

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
of the Massachusetts Board of Education**

**August 26, 2003  
9:15 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.**

**Massachusetts Department of Education  
350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts**

**Members of the Board of Education Present:**

**James A. Peyser**, Chairman, Dorchester  
**Henry M. Thomas, III**, Vice-Chairman, Springfield  
**Charles D. Baker**, Swampscott  
**Jeff DeFlavio**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Belmont  
**Judith Gill**, Chancellor, Board of Higher Education  
**Roberta Schaefer**, Worcester  
**Abigail Thernstrom**, Lexington

**David P. Driscoll**, Commissioner of Education, Secretary to the Board

**Members of the Board of Education Absent:**

**J. Richard Crowley**, Andover

Chairman Peyser called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

**Comments from the Chairman**

Chairman James Peyser opened the meeting with a tribute to Board member Bill Irwin, who has resigned from the Board because he has relocated out of state for an international position within his organization. The Chairman noted that Mr. Irwin has the distinction of being the longest serving member of the Board of Education. Commissioner Driscoll added that Mr. Irwin recently was chosen by the National Association of State Boards of Education to receive its Distinguished Service Award. Chairman Peyser and Commissioner Driscoll will draft a certificate of recognition for Mr. Irwin on behalf of the Board.

## **Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Driscoll updated the Board on his participation on the Council on Early Education and Care, which was established by the Legislature through Section 608 of the FY 04 state budget to support accessible, affordable, quality child care and education for children ages birth through age 5 in the Commonwealth. The Council consists of the Commissioner of the Office of Child Care Services, the Commissioner of Education, and the Commissioner of Public Health. The Council is to submit a report and recommendations to the Secretary of Administration and Finance, the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, and the Joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs by February 15, 2004.

Commissioner Driscoll also recognized Senior Associate Commissioner Sandra Stotsky, who is leaving the Department of Education. The Commissioner said, "The cornerstone of standards-based education reform is the standards. In her tenure at the Department, Sandy has worked to ensure the rigorousness, clarity, and strength of our standards." Dr. Stotsky thanked her colleagues and the staff at the Department for their efforts. She also updated the Board on the release of the copy-edited version of the History and Social Science curriculum framework, and invited Board members to attend the statewide history conference on September 26 in Worcester.

Commissioner Driscoll announced the 2003 SAT results, which mark the tenth year of score increases in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts students scored an average of 516 on the verbal exam (a 4-point increase from 2002) and 522 on the mathematics exam (a 6-point increase from 2002.) In addition, Massachusetts has one of the highest participation rates in the country, with 82% of students taking the SAT. The Commissioner said, "This year's results are a cause for celebration. Once again, we can see that the hard work being done in our classrooms is paying off in more than just MCAS scores."

Board member Jeff DeFlavio apologized to the Board for comments he had made at the June meeting, which he characterized as inappropriate. He said that he is looking forward to a productive year as a member of the Board.

## **Statements from the Public**

- Donald Beaudette, Superintendent of Norwell Public Schools, addressed the Board on the South Shore Charter School.

## **Approval of the Minutes**

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

**VOTED:       that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the June 24, 2003 regular meeting as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

## **1. FY 04 Budget and Priorities for Board and Department of Education**

Commissioner Driscoll reviewed the Department's total state budget appropriations for Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, and 2004. He highlighted several line items that have been reduced or, in some cases, eliminated because of the fiscal crisis, including academic support grants, transportation reimbursement, construction, charter school reimbursement, and early childhood education.

Chairman Peyser said that, although the fiscal prospects for FY 05 are not encouraging, it is critical to fully fund line items related to assessment, accountability, teacher certification and Department administration in order for the Board and the Department to fulfill their state and federal obligations. He noted that the Board will need a flexible discretionary account in order to support turnaround strategies in under-performing schools and school districts.

Board member Abigail Thernstrom asked for more information on the impact of programs and grants on student performance. Board Vice-Chairman Henry Thomas said he is interested in further discussions about funding for health education and MCAS remediation. Board members Roberta Schaefer and Charlie Baker said that school building assistance reform should be a priority.

The Chairman will appoint a committee of the Board to work with the Department to draft the Board's FY 05 budget request, which will be brought to the Board in October for discussion.

