Minutes of the Regular Meeting

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

**October 25, 2011**

**8:35 a.m. – 12:35 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

**Harneen Chernow**, Jamaica Plain

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Matthew Gifford**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Brookline

**Beverly Holmes**, Vice Chair, Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**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:

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

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

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Banta said she testified before the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education about educational collaboratives and the work of the Board's Committee on Collaboratives. The chair said she attended a celebration of Race to the Top Year 1 accomplishments at Marlboro High School with the Governor and Secretary. The chair said officials in Marlboro were very complimentary of the work of the Department. Chair Banta said she attended the Your Plan for College event at Malden High School as well as the National Association of State Boards of Education meeting in Atlanta. Chair Banta said she participated in a panel on 12th grade NAEP on October 24th.

Chair Banta said she will be naming a task force on the integration of college and career readiness, and has asked Gerald Chertavian to chair the task force.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Chester provided an update on the state’s participation in PARCC, and noted that he would provide periodic updates to the Board. The commissioner said a higher education advisory board has been formed and Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland has agreed to serve as co-chair. Commissioner Chester said PARCC is an outstanding opportunity to build an assessment system relevant to K-12 and postsecondary education.

The commissioner discussed the revision of the science and technology/engineering curriculum framework that is being informed by the national effort led by the National Academy of Sciences. The commissioner said the Department continues to make progress creating regional approaches to governance in school districts, and noted that three new or expanded regional districts are now fully operational (Ayer-Shirley; Somerset-Berkeley; Freetown-Lakeville). An additional two districts, Chatham-Harwich and Southwick-Granville-Tolland, are currently on track for regionalization next year.

The commissioner called the Board’s attention to the Year 1 RTTT overview and the report on scheduling of audits included in the Board materials. He said he looks forward to working with the newly created Task Force on Workforce Readiness, and that Keith Westrich from the Department would staff the work.

**Public Comment**

1. Hannah Horak, an 8th grade student at Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School, addressed the Board about the school’s proposed amendment.
2. Paula Quinn, a parent of a 5th grade student at Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School, addressed the Board about the school’s proposed amendment.
3. Michaela Colombo from MATSOL addressed the Board on English language learners.
4. Gerry Mroz, a parent from Melrose, addressed the Board on student-centric goals for students.

Board member Matthew Gifford arrived at 9:00 a.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 September 26, 2011 special meeting and September 27, 2011 regular meeting.**

The vote was 8-0-1; Vanessa Calderón-Rosado abstained.

**District Accountability and Assistance: Update on Fall River and Lawrence**

Commissioner Chester said that in addition to the material provided in the Board packets on Fall River and Lawrence, he would be providing a verbal update on New Bedford. The commissioner said he has considerable concern about those three districts, that in the near future forward he might ask the Board to take specific action on one or more of the districts.

The commissioner said there are 12 current Level 4 districts, which are districts that have been identified by a review or that have Level 4 schools. Of the 12 districts, 7 have required a turnaround plan – Fall River, Gill-Montague, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, Randolph, and Southbridge. The commissioner said the Department has gone back and forth with New Bedford on their plan. Commissioner Chester said New Bedford’s initial plan was inadequate and he has considerable concern about the district.

Ms. Kaplan noted that New Bedford was using external partners and asked whether that was a positive thing. Commissioner Chester said he is neutral on the use of an external partner; the key is whether the district is using the partner strategically. Senior Associate Commissioner Lynda Foisy said the overriding concern with the original New Bedford plan was not the use of an outside partner, but the degree to which it worked on a specific challenge area and not seeing how the work fit together. Ms. Foisy said the district has taken the Department’s feedback seriously.

Commissioner Chester said the Department engages districts in the school turnaround process, and districts have to be a partner and have the capacity to turn around schools.

Ms. Chernow asked why five districts had not required a district plan. Ms. Foisy said four had previously been determined to be underperforming.

