Minutes of the Regular Meeting

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**June 25, 2008**

**1:05 p.m. – 4:25 p.m.**

**Massachusetts State Archives**

**220 Morrissey Blvd.**

**Boston, Massachusetts**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Paul Reville**, Chairman, Worcester

**Harneen Chernow**, Jamaica Plain

**Thomas E. Fortmann**, Lexington

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

**Sandra L. Stotsky**, Brookline

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

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Christopher R. Anderson**, Westford

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

Board member Harneen Chernow called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m., noting that Chairman Paul Reville would arrive shortly.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Chester welcomed incoming Board members Maura O. Banta of Melrose (the Board chair-designate) and Beverly A. Holmes of Springfield, who were in the audience, and the newly elected chair of the Student Advisory Council, Andrew “AJ” Fajnzylber from Brookline High School. The commissioner also recognized the newly-elected vice-chair of the Student Advisory Council, Danielle Damren of Westwood High School, who was in the audience. The three new Board members (Banta, Holmes, Fajnzylber) will begin their terms on July 1.

Commissioner Chester recognized Board member Christopher Anderson, who was not in attendance but whose term expires on June 30. The commissioner said he appreciated Mr. Anderson’s leadership as past chair of the Board and as a member, and said that Mr. Anderson was very helpful to him personally during his own transition to Massachusetts.

The commissioner congratulated Board Chairman Paul Reville and Board member Dana Mohler-Faria for their outstanding work on the Readiness Project report. The commissioner also recognized Ronald Honesty, the Department’s director of grants management, for his selection as recipient of the 2008 achievement award from the Boston chapter of the Association of Government Accountants.

Commissioner Chester publicly acknowledged the two winners of this year’s Teacher of the Year awards: George Watson, a Spanish teacher from Walpole High School, who was named the 2008-2009 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year; and David Mitchell, a History/Social Studies teacher from Masconomet Regional High School, who was named the 2008 *Preserve America* History Teacher of the Year. The commissioner said he is very proud of our teachers and the work that they do.

The commissioner said the Department is seeking nominations to the advisory councils to advise the commissioner and the Board on matters related to improving public education and student achievement. He invited Board members to encourage qualified candidates to apply. The commissioner also announced that he will appoint a working group this summer to make recommendations to him on amending the MCAS Performance Appeals process to include Science and Technology/Engineering, which is part of the high school graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2010. The commissioner said he will bring his recommendations to the Board in August or September, and with the Board’s approval, the proposed amendments will then be posted for public comment so the updated performance appeals process can be established during the 2008-09 school year.

Commissioner Chester referred Board members to the memorandum he distributed on conditions in the Greenfield Public Schools, and said he would keep Board members apprised of the situation.

Chairman Paul Reville arrived at the meeting at 1:20 p.m. He explained that he and Governor Deval Patrick had been meeting with the media after the morning release of the Readiness Project report.

**Comments from the Public**

* Alison Fraser, a parent from Marlborough, addressed the Board on the MCAS read-aloud accommodation.
* Kevin O’Reilly, a social studies teacher, addressed the Board on the MCAS History test.
* Mary Anne Saul, a retired teacher, addressed the Board on the MCAS History test.
* June Coutu, a retired teacher and former head of the Massachusetts Council of Social Studies, addressed the Board on the MCAS history test.
* Genoa Warner, a student who graduated this year from Dartmouth High School, addressed the Board on school libraries.
* Gerry Mroz, a parent from Melrose, addressed the Board on gifted education.
* Deborah Nathan, a parent from Randolph, addressed the Board on mathematics education in Randolph.

**Comments from the Chairman**

Chairman Reville said this would be his last meeting in the role of chairman, as he assumes the role of Secretary of Education on July 1. The chairman said that he has watched new Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell D. Chester closely over his first month on the job and talked to many people around the state, and he is proud of the work that Commissioner Chester has done since he started on the job.

Chairman Reville acknowledged the release of the Readiness Project report and distributed copies to members. The chairman said the Department and the Board are great partners in this work to translate the Governor’s vision into action.

The chairman noted that Board member Christopher Anderson was unable to attend the meeting due to a personal commitment, and said the Board would find an opportunity to honor him for his service. The chairman also welcomed new Board members Maura Banta (chair-designate), Beverly Holmes, and student Board member Andrew “AJ” Fajnzylber, who will begin their service on July 1. The chairman said that Ms. Banta brings the knowledge, skills, disposition, and respect for others that will make her a very effective chair. The chairman also said that Ms. Holmes brings great experience, expertise and accomplishment in the private sector, and a commitment to making education better for all students.

