**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**135 Santilli Highway**

**Everett, Massachusetts 02149**     
**Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 9:05 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

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

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

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

**Ioannis Asikis,** Brookline, Student Member

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington *(participated remotely for a portion of the meeting)*

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

**Martin West,** Newton

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

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., and members introduced themselves. She noted one member is participating remotely and votes would be taken by roll call, and that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board/BESE) meeting, like all regular meetings of the Board, is being [livestreamed and recorded](https://vimeo.com/user217853291).

**Statements from the Public**

* **Ed Flynn,** Boston City Councilor, addressed the Board on school bus delays in Boston
* **Erin Murphy,** Boston City Councilor, addressed the Board on school bus delays in Boston
* **Ed Lambert,** MA Business Alliance for Education, addressed the Board on the accountability system
* **Gerry Mroz** addressed the Board on the accountability system
* **Kahris McLaughlin** addressed the Board on the accountability system
* **Mary Tamer** addressed the Board on literacy
* **Jennifer Amento,** MA Teach Plus policy fellow, addressed the Board on literacy
* **Lew Finfer,** Vocational Education Justice Coalition, addressed the Board on access to Career Technical Education (CTE)
* **Denise Pigeon,** Superintendent, Nashoba Valley Tech and MAVA President, addressed the Board on access to CTE
* **Robert Sanborn,** Superintendent, Cape Cod Tech, addressed the Board on access to CTE
* **Roger Forget,** Superintendent, Upper Cape Cod Tech, addressed the Board on access to CTE
* **Maricel Goris,** Deputy Superintendent, Lynn Public Schools, addressed the Board on the charter school law

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven welcomed Ioannis Asikis, the new student Board member. Member Asikis introduced himself and said he is honored to have been elected to be the voice of Massachusetts students on the Board.

Chair Craven announced she has asked Member West to be the Board’s liaison to the Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council. Member West said he is happy to serve in this role.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler welcomed everyone to the new school year. He commended DESE for the *Your Presence is Powerful* campaign. Secretary Tutwiler said he was pleased to visit Clinton Elementary School with Governor Healey and Acting Commissioner Johnston last week to introduce the Literacy Launch initiative. The Secretary said the FY25 budget that Governor Healey signed centers education and makes historic investments in all sectors of education including fully funding the Student Opportunity Act, supporting Literacy Launch, and affirming universal free school meals.

**Comments from the Acting Commissioner**

Acting Commissioner Russell Johnston welcomed Member Asikis and wished him well in his year of service chairing the State Student Advisory Council and representing students across the Commonwealth on the Board.

The Acting Commissioner briefly recapped the Board’s special meeting on Monday, September 23, which was a presentation and discussion on the work of the Accountability System Review Advisory Committee. Dr. Chris Domaleski and Dr. Carla Evans ​from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment presented the advisory committee’s report and recommendations and engaged in discussion with the Board.

Acting Commissioner Johnston noted that over the summer, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) put out a request for proposals for an outside group to conduct an organizational review. He said PCG has been contracted to do this review and this is an opportune time as we look to advance DESE’s Educational Vision.

The Acting Commissioner introduced Leah Murphy, DESE’s new Manager of Advanced & Accelerated Learning in the Center for Strategic Initiatives.

With respect to CTE admissions, Acting Commissioner Johnston said the Board will hold two special meetings/study sessions on this topic in October and November. He also informed the Board that DESE is proceeding in two phases to implement new legislation requiring that we make available resources regarding antisemitism and societal bias. For phase one, we have put together a list of resources and materials that are already available and will package them for easy accessibility on DESE’s website. In phase two, we will continue to build our resources to support schools in this important work.

Chair Craven asked if the Acting Commissioner would brief the Board at a future meeting on educator preparation programs in relation to evidence-based early literacy. Acting Commissioner Johnston said Literacy Launch has enabled DESE to accelerate this work and it will be on the agenda for an upcoming Board meeting.

The Chair then called for a motion and vote to approve meeting minutes.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the following meetings: the June 17, 2024 special meeting, June 18, 2024 regular meeting, and July 19, 2024 special meeting.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Election of Vice-Chair**

Chair Craven announced this is the annual meeting at which the Board elects its vice-chair, per Article I of the Board’s by-laws. She asked for nominations. Member Moriarty nominated Vice-Chair Hills to continue serving in that role. There were no other nominations. Chair Craven called for a motion and vote.

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

**Voted: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education re-elect Matt Hills to serve as vice-chair of the Board.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Update on Commissioner Search Process**

Chair Craven said the final bids for an executive search firm came in and she is pleased to announce that Isaacson Miller has been selected to assist in conducting the search for a new commissioner. She said she will report again next month.

**2024 Assessment and Accountability Results**

Acting Commissioner Johnston called up Rob Curtin, Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability, Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel, and Associate Commissioner Erica Gonzales to present the 2024 state MCAS and accountability results. The Acting Commissioner gave a brief overview of the results for the spring 2024 MCAS test administration in English language arts, math, and science-technology engineering, and said the results are concerning.

