Minutes of the Regular Meeting

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

**January 25, 2011**

**8:4 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street**

**Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Michael D'Ortenzio Jr.**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley

**Beverly Holmes**, Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**James McDermott**, Eastham

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

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

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Harneen Chernow**, Vice Chair, Jamaica Plain

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**English Language Learners: Background, Policy Issues, and Initiatives**

Chair Banta said the Board had an excellent special meeting last night on English language learners that included an overview of the big issues and challenges, a science experiment lesson in Spanish led by 2010-11 Teacher of the Year Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, and remarks from the Board's Advisory Council on English Language Learners / Bilingual Education. Chair Banta said she was impressed with the number of advisory council members who attended last evening’s meeting.

Commissioner Chester said the special meeting was a great opportunity and that the Board is clearly committed to these issues. He noted that the Proficiency Gap Task Force report had addressed English language learners and that the Department is continuing to promote more effective instruction and programs for English language learners. The commissioner said the Board has also made ELL programs a priority in its budget recommendations for FY2012. The commissioner gave a brief update on the work of the Children's Behavioral Health Task Force, which he chairs, to encourage schools to coordinate effectively with health and human services providers. The commissioner said this work will also be supportive of ELLs and their families. Commissioner Chester said there would be an event at the State House tomorrow sponsored by legislators and the Gaston Institute to look at the educational outcomes of Latino students.

Dr. Howard said the special meeting was wonderfully substantive, and he appreciated the interaction with a teacher who was teaching in Spanish. Dr. Howard said that experience was the closest he has ever come to feeling what ELL students must feel like in a classroom. He said it was a powerful experience. Dr. Howard said Ms. Ortiz’s presentation is a testament to the commitment of our effective educators.

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Banta noted that members had received in their packets a copy of the Board's Annual Report for FY10. The chair said that report and a recent report emailed from the Executive Office of Education show an impressive range of accomplishments in the past calendar year. Chair Banta provided an update on the work of the Board’s committees, including Proficiency Gap, Commissioner's Evaluation, and Charter Schools. Chair Banta said she recently attended a Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) meeting on Common Core State Standards and a National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Government Affairs Committee meeting in Washington, D.C. The chair said the focus of the latter meeting was on future improvements to the ESEA/No Child Left Behind Act.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Chester said he would hold the agenda item on Seven Hills Charter School until February because he just visited the school last week and the Department is not ready to bring the item forward this month. The commissioner said Governor Patrick will release his FY2012 budget proposal tomorrow. The commissioner updated the Board on his decision to invalidate the 2010 MCAS scores for the Goddard School in Worcester. Commissioner Chester said later this morning he would announce state-level results for the 2009 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Science exam.

**Public Comment**

* Diana Lam, Anne Snyder, and Megan Lewis from the Conservatory Lab Charter School addressed the Board on the school's request for additional seats.
* Richard Alcorn from the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School addressed the Board on the school's amendment request.
* Janice Fairchild of the Massachusetts Council for Social Studies addressed the Board on the MCAS History and Social Science test.
* Marilyn Segal, Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board on educator evaluation.
* Arthur Lipkin from the Commission on GLBT Youth and Stan Griffith from PFLAG-Greater Boston addressed the Board on parental notification around bullying.

# 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 December 21, 2010 regular meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Update on Revision Process for Massachusetts Curriculum Framework in Science and Technology/Engineering**

Commissioner Chester said the Department's revision process for Science and Technology/Engineering has been cutting-edge work and takes advantage of national work by the National Academy of Sciences and other organizations. He introduced Deputy Commissioner Nellhaus, Julia Phelps, and Jake Foster from the Department's Office for Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering.

Mr. Foster acknowledged the work of the revision panel and said it has been supportive and thoughtful about this work. He said the panel has worked to: (1) keep the overall structure of the framework, including grade spans of three years each and high school; and (2) examine how much time is expected for science.

Mr. Foster reviewed the main recommendations around Progressions of Learning and how to effectively sequence ideas to get from student preconceptions about science; to integrate science skills into the standards such as practices, habits, particular skills, hypothesizing, and data analysis which are key to science learning and scientific literacy; to incorporate literacy standards from the new English language arts (ELA) framework since science is an excellent context and application for literacy; college and career readiness, and thinking beyond introductory high school courses to upper level courses and pathways that would lead to college and career readiness; having students take at least three science courses in line with MassCore; and grade-by-grade standards that would keep grade spans but provide recommendations for grade-by-grade work.