*Fall River*

Commissioner Chester acknowledged Fall River Superintendent Meg Mayo-Brown who was in attendance. The commissioner said former Fall River Mayor Robert Correia had asked the Department to come in and do a review in 2008. The commissioner said the Department has seen significant progress in three of four areas, but there continue to be structural concerns with governance and the role of the school committee. Ms. Foisy said the Department has appointed a mentor to the superintendent, and also a mentor to the school committee. Department director of school and district review Eva Mitchell said the school committee has not shown evidence that it can evaluate itself and improve itself, and there is currently no collective bargaining agreement.

Chair Banta asked if the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) had any involvement. Ms. Foisy said MASC has provided short-term training. The commissioner said MASC fiercely guards local control and that while we try to maintain balance, the bottom line for us is whether students are well served. Ms. Kaplan asked for examples of the school committee’s micromanagement or not following policies. Ms. Mitchell said specifics were contained in Attachment 1. Mr. DiTullio asked about any expected turnover in the upcoming election. Ms. Foisy said the Department’s consultant will continue to work with the school committee and any new members.

*Lawrence*

Commissioner Chester said the Lawrence district review has been delivered to the city. The commissioner said the Department has substantial concerns about Lawrence and its leadership and governance, instruction, assessment, evaluation, and finance, among other areas. The commissioner said an interim superintendent has been in place for close to two years, and the school committee recently conducted a search that failed to bring forward a candidate. Commissioner Chester said professional development is lacking, particularly around English language learners, and there has been financial mismanagement. The commissioner said student performance in Lawrence is very low and going in the wrong direction. Commissioner Chester said Lawrence is heavily impacted by poverty, but it could and should be doing better.

Commissioner Chester said the Department has a long history of involvement in the district, and of the three school districts, Lawrence is his greatest concern.

Ms. Chernow said reading the district report was intense, and noted the district’s lack of adherence to rules, and that the lack of leadership is overwhelming. Commissioner Chester said he is in very active discussions with leadership in the community around finding a path forward that will put the school district on a steady improvement trajectory.

Ms. Calderon-Rosado said the student performance gave her a sense of indignation, and asked what has been put in place to address performance. Ms. Mitchell said the most important issues of the district were not taken on by the school committee. She said the school committee has failed to develop a capital improvement plan and does not have a permanent superintendent in place and a search led by the mayor that yielded no candidate is a concern. Ms. Mitchell said of the 28 schools in Lawrence, student performance in ELA and math has declined in 75% of them since 2008.

Ms. Mitchell said there are instructional concerns across the district, including no complete curriculum or aligned assessments, one-third of teachers scheduled for assessments were not evaluated, and few teachers are trained in sheltering content for English language learners. Ms. Mitchell said there were also financial and asset management concerns.

Dr. Howard said there is a litany of dysfunction in Lawrence. He asked about a decision to move the district from Level 4 to Level 5. Commissioner Chester said he has found Mayor Lantigua to be impatient with the status quo. The commissioner said 95 percent of the school district’s budget is from the state. Commissioner Chester said the process of becoming a Level 5 or chronically underperforming district requires a vote of the Board, which would then trigger appointment of a receiver. Commissioner Chester said in case of receivership, he favors creating an advisory committee at the district level to act as an advisor to the receiver.

Ms. Kaplan suggested that Board members should have the opportunity to visit schools in these districts. Commissioner Chester said the Department would be happy to arrange visits.

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY13 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board’s Budget Committee**

Chair Banta said the Board’s Budget Committee has met once and will meet again prior to the November regular meeting. The chair said the Committee suggests focusing on the closing of proficiency gaps. The chair said the Committee feels strongly that the Department needs resources to support its work on collaboratives and charter school oversight, among other areas. The chair said the committee will come to the November 29th regular meeting with specific budget recommendations.

**Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Educator Licensure, 603 CMR 7.00 (Standards for Administrative Leadership)**

Commissioner Chester said the proposed changes are to licensure regulations and program approval, and the Department will solicit public comment on the proposed amendments. The changes come in four areas: (1) aligning the licensure standards for administrative leadership with standards the Board adopted in June for educator evaluation; (2) including only standards in the actual regulations and publishing more detailed indicators in guidance; (3) including American Sign Language as a foreign language; and (4) allowing school nurses to earn a supervisor/director license.

Secretary Reville arrived at 10:25 a.m.

Ms. Holmes asked about the reference to vocational licenses. The Department’s director of the Office of Educator Licensure, Brian Devine, said this provision would allow superintendents to use their discretion to match a vocational license to a position where there is no obvious fit with an academic license.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and c. 71, § 38G, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c.30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner. The proposed amendments would align the licensure standards for administrative leadership with the standards for educator evaluation and** **make other changes as outlined in the Commissioner’s October 14, 2011 memorandum.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Reville said he delivered the opening address this morning to the national conference of the National Center on Time and Learning. Secretary Reville congratulated Board member Calderón-Rosado on her recent recognition by Governor Patrick at a Latino Heritage Month event. The Secretary said the Governor's Education Summit will be held on November 9th at UMass-Boston and will include the four boards (early education and care, elementary and secondary education, higher education, UMass). The secretary said EEC had filed its Race to the Top proposal. Secretary Reville also updated the Board on several higher education matters.

**Annual Meeting: Election of Vice-Chair**

Chair Banta recognized Harneen Chernow for her contributions as vice-chair and noted that she had been invaluable to the chair. Chair Banta called for nominations for vice- chair. Ms. Chernow nominated Beverly Holmes. There were no further nominations.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education elect Beverly Holmes to serve as Vice-Chair of the Board, in accordance with Article I of the By-Laws.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Proposed Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver Request**

Chair Banta thanked Department staff for the excellent discussion during last evening's special meeting. Commissioner Chester said Massachusetts is well positioned starting with the leadership that our educators have shown. Commissioner Chester said that under the NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) metric, a school or district either makes it or does not, and 90 percent of Massachusetts school districts were recently identified as not making it. The commissioner said the state's accountability system, in contrast, is much more nuanced in identifying levels of concern, progress, and attainment.

The commissioner said the flexibility request is an opportunity to create a unitary accountability system. Commissioner Chester said this is not about backing off high standards, but rather about calling out our strongest schools and aggressively addressing our lowest performing schools. Commissioner Chester said at its core the proposal would over the next 6 years cut in half the number of students who have not achieved proficiency. He said this plan is ambitious and achievable, and represents a more customized approach to the use of federal funds.

Secretary Reville endorsed the commissioner's proposal, and said that No Child Left Behind has great strengths and conspicuous weaknesses. The secretary said he liked the commissioner's comment last evening about eliminating the noise in the accountability system so it sends a strong signal. Secretary Reville said this proposal would inject more power into the accountability system to close gaps but also offer flexibility.

Secretary Reville asked about supplemental education services. Commissioner Chester said right now that was a district level obligation, but under the proposal a district could make the case for a better use of funds. The commissioner said a district for instance could make the case to strengthen its approach with English language learners. Secretary Reville said as we afford greater flexibility, we should also provide guidance on effective strategies and providers. The secretary said he was delighted to see the flexibility that can help schools mitigate problems children sometimes bring from outside of school.

Ms. Kaplan asked whether if approved this would require changes in regulation. Commissioner said there may be the need for changes in regulation, particularly around the levels in the accountability system. The commissioner said the Board would take this up later this winter or spring, and added that the federal waiver would be for 3 years. Ms. Kaplan asked about flexibility around incorporating recommendations for English language learners. Commissioner Chester said we will have a certain amount of flexibility, and noted that the Department was pursuing World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) instead of the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA). Commissioner Chester said many people advocate for including students with disabilities and English language learners in the mainstream testing program to ensure they have access to high curriculum standards.

