# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

# June 26, 2007

**9:10 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.**

**AstraZeneca R & D Boston**

**35 Gatehouse Drive**

**Waltham, Massachusetts**

Members of the Board of Education Present:

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

**Harneen Chernow,** Jamaica Plain

**Ruth Kaplan,** Brookline

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

**Sandra L. Stotsky,** Brookline

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

**Zachary Tsetsos,** Chair, State Student Advisory Council

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

**Members of the Board of Education Absent:**

**Thomas E. Fortmann,** Lexington

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

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

#### Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Anderson opened the meeting by noting that the Governor recently announced his vision for education, which is very much in concert with the education/business working group that Chairman Anderson has convened. The Governor also announced on June 8th that Massachusetts has been accepted as a leadership state in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The Partnership is a national network of states backed by 30 leading businesses and organizations working to ensure that every child masters content standards as well as the skills and competencies needed to be engaged and productive citizens and employees in an increasingly competitive economy.

Chairman Anderson welcomed two new members to the Board this month: Ruth Kaplan of Brookline and Zachary Tsetsos, the newly elected chair of the State Student Advisory Council, and he extended his congratulations to Patricia Plummer on her re-appointment as Chancellor of Higher Education. He also updated the Board on the successful Pilot Schools conference that the Board and Department sponsored on May 31st in response to the great interest generated by the Board's initiative to establish Commonwealth Pilot Schools.

The Chairman congratulated two outstanding educators: Michael B. Flynn of the William E. Norris School in the Hampshire Regional School District, who is the Massachusetts 2008 Teacher of the Year; and Ann B. O'Halloran of the Albert Angier School in Newton, who is the 2007 Massachusetts *Preserve America* History Teacher of the Year. Both teachers were honored on June 21st, together with the six finalists and eight semifinalists for Teacher of the Year.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Driscoll announced that Massachusetts has received a $9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support newly created charter schools. The Commonwealth is one of ten states selected for this grant award. Additionally, he announced that Massachusetts has received a Wallace Foundation grant for leadership training.

Martha Welch, of AstraZeneca, welcomed the Board and commented on the importance of encouraging mathematics and science education through partnerships with schools.

#### Statements from the Public

* Larry Mays of the Office of Boston Mayor Thomas Menino addressed the Board concerning grant funds.
* Supt. Charles Lyons of Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational-Technical School, on behalf of the Mass. Association of Vocational Administrators, addressed the Board concerning MassCore.
* Barbara Wallace Grossman of Tufts University, on behalf of the Mass. Cultural Council, addressed the Board concerning MassCore.

#### Approval of the Minutes

Board member Sandra Stotsky requested to amend the minutes of the May meeting to include her comment recommending that the Board hear from school administrators directly on suggestions for improving the state's district accountability system as well as her recommendation that the Department develop and use a mechanism to enable the Department and underperforming school districts to evaluate the services of their turn-around partners. Chairman Anderson noted no objections from other members but some concerns about keeping the minutes of meetings brief. He suggested it would be useful to follow up on how the minutes are structured in the future.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the May 22, 2007 regular meeting, as amended.**

The vote was 8:0:1. Ruth Kaplan abstained.

### 1. Presentation on NFTE (National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship) and LIFT (Leadership Initiatives for Teaching and Technology)

The Board heard brief presentations on two innovative partnerships between education and the technology/business sector. The mission of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is to teach entrepreneurship to young people from low-income communities to enhance their economic productivity by improving their business, academic and life skills. A presentation was made to the Board by Christine Hall, Chair of the Mathematics Department at Excel High School in South Boston, Julie Stubbs, Development Manager of NFTE New England, and Chantry Romaine, a college sophomore and graduate of a NFTE course.

The presentation on LIFT, Leadership Initiatives for Teaching and Technology, was made to the Board by Jim Stanton, Director of the Technology Initiative for the Metro South/West Regional Employment Board, and Katie Clark, a teacher at Pollard School in Needham. LIFT is an innovative professional learning program for middle and high school science, technology, engineering and math teachers, which is designed to help teachers relate classroom curricula to authentic and relevant applications in the 21st century workplace. Chairman Anderson commented that these two programs demonstrate that connections to real life experiences have a transforming effect on teaching and learning, for both teachers and students.

