Minutes of the Regular Meeting

of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

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

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Amanda Fernandez,** Belmont

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**James Peyser**,Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeffrey C. Riley**,Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

**Maya Mathews**, Student Advisory Council, Newton

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Chair Sagan convened the meeting at 8:34 a.m. Members introduced themselves. Chair Sagan said Ms. Mathews would not be in attendance and Ms. Craven and Mr. Moriarty are en route.

Commissioner Riley announced that on March 19, 2019, the Department Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) will sponsor a conference at UMass Amherst to bring together stakeholders from various facets of education. He asked members to save the date. The Commissioner commented on the continuing work to update Chapter 70 and said there is hope it will be addressed in the upcoming legislative session.

Commissioner Riley said he recently visited the Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School in Holyoke to see classroom instruction and meet with students; other Department staff met with parents, staff, and board members. Commissioner Riley said he visited the school to gain insight on its current probationary conditions and inform his upcoming recommendation to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board). He said he heard from students and families that they value the school. The Commissioner said he expects to provide a status report on the probationary conditions to the Board in January, and a recommendation in February about the school’s future. The recommendation is delayed because the school has not yet undergone its required 2018 financial audit, plus the Department must perform due diligence on the school’s request to locate in Chicopee starting in the 2019-2020 school year. The Commissioner said the school is scheduled to begin the audit on January 2, 2019, and he expects to have all the required information in time for a recommendation and decision at the Board’s February meeting.

Chair Sagan asked if this plan would allow enough time for the Board to reach a decision that families can act on for next fall. Commissioner Riley said the timetable should be workable.

# Public Comment:

1. **Ruth Rin,** addressed the Board on technology safety.

Mr. Moriarty joined the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

**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 November 20, 2018 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

# Teacher Leadership to Support Standards and Instruction

Commissioner Riley said he is pleased to highlight the work of teacher-leaders who are engaged with the Department to support teaching and learning through: revising the Arts Curriculum Framework, increasing access to high quality curriculum, and serving as STEM Ambassadors.

He introduced Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner, and her team.

Ms. Craven joined the meeting at 8:47 a.m.

* **Arts Curriculum Framework Revision**

Ms. Peske introduced Ron Noble, Associate Commissioner, who provided an update on the revision process for the 1999 Arts Curriculum Framework. Mr. Noble introduced Craig Waterman, Assistant Director of Instructional Policy; Dawn Benski, teacher-leader facilitator for the revision process and a Visual Arts Content Specialist in the Boston Public Schools; and Jennifer Fidler, teacher-leader facilitator and Visual Arts Department liaison at Wilmington High School.

Mr. Noble outlined the phases of the revision process: preparation, writing and revising, and refinement and Board approval. He explained that the team is near the end of phase two. Mr. Waterman presented the vision of the framework and components of artistic literacy: creativity; communication; collaboration and leadership; and cultural awareness. He went through the guiding principles that describe components of a high-quality arts curriculum or program, practices and content standards, and the structure of the framework with five disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) and grade pairs plus high school courses. Both Ms. Benski and Ms. Fidler explained how the practices and standards are incorporated in the disciplines.

Chair Sagan asked how well the current Arts Curriculum Framework has been implemented. Ms. Fidler, who has served on the Arts Advisory Council for the last seven years, said she believes most schools use the framework as a foundation. Chair Sagan asked how much arts education students receive. Mr. Waterman said that it is widespread in elementary schools and drops to approximately 50 percent at high school, although there is a lot of variability. Secretary Peyser asked about the role of exposure to the arts. Mr. Waterman said the Pre-K-8 section is focused on exposing students to the arts, and high school is for going deeper. Secretary Peyser asked how to support students to develop their skills and talents. Mr. Waterman said the framework tries to build a baseline for all students so that they can go deeper into the arts disciplines in high school. Secretary Peyser said he would like to see students have opportunities at a younger age. Ms. Peske said that is an important point for all frameworks.

Mr. West said the draft framework is coherent and comprehensive and asked if it provides enough guidance and/or support to educators on what to prioritize. Mr. Noble said the Department will need to work with educators to knit the framework together; integration will be the key. Ms. McKenna said she is a huge proponent of the arts but wonders if the standards will simply add to teacher workloads. Ms. Craven said some districts are already doing this well and we should learn from successful models. Ms. Peske said the questions about feasibility are themes that the revision panel has been discussing as well.

* **Increasing Access to High Quality Curriculum**

Mr. Noble introduced Rachel Bradshaw, Manager of Instructional Policy; Nicole Palmieri, Kindergarten teacher, John Breen School, Lawrence Public Schools; and Kevin Cormier, 7-8th grade mathematics teacher, Nissitissit Middle School, North Middlesex Regional School District, to discuss the Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE) project. Ms. Bradshaw explained that the project convened panels of teachers to review specific curriculum products and report on their alignment to the expectations for teaching and learning in Massachusetts.