Ms. Kaplan asked if other measures were going into assessing the quality of schools besides test scores. Commissioner Chester said we are interested in broadening measures that go into school quality index. Dr. Howard said he was very concerned about any set of rationales that would excuse educators from educating all students at levels they need to be at to function in the world. Dr. Howard said the state has challenging but realistic objectives. Ms. Kaplan said she believes the measures to show proficiency are too narrow. Secretary Reville said the state set an "all means all" goal 18 years ago and has invested billions of dollars – and we are increasing our focus on proficiency gaps.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said this proposal has a lot of merit in closing gaps. Ms. Chernow said she would like more data on which schools would be in which levels under the new system. Ms. Chernow said she is concerned about too much testing, particularly in urban schools. Commissioner Chester said the Board charged him to design an accountability system that would focus on assistance, and we have done so. He said while the resources are not as we wish they were, the state system is the right system, and this proposal builds on that success.

Mr. Chertavian said it is important to keep expectations high for all students. He said the success that Brockton High School has achieved shows that it is possible and forces us to ask why it is not happening everywhere. Ms. Chernow asked about the impact on charter schools. Commissioner Chester said the executive board of the charter school association is interested in having charter schools included in this system.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education endorse the Commissioner’s proposed flexibility waiver request under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as outlined in the Commissioner’s October 14, 2011 memorandum and October 24, 2011 presentation, and authorize the Commissioner to submit a flexibility waiver application to the U.S. Department of Education consistent with the elements contained in his memorandum and presentation.**

The vote was 8-0-1. Ms. Kaplan abstained.

**Charter School Authorizing Activities: Recommendations from Charter School Committee**

Chair Banta said the Board's Charter School Committee has been discussing how best to manage the body of work and maintain a high standard. Committee Chair Gerald Chertavian said the committee is offering the following six recommendations:

1. Maintain the current statutory framework, with the Board as the sole charter authorizer in the state.
2. Delegate additional authorizing decisions to the Commissioner.
3. Establish an on-going Board Charter School Committee.
4. Eliminate unnecessary duplication in public hearings.
5. Plan extra meeting time in February of each year.
6. Continue to advocate for adequate funding for the Department's charter school office.

Ms. Kaplan said she was concerned about managing the policy around public comment. Chair Banta said public comment at meetings sometimes is repetitive of what the Board hears in the districts at the public hearings on proposed charters. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said when there are proposed revocations or non-renewals, it is our practice to have the commissioner and staff to go into the community to hear from parents. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson said that with the increasing number of charter schools comes an increase in the number of those decisions. Dr. Howard said he appreciates the recommendations from the committee. Chair Banta said the Board will tweak the recommendations where necessary as it moves forward.

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education endorse the recommendations of its Charter School Committee as presented at its meeting of October 25, 2011; and**

**Further, that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorize the Commissioner, in accordance with General Laws c. 15, § 1F, paragraph 3, to act on behalf of the Board in: (a) granting charter renewals that do not involve probation; and (b) approving charter amendments that do not involve changes in grade span, maximum enrollment, or districts served; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board on all charter renewals and charter amendments that have been so approved; and provided further, that the Commissioner shall notify the Board in advance of all such intended actions, and a Board member may request that the Commissioner place the charter matter(s) on the agenda of the Board for discussion and action; and provided further, that charter school matters on which the Board continues to take direct action shall be presumed to be matters that the Board discusses and decides at a single meeting notwithstanding Article II, Sec. 7 of the Board's By-Laws, provided that the Commissioner may recommend or the Board on its own initiative may determine that action on a particular matter shall be deferred until a subsequent meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Report and Recommendations of Committee on Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation and Terms of Employment**

Committee Chair Holmes said the committee sought to provide commensurate compensation or recognition for the commissioner's exemplary performance, but was unable to do so due to the fiscal climate. Ms. Holmes said the Board publicly expresses its appreciation to Commissioner Chester and reaffirms its public confidence in the commissioner and his ability to meet the high standards of the Board. Ms. Holmes said the committee is recommending that the Board continue and update the terms of the commissioner's employment and continue to monitor the compensation question.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws c. 15, § 1F, affirm the FY2011 annual performance evaluation of Commissioner Chester, express its appreciation to him for his exemplary service, and endorse the terms and conditions as set forth in the Board Chair’s proposed letter to the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Chester expressed his appreciation to the Board and said he has enjoyed this assignment. Commissioner Chester said it is a privilege to serve the Commonwealth, Board, and students. The commissioner said his success is a result of the success of his excellent staff.

