



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

February 14, 2017

Mary Pichetti  
Director of Capital Planning  
Massachusetts School Building Authority  
40 Broad Street, Suite 500  
Boston, MA 02109

Dear Ms. Pichetti:

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has reviewed the space summary and accompanying documentation submitted by the city of Somerville for the construction of a new facility to house Somerville High School. The agency has done so in accordance with M.G.L. chapter 70B, section 6(6), which instructs us to certify "...that adequate provisions have been made in the school project for children with disabilities, as defined in section 1 of chapter 71B...".

ESE is satisfied that the plans for floors 1-5 of the facility will provide the community with an opportunity to serve its special education students well. ESE certifies that the space on these floors has been planned to adequately serve the programs and school populations referenced in M.G.L. chapter 70B, section 6(6) noted above.

However, the district is proposing to situate the Full Circle Public Day School and the Next Wave Public Day School programs on the lower floor of the building. While the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education believes that District's plan to relocate these programs to the proposed high school is appropriate, reasonable, and most importantly in the best interests of the students, the unique composition of these programs (~65% students on IEPs, ~35% alternative education students) presents the agency with a challenge of defining whether or not these are special education day programs, or non-special-education alternative programs. If they were considered special education day programs, the Department would want to ensure that the enrolled students are provided adequate and appropriate facilities for special education and related services specified on student IEPs. If, on the other hand, they were considered non-special-education alternative programs, the Department would not have to certify approval to MSBA, because the Department only makes such certification for special education program spaces. The Department would like to engage further in thoughtful conversations with the district to determine the best way to transition the Next Wave and Full Circle students to the new high school, including how best to define these programs. In the meantime, however, the agency does not want to cause an undue delay to an already lengthy building design process. Therefore, the Department will **provisionally** certify that the design of the lower floor design has been planned to adequately serve the programs and school populations referenced in M.G.L. chapter 70B, section 6(6) noted above. The Department will allow the project to move forward in the MSBA process, and will look forward to continued dialogue (discussions to be coordinated by ESE and preferably completed by August 1, 2017) about the best possible solution for the students at Next Wave and Full Circle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Deninger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Matthew J. Deninger  
ESE designee on the MSBA Board of Directors

Cc: Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner, ESE  
Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner and Acting State Director of Special Ed, ESE  
Vani Rastogi-Kelly, Director, Public School Monitoring, ESE  
Jane Ewing, Supervisor, Public School Monitoring, ESE  
Barry Barnett, Director, Problem Resolution Services, ESE  
John Jumpe, Senior Project Coordinator, MSBA  
Members of the Somerville High School Building Committee