### 2. State Professional Development Initiatives

The Board had an initial discussion about the process and framework for updating the state plan for professional development, which was last revised in 2001. Commissioner Driscoll said the Department intends to work with stakeholders over the next year to prepare the new plan, which will be presented to the Board in the spring of 2008. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus noted that the Board's discussion of professional development is in the context of a larger discussion that the Board is engaged in regarding educator quality.

Chairman Anderson said that professional development is critically important; the updated plan should reflect the current needs of classroom teachers and should be a collaborative effort by all stakeholders and the Legislature. Chancellor Patricia Plummer said she intends to designate a staff person at the Board of Higher Education to work with the Department on the plan. Board members offered suggestions for consideration as the plan is updated, including clarifying the connections between state, district and individual professional development plans; minimizing paperwork; addressing special education and inclusion as well as English language learners; connecting professional development standards with preparation and licensure standards; and helping educators build cultural competency. Commissioner Driscoll said that with assistance from the Board's Educational Personnel Advisory Council, the Department will convene a broad-based steering committee to help review and revise the state professional development plan. Chairman Anderson suggested that the Commissioner and Board also consider policy recommendations for funding the new plan.

**3. District Accountability**

Earlier this spring the Board received reports from the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) on the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Haverhill Public Schools. The reports are based on reviews of those districts that the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) conducted.

Gill-Montague's Acting Superintendent Kenneth Rock and outgoing Superintendent Suzanne Gee gave the Board an overview of the district and its fiscal, structural and educational challenges, noting declining enrollments and resources, lack of educational leadership and rural isolation. In response to comments from Board members, Commissioner Driscoll stated that a Board vote on underperformance would permit fact-finding to commence. Chairman Anderson stated the students cannot wait; a designation of underperformance will bring additional help to the schools.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1K and 603 CMR 2.04 (5), and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby declare the Gill-Montague Regional School District to be an under-performing school district, and direct the Commissioner to appoint a fact-finding team to assess the reasons for the under-performance and whether the district has the capacity and willingness to implement effectively an improvement plan in partnership with the Department.**

**Further, that the Board, upon recommendation of the Commissioner, defer action on a decision of district underperformance regarding the Haverhill Public Schools.**

The vote was 4:1:1. Harneen Chernow voted in opposition and Ruth Kaplan abstained.

The Department will proceed with a fact-finding review and work with district officials at Gill-Montague to determine the next steps.

Addressing another item related to school and district accountability, Commissioner Driscoll and Senior Associate Commissioner Juliane Dow presented the Department's concept paper outlining an improved state support system to assist school districts that need help to improve student achievement. The concept provides stronger and more targeted supports for the Commissioner’s Districts (the nine largest and highest poverty districts, which include 80% of the schools currently designated as Commonwealth Priority Schools) and for Commonwealth Priority Districts, which would have next priority for state assistance with the help of a new system of educational services cooperatives. A Stakeholder Working Group of education leaders is working with the Department on various models of service delivery.

Commissioner Driscoll noted that issues related to district accountability are major challenges with which every state is struggling. He said that early in the fall, the Commissioner would bring to the Board a more detailed proposal for further consideration, with the goal of having a redesigned system of support fully developed and in place for the start of the 2008-09 school year. Chairman Anderson said that Board members might want to offer input in this process.

### 4. Amendments to Regulations on Vocational-Technical Education (Licensure of Administrators, 603 CMR 4.00)

In April, the Board voted to solicit public comment, under the Administrative Procedure Act, on proposed amendments to the Vocational-Technical Education Regulations. All of the comments the Department received were in support of the proposed amendments. Commissioner Driscoll said the amended regulations would streamline the licensure standards for vocational-technical administrators and coordinate the standards more closely with those for administrators in academic schools and districts. He recommended that the Board adopt the amendments.

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

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

The vote was unanimous.