**Appointments and Reappointments to Advisory Councils to the Board**

Chair Banta said the Board talked in September about making better use of advisory councils. Ms. Kaplan reiterated that point and said it is important to maximize the use of these volunteers. Commissioner Chester said he appreciated Ms. Kaplan's comments, and noted there is a tension with having 18 advisory councils established by statute that require Department staffing. The commissioner said he is concerned that as agency staffing has been reduced, the level of investment it takes to manage the councils is not commensurate with the value added from the councils. Ms. Kaplan suggested that the commissioner assess the utility of the councils and follow up with the Board and the Legislature.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws Chapter 15, § 1G, hereby appoint the Advisory Council members as recommended by the Commissioner. Unless otherwise specified, appointed members shall serve for a three-year term, concluding November 1, 2014.**

The vote was unanimous.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:35 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**

**October 24, 2011**

**5:05 p.m. – 6:50 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

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

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Matthew Gifford,** Chair, Student Advisory Council, Brookline

**Beverly Holmes**, Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**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:

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

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

Chair Banta said the Board meeting this evening is to discuss the state's intent to seek a No Child Left Behind waiver from the U.S. Department of Education. Commissioner Chester outlined the Department's proposed request to the federal government. The commissioner said that he hoped the Board would see fit to endorse the plan.

Commissioner Chester said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced this as an opportunity through a waiver process to create an alternative to the current Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement. The commissioner said this is important to pursue, and that a strong accountability system should provide more signal than noise. Commissioner Chester said this is an opportunity to propose a unitary accountability system that generates a strong signal, rather than static, and sets a high standard for student achievement. The commissioner said this would be a system that calls out and remedies performance gaps and expects continuous improvement of every school and district.

The commissioner said the Department has secured substantial stakeholder input. The commissioner said four internal working groups (Data and Measurement; Support; Fiscal; External Feedback) were created to managed the development of the proposal. Commissioner Chester said he has received tremendous support in favor of seeking a waiver. The commissioner said at the core of what the Department is proposing is the goal that over the next six years, the state will reduce the proficiency gap by half as it sets customized targets for each school.

Chair Banta asked why the Department was seeking to meet the first filing deadline for a waiver on November 14, 2011. Commissioner Chester said that among the advantages of meeting that deadline is that the state has a game plan with the right prerequisites and if granted approval, this would put us in position to build in planning for school districts for the 2012-13 school year.

ESE director of data analysis and reporting Rob Curtain said the Department heard from the field that they would like to have growth incorporated into annual measurable objectives. He said there will be differentiated targets for all schools and subgroups in those schools. Mr. Curtin also said under the current system, one "no" puts a school on the list of not making Adequate Yearly Progress. Commissioner Chester said the way the Department identifies Level 3, 4, and 5 schools is consistent with state statute, and the proposed changes in the waiver request would not require a change in regulation.

Ms. Chernow asked about the number of students required to be in a subgroup to get reported. Mr. Curtin said the number would still be 40. Mr. Curtin said the Department will propose the use of "high need" for Level 4. "High need" would be a combination of low income students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students. He said this would bring more schools into the accountability system, and schools would see this as fairer because under the current system a student could be counted three times. Commissioner Chester said well over 80 percent of Latino and African-American students are captured by this "high needs" category.

Ms. Kaplan arrived at 6:05 p.m.

Mr. Curtin reviewed requirements under the waiver request that a state must name priority, focus, and reward schools. He said priority schools would include the lowest performing schools, focus would be schools with persistent low subgroup performance, and reward could include the current commendation schools.