Chair Banta asked whether the panel had looked at college students who drop out of engineering or pre-med and whether that correlates with not enough high school upper level science courses. Mr. Foster said Phil Sadler at Harvard has looked at student success in college science as related to high school experience: students with the opportunity to investigate a topic in biology in depth are more likely to be successful in college biology. Commissioner Chester said the Board of Higher Education has heard concerns about the attrition rate in public universities in engineering and STEM fields.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said she was pleased to see the integration of literacy in STE. Commissioner Chester said it has frustrated him to hear teachers at the elementary level say they cannot teach science because they have to teach reading and math, when in fact this is a false dichotomy; ELA and math and science and social studies are all part of an integrated curriculum, with literacy as the key.

Dr. McDermott said he appreciates the focus on “apply” and “analyze,” not just “understand.” Mr. Foster said they are working to balance depth and breadth, and that hat to do both literacy and science together enhances both. Deputy Commissioner Nellhaus said the Department will be working with national organizations developing model science standards, and will report back to the Board in about a year.

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Progress Report on Work with School Districts and Other Organizations**

Commissioner Chester said this progress report is a follow-up to a concern that the Board raised in the fall about the dynamic in schools notifying parents about bullying based on perceived sexual orientation when the parents do not know that their child is gay. He said the Department is also reporting more generally on implementation of the law on bullying prevention and intervention.

Associate Commissioner John Bynoe said the Department has received 100 percent of bullying prevention and intervention plans from school districts that were required to submit those plans to the Department. Mr. Bynoe said all the plans have been through an initial review, which took the help of 36 staff members from across the Department. Mr. Bynoe said the initial review found that 63 percent of districts submitted plans that addressed at least 90 percent of the required elements, and that in 13 percent of plans at least one-quarter of the required elements were not clearly addressed. Commissioner Chester said the statute specified particular elements that the plans had to address. Mr. Bynoe said the Department will offer targeted technical assistance and support to bring districts into compliance with the law. Mr. Bynoe said the Department has also identified exemplary plans, including Pittsfield and Provincetown.

Mr. Bynoe said the guidance on notification of parents, included in the Board’s materials, was a collaborative effort with external partners. Mr. Bynoe said the Department is also working with external partners on guidance relating to bullying and students with disabilities and will report back in the future. He said the Department is developing an online training for schools on the basic elements of the law. Mr. Bynoe said the Regional Lab has worked to identify evidence-based programs.

Chair Banta asked whether the exemplary plans are shared with the 13 percent of districts who did not meet 25 percent of the requirements. Mr. Bynoe said the Department will post the exemplars for all to see. Dr. Howard asked what percent of bullying has to do with GLBT. Stan Griffith from PFLAG-Greater Boston said the Department regularly conducts surveys through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and that GLBT youth are over four times more likely to skip school, feel unsafe, or have an elevated risk of an attack by a weapon, and are four to six times more likely to require medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt. He said two drivers are school victimization and parent rejection. Arthur Lipkin from the Commission on GLBT Youth said this applies to perceived sexual orientation also. Dr. Howard asked what percent of bullying incidents have to do with sexual orientation. Mr. Griffith said the survey results vary. Mr. Bynoe said questions to address this could be added to next year's YRBS.

**Charter Schools**

**Charter Renewals Proposed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School of Excellence**

**Public Comment**

* Lan Katz from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School of Excellence addressed the Board on the school's renewal.

Ms. Holmes stated for the record that before she was appointed to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, she was one of several community members that helped to found the Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School of Excellence. Ms. Holmes said she has not been involved in the application for renewal but will abstain from the discussion and action so as to dispel any appearance of a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Chester said his recommendation is to place the school on probation with a number of conditions related to academic performance. The commissioner said the school is at the first renewal point and it is hard to overstate his concern about the low level of performance. The commissioner said the school's achievement is low and its growth is low. Commissioner Chester said he considered recommending non-renewal but noted there is evidence that the school is taking steps to address these serious concerns.

Dr. McDermott asked about the school's commercially created curriculum. Commissioner Chester said one of the conditions is that the school document its curriculum. Dr. Howard said he found this situation very troubling: a charter school that is underperforming a very low performing school district, with such low growth rates that the school will never catch up if it performs the same way. Dr. Howard said it appears the charter school had no sense of urgency until the review arose, and it is hard for him to understand why the Board should consider renewal at all.

