# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# December 19, 2006

**9:05 a.m. – 12:15 p.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, Boston

**Harneen Chernow,** Jamaica Plain

**Thomas E. Fortmann,** Lexington

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

**Patricia Plummer**, Chancellor, Board of Higher Education, by Clantha McCurdy, designee

**Roberta Schaefer**, Worcester

**Sandra Stotsky,** Brookline

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

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

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

## Statements from the Public

* Alan Safran of the MATCH Charter School addressed the Board on the MATCH Charter School.
* Reverend Gregory Groover of the African Methodist Episcopal Church addressed the Board on the Uphams Corner Charter School.
* Michael Mayo of the Uphams Corner Charter School addressed the Board on the Uphams Corner Charter School.
* Edward Cook of the Uphams Corner Charter School addressed the Board on the Uphams Corner Charter School.
* Christopher Binns of the Uphams Corner Charter School addressed the Board on the Uphams Corner Charter School.
* A student of Uphams Corner Charter School read the letter of Jasmine Howell, a former Uphams Corner Charter School student.
* Shaquise Ellie, a student from the Uphams Corner Charter School, addressed the Board on the Uphams Corner Charter School.

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Christopher R. Anderson opened the meeting by welcoming Board member Sandra Stotsky, who was recently appointed to the Board. Chairman Anderson also welcomed Dr. Clantha McCurdy of the Board of Higher Education, designee of Chancellor Patricia Plummer.

The Chairman provided an overview of the search process the Board will use for the selection of a new Commissioner. Commissioner David Driscoll announced in October that he plans to retire at the end of August 2007. The Chairman said he will appoint a committee of the Board that will work with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) on the search.

Chairman Anderson said he anticipates a transparent process and hopes the Board will select a new Commissioner by June 2007. He plans to present more details about the search process at the January meeting of the Board, which will be held at the Microsoft Corporation in Waltham. Chairman Anderson also announced the March Board meeting will be held at the Mason School in Roxbury.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Driscoll distributed copies of *The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce* to the Board. He discussed his service on the commission and encouraged the Board to consider the report and its recommendations at a future meeting.

As part of a grant from the National Governors Association to increase college readiness, the Department of Education and Board of Higher Education have commissioned transit advertisements and a short video designed to encourage students to go to college. The Commissioner displayed the ads for the Board.

#### Approval of the Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 28, 2006 regular meeting, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 1. Expanded Learning Time

The Board discussed the state-funded Expanded Learning Time initiative that is now in its first year of implementation. Throughout the country there have been varied attempts to extend learning time by adding after-school programs or otherwise. The Massachusetts initiative requires two important commitments: first, that the additional time must be significant (at least a 25-30% increase in time) and must benefit 100% of the students, and second, that the state must provide enough funding to assure that the changes will be made and that they are systemic. The initial allocation of $1300 per pupil is substantial enough to allow for strong programming options.

Chairman Anderson introduced a panel, led by Chris Gabrieli of Mass 2020, who was instrumental in establishing the ELT initiative. He was joined by Nancy Mullen, principal of the Kuss School in Fall River, Colleen Lewis, a literacy coach from the King School in Cambridge, and Joan Connolly, Superintendent of the Malden Public Schools. Chris Gabrieli provided an overview of the ELT program, and then the school and district representatives described the positive impact that the extra time has had on teaching and learning in their schools. Board members commended the participants and expressed support for evaluating and expanding the initiative.

# 2. Board of Education Budget Proposal for FY 2008

The Board discussed its FY08 budget proposal. The proposed budget, which was initially reviewed at the November meeting, includes funding for a number of new initiatives as well as increases to current programs based on inflation and funding formulas. Board member Thomas Fortmann said he is pleased with the overall budget proposal, but would like to see increased funding, beyond the level recommended, for math teacher improvements and professional development. Commissioner Driscoll said he expects the Legislature may address these issues in the context of Chapter 70.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, § 1A, approve the FY 2008 budget proposal, and authorize the Commissioner to transmit the budget proposal to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Education, and the Secretary of Administration and Finance.**

The vote was unanimous. The Commissioner will transmit the budget proposal to the Administration and the Legislature.

# 3. School and District Accountability System: Recommendations on Four Schools Considered for Chronic Underperformance

At the November meeting, the Board considered a Commonwealth Pilot School alternative for four schools, in lieu of a declaration of chronic underperformance. This recommendation has spurred great interest in the districts under consideration (Boston, Fitchburg and Springfield) as well as across the state and beyond.

