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Subject to approval by the Board at the the February 10 meeting in Malden

Board of Education Special Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, January 14, 1997

Chairman John Silber of Brookline called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Of The Board Of Education Present

Dr. John Silber, Brookline, Chairman
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Southwick, Vice Chairperson
Dr. Edwin Delattre, Boston
Mr. William K. Irwin, Jr., Wilmington
Dr. Stanley Z. Koplik, Chancellor, Board of Higher Education
Mr. James Peyser, Boston
Dr. Roberta Schaefer, Worcester
Dr. Abigail M. Thernstrom, Lexington
Ms. Alexis Vagianos, Melrose, Chair, Student Advisory Council

Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci, Secretary

Also In Attendance

Ms. Linda Beardsley, Department of Education
Dr. David P. Driscoll, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Education
Ms. Robin McCaffery, Department of Education
Ms. Michelle McDonald, Department of Education
Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, Department of Education
Ms. Sandra Stotsky
Ms. Carole Thomson

Board members reviewed and discussed the English Language Arts framework that was on the agenda for the regular meeting scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. on January 15, 1997. There was an open discussion among Board members and Sandra Stotsky, representative of the English Language Arts framework committee, regarding this framework.

The first issue discussed was whether to hold a public hearing on the History and Social Science framework. Mr. Irwin and Vice Chairperson Crutchfield recommended holding a hearing, and offered to co-chair it. Dr. Silber commented that nothing would be said at a hearing that the Board has not already read in the written comments it has received. Dr. Thernstrom and Dr. Schaefer stated that holding a hearing would deviate from the process now underway and would delay completion of the revisions. Dr. Silber and Commissioner Antonucci recommended and the Board agreed to wait until after the regular meeting tomorrow to decide whether or not to hold a public hearing.

The Board then discussed the English Language Arts framework and made numerous suggestions and corrections, both typographical and substantive. Among the substantive changes are revisions that emphasize phonics instruction to ensure that students will learn to read. Dr. Silber said systematic phonics instruction can reduce the number of children referred to special education. He referred to a December 17, 1996 letter from David Pesetsky to Linda Beardsley on this issue. Dr. Schaefer suggested adding the latest research and assessment results on reading achievement in California. Dr. Stotsky reviewed changes that have already been made to increase the emphasis on phonics, and additional changes were agreed. Dr. Silber said the Board will send this document to David Pesetsky to review.

Dr. Stotsky noted that this draft includes references to handwriting practice, elocution, development of reading vocabulary and grammar. She will incorporate additional changes suggested by Dr. Delattre including revisions to the sections on citizenship and on electronic media. Other changes that were discussed and incorporated include expansion of the paragraph on non-fiction to refer to historical and biographical works, speeches and other texts; a reference to memorizing poetry; and the addition of thinking, not just brainstorming, to the list of stages in the writing process.

Dr. Silber asked Dr. Stotsky to add more literary works by minority authors to the literature list. Dr. Stotsky said the entire list is being vetted by editors of the *Hornbook*, a respected children's literature review, and it will emerge much stronger and more complete.

Board members also discussed the literature list in relation to assessment. Dr. Silber said he believes the most serious testing of student's writing ability and literary knowledge should take place in the individual schools, but he proposed that the Board consider identifying 12-15 books that every Massachusetts student should have read by high school graduation. Mr. Peyser suggested looking at the AP English reading list and how it is used. Dr. Stotsky recommended that the issue of assessment be discussed further with teachers and other members of the assessment committee.

It was agreed that the corrections discussed will be made as soon as possible and the corrected pages will be sent to Board members. The Board will vote on the English Language Arts framework at the regular meeting on January 15, 1997, contingent on the changes discussed at tonight's meeting.

No votes were taken except to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED:that the Board of Education adjourn the special meeting at 9:00 p.m. subject to the call of the Chairman.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert V. Antonucci
Secretary