COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
*****REGULAR MEETING*****
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

350 MAIN STREET
MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS
Tuesday, April 24, 2001
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT:
Mr. James A. Peyser, Chairman, Dorchester
Dr. Roberta R. Schaefer, Vice-Chairperson Worcester
Mr. Charles D. Baker, Swampscott
Mr. J. Richard Crowley, Andover
Dr. Judith I. Gill, Chancellor, Boston
Mr. William K. Irwin, Wilmington
Ms. Jody Kelman, Chairperson, Student Advisory Council
Mr. Henry M. Thomas, III, Springfield
Dr. David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Secretary to the Board

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ABSENT:
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

ALSO PRESENT:
Maryellen Coughlin, Registered Professional Reporter

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAIN

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Good morning everyone. Welcome to this month's Board of Education meeting. I'd like to start off with a few comments. One is that I have taken a new job. On May 7th, I'm going to become the Governor's Senior Advisor on Education and Worker Training, which means I'll be leaving my day job at the Pioneer Institute, but it doesn't mean I'll be leaving my post as Chairman of the Board of Education. I'll be holding both positions going forward.

In addition, there's a new office that's been created. It's the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, which is taking over some of the responsibilities of the accountability office in DOE as well as the responsibilities of the Education Management and Accountability Board or EMAB. I'm going to be chairing a five-person board that will oversee that office as well.

On an unrelated point, I want to comment that Chapter 70 Reform is making some headway in the legislature. There have been hearings. There have been bills introduced by the Administration as well as by the House Ways and Means Committee to reform and improve the foundation budget and other aspects of Chapter 70. One thing that I would like to note, at least in the Administration's proposal, is the recommendation to update data related to income and inflation rates and consolidate various categories of aid down from six to three in order to tie a greater share of new Chapter 70 aid to growth, to enrollment growth in communities, regardless of community type. The formula itself is modified to provide additional

resources for special education, and there's a cap or some form of limitation that's proposed for high spending districts that are spending well above the state average, and in particular well above their foundation budget.

A lot of these proposals on the table are very significant improvements that are not only overdue but needed right now because the existing formula has essentially been fulfilled. All districts have essentially reached their foundation levels, which means that most of the incremental aid is going out to districts through minimum aid and some other supplemental aid mechanisms which do not take into account the variables that are embedded in the foundation formula, all of which means that there's not a lot of thought behind the distribution of these funds from one community to the next. In order to make the process more thoughtful and to make the allocation of funds fair, it's important to reform Chapter 70 to reflect these new realities where we have all districts at or above foundation. A number of the proposals come out of recommendations that were made by this Board over a year ago, and in particular the committee on budget and finance. For the Commissioner, Jeff Wulfson, and others in the Department who contributed to that process, I'm pleased to report some progress on that front.

I have just one more quick comment. I was in the Quincy Public Schools last month and I'm going to the Everett Public Schools this month as part of a program I've begun to visit schools monthly. Perhaps in my new role I'll be able to do that even more frequently. We visited the Wollaston and Squantum Elementary Schools in Quincy, both of which had shown very significant improvement on MCAS compared to the 1998 base year. They were identified as candidates, I believe, for exemplary status. My visits to both those schools were very interesting and useful. With that, Commissioner, let me turn it over to you.

DR. GILL: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Board of Higher Education, I would like to congratulate you on your new position and to say that I look forward to working with you in a new role.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I, too, obviously want to add my congratulations and great pleasure in having Jim assume his new role, which in many ways will greatly help move forward the agenda that he and I set back in 1999. I'm very much looking forward to him assuming his new duties and to continuing to work with him as a partner, even more so now. I suspect that we'll be seeing more of each other, not that he let Pioneer Institute interrupt too much, but after all, it was his day job. I suspect that he will now be at many more public events with me and I look forward to that. I have a few quick announcements.

This time of the year is a one when, traditionally, the Commonwealth has found ways to honor its teachers and educators. For example, we have our Teacher of the Year Ceremony at the Statehouse coming up. In addition to that, we have the awarding of the new charters. We have the MINT program, the new bonus recipients celebration, and the teachers who have earned National Board Certification status. You might remember that we had seven in 1998, and we now are into the hundreds. Hopefully, we'll soon reach my goal of a thousand by 2003. So those events will be coming up at the Statehouse.

I would also like to mention that next week is "Turn Off TV Week," and the Governor and I will be monitoring the Nielson ratings. Hopefully, this will call attention to the importance of students and families developing good habits at home and not spending so much time watching television.

As the Chairman mentioned, the House budget is out, and we're looking at what seems to clearly be a change in Chapter 70. We don't know exactly what the Senate is going to do, but we're pleased with some action on that front because there are some issues that need to be addressed. Hopefully, through the budget process, when it goes back to the Governor's office and so forth, we can come out with an improved Chapter 70. I hope people in education understand that this is a most difficult time for state government under any circumstances. You can see across the country that several states are now entering a period of time with deficits once again. Obviously, the economy is cooling, and we face some very difficult situations. People get use to the kinds of increases they've had in the past and it's very difficult for state government to deal with such constraints. A number of agencies are already seeing some severe limitations.

