# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:** | December 10, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Briefing for the December 17, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have a **regular meeting** this month on **Tuesday, December 17, 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 meeting will be live-streamed and recorded. Helene Bettencourt will assist with all arrangements; please email or call her if you have any questions.

**REGULAR MEETING, December 17, 2024**

Our business agenda will lead off with an introduction of the 2025 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, Luisa Sparrow. I will provide members with an update on the Department’s ongoing work to align to the Educational Vision and advance student learning with a focus on the “DESE as partner” planning process. Committee Chair Martin West will provide an update on the Career Technical Education committee meeting. Following up on our discussion at the November meeting, I will recommend that the Board vote at the December 17 meeting to amend the certificates for GCVS and TECCA to specify a per pupil tuition rate of $13,114 (with $75 per pupil retained by DESE for program administration) effective in FY26. I will also recommend that the Board delegate to the Commissioner authority to revise this rate for FY26 to reflect the annual Chapter 70 inflationary adjustment and amend the schools’ certificates accordingly. I will engage with the Board in a discussion on the new statutory provisions relating to the competency determination. The Department has issued [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/spec-advisories/2024-1211student-cd-update.html) on the new competency determination provisions.

**Statements from the Public**

**Comments from the Chair**

**Comments from the Secretary**

* **2025 Teacher of the Year**
* **FY26 Budget**

**Comments from the Acting Commissioner**

* **Updates on District and School Receiverships**
* **Updates on Upcoming Proposed Changes to Licensure Regulations**

**Routine Business:** Approval of the Minutes of the November 15, 2024 and November 18, 2024 Special Meetings, and the November19, 2024 Regular Meeting**.**

The Board will vote on approval of the minutes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

1. **Update on Commissioner Search Process**

Chair Craven will update the Board on the search process. Representatives from Isaacson Miller will be joining Chair Craven to provide an update.

1. **Teacher of the Year**

I look forward to introducing you to the 2025 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, Luisa Sparrow. Ms. Sparrow teaches fifth and sixth grade students with disabilities at the Oliver Hazard Perry School in South Boston. We announced Ms. Sparrow’s selection at an assembly at her school on December 4, and her time as Teacher of the Year will begin in January.

While serving as Teacher of the Year, Ms. Sparrow will continue teaching, attend convenings of teachers of the year from other states, speak at events, and network with other educators.

1. **Educational Vision Update and Advancing Student Learning**
   1. **DESE As Partner Planning Process**

At the Board meeting, I will provide an update on the Department’s Educational Vision, including its ongoing work to advance student learning. This will include an overview of the DESE as partner planning process that will begin in January. DESE believes that if we promote our Educational Vision and commit to providing coherent and aligned supports in service of that vision, districts and schools will strategically select and leverage our resources and supports, and students will have equitable experiences and will thrive. In January, we will launch our strategic planning process that promotes internal coherence in service of this theory of action.

1. **Career Technical Education Committee Update – Discussion**

Committee Chair Martin West will provide an update on the Career Technical Education committee meeting that is planned for Monday, December 16, 2024.

1. **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools: Tuition Rate**

At the meeting on November 19, 2024, the Board discussed my recommendation to increase the per pupil tuition rate for each Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS) currently operating.

With the benefit of the Board’s initial discussion about timing of the rate increase, I am recommending that the Board vote at the December 17, 2024 meeting to amend the certificates for GCVS and TECCA to specify a per pupil tuition rate of $13,114 with $75 per pupil retained by the Department for program administration. Each school will receive the net amount of $13,039 per pupil, effective FY26. This would fully implement the tuition rate increase in the coming fiscal year. I further recommend that the Board delegate to the Commissioner authority to revise this rate for FY26 to reflect the annual Chapter 70 inflationary adjustment and amend their certificates accordingly. When the Board considers renewal of each CMVS’s certificate in March 2025, I will seek an extension of the delegation to annually adjust the CMVS tuition rates to reflect inflation.

Regina Robinson, Deputy Commissioner; Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; Ruth Hersh, School Redesign and Education Collaborative Manager; and Robert O’Donnell, Director of School Finance will be present at the Board meeting on December 17 to answer any questions you may have.

1. **Competency Determination Update – Discussion**

At the meeting on December 17, I will engage with the Board in a discussion on the new statutory provisions relating to the competency determination. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has issued [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/spec-advisories/2024-1211student-cd-update.html) on the new competency determination provisions.

Rob Curtin, Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability will be available to answer your questions.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

1. **SOA Data Advisory Commission Report**

Enclosed for your information is the annual report of the SOA Data Advisory Commission, which met twice during 2024. Consistent with its legislative charge, the group continued its overview of current ongoing data-related strategies and initiatives at DESE. The Commission continues to push forward in six focus areas that it established in 2021, which help ground the Commission and set direction for DESE’s efforts to improve its data systems and its understanding of questions related to school and district funding.

1. **FY2026 Education Budget Priorities from Board of Elementary and Secondary Education: Budget Transmittal Letter and Memo**

The FY2026 Education Budget Priorities memo from the Board to Secretary Tutwiler is enclosed for your reference.

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to meeting with you on December 17.