# Minutes of the Regular Meeting

# of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Tuesday, December 19, 2017

# 8:31 a.m. – 12:26 p.m.

# Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

# 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Amanda Fernandez,** Belmont

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Hannah Trimarchi**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead

**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeff Wulfson,** Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education,

Secretary to the Board

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

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

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Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. and the members introduced themselves.

Chair Sagan noted that Katherine Craven would not be in attendance. Acting Commissioner Wulfson reported on the renewal of charters for the following charter schools: Boston Collegiate Charter School (BCCS), Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers Horace Mann Charter School (EMK), Four Rivers Charter Public School (FRCPS), and Foxborough Regional Charter School (FRCS). The Acting Commissioner reported that the number of students arriving in Massachusetts from Puerto Rico recently surpassed 2000.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson informed the Board that the Department has published updated guidelines on implementing social and emotional learning curricula. He said the Department and school districts are on track to meet the Board’s goal of full computer-based MCAS testing by spring 2019, noting that virtually all schools will be using computer-based testing for MCAS in grades 4, 5, 7, and 8 this spring, as required. The Acting Commissioner said districts have supported this initiative and he commended their efforts in making the transition.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson updated the Board on the designation process for Early College and Innovation Pathways and said 21 Early College and seven Innovation Pathways applicants have been invited to move to the next stage of the process. Final designations for both will be conferred in the spring.

## Statements from the Public

1. **Jackney Prioly Joseph**, Director, Future Ready Massachusetts; Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, addressed the Board on Computer Science education.
2. **Maria Walzer**, Medway, addressed the Board on the Ukrainian Genocide.
3. **David Gass**, Director of the Highlands Coalition, Lynn, addressed the Board on the KIPP Lynn Charter School expansion request.
4. **Natasha Megie-Maddrey**,Lynn parent, addressed the Board on the KIPP Lynn Charter School expansion request.

Secretary Peyser highlighted a new initiative that Governor Baker announced at Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School, through which Massachusetts residents interested in careers in advanced manufacturing can take classes at local vocational high schools and be eligible for state and federal financial aid to pay for their training. He added that those who complete the manufacturing training at one of the participating vocational high schools could earn a certificate in advanced manufacturing and an associate’s degree and then be eligible for college credit when enrolling at partnering colleges and universities. Secretary Peyser thanked the Department for its involvement in this initiative.

## Approval of Minutes

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the November 28, 2017 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

### Progress Report on the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP)

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner; Chris Gabrieli, SEZP Board Chairman and co-founder;Colleen Beaudoin, SEZP Co-Executive Director; and Julie Albino, SEZP Co-Executive Director. Mr. Johnston said SEZP is a unique in-district receivership model that is now in its third year of implementation. Mr. Gabrieli explained that the SEZP board set a goal for the nine middle schools in the Zone to attain a median student growth percentile (SGP) of 50 or above in ELA and math by 2017; five out of nine schools met the goal in ELA and although no schools met the goal in math, five out of nine improved their SGP from the previous year. He said he is pleased with the progress though disappointed not to meet the goal, and changes have been made at three of the nine schools.

Ms. Albino explained that management of the Zone has transitioned from Empower Schools to the SEZP leadership team. She highlighted the community- and educator-led redesign of the High School of Commerce, which joined the Zone this fall, and explained SEZP’s “Roadmap for Student Success.” Ms. Beaudoin said Superintendent Warwick regrets he could not attend today’s presentation. She described SEZP’s support for schools and the strong partnership that SEZP has with the Superintendent, the district, and the Springfield Education Association.

Vice-Chair Morton thanked Mr. Johnston for his support to the SEZP team and commended the panelists for the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit they have brought to this work. Mr. Moriarty inquired about teacher recruitment and retention. Ms. Albino said recruitment requires coordinated effort and Teach Western Mass has been a great partner. Mr. West asked if the panel had any insight about the difference in the early results in ELA and math. Ms. Beaudoin responded that literacy was the initial focus of the improvement plan and now the focus is on math.

Ms. Trimarchi noted the importance of student engagement and asked how students are involved. Ms. Beaudoin explained that Commerce High School students are represented on the redesign team and that at the middle schools, students participate in school councils and focus groups. She added that students feel they are part of the change.

Chair Sagan said this is an inspiring report and asked if this model would work in lower grades. Ms. Albino said the district is interested in sharing successful strategies with other schools. Mr. Johnston said Springfield has had a good track record in turning around elementary schools. Mr. Gabrieli said the central element of the SEZP model is to increase autonomy and resources at the school level, shifting power from the district to each school. Ms. McKenna commented that the model shows great respect for the role of teachers as professionals and she commended the team. Chair Sagan thanked the panelists. Mr. Gabrieli thanked the Board and Department for their support.

