# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# November 28, 2006

**9:05 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.**

**Department of Education**

**350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts**

Members of the Board of Education Present:

**Christopher R. Anderson**,Chairman, Westford

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

**Harneen Chernow,** Jamaica Plain

**Thomas E. Fortmann,** Lexington

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

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

**Roberta Schaefer**, Worcester

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

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

Member of the Board of Education Absent:

Sandra Stotsky, Brookline

Chairman Christopher R. Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

## Statements from the Public

* Superintendent Joseph P. Burke of Springfield, addressed the Board on the recommendation for the Gerena Community School to remain in underperforming status.

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Christopher R. Anderson opened the meeting by thanking Governor Romney, who appointed him as Chairman on November 20, 2006. He welcomed new Board member Tom Fortmann, announced new Board member Sandra Stotsky, who is currently out of the country, and thanked outgoing Chairman James A. Peyser. Chairman Anderson made the following statement:

One thing's for certain: the world is changing and the education systems of the Commonwealth and the nation must continue to evolve or we risk continued erosion of our competitive advantages. Nations like China, India and Singapore are doing a better job of generating the scientists and engineers needed to compete in the global economy.

I joined the Board of Education earlier this year amid a renewed sense of urgency around this subject, coming mainly from the leadership of the state's technology community which committed itself to working with the major stakeholders in public education to create a more globally competitive education delivery system for our state's public schools-with particular emphasis on math and science instruction.

Because Massachusetts cannot be complacent with our excellent results by restricting comparison of our system and our students' performance with that of the 49 other states, we look forward to an assessment in which we compete head-to-head with our global economic and educational competition. In a unanimous vote in August, the Massachusetts Board directed the Department of Education to enroll the state in the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) program, which will benchmark the achievement of Massachusetts students against their peers in other countries. The vote by the Board is critical to laying the foundation for a math and science education strategy that will help us reach our goal of creating a world-class education system to benefit our teachers, students and employers.

Last month, the Board of Education voted to strengthen the MCAS graduation standard in an effort to close the college and workforce readiness gap for our graduates starting in 2010. It's important to recognize that while the 10th grade standard will increase from a passing score of 220 to 240, students who score between those scores still can graduate by completing an educational proficiency plan.

I believe that MCAS is an essential tool in our educational toolbox-but not the only one. While MCAS alone has changed student performance for the better, the global changes occurring around us require us to move beyond MCAS and start discussing the next level of transforming our education system.

With our global competitors as a backdrop, the leadership of the state's technology community has committed to support a collaborative leadership strategy for invigorating the pipeline of technology employers by focusing on the importance of early math and science education.

The fundamental mission of these efforts is focused around recruiting, training and supporting the next generation of teachers. We need a system that assures teachers are properly equipped with the necessary content training so when they arrive in the classroom they have the skills and confidence needed to excite kids about learning, especially math and science. We need a system that assures teachers are supported in the classroom and that we have a strategic, statewide, high quality system for teacher professional development. The professional development programs teachers can access should be relevant and related to the changes going on in the world regardless of the district that they choose or are hired to work in. Teachers deserve improved professional environments and career paths, and stronger connections to-and coordinated support from-the private sector.

Competition within the public education system created by the 1993 Reform Act is working. Charter schools create unique and productive professional environments where teachers, administrators, and students thrive. So do pilot schools in Boston, as do Horace Mann charter schools. The environments these public schools create and have proved are working should be supported and replicated throughout the state.

And, we must work to empower principals to run their schools in innovative ways and work to ensure they have the proper training to meet those new responsibilities.

As we look back, we have much to celebrate. Massachusetts' students are commonly recognized as the best performers in the nation. And it seems that all the major stakeholders are prepared to work to make Massachusetts public education even better.

In a real way, we are now called to reinvent the Massachusetts public education system all over again.

Chairman Anderson reported that the Board will initiate a search process for Commissioner Driscoll's successor. He also said the Board will hold its monthly meetings in locations across the Commonwealth, starting in January. He will announce meeting locations at the December meeting.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Driscoll shared with the Board a policy statement from the Council of Chief State School Officers on reauthorization of No Child Left Behind/ESEA. He said the Board can play an important national role in the reauthorization. Commissioner Driscoll also congratulated Upper Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical High School for its wind energy program, which has recently gained national attention.

#### Approval of the Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 24, 2006 regular meeting, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 1. Educator Preparation, Licensure and Professional Development: Improving Mathematics Teaching and Learning

At past meetings, the Board has discussed transforming the system for preparing and licensing teachers and strengthening the existing educator workforce through high quality professional development. This month, the Board discussed current and proposed action steps to improve mathematics teaching and learning.

Commissioner Driscoll recommended that two actions be considered: first, increasing the mathematics requirement of the education licensure test (MTEL) for “generalist teachers” at the elementary level, and secondly, specifying more clearly in the Board’s educator licensure regulations the content expectations in mathematics for preparation of these prospective teachers.

Board members expressed support for the Commissioner’s recommendations and requested information about the timetable for implementing the changes, which the Commissioner said he would provide. The Board plans to discuss specific proposals relating to preparation, licensure, and ongoing professional development for elementary and special education teachers with respect to mathematics at its December meeting.

# 2. Board of Education Budget Proposal for FY 2008

Commissioner Driscoll presented a draft budget proposal for FY 2008 based on discussions with the Board's budget committee. The proposed budget represents an 8.7% overall increase, or $352 million, of which $194 million is for Chapter 70 funding. Board member Henry Thomas said he would advocate for the Department to provide support for schools to get parents more engaged in their children’s education. Based on the discussion at this month's meeting, Department staff will refine the budget proposal and bring it back to the Board for a final vote in December.