There were initiatives that we had introduced through the Board's budget that the Governor supported, and he introduced some of his own. Some were eliminated in the House budget, but despite that, K to 12 is up over a couple hundred million dollars. I just hope that people understand that it is a time, even though we have concerns, to be appreciative of the fact. The Senate has been supportive in the past and the fact that both the House One budget and the House budget have shown over a $200,000,000 increase for public education in K to 12, in one way or another, is noteworthy.

Yesterday we held an orientation for our two new Board members, although they didn't need it. It was very good and it reminded Jim and me that we need to find ways to provide some information and go back over some of the issues that we haven't visited in a while as a full Board. We also have our Math Education Conference coming up on May 4th and we're looking forward to that.

Yesterday, I signed a contract with an independent nonpartisan organization called Achieve. Many here in Massachusetts know about Achieve. They've been affiliated with the National Governors Association and with IBM doing some work ever since the original National Education Summit in 1996. Achieve is going to do three things for us: number one, compare our mathematics frameworks to other state and international standards; number two, compare our mathematics test at grade 10 with the mathematics framework for grade 10 to make sure that there's a clear alignment; and three, do a policy analysis on where we now stand in the education reform process. I expect the first part, the benchmarking of our math framework to national/international standards, to be completed by the end of June, and the other two components in the fall.

Finally, I want to talk about the Tutors and Mentors Project, particularly focused on the Class of 2003. The Board of Higher Education, businesses, and others have joined us in working towards this goal. We've included extensive outreach. We've got a web site to contact volunteers for on-line training. We just issued an RFR to hire a firm to help recruit and train a core group, what I like to call "Super Tutors," who will most likely be retired mathematics teachers, by the way, and we're going to use a train the trainers model. This group of up to 300 people will receive special MCAS tutor training this summer so that by September they will be available statewide to assist schools in managing, training, and supporting the volunteers who come into our schools to help tutor students in mathematics. So that's my report.

DR. SCHAEFER: I was just wondering if I could comment on two items in the budget which are of particular concern to me, and I think probably to the whole Board. One is the line item for mentors to teachers that we keep putting it in, and it never gets funded, and this is a serious issue. We are going to confront a teacher shortage soon. We've come up with alternative ways of certifying teachers, and that involves having them have mentors, and we can't just put teachers in the classroom without some kind of support system. I would like to make a strong plea, maybe somebody from the legislature will be listening, that that needs to be funded. I'm not sure where the accountability line item was left, but was that cut also?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: It's a little obscure. Actually, I don't know what the House budget did on that item. I don't know if you have it.

MR. WULFSON: They fully funded it, but they put half in a reserve to be released upon a progress report.

DR. SCHAEFER: Okay. Because obviously if we're going to say that we're holding schools accountable, then we need to have the funds available to do that.

MS. KELMAN: I have two questions. One was on the Certificate of Academic Mastery. Is that the same as the program where if you score Advanced on one test and then all the rest Proficient, you get to go to a state college?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: They're essentially cash prizes for students who receive Certificates of Mastery.

MS. KELMAN: I just wanted to make sure that no one who thought they were going to state college was now finding out that they couldn't. The other was in terms of the orientation for new board members. I was just wondering if you might be willing to do maybe a smaller version of that when the new student board member comes in?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Absolutely.

MS. KELMAN: Thank you very much.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: With that, let's go on to statements from the public, and I think we have one person appearing this morning, Carey Reid. Is Carey Reid here?

MR. REID: Good morning, and thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I'm speaking mainly about the ABE regulations that are up for a final vote today. My name is Carey Reid, and I am employed by the System for Adult Basic Education Support, which is known as SABES. SABES is contracted by DOE to provide training and support to the adult literacy practitioners and programs. In our technical assistance role, SABES has been asked by ACLS to provide assistance to ACLS and the Advisory Committee that put together the package that you're looking at today. The statement I am reading is different from the one I faxed yesterday to Carline Gele. I apologize for the revision.

The regulation changes came out only a few days ago, and as I've spent more time with them, I felt the need to make a stronger statement than I thought I would have to make yesterday at this time. To get to the point, I am very concerned that changes have been made to this document that occurred outside the public commentary process, changes that were not made in response to public comment but by persons within the Department who felt that certain sections needed changing. I am especially concerned about the numerous changes that have been made to Professional Standards, that's Section 47.08, and it might save us some time for you to find the red-lined version that Mary Jayne Fay passed out to you. None of these changes were made based on response to public comment. In other documents you have been provided with, the argument is made that the standards, which are the heart of the licensure model, were edited for clarity in case of assessment, but a close examination reveals the changes actually go far beyond those points.

