# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# March 27, 2007

**9:10 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.**

**Murphy School**

**1 Worrell Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts**

Members of the Board of Education Present:

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

**Ann J. 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 F. Plummer**, Chancellor, Board of Higher Education, by Clantha McCurdy, designee

**Sandra L. Stotsky,** Brookline

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

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

Member of the Board of Education Absent:

**Roberta R. Schaefer**, Worcester

Chairman Christopher R. Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Christopher R. Anderson opened the meeting by thanking the Murphy School for hosting this month's Board meeting. Chairman Anderson said that the Board is meeting at the Murphy School, a host school for the Boston Teacher Residency Program, to focus on the critical phase of teaching known as induction.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Driscoll introduced Carrie Conaway, the newly hired Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation for the Department of Education.

#### Approval of the Minutes

Commissioner Driscoll said that he had two additions to the minutes of the February 2007 meeting to reflect comments made by Board member Sandra Stotsky.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 27, 2007 regular meeting, as amended by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 1. Presentation on Boston Teacher Residency Program

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Michael Contompasis, Murphy Principal Mary Russo, Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) Program Director Jesse Solomon, and several BTR participants gave a brief presentation and answered questions about the program and its successes. This in-district teacher-training program is modeled after the medical residency program. During the 13-month BTR program, Teacher Residents co-teach with a mentor teacher in one of Boston's public schools and participate in master's level coursework. Teacher Residents earn an initial teaching license in their primary content area and a master's degree in education from the University of Massachusetts/Boston. They also work toward dual licensure in special education. More information about the BTR is available at [www.bpe.org/btr](http://www.bpe.org/btr%20) . Chairman Anderson congratulated the Boston Public Schools on its BTR program. He said the presentation on the BTR model would stimulate broader discussion.

Jill Berg, a member of the Teachers 21 "Working Group for Educator Excellence," gave a brief presentation on H. 451, An Act to Ensure Educator Quality, which is pending in the Legislature.

# 2. Commissioner's Priorities

Commissioner Driscoll said this is an opportune time to discuss educator quality priorities for the Board and the Department, in order to frame policy work for the next five months as well as outline some longer-range plans. Critical initiatives that the Board is scheduled to discuss in the near future include:

* Improving the system for training, preparing, licensing and recertifying educators, and revising the regulations as needed;
* Updating the statewide professional development plan for educators; and
* Considering the elements of a comprehensive system of recruitment, induction, mentoring, evaluation, and ongoing professional growth of educators.

Board Member Tom Fortmann asked Commissioner Driscoll if he could provide a summary of the current status of approved programs and perhaps do a survey of teachers on their experiences with approved programs. The Board will have a more in-depth discussion of the initiatives outlined by the Commissioner at a future meeting.

# 3. Four Schools Considered for Commonwealth Pilot School Status

The Board discussed granting Commonwealth Pilot School status to four schools. Chairman Anderson recommended in November that the Board consider a Commonwealth Pilot School alternative for four schools (the English High School in Boston, Academy Middle School in Fitchburg, and Duggan Middle School and Putnam Vocational-Technical High School in Springfield), in lieu of a declaration of chronic underperformance. 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.

The school faculties at each of the four schools voted by a greater than two-thirds margin to pursue Commonwealth Pilot School status. Each school formed a design team consisting of the principal, faculty, central office administrators, parents, and community representatives, and submitted an initial design proposal to the Department in February. Based on review of the initial proposals, the Department asked each school to make some revisions.

Superintendents Michael Contompasis (Boston), Andre Ravenelle (Fitchburg) and Joseph Burke (Springfield) presented the plans and responded to questions from the Board about the change process, reading levels of incoming high school students, school culture and expectation relating to behavior, family engagement, and other matters. The superintendents expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to transform these schools into Commonwealth Pilot Schools. They thanked the Board and Department of Education and the Center for Collaborative Education, a Boston-based nonprofit organization, for their ongoing support. Commissioner Driscoll said that after the Board approves Commonwealth Pilot School status, the four schools will proceed with implementation planning, including setting school calendars, selecting staff, establishing the governing board for each school, filling leadership positions, refining curricular plans and materials, and preparing for summer professional development activities.

Chairman Anderson noted there is growing interest in the Commonwealth Pilot School model, both within and outside of Massachusetts. He said the Board and Department of Education plan to sponsor a conference on Commonwealth Pilot Schools later this spring.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, upon recommendation of the Commissioner and in lieu of a designation of chronic underperformance in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1J and 603 CMR 2.03, hereby accept the proposals from the following four schools to be designated as Commonwealth Pilot Schools:**

**The English High School (Boston)**

**Putnam Vocational Technical High School (Springfield)**

**Academy Middle School (Fitchburg)**

**John J. Duggan Middle School (Springfield)**

**Further, that the Board direct the school and district leaders to continue to work with the Commissioner to implement their Commonwealth Pilot School plans in accord with the applicable regulations and guidelines in order to improve the academic performance of students at each of the schools. The Commissioner shall report to the Board on the progress of each Commonwealth Pilot School twice each year, starting in the fall of 2007.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 4. Recommended High School Core Program of Studies for College- and Career-Readiness

Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus and Department administrator Stafford Peat updated the Board on the National Governors Association (NGA) High School Honor States Grant and focused on a key initiative to increase the college- and career-readiness of high school graduates: the proposed High School Core Program of Studies, or MassCore. The recommended core program of studies complements the existing standards in the curriculum frameworks and provides a common set of course and credit expectations. Deputy Commissioner Nellhaus responded to questions from Board members about high school mathematics instruction; whether MassCore should be recommended, mandated, or coupled with incentives; possible expansion of the list to include life skills and financial literacy; and the relationship of MassCore to state college admission requirements set by the Board of Higher Education. Commissioner Driscoll said he would invite public comment on the proposed High School Core Program of Studies and bring it back to the Board at a future meeting for further consideration and a vote of endorsement.

Chairman Anderson said MassCore demands that the K-12 system and higher education unify around goals, curriculum, and the preparation of teachers who will be effective at preparing students for success in college and careers. He commended Commissioner Driscoll for working to unify the system. Chairman Anderson added that he would be interested in public comment on whether MassCore should be mandatory or voluntary.

# 5. Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $587,719 under the following programs: Special Education Support: Building Reading Comprehension Strategies ($80,000 - federal funds); increases to two grants for Adult Basic Education for Incarcerated Adults ($12,719 - state funds); and Transition to Full-Day Kindergarten, Round 2 ($495,000 - state 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 11:35 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