for after-school and out-of-school programs totaling $950,000.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the grants as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the meeting adjourn at 11:55 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Driscoll

Commissioner of Education

and Secretary of the Board