In some cases they eliminate important emphases, and in others they reduce clarity and risk confusing readers. Here are just a few of the changes. Former standard 9, renumbered 7, which used to read: "Uses

instructional materials conveying the range of contributions that various immigrants and native groups have made to American society" has been changed to read: "Includes appropriate use of instructional materials conveying the range," et cetera, implying that inclusion of materials underscoring the contributions of other cultures might somehow be inappropriate or that their use should be optional.

Several standards covering curriculum design have been patched together to now read: "Designs curriculum relevant to the experiences, interests and goals of learners, the particular instructional setting, and the Department's adult basic education curriculum frameworks." I believe that's now Standard 10. The clause "Designs curriculum relevant to the Department's adult basic education curriculum frameworks" does not make sense. How can curriculum be relevant to curriculum?

Former Standard 14, renumbered 11, changes "Integrates technology for use within the home, community and classroom into the design of a curriculum" to "Integrates appropriate use of technologies into lesson plans and classroom pedagogy." The revised version loses the emphasis on and muddies the intent of helping our learners to cross the digital divide that makes for many of them use of fax machines, voice mail, copiers, and electronic card catalogs challenging tasks. The revised standards imply the assumption that technology for adult learners means only the computer of a K to 12 classroom.

This is the final example, so I won't tax your patience. Former Standard 17, "Uses a wide variety of instructional methods, techniques and tools to facilitate adult learning," and former Standard 18, "Uses effective strategies that encourage learners to develop and use critical thinking, solve complex problems, work with diverse learners and identify and use resources" has been collapsed into one standard, now 13, to read "Uses a wide variety of instructional approaches, techniques and tools to facilitate adult learning (e.g. critical thinking, solving complex problems, working with diverse groups and identifying and using resources.)" Former Standard 17 had captured the range of approaches from direct teaching to participatory practice, and the range of interests, skills and learner preferences one could expect to find among adult learners. Former Standard 18 had isolated and emphasized the hard won set of higher order learning skills articulated by some of the best adult education researchers (Kegan, Gardner, Fingeret) as well as the SCANS recommendations. In the new composite standard, these distinctions are lost, and in fact the parenthetical reference implies that developing higher order skills is the only option open to teachers in the classroom.

In keeping with the spirit of the public commentary process, citizens reading the document approved for public comment by the Board on January 24th had a right to expect that what they were reading would not be changed by persons inside the Department. They had a right to expect that by not asking for changes to the standards, they were voting for those standards as they were written. In fact, there are many comments that point to strong overall approval of the regulations. A group process, such as the one that produced the draft regulations and the one that guided their examination by the public, is meant to eliminate or diminish the potential damage of personal bias. In this case, that protection was lifted. Therefore, I submit that any changes made to this document after January 24th that were not made in response to public comment should by rights go out for public comment again. Either that, or wherever changes were not made in response to public comment, the document should be restored to its January 24th form as approved by the Board on that date and protected from further tampering. Thank you for your attention.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the March 27, 2001 Regular Meeting as presented by the Commissioner.**

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Mr. Thomas. The vote was unanimous.

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPATIONAL PROFICIENCY: PROPOSED STANDARDS FOR FOUR OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS - Discussion and Vote to Seek Public Comment

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The next item is the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, and we have before us some new standards which hopefully you will go over in summary form that we're going to vote on to send out for public comment.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I'd like to introduce this in a couple of ways. First of all, this entire issue of Certificates of Occupational Proficiency began with the Educational Reform Act of 1993, and it has been our hope and intent to be able to develop Certificates of Occupational Proficiency in various areas. The biggest thing I've learned in this whole area is how complicated and difficult this is. Even in states like Oklahoma and Ohio that spend literally millions and millions of dollars of state monies in this area, the development of an assessment system and a standard system has taken quite a bit of time. I think we have to recognize that what was written in 1993 was very difficult to implement. There are two points I'd like to make before turning it over to Fran to talk about the four specific certificates that we're dealing with today. By the way, as the Chairman said, these will go out for public comment.

I think there has been some confusion because of concerns around the high-stakes testing and the Competency Determination requirement for the Class of 2003 and a number of pieces of legislation and other discussions that have been held around that issue. We ought not to confuse what this Certificate of Occupational Proficiency is by law. By law, this certificate is awarded in addition to the Competency Determination. In fact, let me read the very important statement from the law: "No student may receive said Certificate of Occupational Proficiency without also having acquired a Competency Determination." I hope that we're very clear on this issue. This is the way the law was passed in 1993, and this is the way we intend to implement it.

In looking at the development of the standards in these four areas, there is a succession, if you will, of skills. When you look at, for example, cosmetology and culinary arts, you're really talking about some very basic skills that then build up to a level of occupational proficiency, and they're listed there so that you can see the progression up through the various skills that are needed. The focus should really be on the end result, which is the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency.

Finally, I'd like to say that this is part of an entire system of establishing standards and establishing a semblance of order in the entire area of careers. I'm very pleased with the seven career clusters that we have identified and within which we will organize future Certificates of Occupational Proficiency. So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to turn it over to Fran to introduce our guests and make a brief presentation, and then have a discussion with the Board.

