# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# April 24, 2007

**9:10 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

**Ipswich High School**

**134 High Street, Ipswich, 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

**Sandra L. Stotsky,** Brookline

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

Members of the Board of Education Absent:

**Roberta R. Schaefer**, Worcester

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

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 reading a citation to student Board member Trevor Frederick, acknowledging his dedication and commitment over the past year. Trevor, who will be graduating from Ipswich High School, has served with distinction as the elected chair of the state Student Advisory Council and as a member of the Board of Education for the past year. Trevor’s last meeting will be in June when the newly elected student Board member will be announced. Chairman Anderson also introduced Ipswich Superintendent Richard Korb and High School Principal Barry Cahill who welcomed the Board to Ipswich.

Chairman Anderson gave an update on the search for a new commissioner. He said that the group assisting the Board with the search, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), will meet with members of the Board and the education community in the coming months to discuss the criteria for a new commissioner.

Chairman Anderson discussed appointing Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus as Acting Commissioner, beginning on September 1, 2007. Jeff will be replacing Commissioner Driscoll who, after nine years in the role, has announced that he plans to retire effective August 31st. Board members commended Deputy Commissioner Nellhaus for his work on behalf of students.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education appoint Deputy Commissioner Jeffrey Nellhaus as Acting Commissioner of Education, to serve in that capacity starting on September 1, 2007, until a permanent Commissioner is appointed and takes office.**

The vote was unanimous.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Driscoll discussed the joint statement on the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act that was published recently by NASBE, the National Governors Association (NGA), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). He said the joint statement is well aligned with the Board’s initiatives, in particular those relating to teacher quality.

#### Approval of the Minutes

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

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

The vote was unanimous.

# 1. National Perspective on High School Reform Initiatives from Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, Inc.

The Board heard a presentation from Michael Cohen, president of Achieve, Inc., on high school reform efforts nationally and in Massachusetts. He distributed and spoke about the report that Achieve and Jobs for the Future produced, *High Standards and High Graduation Rates: Moving Forward on a Dual Agenda in Massachusetts*. The report is available online at: <http://www.achieve.org/node/845>. Mr. Cohen also talked about the Algebra II common assessment in which Massachusetts and eight other states are participating. It is the largest multi-state effort so far to create a common test that will improve curriculum and instruction, allow meaningful comparisons among states, and provide timely information to high schools and students about college readiness. The Algebra II test is expected to be available to schools in the spring of 2008.

Mr. Cohen also discussed MassCore, the recommended high school core program of studies that the Board discussed and sent out for public comment at its March meeting. Board members asked Mr. Cohen questions about how MassCore compares to efforts in other states around the country. Board members also discussed the mathematics content in MassCore and the integration between MassCore and higher education.

Following the discussion, Chairman Anderson thanked Mr. Cohen for his presentation and announced that he has asked Board member Harneen Chernow to chair the task force he is forming to work with the Department to review graduation rate data and consider recommendations for increasing the graduation rate. The task force includes representatives from various educational organizations. The list of task force members will be posted on the Board’s website.

# 2. Educator Preparation and Licensure: Elements of a New System

At its March meeting, the Board discussedthe Boston Teacher Residency Program. This month, the Board discussed how to transform educator preparation and licensure as part of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen educator effectiveness. Commissioner Driscoll and Associate Commissioner Bob Bickerton presented a draft report to the Board with some key elements of the proposed new system. The report is based on a review of the research and the Department’s ongoing work with a wide range of constituencies, including the Board’s Educational Personnel Advisory Council. Commissioner Driscoll stated that three conditions are essential to the success of a new system: adequate and strategically directed funding, careful coordination, and willingness of school districts and educator preparation institutions to assume new roles and responsibilities in partnership with the Department.

Board member Sandra Stotsky suggested asking teachers what they think they need, as a part of the process. Board member Ann Reale added that it might be useful also to contact teachers who have recently left the profession. Associate Commissioner Bickerton said the Department is inviting educators to its upcoming forums on the topic as well as conducting surveys. Board member Harneen Chernow recommended caution about giving school districts, as employers, a role in licensure and also noted that a second license based on professional development rather than a master’s degree might be less advantageous to teachers.