The Commonwealth Pilot School model draws on the successful experience of existing pilot schools, but with some significant additions. The Board’s intent for the Commonwealth Pilot Schools is to promote greater school autonomy while also complying with the stricter accountability expectations that would accompany a declaration of chronic underperformance.

Representatives from the three districts addressed the Board at its meeting this month. Superintendents Michael Contompasis of Boston, Andre Ravenelle of Fitchburg, and Joseph Burke of Springfield each expressed interest in pursuing the option of converting the schools in question into Commonwealth Pilot Schools. The Board also heard from three of the principals of the schools in question: Jonathan Swan of the John J. Duggan Middle School in Springfield, Kevin McCaskill of the Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield, and Steve Silverman of the Academy Middle School in Fitchburg. The three union representatives also addressed the Board on the proposal: Tim Collins of the Springfield Education Association, Bill Bourbeau of the Fitchburg Teachers Association, and Richard Stutman of the Boston Teachers Union.

In light of the expressed interest in pursuing the Commonwealth Pilot School option, the Board deferred action on the pending motion to declare the schools chronically underperforming until at least February 2007. Chairman Anderson asked the Commissioner to present an update to the Board in January. At the February meeting, the Board will consider the districts’ proposals to convert the four schools into Commonwealth Pilot Schools.

# 4. Graduation Rate as an Element of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Calculation under No Child Left Behind Act

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to report graduation rates for each high school, based on the percentage of students, measured from the beginning of high school, who graduate from high school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years. The Commissioner handed out a brief overview and told the Board that he will present a proposal at the January meeting on how graduation rates will factor into calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress.

# 5. Mathematics Improvement Initiatives: Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) Mathematics Subtest

As part of the strategy to improve mathematics teaching and learning at the elementary level, the Board discussed revising the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) to include a mathematics subtest on the General Curriculum exam for elementary and special education teachers. The Department would conduct outreach, technical assistance and test development in 2007 and the new General Curriculum test would become operational in July 2008.

Board member Henry Thomas said he supports of the proposal but he is concerned that implementing the new test in July of 2008 may not allow enough time for prospective teachers to prepare for the changes. Board member Ann Reale suggested that the Commissioner send sample math questions from the MTEL to Board members for their review. Commissioner Driscoll agreed to do so. Board member Roberta Schaefer then moved, and the Board agreed, to amend the original motion to vote on the Commissioner’s recommendation this month while reserving the option to reconsider the implementation date of the revised test.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that that the Board of Education, in accordance with Mass. General Laws c. 71, § 38G, approve the revisions to the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL), as presented by the Commissioner. The revisions strengthen the mathematics component of the General Curriculum examination for candidates for licensure as elementary teachers and teachers of children with special needs at the elementary level. The Board may reconsider the implementation date for these revisions to the MTEL after reviewing information from the Commissioner about the mathematics questions on the General Curriculum examination.**

The vote was unanimous.

# Mathematics Improvement Initiatives: Proposed Amendments to Educator Licensure and Preparation Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00 (Mathematics Standards for Generalist Teachers)

The Board deferred this item and intends to address it at the January meeting.

# 7. Amendments to Regional School District Regulations (603 CMR 41.00)

The Board deferred this item and intends to address it at the January meeting.

# 8. Charter Schools

The Board had an initial discussion of the renewal of the charter for the Uphams Corner Charter School. Commissioner Driscoll recommended non-renewal of the charter based on the school’s performance record. He said that while the school has made some improvements, the students’ academic performance and turnover rate are particularly troubling. Chairman Anderson requested that the Commissioner bring back for the Board’s consideration a list of conditions that the school would have to meet if the charter were to be renewed. The Board will vote on this charter renewal at the January meeting.

The Board deferred discussing the requested extended loan term for Global Learning Charter School.

# 9. Approval of Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $2,455,424 under the following programs: Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Programs for Students with Disabilities ($1,136,657 – state funds); Gifted and Talented Services/School Year ($583,282 – state funds); Gifted and Talented Services/Summer ($157,985 – state funds); Academic Support/School Year ($99,500 – state funds); Academic Support/Summer ($398,000 – state funds); School Health Leadership Institute ($40,000 – federal funds); and Local Wellness Grant ($40,000 – federal funds).

**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 12:15 p.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