# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# May 22, 2007

**9:05 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.**

**Bridgewater State College**

**Maxwell Library, 10 Shaw Road**

**Bridgewater, 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

**Roberta R. Schaefer**, Worcester

**Sandra L. 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.

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Christopher Anderson opened the meeting by noting that the Board is meeting at Bridgewater State College at the invitation of its president, Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, who is serving also as Governor Patrick's education advisor. Dr. Mohler-Faria welcomed the Board and introduced Dr. Anna Bradfield, Dean of the School of Education and Allied Studies, who gave a brief presentation on Bridgewater State College's work to prepare and support teachers and students, particularly in science and mathematics.

Chairman Anderson also updated the Board on the focus-group process for the commissioner search and the K-12 Education Strategy matrix that has been the subject of ongoing meetings of the Commonwealth's technology and education leadership.

#### Approval of the Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the April 24, 2007 regular meeting, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

### Science, Technology/Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Update

Ioannis Miaoulis, President of the Museum of Science, presented to the Board about the importance of technology and engineering in K-12 education. Massachusetts was the first state to include technology/engineering in its science curriculum framework. Dr. Miaoulis encouraged the Board to continue its support for technology/engineering in elementary and secondary schools, noting that it engages students in project-based learning and problem-solving, makes mathematics and science more relevant, and opens career opportunities. The Museum of Science is working with teachers, schools and higher education institutions in Massachusetts and in other states and countries to promote and support technology and engineering in K-12 education. The museum has posted resources for educators on its website at <http://www.mos.org/educators/>. Board members commended Dr. Miaoulis for his leadership and advocacy.

### Massachusetts PreK-12 Literacy Plan: Task Force Recommendations

The Board heard a presentation from members of the Massachusetts PreK-12 Literacy Task Force. With support from several national organizations, the Department convened and for the past year has been working with a broadly representative task force to consider ways to help all students achieve proficiency in English language development, reading and writing - foundational skills that are essential to success in mastering the content of all academic disciplines.

Cheryl Liebling, Director of the Department's Office of Reading, presented along with five members of the task force: Basan Nembirkow, Superintendent, Brockton Public Schools; Joanne Wilson-Keenan, Director of Reading, Springfield Public Schools; Elaine Bukowiecki, Assistant Professor of Literacy Education, Bridgewater State College; Marinel McGrath, President, Mass. Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development; and Cynthia Mata-Aguilar, Senior Project Director, Education Development Center.

Board member Thomas Fortmann expressed support for integrating literacy into all disciplines, and interest in receiving a similar report in the future about numeracy. Board member Sandra Stotsky recommended that teachers and principals should be asked about specific programmatic ideas and approaches that in their experience have strengthened literacy instruction. Chancellor Pat Plummer suggested consideration of a national credential for literacy coaches rather than creating a separate state license. Chairman Anderson noted that the Board will discuss the recommendations further at a future meeting.

### District Accountability System Review

The Board continued its discussion about potential changes to improve the state's system for identifying and providing assistance to school districts that fail to meet state performance standards. Dr. Joseph Rappa, Executive Director of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), and Associate Commissioner Juliane Dow and Lynda Foisy of the Department, led the discussion, which included an update on the targeted assistance the Department has been providing and funding in Holyoke, Winchendon, and Southbridge.

Commissioner Driscoll reported that there are currently 27 districts in corrective action. He also noted that 98 of the 121 Commonwealth Priority Schools are located in nine districts, of which only Holyoke is currently in underperforming status. The Commissioner said he expects to propose amendments to the Board’s regulations on underperforming districts to streamline the process and improve allocation of resources to districts in greatest need.

Dr. Rappa updated the Board on two districts that the Educational Management Audit Council has forwarded to the Board for consideration of underperformance: Gill-Montague and Haverhill. The Commissioner will make a recommendation on each of these two districts at a future meeting.

Board member Sandra Stotsky recommended that the Board hear from school administrators directly on suggestions for improving the state's district accountability system. She also requested that the Department develop and use a mechanism that would enable the Department and underperforming school districts to evaluate the services of their turn-around partners.

Chairman Anderson said many of the factors the Board and Department have identified for turn-around schools and districts should be in evidence in all schools and districts. He added that the pilot school model – empowered leadership among administrators and teachers, with accountability for results – shows great promise. The Board will review the district accountability system further at its June meeting.

### Approval of Extended Loan Term for Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School

The Board discussed a request for an extended loan term for Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School. State law permits a charter school to incur temporary debt in anticipation of receipt of funds but requires approval by the Board of Education of any repayment terms that exceed the duration of the school's charter. Neither the Commonwealth nor the Board or Department of Education has any liability for the loan and the extended term has no impact on any action the Board might choose to take in the future with respect to 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 the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School to enter into proposed loan agreements that extend beyond the term of the school’s current charter and are not to exceed thirty years. The Board’s approval is explicitly conditioned upon the inclusion of the language that follows in the loan agreements as executed by the school and its lender(s).**

**The [parties] explicitly acknowledge and agree that the Commonwealth, including but not limited to the Board and the Department of Education, has no liability for any portion of the loans and provides no representations or guarantees with respect to these loans. 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.

### Approval of Grants

The Board discussed grants totaling $1,994,500 under the following programs: Partnership for Online Professional Development ($124,500 - federal funds), 21st Century Community Learning Centers ($1,500,000 - federal funds) and Reading First ($370,000 - 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 12:20 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