Chairman Reville announced that Board member Jeff Howard has graciously agreed to serve on the Commissioner’s working group on amending the MCAS Performance Appeals process to include Science and Technology/Engineering. The chairman also said the Board will schedule a retreat this summer to plan for the work that lies ahead.

Chairman Reville said that as he transitions out of the role of chairman, he has enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Board and the Department and appreciated the support of his colleagues. The chairman thanked Jeffrey Nellhaus, who served so well as acting commissioner, the new Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester, and others who have provided valuable assistance. The chairman said the wide range of opinion on this Board is one of its greatest strengths. Chairman Reville said the work that lies ahead, outlined in the Readiness Project report, is nothing less than reinvention of the education system for the 21st century, and it will require all hands on deck. The chairman said this work will be done in partnership with the Department and the Board, and the expertise of the Department will be critically important.

Board member Sandra Stotsky had to leave the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

**Approval of the Minutes**

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the May 20, 2008 regular meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Districts’ Plans for Commonwealth Priority Schools**

Chairman Reville noted that at the Board’s May meeting, the commissioner presented recommendations from the State Review Panels that had reviewed the District Plans for School Intervention submitted by the nine Commissioner’s Districts: Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester.

Commissioner Chester made a recommendation to the Board to accept the districts’ plans, with the understanding that he intends to review the current process and criteria for identifying and intervening in schools with low performance and to develop a system of accelerated technical support. He said the key question is whether the plans will improve student learning.

Commissioner Chester noted that the Department requested additional information from four of the districts since the May meeting, information which was provided to Board members as part of a supplemental briefing packet this month. He added that the Department is committed to monitoring results and providing service and support to the districts as they work with these 54 Commonwealth Priority Schools. The commissioner also said he would revisit the criteria by which the Department evaluates schools and districts relative to the system of support and capacity building. The commissioner noted that the volume of materials contained in the supplemental packet was meant to be responsive to members’ inquiries, and included a summary of each district’s Memorandum of Understanding, a summary of responses from teacher and administrator surveys, and responses to four specific questions.

Board member Thomas Fortmann said there has been good progress, and that he was impressed with the assembled panels, which included very capable people. Mr. Fortmann said he believes we have not used the process and panels to their full potential. He noted some of the surveys reported high confidence in school administrators, while in others the confidence level was low. Mr. Fortmann recommended that in the future the panels look more closely at leadership in schools.

Mr. Fortmann said the Department should look at math programs and their alignment to state standards and provide more guidance to districts. He said coaches seem generally weak in their qualifications, though there are some exceptions. Mr. Fortmann said he is pleased that some districts require coaches to take the MTEL exam relevant to the subject matter on which they will be coaching.

Board member Ruth Kaplan said the information provided by the Department was helpful. She said she supports the commissioner’s intent to review the accountability criteria. Ms. Kaplan said she does not favor labeling schools based on Adequate Yearly Progress. She said she hopes that the information contained in the surveys can be used in meaningful ways because the questions are so important.

Board member Dana Mohler-Faria said he supported the Commissioner’s recommendations and that they were very timely with respect to the Readiness Project. He said this is a real opportunity to review the criteria and make revisions as needed, based on experience as well as the work of the Readiness Project.

Board member Harneen Chernow said the process to identify Commonwealth Priority Schools and the 10 conditions were developed under a different Board and that it is timely to review them. Ms. Chernow said the surveys indicate a disconnect between the administrative perspective of what goes on in schools and teachers’ perspective.

Board member Zachary Tsetsos said it is important to also to keep in mind Supt. Carballo’s suggestion to clarify the criteria for moving schools out of underperforming status.

Board member Jeff Howard said that everything said by his colleagues resonated with him. He suggested that the Department consider ways to summarize the key elements and findings in a graphic display.

Chairman Reville said he sees this as data-driven policy making, which should be encouraged as we encourage data-driven instruction. The chairman said the Board needs to focus on matters of policy, and rely on the expertise of the commissioner and Department staff.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1J and 603 CMR 2.03, and upon recommendation of the Commissioner with the advice of the State Review Panels, hereby accept the *Plan for School Intervention* submitted by each of the following school districts to improve student performance in the Commonwealth Priority Schools in the district:**

* **Boston**
* **Brockton**
* **Fall River**
* **Holyoke**
* **Lawrence**
* **Lowell**
* **New Bedford**
* **Springfield**
* **Worcester**

**Further, that the Board request the Commissioner to report periodically to the Board on the districts’ progress in implementing their initiatives and improving student performance in the Commonwealth Priority Schools.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Readiness Project**

Chairman Reville led the Board in a discussion of the Governor’s Readiness Project Action Plan, which was released in full earlier in the day during a ceremony at the JFK Library. The chairman said the premise is that while Massachusetts is a national leader in education reform, persistent and complex problems remain, including the correlation between low academic performance and poverty. Chairman Reville said the two priorities of the Readiness Project are to improve teaching and learning and to connect more deeply with the lives of children so they come to school ready to learn.

