**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

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

**Meeting held virtually via Zoom  
Monday, June 17, 2024, 5:02 p.m. – 6:28 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Ela Gardiner,** Wellesley, Student Member

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Martin West,** Newton

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

**Paymon Rouhanifard**, Brookline

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Russell D. Johnston,** Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and asked members to introduce themselves. She announced that this special meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board/BESE) is being [livestreamed and recorded](https://vimeo.com/user217853291). Nine members (listed above) were present. Chair Craven welcomed Dr. Thomas Kane and asked Acting Commissioner Russell Johnston to introduce the presentation.

Acting Commissioner Johnston welcomed Dr. Thomas Kane, Faculty Director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University and co-author of the [Education Recovery Scorecard](https://educationrecoveryscorecard.org/), to present recent findings from his [report](https://educationrecoveryscorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ERS-Report-Final-1.31.pdf) and engage in discussion with the Board. Dr. Kane last presented to the Board in June 2023. Acting Commissioner Johnston said the Board and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have been addressing the challenges of post-pandemic recovery and we are eager to discuss how we can further advance student learning.

**Presentation by Dr. Thomas Kane**

Dr. Kane said he has been conducting the ongoing study jointly with Dr. Sean Reardon at Stanford University, using National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. He said this presentation is based on spring 2023 NAEP results and the report will be updated when 2024 data are available. The study found that across the country, higher poverty schools remained closed longer during the pandemic and that is where achievement gaps widened the most. Similarly in Massachusetts, recovery as of 2023 was greater in lower poverty districts than in higher poverty districts.

Dr. Kane noted four challenges for policymakers and educators. (1) The rise in absenteeism has been a barrier to faster recovery. (2) Parents underestimate the impact on their children, which makes it harder for schools to make significant changes. (3) District-level decision-making leads to different strategies and some districts have greater capacity, leading to divergent results. (4) Districts focus on intervention options more than on how to scale up strategies that are effective.

Dr. Kane listed some ideas Massachusetts could consider as pandemic-related federal funding expires. (1) Review districts’ Student Opportunity Act (SOA) plans. (2) Use 3% of Title I plans for direct student services such as tutoring. (3) Require teachers to inform parents when a child is below grade level. (4) Use state funding to pilot alternative approaches to lower absenteeism. (5) Offer college application and financial aid information to help high school graduates since 2019 who never showed up in college.

Board members engaged in discussion about the presentation. In response to a question from Vice-Chair Hills, Dr. Kane said he does not know the reasons for the losses and gaps in Massachusetts. He added that he has some hypotheses about factors that can make a positive difference, such as a coherent, coordinated approach at the district level and building in more instructional time for students.

With respect to Dr. Kane’s suggestion about improving schools’ communication with parents about their children’s progress, Acting Commissioner Johnston noted that last year the Board put in place the early literacy parent notice requirement, an important step that will benefit students. He added that he will come back to the Board in the fall to discuss further action steps to advance student learning.

In response to a question from Secretary Tutwiler about next steps in the qualitative analysis, Dr. Kane suggested that a review of SOA plans and implementation could be helpful. Responding to a comment from Member Rocha, Dr. Kane said academics and students’ mental health are indeed linked and helping students feel connected and supported is a key to their academic success. In response to a comment from Member Moriarty, Dr. Kane agreed that 2019 is a floor, not aspirational, and the state has an important role as an information broker, measuring and reporting on successful practices and spreading ideas that work.

Chair Craven said the Board continues to feel a sense of urgency to address these challenges, as it did when it voted to bring students back for in-person learning. Dr. Kane expressed appreciation to the Board and Acting Commissioner Johnston and said this is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to rally around addressing these challenges. Chair Craven thanked Dr. Kane for his presentation and thanked members for engaging in the discussion.

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

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 6:28 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Johnston

Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board