## **2. Update on Holyoke Public Schools**

Commissioner Driscoll reviewed the process for making a determination regarding the Holyoke Public Schools. At the May meeting, the Board received the Tier II report on the Holyoke Public Schools prepared by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and transmitted to the Board by the Educational Management Audit Council, in accordance with the Board's Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and School Districts. Commissioner Driscoll noted that the report portrayed a school district that has been experiencing difficulty for some time. At the June meeting, Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan and School Superintendent Eduardo Carballo presented their response to the report. The Commissioner said it is apparent that the leaders of the city and the school district have taken some positive steps to address long-standing problems. The Commissioner said that it is critical for schools and districts to use the data available to them to plan for improvements. Commissioner Driscoll will make a recommendation to the Board at the September meeting, after visiting the district and reviewing the most recent MCAS results.

## **3. Proposed Criteria for Determining District Under-Performance**

Commissioner Driscoll presented proposed criteria for determining district under-performance to the Board for discussion. Under the Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and School Districts, the Board of Education is responsible for reviewing reports from the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) that, in the judgment of the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC), "uncovered serious or widespread deficiencies in the quality of curriculum or instruction or in the adequacy of programs, services, operational management or facilities that, in the EMAC's judgment,

are likely to have a substantial negative effect on the educational achievement of students attending the district's schools." EMAC has referred the EQA reports on Holyoke and North Adams to the Board, and the Board will receive additional reports in the future.

In preparation for consideration and action on these reports, the Board had an initial discussion on the proposed criteria for determining district under-performance. Chairman Peyser noted that the criteria are meant to be a guide that will evolve as the Board applies the criteria to districts over the next few months.

#### **4. Report on North Adams from Educational Management Audit Council**

The Board discussed a Tier II report on the North Adams Public Schools prepared by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and transmitted to the Board by the Educational Management Audit Council. Joe Rappa, Executive Director of EQA, presented the preliminary findings of the report. The North Adams Superintendent of Schools will be invited to respond to the report at the Board's September meeting. Based on additional information from district officials and from the Department, the Commissioner will prepare a recommendation for the Board's consideration this fall. Under the Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and School Districts, a district that is determined to be under-performing will be referred to EQA for a Tier III fact-finding team review, and will prepare a plan to improve its performance.

#### **5. Charter Schools**

The Board discussed amendments to three charters. The Hill View Montessori Charter School amendment adds a kindergarten to its current grade span; the South Shore Charter School amendment adds a location and eventually changes the school's location to Norwell; and the Sturgis Charter School amendment changes its Board of Overseers to an Advisory Board, changes its administrative governance structure, and amends its bylaws to reflect those changes.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89 and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amend the charters granted to Hill View Montessori Charter School of Haverhill (addition of kindergarten to grade span); South Shore Charter School (change of location); and Sturgis Charter School (governance and bylaws) as presented by the Commissioner.**

The vote was unanimous.

The Board also discussed a waiver request from the Holyoke Community Charter School, granting an additional one-year extension for its opening date, from the fall of 2003 to the fall of 2004. The Board's approval is conditioned upon the submission of a request by the school's Board of Trustees to amend the school's charter.

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

**VOTED:** that the Board of Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.03(2), hereby grant a waiver of the requirements in 603 CMR s. 1.04(4)(b) to Holyoke Community Charter School. This waiver allows Holyoke Community Charter School to open in the Fall of 2004 instead of the Fall of 2003. Such waiver also operates to amend the charter granted to Holyoke Community Charter School.

**As a condition of this waiver, the Board of Trustees of Holyoke Community Charter School must submit a full and complete request to amend the school's charter. A draft of the amendment request is due on or before October 15, 2003 and the final amendment request is due on or before December 15, 2003.**

The motion passed 6:0. Vice-Chairman Thomas abstained.

## **6. Approval of Grants and Other Matters**

The Board discussed \$3.4 million in grants under the following federal programs: Technology Integration, Technology Enhancement, McKinney-Vento Homeless Education, Career and Technical Student Organization Leadership, and Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. The Commissioner also updated the Board on \$6.7 million in grants that he approved in the summer, under the authority granted to him by the Board at the June 2003 meeting.

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

**VOTED:** that the Board of Education approve the grants as presented by the Commissioner.

**The vote was unanimous.**

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

**VOTED:** that the meeting adjourn at 11:35 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education  
and Secretary of the Board