Board member Chernow said this is a tremendous amount of information for Board members to absorb, and it is exciting to be involved in it. She asked the chairman about the distinction between Readiness Schools and charter and pilot schools. The chairman said the Readiness Schools are modeled on pilots and Horace Mann charters, using the core principles of teacher ownership, innovation, and responsiveness to clients, with autonomy in exchange for accountability. The chairman said there are a number of ways a community can imitate Readiness Schools both within and outside of the system.

Chairman Reville said the challenge is to deliver on the promise of education reform so that all students reach proficiency and beyond. The chairman echoed the governor’s statement earlier in the day, that “all means all.” He said the Readiness Finance Commission, chaired by Gloria Larson and John Fish, will examine the funding formula and make recommendations on how to fund the new initiatives.

The chairman said that as Secretary of Education, he would regularly convene the chairs of the boards of early education, elementary and secondary education, and higher education, to initiate a collaborative planning process for this work.

Board member Howard asked what accountability the Board has for this work. Chairman Reville said this is a comprehensive plan with near-, mid-, and long-term goals. The chairman said the Executive Office of Education will pursue strategies to draw people in, and it is important that the Board remain engaged. He said it is the responsibility of the executive branch to lead this effort.

Board member Kaplan commended the chairman on the hard work that went into the report. She said it was her hope that the Board will get some time soon to discuss the report in greater depth. Board member Fortmann congratulated Chairman Reville and Board member Mohler-Faria, and said he found the report to be bold and full of promise.

**English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Review: Second Progress Report**

Commissioner Chester presented a second progress report to the Board on the work of the English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Review Panel. This work, which began in November 2007, is part of a systematic review of all seven curriculum frameworks to make them more accessible and stronger in academic content. Commissioner Chester noted that he is very interested in incorporating the recommendations of the Board’s 21st Century Skills Task Force into this curriculum framework and others.

Board member Kaplan said she was pleased to see the emphasis on writing, research skills, and note-taking in the second report. She said that since these are not skills currently assessed on MCAS, the question is how they are being implemented in schools. Commissioner Chester said we need to consider how best to assess students on skills such as problem solving and critical thinking.

Based on the Board’s discussion, Commissioner Chester said he would ask the Panel to proceed, so that a draft of the updated English Language Arts Curriculum Framework can be presented to the Board this fall.

**Charter Schools**

The Board voted to approve amendments proposed by three charter schools: Conservatory Lab Charter School (grades served), Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (location of facilities), and Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (maximum enrollment and grades served).

Commissioner Chester said the amendment requests describe what the schools are trying to accomplish. Board member Chernow asked whether the Department contacted the new communities in the case of Pioneer Valley wanting to move its facility. Associate Commissioner Jeffrey Wulfson said that the superintendents in all districts were notified and provided no comment. He said the move is relatively short (4 miles) and that the school does not expect a change in enrollment patterns.

Board member Kaplan asked why Roxbury Preparatory was seeking to reduce its enrollment. Associate Commissioner Wulfson said that since the school’s opening, it has had more slots than it has used. Charter School Director Mary Street said that while the school was chartered to be grades 6-12, it opened as a grades 6-8 school and has not expanded. Ms. Street added that the school has a big waiting list for grades 6-8.

Board member Howard said given that Roxbury Prep is one of the most successful charter schools in the state, he was surprised to hear that it will be contracting. Associate Commissioner Wulfson said the school is not contracting, rather it is not expanding to include more grades. Josh Phillips from Roxbury Prep came forward and said that the school had conducted a long feasibility study and thought about opening a second middle school. He said the school’s decision not to expand related to how best to leverage what it does best (6-8) by disseminating best practices. In response to a question from Board member Chernow about where graduates attend high school, Mr. Phillips said that 65 percent go to an exam school in Boston, or an independent or parochial school. He said the others attend a charter or pilot school.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89 and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amend the charters granted to the following schools as presented by the Commissioner:**

### Conservatory Lab Charter School

**Location: Boston**

**Maximum enrollment: 154**

**Grade levels: Pre-K through 5**

**Effective year: 2009-10**

#### Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

**Location: Hadley**

**Maximum enrollment: 360**

**Grade levels: K through 8**

**Effective year: 2008-09**

### Roxbury Preparatory Charter School

**Location: Boston**

**Maximum enrollment: 300**

**Grade levels: 6 through 8**

**Effective year: 2008-09**

The vote was unanimous.