### Update on Commissioner Search

Chair Sagan said the Preliminary Screening Committee met on December 18th to review initial applications and is very pleased with the quality of the candidates. He added that he was impressed with the diversity of the pool of candidates, noting that more than a third are women and 40 percent are minorities or represent underserved communities. Chair Sagan said that search consultant Rosa Morris from Korn Ferry will notify candidates of their status and arrange confidential interviews with the Preliminary Screening Committee for the second week of January. He said he expects the committee will identify two to three finalists to be interviewed by the Board in a public meeting, tentatively scheduled for Monday, January 22nd, in the Boston area. Chair Sagan added that, if things proceed as scheduled, the Board will meet to select a finalist at a special meeting on Friday, January 26th or possibly Monday, January 29th.

Chair Sagan clarified that there is no deadline to submit an application; the December 15th date was set to ensure that the Preliminary Screening Committee could review the applications. He added that the committee members have provided very helpful input. Chair Sagan said we are focused on finding an experienced educator for the position; many people are interested in it and he is optimistic we will have strong candidates. In response to Mr. Doherty’s question, Chair Sagan said there are 17-19 candidates, about two-thirds from out of state.

At 10:00 a.m., Chair Sagan called for a short break.

Chair Sagan reconvened the meeting at 10:13 a.m. and handed out a draft of questions for commissioner candidates. He invited Board members to contact Rosa Morris with any feedback.

### Report from Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council (AAAC)

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he is pleased the Board is hearing from the Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council (AAAC), which is one of the advisory councils to the Board whose work has been valuable to us this past year when addressing ESSA and the accountability system. The Acting Commissioner thanked Valerie Annear, Assistant Superintendent of the East Longmeadow Public Schools and co-chair of the AAAC, for the work of the council. Ms. Annear provided an overview of the council’s membership, its focus over the past year, and its most recent annual report. She said the council strives for general agreement and notes objections that members may have on specific issues. Ms. Annear said the Department has been responsive to the council, which saw its feedback reflected in the revised accountability and assistance framework. In response to a question from Vice-Chair Morton, Ms. Annear said the council tries to balance individual members’ views and provide constructive input as a group. The Board thanked Ms. Annear for the report.

### Proposed Implementation of the School and District Accountability System

Acting Commissioner Wulfson provided an overview of the school and district accountability system as it has evolved since 1993. He said since the approval of the Massachusetts state plan under ESSA and the release of the 2017 student assessment results, the Department has been refining plans for the new accountability system and has appreciated feedback from the AAAC and all stakeholders. The Acting Commissioner highlighted a few points: we are maintaining a unitary system that meets the Commonwealth’s needs and federal standards; the system uses multiple measures and minimizes complexity; the system acknowledges that not everything that is important in schools can be quantified as data; categorization has to have a clear, compelling purpose, not just labeling; and student achievement matters.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston and Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin to present the new system design to the Board and answer questions. He said the discussion would continue at the January meeting and after that, the Board would consider proposed amendments to the regulations.

Mr. Johnston noted that the Board and the field provided input on the accountability system design over the last year. Mr. Curtin presented an overview of the accountability system design components and indicators to be included. The Board discussed the indicators, including the extended engagement rate, progress in attaining English language proficiency, percentage of students passing all grade 9 courses, and completion of advanced coursework. Several Board members voiced concerns about the grade 9 course passing indicator. Mr. Curtin said the AAAC and other stakeholders also had some concerns about this measure and the Department may reconsider it. Mr. West said adjusting the weights might make a difference. Ms. McKenna noted the grade 9 success rate would be a reflection of middle school, not high school. Ms. Trimarchi asked if there are indicators for middle schools. Mr. Curtin responded that the indicators begin at the high school level and the Department is not yet ready to incorporate middle school indicators in a formal system. Secretary Peyser suggested including an indicator relating to completion of MassCore, the recommended program of studies in high school. Mr. Doherty asked about art and school climate. Mr. Curtin responded that these types of elements could be included in the school and district report cards first, and then considered for inclusion in the accountability system.

Mr. Curtin reviewed the accountability percentile, which will be used to identify the lowest performing schools in the state, and same calculation used at the subgroup level to identify low-performing subgroups in need of targeted support. He said the next-generation MCAS tests allow us to compare all schools, regardless of grade configuration. Mr. Curtin explained that the

criterion-referenced component will focus on closing the achievement gap by measuring not only the performance of all students in the school but also the performance of the lowest performing 25 percent of students in each school who have been enrolled for more than one year.