MR. KANE: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr. Chairman and Board Members, we want to thank you for having us return to give you an update on where we are at this point. What we said we would do was bring a couple of individuals from business that were involved with the validation, so I would like to introduce to you, to my immediate right, Paul Porter. Mr. Porter represents Ford Motor Corporation, where as Technical Support Operations Manager of the Automotive Consumer Services Group, he manages all service training operations in the northeast. He is active in the annual Ford troubleshooting contest and is a resident of Milford, Massachusetts. To my far right is Chip Dufault. He is certified as an Executive Chef by the American Culinary Federation. He serves as Executive Chef at the Worcester Country Club. When he's not supervising the dining of members, guests and the general dining public, he serves as the president of the Central Massachusetts Chapter of the American Culinary Federation.

I'm not sure where we want to proceed here, but if I may, I'd like to just summarize what has happened so far, is with the hundred plus volunteers that we've had from administration, from faculty, we want to thank those people for where we are so far. But what we're seeing as we develop these and look at these competencies is that it's leading us to other openings for professional development, for teacher certification, recertification and also Chapter 74 regulation changes. I don't want to take as much time as we took last time, but I would like to open it up to any questions you may have, especially of our two business individuals.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Fran, if you can ask our guests if they have any comments they'd like to make either about the process or the content of the standards at this point.

MR. PORTER: Commissioner, Board Members, thank you very much for allowing me to come to speak today. Although I work for Ford Motor Company, I actually represent probably all the manufacturers, no matter what badge is on the vehicle. The skill sets that were set forth in this are basically the minimum skill sets that would be put forth to somebody going into the industry, and I would not allow somebody to do a brake job on my car, and hopefully not on your vehicle, unless they actually had competency in what they were doing, and I think this set of skills would put forth that message to employers, basically that they would not hire somebody to an entry level unless they had these. Certainly, as we go forth into the next millennium, we are starting to see more and more sophistication going into our vehicles with the split voltage systems, electrical/gasoline hybrid type vehicles, fuel cell type vehicles. The skill sets keep rising and rising. What was once reserved for rocket scientists and astronauts is now infiltrating clear down into the lowest level of the automotive industry. So we are very much supportive of this process and would like to go forward.

MR. DUFAULT: I apologize for my tardiness. The standards that are established for the culinary arts have come in bulk from the American Culinary Federation Standards for Apprenticeship which are accepted by the U.S. Department of Labor. The ACF, American Culinary Federation, has 22,000 members around the country and in the Caribbean, and now they have a couple of overseas chapters, and these standards are used to train cooks to a point where they can walk into just about any kitchen anywhere in the United States and perform at a proficiency level that we would expect to be able to do the job that's required, to be able to do most jobs that are required. There's been very little standardization in the culinary field. The ACF has been kind of a forerunner in pushing these things forward since the 1970s. In the field, trying to find qualified individuals even out of the trade schools has been very difficult. The majority of our time as professionals is spent training individuals once they're on the job. These standards that we've established to put forward for the education would help us to be able to concentrate more on the work at hand and not have to spend as much time training the individuals in the basic skills that are required to do the job.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Let me introduce Karen Ward from our staff who does yeoman's work in all kinds of areas including the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, and I'm pleased to announce that she will be receiving from Skills USA VICA their highest honor this spring. So, Karen, congratulations.

MS. WARD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Do members have any questions for the panel?

MR. IRWIN: I do have a few questions. I found it interesting that 20 years ago a lot of us could take an engine out of a car and put it back in the car on the same day and would not have a problem with it, even if we really weren't mechanics. It's interesting the statement that you made that the skill sets keep rising with the different types of engines and things that are coming out. It really falls right into what I've been saying

all along -- in the vocational technical area, there is a need for a higher understanding and higher education in math and English so you'll be able to understand those things, and I really appreciate that. There is one thing we have to remember. This is just not for secondary standards; it's post secondary also, and these are standards that are going to be very hard for somebody to obtain.
Going back to the actual report, I do have a few questions and comments. The first one is in the career clusters that are broken out here. Can we get that broken out into occupations, because there are a lot of occupations involved in these career clusters? If you get it broken out that would really give us an idea of how far along we are and where we're going. That comes right into play with the budget that just came out. For years and years we've been requesting from the legislature a budget to do the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency development and assessment setup. It's interesting that each year the Board asks for $500,000, and the Governor asks for $100,000, and the House Ways and Means comes out with zero. I'd appreciate it if people in the vocational technical area could spend some time going around and seeing the legislators to see if they can't get the money put back into the development of the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. By the way, you did a great job on all four of these occupation areas. I really like them.

When you get into the earnings and the occupational outlook, I see that the earnings go back to 1997, and the occupation outlook is within a year or two of that. I don't know if there are studies that have been done recently on what the earnings or the occupational outlook should be, but I'd think it would be important if we could update that so that we get better information out to people who are looking to make a choice.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Can we just pause on that point, Bill? Is there any response to that?