Ms. Bradshaw said there is a growing research and policy consensus that curricular materials matter, upgrading curricular materials is cost-effective, and educators need guidance on which materials are aligned to state standards. She said the CURATE project responds to requests the Department has received from educators and school districts. Both Ms. Palmieri and Mr. Breen provided examples of their own experiences.

Ms. Fernandez asked if the panel is diverse and representative of the communities we serve. Ms. Bradshaw said diversity is something the Department is continuing to work on, especially because at present the educator workforce is overwhelmingly white and female. Ms. McKenna noted there has been a lot of research on curricular materials and that information may be useful. Chair Sagan said there is a great deal of fully aligned, free, comprehensive curriculum material that could change the field and free up resources, and it would be a great service to identify those materials and draw attention to them so districts could free up funds rather than buy costly materials.

* **STEM Ambassador Program**

Ms. Peske introduced Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Director of STEM, who briefly explained the STEM Ambassador program and introduced Leah Tuckman, Math Content Support Lead;

Nicole Scola, STE Content Support Lead; Nicole Finneran, 8th grade S/TE teacher, Frost Middle School, Lawrence Public Schools; and Karen Cross, 6th grade mathematics teacher, Murphy Elementary School, Boston Public Schools.

Ms. Tuckman explained the program’s goals relating to professional development. She said the Department has partnered with Worcester Polytechnic Institute on this initiative. Ms. Scola discussed the deliverables that each ambassador is asked to create. Ms. Finneran and Ms. Cross discussed their role and experience in the project. Secretary Peyser asked if there is a connection between this and the regional STEM networks, and whether there is a plan to scale it up. Ms. Hashimoto-Martell said there is no collaboration with the regional STEM networks right now but it makes sense to make that connection explicit. She added they are thinking about next steps to scale up the program. Commissioner Riley thanked Ms. Peske and her team and all the teachers who presented today; he said the Board and Department appreciate their efforts.

Chair Sagan announced a ten-minute break at 10:20 a.m. He called the meeting back to order at 10:30 a.m.

# Update on Chronically Underperforming Schools: Receiver Presentations

Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, explained that the Board would hear from three receivers from the chronically underperforming schools, who would present their progress reports and respond to questions. The Board will receive the written reports in January. Mr. Johnston introduced Lauren Woo, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation, who introduced Veronica Conforme, Executive Director of the UP Education Network, to report on UP Academy Holland (UAH).

Ms. Conforme described her background and discussed the community that UP Education Network serves and the organization’s vision. She presented data on UP Academy Holland’s students and said that since 2014, the school has seen a steady increase in student growth percentiles and a decrease in suspensions. She credited hard work by students, parents, and teachers who are using a common curriculum, participating in professional development, using robust data-driven intervention programs, and implementing Open Circle as a social and emotional learning curriculum. Ms. Conforme said two key drivers in improving performance at UAH are increasing instructional capacity of the staff and D.E.E.P – drop everything and prep – which means the last 30 minutes of the day are dedicated to preparation. Ms. Conforme said they are proud of the progress so far but know there is much more work to do. She thanked the Department and Mr. Johnston, Ms. Woo, and Chris Taylor for their support.

Mr. Michael Contompasis, introduced himself and said since August 2018, he has been

receiver of the Dever School in Boston. He said he sees his role as primarily to ensure that the conditions that have been agreed to by the Board, the Department, and the district are implemented with fidelity. He added that he has been impressed by the commitment of all the stakeholders, including the faculty, administration, and particularly the students. Mr. Contompasis thanked Commissioner Riley and Department staff for their support.

Mr. Todd Fishburn, Principal of the Dever School, said he is focused on helping his students realize their hopes and dreams despite the obstacles they face. He discussed the data for grades K-3 in the areas of positive change, behavior management, language modeling, and quality of feedback. Mr. Fishburn then reviewed the data for grades 4-5 in the areas of positive change, behavior management, analysis and inquiry, and instructional dialogue. He noted an upward trend for all, but acknowledged much work still needs to be done. Mr. Fishburn said the school is building teachers’ skills and capacity to lead. He said the school is collaborating with organizations that families can access for their basic needs and expand students’ exposure to science.