Chairman Anderson said the educator effectiveness strategy needs to be systemic and interdependent since the state, schools and districts, and institutions of higher education all have important roles in it. He asked the Commissioner to prepare a framework on how best to proceed. Commissioner Driscoll said the Department will continue working with the professional organizations and other partners in order to present more detailed recommendations and proposed action steps at a future meeting.

# 3. Amendments to Educator Licensure Regulations (603 CMR 7.00, Elementary Mathematics Standards)

In January 2007, the Board voted to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to the Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval (603 CMR 7.00) for the purpose of strengthening preparation and licensing of elementary and special education teachers to teach mathematics. The proposed changes would clearly specify the subject matter knowledge requirements in mathematics, focusing on outcomes rather than on a list of arts and sciences coursework.

Based on the comments the Department received, Commissioner Driscoll recommended a few changes in the amendments. The Board discussed the new regulations, which will be reflected in the Massachusetts Tests of Educator Licensure (MTEL) by means of a revised general curriculum test with a separately scored mathematics subtest as of January 2009. Commissioner Driscoll commented that by strengthening teachers’ knowledge and skills, the Board has taken a significant step to improve students’ proficiency in mathematics.

Board member Tom Fortmann said that he believes teachers need to take more math in college and that the regulations should reflect this by requiring 9-12 semester hours of mathematics as originally proposed. He said he had wanted to make the motion to amend the proposed changes, but that he recognizes he does not have the necessary number of votes. Board member Pat Plummer said she disagrees with requiring 9-12 semester hours of mathematics and that the Board needs to leave such decisions to higher education institutions. She added that strengthening the MTEL will likely bring about the desired results.

Board member Sandra Stotsky said she was hoping to have the results of the Department’s survey of elementary teacher preparation programs along with their course syllabi. She then said that she would like to make the motion to include the 9-12 semester hours of mathematics in the regulations as a requirement.

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

**MOVED: that the regulations be further amended by adding, to the end of section 7.06(7)(b)(2)(c) as proposed by the Commissioner, the phrase, “and typically covered in 9 - 12 semester hours of courses, that would meet with the Department’s approval.”**

The motion failed by a vote of 3-4. Chairman Anderson and Board members Pat Plummer, Ann Reale, and Harneen Chernow voted in opposition.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, § 1B and c. 71, § 38G, and having solicited and reviewed public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, § 3, hereby adopt the proposed amendments to the Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner (amendments dated April 23, 2007). The amendments address mathematics requirements for elementary and special education licenses.**

The vote was unanimous.

# 4. District Accountability: Status Report

The Board has addressed schoolaccountability at several recent meetings. At this month’s meeting, the Board discussed district accountability, including the 27 school districts currently in corrective action status and how the Department might target its resources for intervention and assistance to address the most pressing needs. Associate Commissioner Juliane Dow reported that 98 of the 121 schools that currently qualify for *Commonwealth Priority School* designation are located in nine of the 27 corrective action districts.

Commissioner Driscoll and Associate Commissioner Dow said that the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) has to date referred only one of the nine lowest-performing districts (Holyoke) to the Board for further action. Commissioner Driscoll and Chairman Anderson said the Board will have a more in-depth discussion on the district accountability system at the May meeting.

**5. Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Vocational-Technical Education (603 CMR 4.00, Licensure of Administrators)**

The Board discussed soliciting public comment on the proposed amendments to Regulations on Vocational-Technical Education. Commissioner Driscoll said he is proposing amendments to the vocational-technical education regulations in order to increase the pool of qualified candidates for licensure as vocational-technical superintendents and principals. The proposed amendments would align the licensure requirements for vocational-technical administrators with those for administrators in academic or comprehensive schools and districts, while taking into account the specialized knowledge that vocational-technical administrators should have.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, §§ 1B, 1D and 1F and chapter 74, § 2, hereby authorize 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 the Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments concern standards for licensure of vocational-technical superintendents and principals.**

The vote was unanimous. Commissioner Driscoll will bring the regulations back to the Board in June for final action.

# 6. Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $412,601 under the following programs: Partnership for Online Professional Development ($374,495 – federal funds), and Adult Basic Education Program and Staff Development Regional Support Centers ($38,106 – 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 11:45 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