MR. KANE: Well, we used the information from DET's so-called 2006 Projections, but we are doing some work with Andy Sum and Paul Harrington upgrading a lot of this along with some other work that he's doing for us, so we're going to keep them involved in this.

MR. IRWIN: One of the areas you could look into is on the Internet, into careers. There's a lot of information in there. In fact, I just did it for some of my employees, to update their salaries.

MS. WARD: The industries themselves lots of times have the best information, so we could certainly work on getting some of that. As far as the breakdown of occupations, we have that, and we'll provide it to you.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: So we feel that the numbers that are here do in fact need to be updated for inflation?

MS. WARD: Those are the last official numbers, but, yes, they need to be updated because we're in the year 2001 and we're talking about 1997, so point well taken.

MR. IRWIN: One thing that I'd really like the Committee to revisit is the mission statement. On page 3 of the mission statement, it still seems like it's missing the original intention of the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, which is the mastery of core skills. The last line is "receive recognition and certification for what they know and can do." I think we're talking about two different things here. One would be some type of certificate for a student that has not necessarily reached the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. I still, and I hope others still, envision a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency as being very hard to obtain, whereas when you talk about certification for what they know and they can do, that would be something totally different. So if I could ask you to revisit that and perhaps make it a little bit different. My last question which is, and I'm not going to hold anybody to it but I'm going to ask it anyhow, how many students do people envision attaining a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, what percentage per year,

what's the thought? I know, it's a very, very difficult question. But working with the Committee, what is the thought?

MR. KANE: Once we have all of the competencies established and we go back and look at the competencies that are presently being taught in the schools and get a uniform level and move forward with curriculum development, then I think each year maybe more of those students will attain that. I think maybe by the year 2003, I'll take a gander and say 10 or 15 percent may reach that. In the automotive it may be a little bit easier, because we are all -- all of them are NATEF approved there and we're moving in that area. But what we really need to do, and I would ask Chancellor Gill while I have the opportunity, we really need more help from the community college level. We need more volunteers to work with us on this. And we really need to make sure that once the student graduates from high school after meeting all the other requirements, if they have not mastered all of the competencies of the COP, that they have another place to go to finish them. We can't let it end there. If I graduate with my so-called Chapter 74 certificate in automotive and I have 25 of the 50 competencies, where will I get the other 25 to actually obtain that COP? Will it be at a community college, will it be back at the school for an evening program or a day program at some of the schools right now?

MR. IRWIN: If I could continue on that thought, where would you envision the people obtaining the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency from after they have left school and gone into post secondary? Would it be from the post-secondary institution or would it be going back to the school?

MR. KANE: Well, I think that's a combination of both. At the present time we do that in some of our secondary schools to go back and complete those competencies that they didn't do. I would love to think that with the 16 community colleges, we could continue the process on, and at the same time be working on an associate degree be completing those competencies, but I think we've got a lot of work to do in that area.

MR. IRWIN: My concern would be just holding the high standards of secondary schools.

MR. KANE: Right.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: You know, part of this is semantics, although I think there's substance behind it as well. In looking at the mission statement, for example, you refer to the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency System, and what we're really talking about is a system of occupational standards and assessments of which the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency is the capstone. It might be helpful to start using words in that way so that it's clear the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency is pointed towards the higher end of the performance spectrum here. There are other certificates that could be developed, and I believe we have the authority to develop them, to recognize performance at other levels, that is, competency certificates rather than proficiency. In some ways, it's a matter of changing the rhetoric so that the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, rather than the foundation of the system, is the capstone. I need to refer to the architectural instruction standards to get the terminology right here, but that may help in making sure that we stay on track. Are there other comments or questions?

DR. GILL: I'd just like to make a statement that Mr. Irwin and Ms. Moda from the Community College Executive Office have been doing a great deal of work in the last year in order to bridge any of the gaps that had once existed between these two areas, and we will be pleased to continue our work to help you in this area.

MR. KANE: We do have representation from Jan's office that serve on our occupational committee, but we really need more of the practitioners that are involved.

DR. SCHAEFER: First of all I would like to thank the representatives of these industries coming today and all of the volunteers who have been working on this very important area. I was glad that the Commissioner read from the law and clarified where this stands with respect to our other graduation requirements, because -- I don't know if you were listening this morning to NPR—but unless I misunderstood it, what they were saying was that the Board was considering changing vocational education requirements to be a combination of MCAS and the work. So I think there has been a misunderstanding in the public about the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, and I do think that that information needs to get out there.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Well, I'm glad you brought that up. I didn't hear the story, but, just so that no one is confused, we are not adding a requirement on to high school graduation for students in vocational schools. This is again a certificate. We're talking about a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency as a recognition for high performance, not a minimum requirement for high school graduation, so that's a very important point.