Commissioner Chester said the way we approach a first renewal is different than the approach to a second or third renewal. The commissioner said it is not unusual that by the fifth year of operation we do not yet see a well functioning school. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson said it has been the practice of the Board to give schools the opportunity to succeed and turn around. He said one could make the argument that we need to be stricter, but there is a lot invested in these schools. Mr. Wulfson said there is some hope that the school can turn around. Mr. Wulfson said the recommended probation with conditions signifies that we take this very seriously.

Mr. Chertavian said he shares Dr. Howard's concern. Mr. Chertavian said he is interested in the school's leadership, whether they can lead, and whether the leaders understand the nature of the situation and what they must do. Mr. Wulfson said the Department had some concerns about the school's board of trustees, but the current board has the skills and understanding of what needs to happen as evidenced by the deliberations and changes that have taken place.

Chair Banta asked what would prompt the Department to bring the school back to the Board for review. Mr. Wulfson said academic performance is key, and the timeline tied to the commissioner's recommendation of December 2012 allows for this spring's and next spring's MCAS administration and results. Mr. Wulfson said the Department will come back to the Board with a report in December 2012. Chair Banta asked what would happen if there was no headway made with curriculum and instruction. Mr. Wulfson said the commissioner always have the discretion to come back and report on such matters to the Board. Dr. Howard said that Mr. Chertavian's observation about leadership resonated with him. Dr. Howard said his biggest fear is that the same group will squeak by and get another five years. Dr. Howard said he does not have confidence that this group could turn around the 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 places the Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence on probation and grants a renewal with three conditions on the school’s charter for the five-year period from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2016, as recommended by the Commissioner:**

**Commonwealth Charter School:**

**Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence**

**Location: Springfield**

**Number of students: 380**

**Grade levels: K-5**

**This probationary status and charter renewal is explicitly conditioned as follows. Failure to meet these conditions may result in revocation of the charter or imposition of additional conditions.**

1. **By December 2012, Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence shall demonstrate that it is an academic success by:**
   1. **meeting academic growth standards as established by the Department, or by making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics by 2012; and**
   2. **providing evidence to the Department that the school has met or is making substantial progress towards meeting all benchmarks in its 2011-2016 accountability plan.**
2. **No later than December 2011, Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence shall provide evidence of a fully documented curriculum that is aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.**
3. **No later than June 30, 2011, Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence shall provide to the Charter School Office an evaluation of its leadership structure, an organizational chart with accompanying job descriptions, and a plan to fully staff the administrative structure.**

**Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such additional conditions as the Commissioner may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.**

The vote was 6-1-1. Dr. Howard voted in opposition. Ms. Holmes abstained.

**Report on Conditions: North Central Charter Essential School**

**Public Comment**

* Stephanie Davolos from the North Central Charter Essential School addressed the Board on the school's conditions.

Chair Banta said the commissioner's recommendation was to remove the school's academic condition. Commissioner Chester said the school has shown improvement in both subject areas, though stronger in mathematics. Mr. Wulfson said the school is in its fourth year and would be back before the Board next year with a full five-year review. Mr. Chertavian asked to what does the Department attribute the school's improvement. Department Charter School Office staff member Alison Bagg said in 2008-09 the school instituted the Prentice Hall Skills Intervention Program and a similar program in ELA, and that has been one of the largest drivers of improvement. Mr. Chertavian said the Department could foster the sharing of good ideas among charters and other schools. Mr. Chertavian said there are powerful levers to be used with charter schools; many other public schools concern us equally but they are not before the Board.

**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 removes the academic condition imposed in February 2007 and extended in February 2009 on the charter of the North Central Charter Essential School because the school has met the condition.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Statewide Findings on Impact of Charter Middle and High Schools**

Commissioner Chester introduced Tom Kane, a Professor of Education and Economics at Harvard Graduate School of Education and deputy director of education for the U.S. program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. Kane said 17 years after the Education Reform Act, there has been much less consensus about whether or not charter schools have had a big impact than anyone would have expected in 1993. He said the two main reasons are voluntary selection by students and retention. Dr. Kane provided a broad overview of findings of a statewide report to be released during the first week of February. Dr. Kane said even after accounting for selection and retention, Boston-area charter schools that have been oversubscribed are having large positive effects on MCAS scores, particularly in middle school math. He said KIPP Academy Lynn has similar impacts.

Dr. Kane said the study is not a blanket endorsement of charters nor an assessment of what strategies resulted in the impact. Dr. Kane said we need to stay ambitious about what we are expecting middle schools to achieve with various student populations. Dr. Kane reviewed a list of recommendations, including having charter schools submit lottery lists and publish comparisons annually, centralizing the charter application process, and creating a task force to study charter practices, including to investigate the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) initiative.

