



Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner

# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
**From:** Jeff Wulfson, Acting Commissioner  
  
**Date:** March 16, 2018  
**Subject:** Update on the Lawrence Alliance for Education and the Holyoke Public Schools

### Lawrence Alliance for Education

On February 6, 2018, I announced the board members of the Lawrence Alliance for Education (LAE), the partnership board that will oversee the Lawrence Public Schools when Superintendent/Receiver Jeffrey C. Riley assumes his role as Commissioner. The LAE will have the authorities granted to a receiver by state law. The board, with the commissioner's approval, will identify a superintendent who will manage the district on a day-to-day basis and who will report to the board. The board itself will report to the Commissioner and will meet regularly in open session.

The seven members of the LAE are:

- Chairman John Connolly, executive director of The 1647, Inc. in Boston, an organization that helps schools increase family engagement;
- Honorable Daniel Rivera, Mayor of the city of Lawrence;
- Jessica Andors, executive director of Lawrence Community Works, a community development corporation;
- Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, vice president of the Lawrence campus and community relations for Northern Essex Community College;
- Patricia Mariano, member of the Lawrence School Committee and former principal of the Francis M. Leahy School in Lawrence;
- Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, associate commissioner for the statewide system of support at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and
- Julia Silverio, president of Silverio Insurance Agency in Lawrence.

Mr. Riley will continue to have full authority of the district until his transition. In the meantime, members of the LAE will serve in an advisory capacity and will lead the search for a new

superintendent for the district. The first meeting of the LAE was held on February 27, 2018 and can be viewed here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SgCX68wLVhvNrnJr09i9Hz\\_AOJAmVyeB/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SgCX68wLVhvNrnJr09i9Hz_AOJAmVyeB/view).

Chairman John Connolly will provide the Board with an update on the superintendent search and the LAE's activities to date at the March 27<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

### **Holyoke Public Schools**

Dr. Stephen Zrike has been receiver of the Holyoke Public Schools since his appointment in June 2015. In October 2015, Commissioner Chester and Dr. Zrike released the district's turnaround plan. Since then I have been pleased with Dr. Zrike's focus and commitment to the students and staff of the Holyoke Public Schools. Recently, Dr. Zrike and I agreed to extend his employment contract through June 30, 2021. The contract amendment also includes an appropriate salary increase.

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Zrike along with Erin Linville, Chief of Turnaround, will provide an update on the district's overall academic progress to date, including an update on Morgan Full Service Community School, one of the four Level 5 schools. Among the topics Dr. Zrike will cover are: the district's vision and strategic priorities, implementation of the secondary redesign, support for teachers and educator career development, and specific challenge areas.