# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:** | September 19, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the September 23, 2024 Special Meeting and September 24, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have two meetings this month: a **special meeting** on **Monday, September 23, 2024,** 5:00–7:00 p.m.(held virtually); and the **regular meeting** on **Tuesday, September 24, 2024**, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.(held in person at the office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)), 135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149). The meetings will be live-streamed and recorded. Helene Bettencourt will assist with all arrangements; please email or call her if you have any questions.

**SPECIAL MEETING, September 23, 2024**

At the Monday, September 23, 2024 special meeting of the Board , Dr. Chris Domaleski and Dr. Carla Evans from [The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (Center for Assessment)](https://www.nciea.org/) will present on the work of the Accountability System Review Advisory Committee, including recommendations in the committee’s report. The report will be released at the time of the special meeting. The special meeting is an opportunity for the Board to hear the presentation about the committee’s report and recommendations and engage in discussion. No votes will be taken.

**REGULAR MEETING, September 24, 2024**

Our business agenda will lead off with the Board’s annual election of the vice-chair. Chair Craven will provide an update on the Commissioner search process. The Board will discuss the 2024 Assessment and Accountability Results from the spring 2024 administration of the MCAS tests and this year’s accountability results for schools and districts.

Committee Chair Moriarty will present the Pandemic Recovery and Literacy Committee report for a discussion. We will provide an update on the Massachusetts Literacy Launch. The Board will discuss and vote on the voluntary return of the charter for Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School.

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

**Comments from the Secretary**

* New school year
* Recent events – Literacy Launch, Your Presence is Powerful
* Closeout supplemental budget

**Comments from the Acting Commissioner**

* Review of the Board’s Special Meeting on September 23, 2024 (Accountability System Review)
* DESE Organizational Review
* Recent Hire: Manager of Advanced and Accelerated Learning
* Career Technical Education Admissions
* Newly Enacted Legislation

**Routine Business: Approval of the Minutes of the June 17, 2024 special meeting, the June 18, 2024 regular meeting, the June 20, 2024, and the July 19, 2024 special meeting**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **Election of Board Vice-Chair – Discussion and Vote**

Under the Board’s by-laws, the September meeting is the annual meeting at which the Board elects its vice-chair. Chair Craven will call for nominations from members and then conduct the election. The vice-chair presides over meetings when the chair is not available. Details on the process are under Tab 1.

1. **Update on Commissioner Search Process – Discussion**

Chair Craven will update the Board on the search process.

1. **2024 Assessment and Accountability Results – Discussion**

At the meeting, I will present the 2024 assessment and accountability results. I will share results from the spring 2024 administration of the MCAS tests in English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering, as well as accountability determinations for each district and school that has sufficient data. DESE is releasing the assessment and accountability results to the public on September 24.

Accountability determinations include information about the degree to which each district, school, and student group is making progress towards improvement targets, how each school is performing relative to other schools that administered similar assessments, and student group results. This data release includes schools of recognition, which are schools that demonstrate high achievement, high growth, and meet or exceed targets. Rob Curtin, chief officer for data, assessment, and accountability, will join us for the discussion on September 24.

1. [**Educational Vision**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/) **and Advancing Student Learning Update**

**a. Pandemic Recovery and Literacy Committee Report – Discussion**

Committee Chair Moriarty will provide an overview of the report and recommendations from the Pandemic Recovery and Literacy Committee.

**b. Literacy Launch Update – Discussion**

I will provide an update on DESE’s focused activity and investment in early literacy that began in 2019. In 2019, DESE launched the Mass Literacy initiative, the goal of which is to support pre-service and in-service educators in grades preK-3 to gain deep knowledge of literacy development and to skillfully implement evidence-based, inclusive, culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining practices using high-quality instructional materials and assessments.

The recently approved FY25 state budget created Literacy Launch, a new line item that allocates $20M for this current year. The goal of Literacy Launch is to “increase the number of public schools and licensed early education and care providers in the commonwealth providing evidence-based literacy instruction to students in prekindergarten through grade 3.” Literacy Launch will be a key lever in advancing DESE’s [educational vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/), which states that DESE will promote deeper learning so that all students engage in grade-level work that is real-world, relevant, and interactive.

Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner of Instructional Support, and Katherine Tarca, Director of Literacy & Humanities, will present an overview of this information to the Board and invite discussion, questions, and feedback.

1. **Voluntary Return of Charter for Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School – Discussion and Vote**

On May 21, 2024, based on my recommendation, the Board voted to place Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School (DLA) on probation with specific conditions due to grave concerns about the school’s viability and ability to provide adequate programming for students.

On July 17, 2024, the DLA Board of Trustees voted to voluntarily return its charter effective immediately. As the basis for its decision, the school’s board of trustees cited the impact of decreased enrollment demand on the school’s ability to maintain financial viability. The school has ceased operation and is currently going through the charter closure process. I recommend that the Board vote on September 24, 2024, to accept the voluntary return of the charter granted to DLA.

Deputy Commissioner Regina Robinson and Alison Bagg, Director of Charter Schools and School Redesign, will be present to answer any questions you may have.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Report on Grants Approved by the Commissioner**

Enclosed is information on grants I have approved since the last meeting, under the authority the Board has delegated to the Commissioner.

1. **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools: Authorizing Overview**

Between now and June 2025, the Board may take several votes related to its statutory role as an authorizer of Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools (CMVSs). This informational memorandum summarizes the statutory framework for virtual schools and the Board's responsibilities.

1. **Report on Charter Schools: Approval of Loans beyond Charter Duration**

Under the charter school statute, G.L. c. 71, § 89(k)(6), a charter school may incur temporary debt in anticipation of receipt of funds. The charter school must receive approval of the Board if it wishes to agree to a term of repayment that exceeds the duration of the school’s charter. At its meeting on October 21, 2008, the Board voted to delegate to the commissioner the authority to approve such requests.

The enclosed memorandum informs the Board of approvals granted to four charter schools within the past twelve months.

1. **Amendments to Collaborative Agreements Approved in FY24**

At its meeting on February 26, 2013, the Board voted to authorize the commissioner, in accordance with General Laws c. 15, § 1F, paragraph 3, to act on its behalf in approving education collaborative agreements and any subsequent amendments to such agreements; provided that the commissioner shall report to the Board periodically on all collaborative agreements, including any subsequent amendments, that have been so approved.

The enclosed memorandum provides background information about education collaboratives, an overview of the process for amending collaborative agreements, and a summary of amendments that I approved as acting commissioner during the 2023-24 school year.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you on September 23 and 24.