Secretary Reville arrived at 11:15 a.m.

Mr. Chertavian asked how to extrapolate the findings to all charter schools. Dr. Kane said that the lottery study only looked at schools that were oversubscribed, but with the observational study, you could look at all schools. Dr. Kane said that charters not oversubscribed are not having the same positive impact as those that are oversubscribed. Dr. Kane said the average charter in the Boston area was outperforming the traditional public schools, but not as much as oversubscribed charter schools. Mr. Chertavian asked who has done a good job around process assessment. Dr. Kane said the Boston Foundation funded a study to do more qualitative assessments of these schools. Dr. Kane said the most obvious difference between Boston-area charter schools, KIPP Lynn and many other charter schools in the state is that the former groups have ELT. Dr. Kane said there are substantial differences in learning time, and that Abt Associates is conducting an evaluation. Secretary Reville said that with ELT, it is not just the added time, but how the school uses the added time. Secretary Reville said simply adding time does not lead to improvements unless that time is well used.

Commissioner Chester said one of his concerns about the Boston charter study is the peer characteristic issue, and whether students selected into lottery charter schools improve because they are surrounded by a higher achieving peer group. Dr. Kane said these factors could be sorted out in the observational study.

**Report from Board Committee on Charter Schools**

Committee Chair Gerald Chertavian thanked the other members of the committee, Mr. D'Ortenzio Jr., Mr. Martinelli (designee for Secretary Reville), Chair Banta, and Dr. Calderón-Rosado, and Associate Commissioner Wulfson and his staff. Mr. Chertavian reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the work of the committee. Mr. Chertavian said the committee's charge was to discuss policy issues related to the new legislation around: (1) criteria for awarding proven provider status; (2) policies related to seat allocation; (3) policies related to school networks; and (4) impact of expansion on the Board's time resources.

The committee discussed criteria for proven provider status and made the following related suggestions: (1) the charter schools must have successfully completed at least one renewal cycle; (2) schools should be outperforming the state as well as the district – not a hard and fast rule, but setting a high bar; (3) the successful school should have some characteristics in common with the proposed school but need not be identical, recognizing the goal of expanded student representation; (4) where the applicant school is not part of a network with an existing school, it needs to have at least two members of the leadership team who have at least five years in a leadership role in a successful school; and (5) for private or out-of-state schools, evidence of student achievement from other standardized tests will be considered.

Mr. Chertavian said the committee also had a good discussion around how to think about school networks and how they must manage the ability to grow. Chair Banta said quality is the driver and the assessment will have to do with risk and quality, and the ability to expand. Mr. Wulfson said the committee's work has provided the framework for the Department between now and the February meeting. Secretary Reville said proven provider status tells us about educational capacity and the capacity to manage growth. The secretary said this is a higher standard than is typical, and the legislation directs us to look for a connection to past success, with the likelihood but not certainty of future success. The secretary said he supports the notion that quality is the driver in charter decisions and allocation of seats.

**Information on New Charter Applicants**

Mr. Wulfson said Board members have received executive summaries for each applicant in their Board books, and evaluative information will follow. Mr. Wulfson said the discussions from the Charter School Committee helped to set the framework for the Department’s decisions around proven provider status and seat allocations. The Board will vote on the Commissioner's recommendations to grant new charters at its February 28, 2011 regular meeting.

**Update on Educator Evaluation**

Commissioner Chester said that Tom Kane, a Professor of Education and Economics at Harvard Graduate School of Education and deputy director of education for the U.S. program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is leading sophisticated studies on teacher effectiveness. Dr. Kane went through a PowerPoint presentation on the MET project. He said that for four decades we have known there is a difference in quality across classrooms, yet almost everywhere, teacher evaluation is perfunctory and meaningless. Dr. Kane said only a very small percentage of teachers get anything other than a satisfactory rating.

Among early findings, Dr. Kane said: teachers with high value added on state tests also have higher valued added on tests requiring conceptual understanding; student perceptions are reliable information and predictive of value added; and when combined, both value added and student perceptions are independently predictive of value added in another class or academic year. Dr. Kane said the most broken part of the teacher evaluation system now is the classroom observation. Chair Banta thanked Dr. Kane for his presentation and noted that this is part of a continuing process. Associate Commissioner David Haselkorn said these are challenging issues and the Board's Task Force on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators has been deliberating with great commitment to this effort. The task force expects to present recommendations to the Board in February.