The other thing I want to underline in the same vein as Bill's comment as well as the comments about the automotive industry, is that we're kidding ourselves in thinking that vocational and technical education is about a trade only and that the basic academic skills in English and mathematics in particular don't count for anything. They count for a lot because these are increasingly technical occupations where you need to be able to read complicated materials. You need to be able to do math at varying levels, including some high level math. I would add further, this has come up tangentially in the conversation, that I believe half or increasingly more than half of our vocational-technical students are going on to higher education themselves. The competencies in the academic subjects, especially English and math, are no longer optional for most vocational-technical students, not because we say so but because the workplace requires it. Any other questions or comments?

MR. THOMAS: Just a quick observation. Actually, two points. The first is that I would expect that industries would be looking at the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency benchmark as a screener for whether they accept high school graduates or not, notwithstanding the fact that they could have the competency requirements taken care of, yet they may not have met the high level performance. Therefore, those three or fours years that they've been studying horticulture or automotive or woodworking, for example, would not serve them very well in the job market if, in fact, this is the industry's unofficial screening device as to whether they get into jobs or not, correct?

MR.KANE: Correct.

MR. THOMAS: So I would think that there needs to be an aggressive merge between both the competency discipline and the proficiency discipline within the academic areas because I think it would be tragic if we have kids who get through and pass the standards-based graduation requirement and yet don't have the armament to get into more of the work within the field that they've been hoping and dreaming for. A lot of that may have to do with the quality of instruction within those institutions, within the schools that are offering these subject matters.

MR.KANE: It's a delicate balance at this point. There's no question about it. Some schools have cut back on the amount of actual shop time and increased the academic, but a number of them are really working to try to work across the curriculum with the academic and the skills.

MR. THOMAS: Is there a willingness for vocational schools to take another look at their curriculum alignment so that they have a different kind of balance with regard to how much effort they put into the academic side versus the --

MR. KANE: Well, that's happening all the time.

MS. WARD: The standards for automotive, yes, and Paul can talk about that. And NATEF, that's exactly what that does, kind of bridges that gap and raises the standards of curriculum development, and certainly Certificates of Proficiency will have an enormous impact on curriculum in the schools in the Commonwealth and certainly professional development as well.

MR. THOMAS: So you see there's maybe a push?

MS. WARD: Oh, absolutely.
On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education in accordance with G.L. Chapter 69, sections 1B and 1D, hereby authorize the Commissioner to solicit public comment on the proposed standards for the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency in four occupational clusters: automotive service technology, cosmetology, culinary arts, and horticulture.**

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Gill. The vote was unanimous.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS ON LICENSURE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS (603 CMR 47.00) - Discussion and Vote

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I want to thank the panel very much. The second item on the agenda concerns new regulations regarding adult basic education, for the certification of teachers in adult basic education. These have been before us previously and have come back following public comment for final approval. Commissioner, if you could take it from here.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: We have our administrator for Adult and Community Learning Services, Bob Bickerton, to our far right, Mary Jayne Fay, who is a certification specialist with us, and John McGovern, who is the co-chair of the GED Advisory Committee and administrator of the Worcester Adult Learning Center. We also have Suzanne Martin, who is a 20-year veteran and an ABE teacher in the Boston Adult Learning Center. So we've had these proposed regulations before you now for a couple of months. I think the most important point to make is that these are voluntary, that's the way the legislation that directed us to develop these standards reads, not that we were dragged kicking and screaming to do so. We wanted to do so. But it's clear from the legislation that these are voluntary, and just as was said about the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, we think this will drive higher standards across all of our programs, including professional development for our educators. Frankly I think it will ratchet everything up. So we're very proud. In fact, I think it's fair to say that these will be the strongest standards in the entire country. I don't know if this is the place to start, Bob, but it appears to me that we should respond to the person who spoke in public participation.

I was trying feverishly to look across the comments. I think it is an interesting comment, and I will say this from a broader perspective for Board members. When we do send a document out for public comment and then it comes back and we put before you final regulations, they do have a couple of elements. One of course is a response to what the public is saying, and we either accept or reject it and give you the reasons why, and it's very important. Secondly, we're continuing to make adjustments and improvements, and there's opportunity there for us to review the language, and so we do make those kinds of changes, and occasionally we do make a change at the Department of Education. We're not precluded from doing so,

because it's during that period of time that we want to put the best product forward, so it's not in that sense a violation. But I do think that the gentleman's point is well taken that we ought to have a good reason for it. It sounded to me, Bob, like much of it was wordsmanship, for example, that one where we define curriculum of curriculum, that does seem to need fixed. But I guess my first question, and then I'll give you the opportunity to respond in detail, is that it sounds to me like what was presented was fairly technical. Would you agree with that? As the Board finalizes regulations, we always reserve the right to take a couple of weeks to make sure we've got punctuation fixed and make those kinds of edits. Do you think within that spirit, that it didn't sound like huge differences? He had a couple of points that were well taken. Do you think it can be resolved to his satisfaction and more importantly the Boards?