Mr. Curtin reviewed 2024 statewide MCAS data results by subjects, student groups, and grade level, noting that while gaps may have closed in some areas, we have a long way to go for all students. He said district and school results are available on DESE’s website and the data are fairly consistent across the Commonwealth. Mr. Curtin highlighted MCAS achievement results for chronically absent students, underscoring the importance of ongoing efforts to promote student attendance and engagement, including the *Your Presence is Powerful* campaign. He responded to questions. Members asked about factors that could boost student achievement. Acting Commissioner Johnston said DESE’s Advancing Student Learning initiative is focused on this, and there will be further discussion with the Board today and at future meetings.

Mr. Curtin presented the competency determination (CD) results for the class of 2026 (10th graders in 2024), explaining this is the first class required to meet the higher standard that the Board adopted in August 2022. He described the opportunities for students to increase their educational proficiency and earn the CD if they have not done so by grade 10.

Mr. Curtin then presented the 2024 accountability results, providing background on the Massachusetts accountability system, classifications, and progress towards targets. He informed the Board that DESE has identified 57 schools of recognition that demonstrated high achievement and growth and meeting or exceeding targets. Mr. Curtin responded to questions, noting that MCAS measures student performance in relation to standards developed by Massachusetts educators. Chair Craven thanked the presenters and thanked members for their input.

**Educational Vision and Advancing Student Learning Update**

Acting Commissioner Johnston said the assessment results are concerning and fortify our resolve to improve student outcomes. He listed DESE’s core efforts around aligning to the educational vision and strategic objectives, using targeted initiatives to improve outcomes, and building a broad partnership to advance student learning. He described examples of ongoing and new initiatives relating to DESE’s three strategic objectives: Whole Student, Deeper Learning, and Diverse and Effective Workforce. He said DESE is clear about the importance of evidence-based practices, high quality instructional materials, and the importance of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that value all students.

Acting Commissioner Johnston gave an overview of the Advancing Student Learning initiative, with a working group that convened in August to discuss strategies and additional initiatives to address disparities and further accelerate progress​​. The membership includes representatives from the American Federation of Teachers–MA, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, and Association of Massachusetts School Equity Leaders. The group is focusing on potential scalable solutions.

**Report of the Special Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Literacy**

Member Moriarty, chair of the Board’s Special Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Literacy, presented a summary of the committee’s report and recommendations. He said the committee heard from a great roster of people who deeply understand the multi-faceted effort that is involved in addressing the challenge. Member Moriarty said early literacy has been his cause throughout his years on the Board and having delivered the report, he believes the committee has met its charge.

Member Moriarty reviewed the recommendations set forth in the report, including centering multilingual learners, preparing teachers to teach early literacy, high-quality instructional materials, and systems improvement. He commended DESE and said state educational leadership in Massachusetts has created momentum to address the literacy challenge in a thoughtful, comprehensive way.

Chair Craven thanked Member Moriarty for his presentation, chairing the committee, and being the Board’s conscience on this vital issue.

Member West and Member Stewart (attending remotely) left the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

**Literacy Launch Update**

Acting Commissioner Johnston welcomed Associate Commissioner Erin Hashimoto-Martell and Katherine Tarca, Director of Literacy & Humanities, to present an update on DESE’s early literacy initiatives with a focus on Literacy Launch. The presenters reviewed the ongoing Mass Literacy initiative to promote evidence-based literacy across the Commonwealth and how it will expand through Literacy Launch over the next five years. Literacy Launch will enable more targeted literacy programming to support student achievement as well as accelerating DESE’s review of educator preparation programs.

Katherine Tarca said in the first year of Literacy Launch, DESE will organize the following programs, in collaboration with the Department of Early Education and Care and Executive Office of Education:

* Partnership for Reading Success – Massachusetts (PRISM) Grants
* High-quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Communities of Practice
* Literacy Launch Professional Learning
* Accelerated review of educator preparation programs, and
* Support for educator preparation programs.

The presenters responded to questions from Board members. Acting Commissioner Johnston said he will be updating the Board on Literacy Launch in the coming months, including interim goals and metrics for success. Vice-Chair Hills commended the DESE team for their ongoing work.

**Voluntary Return of Charter for Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School**

Acting Commissioner Johnston stated that in May 2024, the Board voted to place the Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School (DLA) on probation with conditions, due to concerns about the school’s viability and ability to provide adequate programming.

On July 17, 2024, the DLA Board of Trustees voted to voluntarily return its charter effective immediately. The trustees cited the impact of decreased enrollment demand on the school’s financial viability. Acting Commissioner Johnston said DLA has ceased operation and he is recommending that the Board vote to accept the voluntary return of the charter. Chair Craven said the memo was informative. Hearing no questions, she called for a motion.

**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 89; General Laws chapter 30A, section 13; and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby accepts the voluntary return of the charter granted to the Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School effective June 30, 2024.**

**The Board of Trustees of Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School shall comply with all procedures and timelines established by the Commissioner to effectuate the return of the school’s charter, transfer of students into other schools, and ensure an orderly closure of the Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School.**

The vote was unanimous.

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

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 12:15 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