**Selected Strategic Initiatives for FY2011**

Commissioner Chester presented the latest version of the Board's Selected Strategic Initiatives for FY2011. The commissioner said this version reflects adjustments based on suggestions that the Board made at its December meeting.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education endorse the five areas of focus and the long-term goals outlined in the *Selected Strategic Initiatives, FY2011*, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Chester distributed a press release on the release of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Science results. The commissioner said the results show that Massachusetts students were tied for first in the nation at grade 4 and tied for second at grade 8. Commissioner Chester said he is very proud of this accomplishment.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Reville said Governor Patrick will release his budget tomorrow and that the Governor's list of priorities includes education and closing achievement gaps. Secretary Reville said the budget will include a $140 million increase in Chapter 70 aid and a $80 million increase in funding for Circuit Breaker.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 1:00 p.m., subject to the call of the chair.**

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**

**January 24, 2011**

**5:05 p.m. – 6:55 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street**

**Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Michael D'Ortenzio Jr.**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley

**Beverly Holmes**, Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Nicholas Martinelli** (designee for Secretary of Education Paul Reville)

**James McDermott**, Eastham

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

Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

**Harneen Chernow**, Vice Chair, Jamaica Plain

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

Chair Banta called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Chair Banta said tonight's special meeting will focus on English Language Learners. During introductions, Board member Ruth Kaplan introduced special guests in the audience who are working on education programs in Israel. Commissioner Chester acknowledged the members of the Board's Advisory Council on English Language Learners / Bilingual Education who were in attendance. Commissioner Chester said this is a critical topic and added that English Language Learners (ELLs) represent one of the few growing populations in K-12 education. The commissioner said the Department is fortunate to have Esta Montano on staff to head up the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement.

Associate Commissioner Julia Phelps said the purpose of the special meeting is to provide background data on ELL students and programs in schools, to examine current initiatives as they relate to the Board's goals and priority areas, to hear from the Teacher of the Year, and to ask Advisory Council members to respond.

Ms. Montano presented a PowerPoint presentation on ELL students and programs.

Mr. Martinelli and Ms. Holmes arrived at 5:15 p.m.

Ms. Montano said that two-thirds of the ELL student population in Massachusetts is enrolled in 10 school districts. She said schools serve ELL students with a wide range of English language proficiency. Ms. Montano said ELL students generally exit the program at Level 5 and sometimes Level 4, and it usually takes about five years to exit from the program and be successful in standard curriculum classrooms.

Mr. D'Ortenzio Jr. asked about the difference between ELL and ESL. Ms. Montano said English as a Second Language (ESL) is what the program was called traditionally, while English language learners (ELL) are the students. She said the programming depends on the district, the number of ELLs, and the philosophy, though the default is Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). In SEI, students receive explicit, direct instruction that facilitates English language acquisition and the rest of the time they are receiving sheltered English instruction in the content areas. Teachers take category trainings to learn how to shelter content successfully, that is, make the content more comprehensible to students who are still learning English. Ms. Montano said other models of instruction include self-contained SEI, traditional bilingual education, and two-way bilingual or dual language programs.

Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, the 2010-2011 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year who is an ELL teacher from Amherst Regional Middle School, addressed the Board and engaged members in a science lesson in Spanish to simulate sheltered instruction.

Ms. Ortiz said that her students are not just learning English, but also the content, higher level thinking, and how to apply it. Ms. Ortiz said ELL students who come in with low academic literacy in their native language face the greatest challenge. Ms. Ortiz described her educational and professional background, including in Adult Basic Education. Commissioner Chester noted that Adult Basic Education programs play an important role in providing ESL instruction for adults in Massachusetts. The commissioner said Ms. Ortiz is a phenomenal representative as Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Ortiz said there is great variety in the academic and language skills of ELL students, requiring teachers to use a variety of strategies, programs and techniques. Ms. Kaplan asked about training materials for teachers. Ms. Montano said the Department is redesigning the category trainings for content teachers and plans to bring in videos and case studies that are now not part of those trainings. Ms. Kaplan said confidence with language is important, and it is important for teachers to learn how to convey confidence. Ms. Ortiz said students need to feel respected and valued in the classroom.