MR. BICKERTON: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board, thank you for this opportunity to present these regulations for your consideration and possible approval. I want to do some overall context pieces, but first let me respond to the comments made by Mr. Carey Reid who spoke to you during the public comment period and also to note that the Advisory Committee that the Commissioner appointed to assist us with the development of these regulations was in many regards ably assisted by Carey and many other people in the field. I believe what is happening here, and, Commissioner, I think you've got your finger right on it, is that there were some wording changes made at the last minute that we believe do not change the substance of the standards, but were, in fact, meant to clarify and get to the heart of what can be assessed.

We worked very closely with Deputy Commissioner Sandra Stotsky to make these regulations as parallel as it was appropriate and possible to do with the K to 12 regulations, and some of these changes, particularly the four standards that Mr. Reid cited, have been condensed and combined to be more parallel with those regulations. That's what we believe we were able to accomplish. It sounds very much as you read the old version and the new that it does have to do with moving the words but not changing the substance, that's our belief. And that, in fact, some of the concerns, for example, I think both in the prior presentation and this one, the need to be able to solve complex problems, to engage in critical thinking, to be able to do some of the higher order things that our field and education in general needs to accomplish with our students, is still present in these standards, but it's present in a different form than previously. I believe the form is not where the problem will be. It will be how we assess whether people meet these standards or not that we'll be able to respond to the concerns that Mr. Reid has raised.

Let me do a little bit of context, because we're talking about voluntary regulations -- regulations for a voluntary licensure. This is a very different structure than this Board and the Department is accustomed to working with, since licensure for teachers in K to 12 is in fact a required part of the field. We're also talking about a field with instruction in fundamentally different ways, and I'm going to do just a couple of context setting pieces so that these regulations can be seen from that point of view.

The first piece is we work with a wide diversity of providers of adult basic education. There is no entitlement to adult education, and there is no entitlement to the funding for adult education. It doesn't go out to one system or another. So that public schools are very active participants in this, as my two colleagues on this panel will attest, both from Worcester and Brockton public schools, but so are the community colleges, almost all of which are represented in this system, as well as community-based and nonprofit organizations, correctional facilities, libraries. There's a very diverse provider network. These funds are hotly competed for, and they're awarded to the organizations that step forward with the best track record and the best equipped to do the work.

There are 2500 adult educators working in programs that are funded by the Department of Education. One of the things we should keep in mind is that because this is not an entitlement we're able to reach only a

portion of the adults in need. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the MassINC report that cited one out of every three members of the Massachusetts work force lacks the level of skills and abilities that we believe they need to have and that are expected in today's very competitive economy. That's 1.1 million adults. We are able to reach about 24,000-25,000 adults a year with our current levels of funding. So we're talking about a population and a delivery system that in some fundamental ways differs from how K to 12 education is structured. I should note that of those members of the work force who lack the level of skills that we expect and need them to have, about half of them have children under the age of 13, most of them are working poor, and in fact this challenges us in another way beyond work force readiness since the greatest indicator of a child's academic success is the education level of the parents.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: We also should mention that two-thirds of them are high school graduates.

MR. BICKERTON: Two-thirds of the people without that level of skills are high-school graduates, correct. 600 and some odd thousand we're talking about. The Department manages $42 million in combined state and federal funding this fiscal year. And despite the fact that we've seen some substantial increases in funding, very important to this program, from the state over the last five years, as of January we still had 13,000 adults sitting on waiting lists trying to get into these services. There's a very strong focus on performance accountability in adult education. At the end of last year, you voted new five-year awards for programs, and in that vote 20 percent of previously funded programs did not make that cut, a very competitive process and one that puts a high level of importance on the kind of performance we're seeing.

Now, about adult education certification or licensure as it's now called, there's a 25-year history of debate in this field on the issue of certification and licensure because so many of the participants in the program, the people who deliver services, are not working in organizations that traditionally use licensure, that would be true of higher education, that would be true of the community-based organizations and others. We began to achieve some measure of consensus at the end of the last decade about how licensure might look, because there's a strong interest -- if we're going to improve program performance we also have to have a strong focus on the ability of staff to deliver a quality program. Representative John Binienda of Worcester took that challenge on, and John McGovern will speak to that a bit more in a moment, but he took that on and in fact submitted and had approved in the legislature the language that says this Department was charged with making this come to life. He wanted to express his thanks and congratulations to the Department and to the Board for considering moving these forward. He's in a hearing this morning. He's chair of the Energy Committee in the House and regrets he couldn't be present personally to commend this work to you.

What you should know is that while there's a pretty wide diversity of people who are teaching in this field, almost all of them have a college degree, and over half of them already possess a K to 12 professional license. There are virtually no preparation programs today to enable people to move here. And, Chancellor Gill, your second request of the morning, we're hoping we can work closely with the Board of Higher Education to help bring these preparation programs and make them available. This license, as the Commissioner cited, will be the first of its kind in the nation. We will be first among the 50 states to have a license that is of the same rigor and stature as the K to 12 licenses in our state. In most other states the ABE license is an add-on for people who have already achieved the preK to 12 license or they are licenses of lesser rigor and stature. There were three key challenges in developing the license. I believe we've met them.