**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. The Board voted to approve these tuition arrangements for 20 school districts for the 2008-2009 school year.

**On a motion duly made 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 2008-2009 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) (Otis/Sandisfield)**

**Florida 9-12**

**Gosnold**

**Cuttyhunk 9-12**

**Naushon Islands 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.

**Randolph Public Schools: Proposed Turnaround Plan**

Commissioner Chester said the genesis for this recommendation goes back to the fall of 2006, when the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability reviewed the Randolph Public Schools and referred the findings to the Department for further action. In October 2007, the Board held its monthly meeting at Randolph High School. In November 2007, the Board voted to designate Randolph Public Schools as an underperforming district. In February 2008, the Board voted on actions and benchmarks for Randolph. The Board deferred action on the question of chronic underperformance and state receivership for the district for 120 days, with the understanding that the Department would appoint a District Support Team to work with local school, municipal, and community leaders to adopt a turnaround plan and to assist in a community-wide, consensus-building effort. At its May 2008 meeting, the Board received an update from the District Support Team, and the commissioner subsequently met with Randolph officials to discuss their plan.

The commissioner said he was recommending that the Board approve the Turnaround Plan for the following three reasons: (1) the Turnaround Plan focuses on critical priorities and articulates broad strategies to address them; (2) the successful April 2008 override vote in Randolph has provided more resources for education in Randolph and indicates the community’s willingness to assume responsibility for improving its schools; and (3) Randolph leaders have taken initial positive steps to craft a new, more collaborative working relationship with a shared focus on improving the quality of education in the schools. The commissioner said the Department will monitor Randolph’s implementation of the plan and will put together a technical assistance team to provide help to the district.

Chairman Reville commended Department staff and the district support team for their work.

Randolph Superintendent of Schools Richard Silverman presented the District Turnaround Plan to the Board. Superintendent Silverman said the School Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and the Finance Committee all supported the School Committee’s budget request. The superintendent said the School Committee unanimously adopted a 5-year strategic plan, and the first operational override in history was passed in April 2008 to provide the district with $5.5 million for the public schools. Superintendent Silverman said the community outreach efforts led to a 100 percent increase in the parent vote (from 19% to 38%). The superintendent said the district received strong public support from Senator Brian Joyce and Representative Patricia Haddad. He said the School Committee and Selectmen met in joint session and unanimously adopted the Turnaround Plan.

The superintendent said the Turnaround Plan asks for the ongoing monitoring, support, and guidance of the Department, which the district welcomes. He said the School Committee intends to ensure the success of the Turnaround Plan and to sustain the capacity of the district to meet the needs of students. He said the School Committee and Selectmen pledge to meet regularly every 6 weeks. The superintendent said the passage of the override began to restore Randolph.

Board member Fortmann said it all sounds good, and he commended Commissioner Chester and his staff, and the people in Randolph. He said he was pleased to hear about the override. Mr. Fortmann asked about the District Leadership Report, and its reference to the Board of Selectmen lacking confidence in the superintendent, and how fragile the détente really is.

Jim Burgis, vice chair of the Board of Selectmen, said that today the Selectmen have full confidence in the superintendent. He pointed to the clarity of the budget process and understanding where resources are going, as well as the open dialogue. Mr. Burgis said the relationship is strong, even though there will still be disagreements.

Board member Kaplan asked what support the district would receive from the Department. Commissioner Chester said the Department will provide or broker technical assistance for the district.

Board member Howard offered his congratulations and said he thought the report was admirably focused and simple. He asked how the district came to this point and what caused the breakdown. School Committee Chairman Larry Azer said the problems started out financially, as state aid flat-lined. He said that prior to the passage of the override, funding was level for 5 years. Mr. Azer said the School Committee and former superintendent engaged in questionable decision making 4 years ago and that eroded confidence in the schools.

Chairman Reville said he felt the most poignant moment of the Board’s visit to Randolph High School in October 2007 was when the high school senior said she could not get access to the courses she needed to get to college. Superintendent Silverman said the district is restoring teachers and high level courses so every student will have a full schedule every day.