**5. Update on MassCore Proposal**

The Board continued its discussion of MassCore, the recommended high school core program of studies for college- and career-readiness. In April the Board agreed to invite public comment on the MassCore proposal. The Department received many responses, which the Commissioner summarized and presented to the Board.

Commissioner Driscoll noted that many students say that more should be expected of them. He added that MassCore would establish a base, not limit what high schools offer. He emphasized that MassCore would be voluntary rather than mandatory. Chancellor Plummer noted that the rationale for this initiative is to give students a heads-up on what they need to get into state colleges. She suggested that technology/engineering courses should not count toward science credits yet because they do not yet count toward state and community college admissions requirements for science.

Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus proposed that the Board think about incentives for students to complete the core curriculum, and said he plans to meet with the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA) to understand their concerns and address them.

Chairman Anderson stated that the MassCore concept is part of an interconnected education strategy for Massachusetts, and that a longer school day and year may be needed, as well, for greater quality and breadth in courses. The Commissioner will continue to refine the draft and will bring the proposed MassCore back to the Board in the fall for further discussion and a vote.

### 6. Approval of Salary for Acting Commissioner

Under state law, the Board has authority to set the Commissioner's salary. The Board voted to approve the salary for the Acting Commissioner, as proposed by Chairman Anderson.

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

VOTED: that the Board of Education set the salary for Jeffrey Nellhaus as Acting Commissioner of Education at an annual rate of $175,000, effective September 1, 2007.

The vote was unanimous.

### 7. Non-Operating Schools

By statute, towns that do not operate their own public schools, generally because the town is small and is not a member of a regional school district, must request and receive approval annually from the Board to tuition their students to public schools in other towns.

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

**VOTED: that the following public school districts, in accordance with provisions of Chapter 71, sections 1, 4 and 6, be permitted not to maintain certain public schools for the school year 2007-2008 and to tuition their students to other school districts for said year.**

**School District Grades**

**Acushnet 9-12**

**Berkley 9-12**

**Clarksburg 9-12**

**Devens K-12**

**Erving 7-12**

**Farmington River Regional 7-12**

**(Otis/Sandisfield)**

**Florida 9-12**

**Gosnold**

**Cuttyhunk 9-12**

**Naushon Island PK-12**

**Granville 9-12**

**Hancock 7-12**

**South Hancock K-12**

**Monroe K-12**

**Mount Washington K-12**

**Nahant 7-12**

**New Ashford K-12**

**Richmond 9-12**

**Rowe 7-12**

**Savoy 6-12**

**Shirley 9-12**

**Truro 7-12**

**Tyringham K-12**

The vote was unanimous.

### 8. Approval of Grants and Authorization to Commissioner

### On a motion duly moved and seconded, it was

### VOTED: that the Board approve grants totaling $1,022,380 under the following program: Even Start Family Literacy ($1,022,380 - federal funds).

The vote was unanimous.

### On a motion duly moved and seconded, it was

**VOTED: that the Board authorize the Commissioner, in consultation with the Chairman, to act on behalf of the Board in approving grants between June 26, 2007 and the next regular meeting of the Board; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board at the next regular meeting on any grants that have been so approved.**

The vote was unanimous.

**9. Schedule for Regular Board Meetings through June 2008**

The proposed schedule for regular Board meetings from August 2007 through June 2008 is as follows:

**Board of Education Meeting Schedule: August 2007 - June 2008**

August 28, 2007

September 25, 2007

October 23, 2007

November 27, 2007

December 18, 2007

January 22, 2008

February 26, 2008

March 25, 2008

April 29, 2008

May 20, 2008

June 24, 2008

The meeting dates are all on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December, April, and May. All meetings will begin at 9:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

The August 28th meeting will be held at the Department of Education in Malden. Locations for other meetings will be posted in advance of each meeting.

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

VOTED: to approve the 2007-2008 schedule of meetings of the Massachusetts Board of Education.

The vote was unanimous.

The schedule will be posted on the Board’s website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/boedate.html>.

**On a motion duly moved 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 to the Board