**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**135 Santilli Highway**

**Everett, Massachusetts 02149**  
**Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 9:04 a.m. – 1:10 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, *participated remotely*

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**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 9:04 a.m., and members introduced themselves. Chair Craven announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being livestreamed and recorded, and votes would be by roll call because one member is attending remotely.

**Statements from the Public**

* **Alice DeLuca, Vice-Chair, Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School Committee,** addressed the Board on Career Technical Education (CTE) admissions
* **Lisa Guisbond, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Schools,** addressed the Board on the Competency Determination Update
* **Kharis McLaughlin** addressed the Board on the Competency Determination Update
* **Emily Howland** addressed the Board on Time-Out Practices
* **Stefanie Krantz, Senior Attorney, Disability Law Center,** addressed the Board on Time-Out Practices
* **Ann Berman, President, Salem Teachers Union, Dr. Stephen Zrike, Superintendent, Salem Public Schools, and Dominick Pangallo, Mayor of Salem,** addressed the Board on the Salem Academy Charter School expansion application
* **Nikki Barnes, Executive Director, KIPP MA Public Charter Schools**, addressed the Board on the KIPP Academy Lynn expansion application
* **Mary Bourque, Ed.D., Executive Director, MA Association of School Superintendents**, addressed the Board on school funding and costs of expanding charter schools

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven said she would forego opening comments. She called for a motion and vote to approve meeting minutes from December.

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

**VOTED:** **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes**  **of the December 17, 2024, regular meeting.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler offered new year’s greetings and provided an overview of the K-12 education components of the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget recommendation. Secretary Tutwiler also stated that Governor Healey has signed an executive order to establish a K-12 Statewide Graduation Council.

**Comments from the Acting Commissioner**

Acting Commissioner Johnston expressed appreciation to educators across the state. He noted that the Attorney General’s Office recently released the *Cell Phones and Social Media in Schools Toolkit for School Leaders and Communities*, which includes guidance on three types of policies that limit the use of cell phones in schools. Acting Commissioner Johnston also noted the *Guidance Regarding K-12 Schools' Obligations to Protect Students and Their Information* issued by the Office of the Attorney General. He said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is continuing to work with the Office of the Attorney General on steps schools can take to support students and families and maintain an environment conducive to learning.

**Update on Commissioner Search Process**

Chair Craven updated the Board on the Commissioner search process. She said the search firm, Isaacson, Miller, has contacted many potential candidates and there is still an active call for nominations across the country. Chair Craven said the preliminary screening committee, which includes four members from the Board – Chair Craven, Secretary Tutwiler, Member Fisher, and Member West – met on January 13 and its next meeting will be on February 28. Chair Craven said more information on the Commissioner search is posted on the DESE website.

**Career Technical Education (CTE) Committee Update**

Committee Chair Martin West provided an update on the CTE committee meeting that took place on January 27, 2025. Member West stated that since October, the Board has dedicated six meetings to CTE admissions, including three special Board meetings and three meetings of the CTE committee, to review and discuss data and hear from superintendents, parents, school committee representatives, principals, school counselors, and community advocates. Member West summarized highlights of learnings from the CTE committee meetings and asked Acting Commissioner Johnston to come back to the Board in February with proposed amendments to the regulations that will address the key issues. Acting Commissioner Johnston agreed to do so. Member West and Acting Commissioner Johnston responded to questions and comments from Board members. Chair Craven thanked Member West for his leadership and thanked committee members for their service. Member West concluded by thanking the Acting Commissioner and DESE staff who provided data and information to support the committee’s work.

**Competency Determination Update**

Acting Commissioner Johnston opened the Competency Determination Update discussion and introduced Rob Curtin, Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability. Rob Curtin presented on the potential regulation changes related to the Competency Determination (CD):

* Regulation change #1: deletion of current language related to MCAS and state awarding CD
* Possible regulation change #2: new definitions of terms
* Possible regulation change #3: DESE oversight in relation to the new local CD policies
* Possible regulation change #4: additional subject areas as part of the CD

Acting Commissioner Johnston and Rob Curtin then responded to questions and comments from Board members about the potential regulation changes. Members discussed short-term and longer-term issues, the anticipated timeframe for the new Statewide Graduation Council, and the interest in promoting meaningful standards for students across districts. Chair Craven said the Board may hold a special meeting in February before the next regular meeting to continue the discussion, given the importance of the topic.

Member West left the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

**Discussion on Use of Time-Out Practices Under Current Regulations (603 CMR 46.00 and 603 CMR 18.00)**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced the topic of time-out practices in educational settings and invited Iraida J. Álvarez, Acting Executive Director of Special Education, Jamie Camacho, Acting State Director of Special Education, Jannelle Roberts, Director of the Office of Approved Special Education Schools, and Arabela Thomas, Deputy General Counsel, to present. The presenters discussed current definitions in regulations, national context related to this topic, guidance in Massachusetts since 2021, the working group DESE established in 2024 to provide input, and considerations on reducing or eliminating the use of time-out and safeguarding the well-being of students and school staff. Acting Commissioner Johnston and the presenters responded to questions from Board members. The Acting Commissioner said DESE plans to come back to the Board with recommendations.

**Educational Vision Update and Advancing Student Learning**

Acting Commissioner Johnston gave a brief update on DESE’s Educational Vision as an introduction to the Early Literacy update agenda item.

**Early Literacy Updates: Literacy Launch and Early Literacy Tutoring**

Acting Commissioner Johnston introduced the topic of high dosage tutoring in literacy and invited Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner of Instructional Support and Linda Sewnarine, Assistant Director of Literacy, to present an overview of early literacy tutoring coordinated by the Department since 2020.

Associate Commissioner Hashimoto-Martell then introduced a panel of presenters including Ed Lambert, Executive Director of the MA Business Alliance for Education, Joanna Jacobson, President of the One8 Foundation, Amanda Neitzel, Researcher at Johns Hopkins University, Katie Schubmehl, K-4 Literacy and Humanities Coordinator, Chelsea Public Schools, and Anne Curry, Director of Reading and ELA K-5, Waltham Public Schools to present on an independent early literacy high dosage tutoring pilot that was funded by the One8 Foundation. Acting Commissioner Johnston noted that the private foundation funded a pilot using one of several tutoring programs that are available to schools; this is not an endorsement of that program provider but rather an opportunity to learn from the outside evaluation of the pilot.

Ms. Neitzel presented Johns Hopkins University’s research on the results of the implementation of the Ignite reading program. Ms. Schubmehl described her experience implementing high dosage tutoring in early literacy in the Chelsea Public Schools as a recipient of the One8 grant. Ms. Curry described the use of high dosage tutoring in early literacy in Waltham Public Schools. Lastly, Ms. Jacobson offered the perspective from the philanthropic organization, One8 Foundation, that funded the pilot in various districts across the state. She said there are other high-quality providers besides Ignite, and the factors that made this pilot effective could be replicated in other districts across the state. The presenters responded to questions and comments from Board members.

Acting Commissioner Johnston then shifted to the second Early Literacy subtopic: Literacy Launch Update. Associate Commissioner Hashimoto-Martell and Assistant Director Sewnarine updated the Board on Literacy Launch progress, PRISM I grants and outcome goals, and how the initiative connects to the recommendations from the Board’s Special Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Literacy. The presenters then responded to questions and comments from Board members.

Chair Craven stated that, in the interest of time, the Education Budget Update would be moved to the February regular meeting. She said she plans to convene a special meeting prior to the February regular meeting. With today’s agenda concluded, Chair Craven asked to adjourn the meeting.

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

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 1:10 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

 Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Johnston

Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board