Commissioner Chester said that while not an easy topic to put on the table, one of the pieces in the mix is the changing demographics of the student population in Randolph. He said the school-aged population has changed more rapidly than the population as a whole. The commissioner said the degree to which leadership deals with this and views all the children in the town as “our children” will determine the future health of the community. Chairman Reville said the commissioner’s point was a great one and well stated.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1K and 603 CMR 2.04 (4) (b) and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby accept the District Turnaround Plan submitted by the Randolph Public Schools. Further, that the Board request the Commissioner to provide assistance and support for the turnaround efforts as the Commissioner shall determine, and to report periodically to the Board on Randolph’s progress in implementing the District Turnaround Plan and improving student learning.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Authorization to Commissioner on Grants**

The Board voted to authorize the commissioner, in consultation with the Chair and the members of the Board, to approve grants and any other matters that require action between the June meeting and the next regular Board meeting.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorize the Commissioner, in consultation with the Chairman, to act on behalf of the Board in approving grants between June 25, 2008 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.

**New Business**

Chairman Reville invited outgoing Student Advisory Council Chair Zachary Tsestos to summarize the Council’s major accomplishments over the past year. Chairman Reville recognized new student Board member Andrew “AJ” Fajnzylber, who addressed the Board. The chairman thanked Mr. Tsetsos for his contributions to the Board’s deliberations over the past year.

Board member Kaplan discussed a Gaston Institute briefing that she attended on the status of Latino students in the Boston Public Schools and examples of schools where Latino students are succeeding. Ms. Kaplan said she hopes representatives from the Institute will be invited to make a presentation to the Board in the fall.

Commissioner Chester pointed out the proposed meeting dates for the coming year, which were included under Tab 11 of the Board packet. He noted that the September 2008 meeting date would have to change.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 4:27 p.m., subject to the call of the chairman.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board

Minutes of the Special Meeting

of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Monday, August 11, 2008**

**8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Henderson House**

**Weston, Massachusetts**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Maura Banta,** Chair, Melrose

**Harneen Chernow**, Jamaica Plain

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Andrew “AJ” Fajnzylber**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Brookline

**Thomas E. Fortmann**, Lexington

**Beverly Holmes,** Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Paul Reville**, Secretary of Education, Worcester

**Sandra L. Stotsky**, Brookline

**Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Secretary Paul Reville convened the special meeting at 8:30 a.m. He introduced Dr. Jim Honan of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who would serve as facilitator. The special meeting was a planning retreat for members of the board to become more familiar with each other and with the work of the board and the department under Commissioner Mitchell Chester, to learn more about the Commonwealth Readiness Project, and to discuss priorities and goals.

Secretary Reville gave an overview of his priorities: implement Governor Patrick’s education agenda and advise him; develop a seamless education system from early childhood through higher education; submit an integrated budget for education through Administration and Finance; and prepare an integrated state plan for education. Besides serving as a member of the education boards, the secretary also advises the governor on appointments to the boards and will select future commissioners for each of the state education agencies based on nominations from their boards. Secretary Reville said he intends to accomplish these priorities with respect for a strong board and commissioner.

Secretary Reville introduced Chair Maura Banta, who welcomed members and presented the agenda for the retreat. Board members introduced themselves and talked about their interest in elementary and secondary education. Commissioner Chester and members of the department’s senior staff introduced themselves. The commissioner presented an overview of the state constitutional mandate for public education, the powers and duties of the board and commissioner, and the work of the department. Secretary Reville presented an overview of the Readiness report and engaged in discussion with board members about various aspects of it. He said the intent is to raise achievement of all students, preparing them to take advantage of higher education, employment, and lifelong learning opportunities; elevate teaching as a profession capable of attracting the most highly qualified candidates; and unleash innovation broadly to transform the education system. He added that since the board is the primary voice on elementary and secondary education matters, the board and commissioner would be centrally involved in this work.

Following a lunch recess, Commissioner Chester presented draft priorities for the next two years, organized under educator development, curriculum and instruction, accountability system redesign, and state leadership and operations. Board members broke into two groups to review the draft priorities and also to consider the role of the board as a policymaking body. The members then reconvened to present their comments in a discussion facilitated by Jim Honan. Commissioner Chester said he would take into account the comments from board members when he revises the draft. With respect to board process, he agreed that the department would send materials (electronically or in hard copy) to board members a week before each meeting whenever possible, in stages if necessary. He also will work with the board chair to schedule occasional special meetings as appropriate, in the late afternoon or evening before regular board meetings, to allow for more in-depth consideration of education policy issues.

Chair Banta then led the board in a discussion of a mission statement. She said she would take the ideas that were proposed and send a draft to members for review and comment. She concluded the retreat with a reminder that members should contact the commissioner if they need any information, and referred members to their orientation materials for guidance on advocacy and dealing with the media. She thanked the members for their participation in the retreat.

The special meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D. Commissioner and

Secretary to the Board