Ms. Fran Roy said she is representing the School&Main receiver team for the Parker Elementary School, which assumed the receivership on July 1, 2018. She introduced Jennifer Mainelli, Principal of the Parker School, who also joined this summer. Ms. Roy reviewed the school’s demographics, academic performance, and students’ perception of cultural and climate data. She explained School&Main’s core turnaround beliefs that include relationships as the foundation of all school turnaround efforts. Ms. Roy noted three main priorities: raising the levels of rigor, creating an emotionally safe community, and supporting socially and emotionally fragile students. Principal Mainelli provided examples of what they are doing to address the priorities. She added that the Parker is putting an emphasis on well-structured lessons and a safe learning environment, and she has seen a decrease in calls for student assistance since October. Ms. Roy said even with these gains, they realize there is still a lot of work to do. She said they would continue to focus on supporting and building the capacity of staff, increasing the level of academic discourse in classrooms, and enhancing community partnerships to support the students and families.

Mr. Moriarty asked about chronic absenteeism at the Dever. Mr. Fishburn said he believes it is due to the school’s highly transient population and the fact that the school serves students from all over Boston rather than the neighborhood. He said they are working to develop trusting partnerships with families and provide support to improve student attendance.

Chair Sagan asked each receiver what was the biggest surprise since taking this position. Ms. Conforme said it was the intensity of the needs, and the lack of programming to address all those needs. Mr. Contompasis said the school has moved from a focus on taking back control to beginning to work on academic needs and also build a solid surround-care environment. He added that collaboration has been the key and he believes the school is on the right track. Ms. Roy said the opioid crisis has had an impact on the students and the school is beginning to figure out how to deal with that.

Commissioner Riley thanked the receivers for their continued efforts, noting that school turnaround work is very challenging.

# Adult Education – System Overview and Student/Educator Panel

Commissioner Riley introduced Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, Acting State Adult Education Director, to provide an overview of the work of Adult and Community Learning Services. Mr. Chuang said approximately 1 million adults in Massachusetts need high school equivalency and English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) services. Ms. Stevens-Carter reviewed the data on who is currently being served by the adult education system. She discussed the educational options the Department currently supports. She reviewed the geographic locations throughout the state where adult education is provided. Ms. Stevens-Carter said the goal is to build a high-quality, performance-driven system that will focus on outcomes and flexibility.

Mr. Chuang presented the preliminary results of research conducted by Blake Heller and Kirsten Slunngaard Mumma from Harvard University and outlined the next steps for research. Ms. Stewart asked about the teachers of adult education programs. Ms. Stevens-Carter said many are retired teachers, some are part-time and teach K-12 during the days, or they are retired professionals who have come into teaching through volunteering and/or professional development.

Mr. Morton asked about funding for adult education. Mr. Chuang said in the last fiscal year the funding increased, although some would say that simply made up for some historical declines. He added that both the Latino and Black Advisory Councils have recommended the Governor review the adequacy of funding for adult education in light of the waitlist.

Ms. Stevens-Carter introduced Lori D’Alleva, Director of the Charlestown Adult Learning Center; Audrey Kelly, student; Priscilla Vele, educator at the Chelsea Public Schools; and Ana Tizol Cantor, student. Both Ms. Kelly and Ms. Tizol Cantor spoke about their experiences as students in adult education programs.

Chair Sagan thanked the panel for their presentations. Ms. Stewart noted that an article about Ms. Kelly’s experience is being circulated to members.

# Accountability System Feedback

Commissioner Riley introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Rob Curtin, Associate Commissioner, to discuss the survey results on the new accountability system. Mr. Curtin reviewed background information on the survey, noting that this is a look back and starting next month, the Board will begin to look forward to possible changes. He added that the Commissioner has said he wants to see where improvements can be made, if there are any to be made, and in January, we will be discussing with the Board how to handle the grade 10 accountability for 2019, given the transition to the next-generation MCAS assessment.

Mr. Curtin said the survey was sent to superintendents, principals, and various stakeholder organizations in the state and received 439 responses from October 29–November 16. Mr. Curtin outlined who responded to the survey and results on how well the respondents understood the system, how satisfied they were with the new system, and how did understanding relate to satisfaction. Mr. Curtin reviewed the results on the normative component (school percentile), which compares one school to all other schools, and the criterion-referenced component (target percentage). He discussed the survey results on the value of the different components of the system and how indicators in non-high school and high school should be weighted.

Secretary Peyser asked if the views expressed in the survey correlated with how well a school or district did in the accountability system. Mr. Curtin said the Department did look at that around views on achievement and growth. Mr. Curtin reviewed the open-ended questions for what additional indicators should be included for non-high schools and high schools and described common themes. He concluded by thanking everyone in the field who took time to participate.

With the business agenda concluded, Ms. Stewart said she noticed the Board’s website has been updated to reflect that the Board’s charter school committee is currently inactive. She asked about the Board’s mission statement and if the website could provide easy access to archived minutes of Board meetings. Chair Sagan said that staff would check on these matters and follow up as needed.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:20 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board