# 3. School and District Performance

Following up on its initial discussion at last month's meeting, the Board discussed the status of thirteen schools that were identified as underperforming in the 2000, 2002 and 2003 state review cycles. With respect to four of the schools - the English High School in Boston, Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield, Academy Middle School in Fitchburg and John J. Duggan Middle School in Springfield - Commissioner Driscoll recommended a vote of chronic underperformance.

Chairman Anderson proposed that the Board defer action on the recommended determination of chronic underperformance. He proposed an alternative approach under which the schools would adopt a pilot school model, promoting greater school autonomy and collaboration for improvement while also complying with the stricter accountability expectations that would accompany a determination of chronic underperformance. The new pilot schools would be established and opened by September 2007.

Chairman Anderson introduced a panel invited to address the Board on the success of pilot school initiatives. NicoleBahnam of the Boston Community Leadership Academy, Bill Bourbeau of the Fitchburg Art Academy Pilot School, and Tom Scott of Mass Partners each commented on their experience with pilot schools.

The Board agreed to postpone the vote on the four schools recommended for chronic underperformance until its December meeting, giving each of the schools the opportunity to build consensus on the notion of becoming a pilot school. The Board asked the Commissioner to take an active role in working with each of the four schools, and to report back at its December meeting.

With respect to the nine other schools in this cohort, the Board discussed the Commissioner’s recommendation to declare two schools (in Holyoke and Lynn) not underperforming and to retain seven schools (in Fall River, Springfield, Holyoke, Boston and Lawrence) in underperforming status.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1J and 603 CMR 2.03, and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby declare the that the following two schools are no longer considered to be underperforming schools, based on their having demonstrated both significant gains in student performance and the conditions needed to sustain quality improvement efforts:**

**Maurice A. Donahue Elementary School (Holyoke)**

**E.J. Harrington Elementary School (Lynn)**

**Further, that the Board encourage the schools and their school districts to continue implementing improvement strategies that will lead to further gains in student performance in the future.**

The vote was unanimous.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1J and 603 CMR 2.03, and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby retain as underperforming the following seven schools:**

**Laurel Lake Elementary School (Fall River)**

**Gerena Community School (Springfield)**

**Liberty Elementary School (Springfield)**

**John Lynch Middle School (Holyoke)**

**Lucy Stone Elementary School (Boston)**

**Arlington Elementary School (Lawrence)**

**Arlington Middle School (Lawrence)**

**Further, that the Board direct each school and its school district to continue implementing improvement strategies that will result in each school reaching or exceeding student performance targets, and direct the Department to maintain oversight of each school’s progress in improving academic performance.**

The vote was unanimous.

The Board also had a discussion on the plans to improve student performance submitted by twelve schools that were identified as underperforming in the 2004 and 2006 review cycles. All twelve school plans respond to the criteria in the regulations on underperforming schools and school districts that the Board adopted in October. The twelve schools (in Chicopee, Gill-Montague, Holbrook, Randolph, Springfield, Westfield, and Worcester) will each receive implementation support from the Department over the next 24 months.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1J and 603 CMR 2.03, and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby accept the plans for improving student performance submitted by the following schools:**

***2004 cohort***

**S.A.F.E. (Springfield Academy for Excellence) – Springfield**

**Brightwood Elementary School – Springfield**

**Worcester East Middle School – Worcester**

**Accelerated Learning Lab Lower School – Worcester**

**Accelerated Learning Lab Upper School – Worcester**

***2006 cohort***

**Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School – Chicopee**

**Great Falls Middle School – Gill-Montague**

**South Middle School – Westfield**

**Holbrook Junior-Senior High School – Holbrook**

**Randolph Community Middle School – Randolph**

**Lincoln Elementary School – Springfield**

**Samuel Bowles Elementary School – Springfield**

The vote was unanimous.

# 4. Proposed Technical Amendments to Special Education Regulations (603 CMR 28.00)

The federal special education law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA) was reauthorized in December 2004, and new federal regulations took effect on October 13, 2006. The Board discussed amending the state Special Education Regulations, 603 CMR 28.00, to update citations to the federal special education law. Commissioner Driscoll said even though these changes are technical rather than substantive, the state Administrative Procedure Act requires the Board to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, §1B and G.L. c. 71B, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, §3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to 603 CMR 28.00 (Special Education Regulations), as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments update citations to the federal special education law and make typographical corrections.**

The vote was unanimous. Following the comment period, the Board will take a final vote on the amendments in February 2007.

# 5. Charter Schools

The Board discussed an amendment to the charter of the Conservatory Lab Charter School, to modify its leadership structure so that both the executive director and the principal of the school would report directly to the school's board of trustees. Under the Charter School Regulations, 603 CMR 1.11(1), the Board of Education must approve major changes in the material terms of a school's charter, including changes to the school's leadership structure.

**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 Conservatory Lab Charter School (modification of leadership structure) as presented by the Commissioner.

The vote was unanimous.

# 6. Approval of Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $683,408 for K-12 programs through: Special Education/Universally Designed Technology (federal funds); Community Service Learning (federal); Vocational Technical Education (state) and Charter School Dissemination (federal). The Board also voted to approve grants totaling $3,126,364 in state funds for adult education programs. This additional funding for adult basic education was appropriated through the economic stimulus bill that was enacted earlier this year. The adult education grants include $2,299,414 for increases to grants previously awarded, and $826,950 in new grants. Most of this funding goes to community adult learning centers to expand adult basic education and English as a second language (ESL) services for students on waiting lists.

**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 11:40 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