Ms. Montano said that many students cross a cultural and linguistic bridge when they come to school, and teachers can serve as advocates are and cultural brokers. Mr. Chertavian asked how many ELL teachers have been through the training. Department staff member Beth O'Connell said over 20,000 teachers have taken the category training between 2004 and 2010. Ms. Ortiz said teachers need ongoing support beyond the training, which is fundamentally about good teaching pedagogy that benefits all learners in the classroom. Ms. Montano said that Race to the Top will help more teachers become certified in special education and ELL. She said the Department plans to include mentoring and sustaining components in the new training modules.

Dr. McDermott said he was struck by Ms. Ortiz’s dynamic approach and her use of 1:1 individualized discussion. He said it is important to encourage teachers to treat each student as a thinking person. Mr. D'Ortenzio Jr. said students need confidence as well as the tools to learn.

Ms. Montano introduced the chairs of the Board's Advisory Committee on English Language Learners / Bilingual Education, Robyn Dowling-Grant from Lexington Public Schools and Leah Palmer from Wellesley Public Schools. Ms. Dowling-Grant introduced other members of the advisory council who were in attendance. Ms. Dowling-Grant said her district has to pay teachers to go to category training because they are not required to attend. She said she is pleased that the category trainings are being revamped.

Ms. Palmer said there should be more sustainability in professional development, including a mentoring and coaching component. Ms. Dowling-Grant said the MEPA and MCAS data are vital but she would like to see more disaggregated data. Ms. Palmer said that engagement for students and families is important, and noted that the advisory council has been working on a document to support districts on engaging ELL families in school activities. Ms. Kaplan suggested that the ELL/Bilingual Advisory Committee should work with the Advisory Council on Family and Community Engagement, which has done some thoughtful work around this.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said it is important to build licensure standards into professional development and to work collaboratively across agencies. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said it would be helpful to have more information about accountability measures for districts with respect to ELL. Ms. Montano said we have Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), and MEPA scores are scrutinized. Ms. Dowling-Grant noted that before the No Child Left Behind Act started to shine a spotlight on student results, the performance of ELLs could be more easily overlooked.

Commissioner Chester said this is an area that is getting increased attention. The commissioner said the Department's Program Quality Assurance unit conducts a coordinated program review in each district every six years. The commissioner said the Department has looked at a number of districts that are outperforming the state in terms of ELL populations to see what approaches they are using. The commissioner added that there is federal oversight in Massachusetts by the Office for Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice, which has looked at programs in Boston. Commissioner Chester said Boston had not been identifying all eligible ELL students or providing services to all students. The commissioner said he is most interested in effective programs that prepare students for success, not just compliance for the sake of compliance. The commissioner said the category training is a work in progress; the quality and efficacy of the training are mixed, and he has asked the Department to work with the field to review and improve it.

Chair Banta asked about the timetable for the enhanced training. Ms. Montano said we need research behind us. Ms. Montano said this would take at least one to two years, but in the meantime some pilot programs would be launched with UMASS Lowell and UMASS Boston.

Mr. D'Ortenzio Jr. asked if the Office of Language Acquisition was involved in the drafting of turnaround plans. Associate Commissioner Phelps said it was involved in writing guidance for districts that need an ELL focus for their turnaround plan.

Mr. Martinelli said that Secretary Reville asked him to raise the question whether the traditional school day is sufficient for these students, and whether there are related afterschool programs. Associate Commissioner Phelps said that districts receiving Title III funds could use them for afterschool programs, summer programs, and programs on school holidays. Ms. Palmer said that Wellesley has joined other low incidence districts to offer tutoring after school for English language learners. Ms. Montano said Framingham, her former school district, had expanded learning time in one school with a high numbers of ELLs and she concluded the more instructional time they had, the better.

Dr. Howard said there is a large and active community of ELL advocates, some of whom view SEI as controversial. Ms. Montano said SEI is the law, and that it works well for some students perhaps more than for others. Ms. Palmer said teachers need professional development and follow-up for SEI to be effective. Ms. Dowling-Grant said some districts believe they cannot use a student's native language at all, which is not correct. Ms. Kaplan said if there are misconceptions about what school districts can and cannot do, the Department could clarify that with guidance.

Dr. McDermott noted that in her demonstration lesson, Ms. Ortiz treated her “students” with respect and trust. Dr. McDermott said a lot of programs that are good for regular programs work well for ELLs too. He asked how much could be included in professional development, from treating students with respect to strategies that work with a regular classroom. Ms. Montano said the Department is considering all of these issues in building new approaches to professional development.

Chair Banta thanked the participants and said this was an excellent session.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m., subject to the call of the chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board