Commissioner Chester said the flexibility request will enable schools to get credit for moving toward proficiency and will focus on all students and moving them towards proficiency. Department staff member Ken Klau said that along with high expectations, we envision a commensurate level of support for teachers and students. Mr. Klau said under the current system a majority of schools are placed in some status, which makes it difficult for the Department to support those with the most urgent needs. Under the waiver the Department hopes to give districts and schools much more flexibility. Secretary Reville said he liked the flexibility with respect to supports. The secretary asked about the capacity of the Department as a result of this shift. Commissioner Chester said the Department’s capacity to provide support is not adequate to address all needs.

Department CFO Bill Bell presented an overview of the fiscal waiver options. Commissioner Chester said that as we move to reconfigure what is possible under a waiver for the use of federal funds, there are likely to be a number of groups who see that as threatening. The commissioner said we distribute those funds competitively. The commissioner said there is a national discussion around the strengths and weaknesses of tutoring and supplemental education services. Secretary Reville said the additional fiscal flexibility is very important.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 6:50 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 Retreat

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

**November 2, 2011**

**9:15 a.m. – 3:05 p.m.**

**Bridgewater State University**

**Crimson Building, Dunn Conference Room A**

**Bridgewater, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Maura Banta**, Chair, Melrose

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Harneen Chernow**, Jamaica Plain

**Gerald Chertavian**, Cambridge

**Matthew Gifford,** Chair, Student Advisory Council, Brookline

**Beverly Holmes**, Vice Chair, Springfield

**Jeff Howard**, Reading

**Ruth Kaplan**, Brookline

**Dana Mohler-Faria**, Bridgewater

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

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

Chair Banta called the Board retreat to order at 9:15 a.m. The chair thanked Board member Dana Mohler-Faria, President of Bridgewater State University, for hosting the retreat and for the support of his staff. Dr. Mohler-Faria provided an overview of Bridgewater State, which is the 8th largest public or private university in Massachusetts and fastest growing campus in the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Chester provided an update on Tuesday's release of the 2011 NAEP results, which showed that Massachusetts 4th and 8th graders outscored their counterparts across the nation in reading and mathematics for the fourth consecutive administration. Dr. Howard suggested that the Board use a Monday evening session in the future to discuss MCAS results and NAEP results just after their release. Commissioner Chester agreed, and suggested pairing it with an update on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment.

The Board reviewed accomplishments of the FY2011 Board session and discussed priorities for the coming year. The Board's five areas of focus are: (1) Educator effectiveness; (2) Curriculum and instruction; (3) Accountability and assistance; (4) Wraparound supports and engagement for students and families; and (5) School and classroom culture. Among the critical issues identified for the FY12 Board session were recommendations of the Proficiency Gap Committee, English language learner teacher preparation, college and career readiness, educator effectiveness, virtual schools, charter schools, and the possibility of one or more Level 5 designations. The commissioner said other key work over the coming months will be the Department's waiver request seeking flexibility from certain No Child Left Behind provisions, the development of PARCC, and the roll-out and implementation of new educator evaluation systems. With the priority issues that are expected for the FY12 Board session, the Board will identify the level of Board involvement associated with each issue.

Chair Banta discussed the Board's committees, which include Charter School, Proficiency Gap, Budget, Cross-Board, Educational Collaboratives, and the Commissioner's Performance Evaluation. The chair said she will name members to the committees shortly and to the new Board Task Force on Workforce Readiness.

The Board reviewed data and information prepared by the Proficiency Gap Committee and discussed next steps. Ms. Chernow said the committee would like to agree on common indicators to track over time. The committee would also like to help focus the Board's work for how it will monitor the Department's initiatives related to closing proficiency gaps. Dr. Howard said this committee could help guide the Board to understand key issues with closing gaps.

Board members engaged in a discussion about the role of MCAS and assessment generally.

Chair Banta thanked Board members for participating in the retreat, and said the discussion will continue as these issues are part of the Board’s ongoing work.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 3:05 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