Mr. Curtin explained that schools will no longer be placed in a vertical hierarchy of levels 1-5; rather, the categories will relate to the level of assistance the state will provide. Mr. West commented that it is momentous to focus on the progress that each school makes with its lowest performing 25 percent of students. Ms. McKenna commended the emphasis on assistance, support, and closing the achievement gap. Secretary Peyser said it will be important to see simulations to get a sense of how the new system works. Mr. Curtin said the Department will not set long-term targets until after reviewing the data from year 2 of the next-generation MCAS tests.

Mr. Curtin said the Department will redesign district and school report cards in 2018, which will include measures of performance/opportunity beyond assessment and accountability results. He concluded by providing a timeline of upcoming Board discussions relative to the accountability system. Mr. Johnston said the Department will be reviewing the new system with school and district leaders and other stakeholders.

### Virtual Schools: Tuition Rate

Acting Commissioner Wulfson reminded the Board that at the November meeting, the Department provided background information on virtual schools, along with a recommendation that the Board vote to increase the per pupil tuition rate for the two existing Commonwealth virtual schools. He said virtual schools are still a work in progress, they serve a small number of students, and the Department is not totally satisfied with either school’s performance. Acting Commissioner Wulfson added that he wants to remove the excuse that the virtual schools’ lackluster performance is due to lack of adequate funding. Mr. West commented that increasing the tuition rate now is not a reward for past accomplishments, and if a virtual school’s performance does not improve, the Board and Department need to look more closely at the situation. Chair Sagan concurred.

**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 94, and 603 CMR 52.07, hereby amends the certificates of the Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School and the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School to specify an annual per pupil tuition amount of $8,265, with $75 per pupil retained by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for administration of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools program. The cost of special education services shall be calculated in accordance with 603 CMR 10.07(3), and shall be added to the per pupil tuition amount unless such services are provided in kind by the sending district. These amendments shall be effective July 1, 2018.**

**The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education further delegates authority to the Commissioner, in accordance with General Laws c. 15, § 1F, paragraph 3, to act on behalf of the Board in amending the current certificates for the Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School and the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School to increase the annual per pupil tuition amount by no more than the annual rate of inflation. Any such increase shall only occur in compliance with G.L. c. 71, § 94(k), and shall occur by December 31 of the fiscal year preceding the effective date of any increase in the per pupil tuition rate.**

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 94; 603 CMR 52.00; and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such conditions as the Commissioner or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the certificate.**

The motion carried 9-0-1. Vice-Chair Morton abstained.

### Improving Education for English Learners

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner; Paul Aguiar, Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement; Arabela Thomas, Associate General Counsel; and Judy Klimkiewicz, Management Consultant for College, Career, and Workforce Development, to provide an overview of the “Act Relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids,” known as the LOOK Act.

Mr. Aguiar reviewed the key elements of the LOOK Act, which include: providing districts flexibility in choosing language acquisition programs that best fit the needs of their English Learners (ELs) population; the Department’s review of all potential new language acquisition programs; creation of some new licensure endorsements for language acquisition program types that qualify under the statute; and requiring districts to establish EL parent advisory councils if they have a large number of ELs. He said the law also: directs the Board to establish the State Seal of Biliteracy, which districts may award to students who meet the state criteria in attaining a high level of proficiency in English and at least one other language; requires the Department to establish English proficiency benchmarks, guidelines, and EL student success templates; and expands EL-related reporting requirements for districts.

Secretary Peyser noted that the purpose of this law is to provide flexibility to districts, with state review and oversight. He said sheltered English instruction remains the default program, and new programs will require Department review for 2019. Secretary Peyser said the programs must be research-based.

Mr. Aguiar reminded the Board that the SEI endorsement for core academic teachers and administrators who work with ELs was part of the RETELL initiative. He presented data, noting that since 2012 almost 60,000 educators have earned the SEI endorsement. Mr. Aguiar said we plan to present proposed regulations to the Board addressing issues in the LOOK Act and expanding the SEI endorsement to include vocational-technical educators who work with ELs. He noted that the Department is now piloting SEI endorsement courses with vocational technical educators at Greater Lawrence Regional Technical School and Worcester Technical High School. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department expects to present proposed regulations to the Board in March.

Chair Sagan asked if there are any additional matters. Mr. Doherty asked about the composition of the new Lawrence partnership board that will oversee the district beginning July 1. Acting Commissioner Wulfson responded that the board will consist of seven members and Mayor Rivera will be one of the members.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:26 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Wulfson

Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board