One is ensuring rigor in a voluntary system, a challenge there. It needed to recognize the skills and knowledge and experience of people who've been working in this field, some of them 25 years or more teaching. And we needed a way to acknowledge the skills they have in a way that was credible and also respectful of what they were bringing to the table. The third we addressed in the earlier public comments is

we need to build a license that addresses the unique needs and circumstances of this field -- there are some differences about it that we needed to respond to -- and while at the same time making it as parallel as possible to K to 12 regulations so that we have some consistency in the level of standards and expectations. That was a very challenging area. While I acknowledge and respect Mr. Reid's concerns that maybe we've varied from that to some extent, we believe we've met that challenge of walking both those paths in parallel.

The last one I want to put on the table is we're going to need to market the heck out of this. It's voluntary. While some of our colleagues who are in K to 12 and are tired of doing their professional development into a license they no longer use in K to 12 and want to be able to do that in adult education, we're still going to need to market this. It's a very challenging license and one that we're going to have to provide both support and some clear reasons why it's important to pursue. If I could turn this to John McGovern, he's going to add a little bit to the picture in terms of how we got to this point with the license.
MR. McGOVERN: Thank you. I'd once again like to take this opportunity to give you a little history of how we got here. It is true that in 1997 Representative Binienda, at the urging of adult educators, primarily from Worcester but from other parts of the state as well, put forth legislation that would allow licensure for ABE teachers. This was especially important because in 1997 the Education Reform Act and in 1999 the Recertification and Professional Development Guidelines changed the requirements for teachers, and our teachers who have been teaching in ABE programs, some of them for 25 years, wanted to maintain their certification, but they didn't want to have to go back and do it in the areas they were originally certified in. What they actually wanted to do was be able to certify in ABE, the field that they were teaching in, and that's what moved this legislation, and that's why we're here today.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. In keeping with that, two years ago the Commissioner established an Advisory Committee to make recommendations regarding the ABE teacher licensure. Through the development of the process, the Department in conjunction with SABES, which is the primary professional development organization for our field, conducted focus groups across the state, posted information on listservs, had on-line discussion groups and presented the model at statewide conferences trying to include as many practitioners as possible in the discussion and end result. Additionally, the Department in conjunction with SABES published a bimonthly certification update to help keep the practitioners informed. The Advisory Committee spent a great deal of time researching and discussing what it is that adult basic education teachers need to know and to be able to do to help ensure the success of our students. These discussions, as mentioned previously, included hundreds of practitioners from the field, and we feel that this document before you now reflects that work. Thank you.

MS. FAY: Thank you, Suzanne. One of the goals as Bob mentioned in developing this model was to make it equivalent in rigor and stature to the other Massachusetts teacher licenses. Because of that, we feel that this is the first license in the nation to have that depth and rigor. There are many similarities to the K through 12 licenses within this model, such as a college degree requirement, rigorous professional standards, an identified body of subject matter knowledge, the teacher test, field-based experiences and recertification and professional development requirements. The differences in this model are mainly due to two factors: the differences in the population of teachers that would get this licensure and the fact that this field is mainly driven by the needs and goals of the students that this field serves. Also, since this legislation stipulates that this is a voluntary license, the Department can make it available but not require it. So those two differences meant that we had to look at a different way of developing and promoting that license to help entice practitioners to come forward and to get this license. There are two ways that we feel that we did this. One is by creating multiple routes to licensure.

There are four routes to licensure proposed, and then two methods of becoming licensed: traditional teacher preparation program and a panel review process. Through that panel review process, we felt that we

would give the opportunity to experienced practitioners to be able to have that experience acknowledged within this process. Also, because there are no teacher preparation programs yet for adult basic education, for the time being the review panel is the only option available to them. Also, since the field is new to licensure, the Advisory Committee recommended that performance assessment should be required of all candidates pursuing this license and a field survey which allows practitioners to see all the varied contexts in which ABE is offered, such as county houses of correction, homeless shelters, community-based organizations, school district-based programs, and community colleges. This would be a way for practitioners to become familiar with all the areas. These differences in this license are meant to respond to the realities of this field while maintaining a rigorous yet accessible voluntary license.

In January you approved the release of the proposed regulations for 60 days public comment during which time we also held two public hearings. The Department, as the Commissioner mentioned before, reviewed the comments received from the practitioners and transcripts from the public hearings and made a few substantive changes based on that public comment.

MR. BICKERTON: We were going to continue at this point and highlight some of the changes from the regulations in January. But in the interest of time and making sure that we can respond to any comments or concerns you might have, I think at this point we should move forward. There's one last piece to mention, and that is that regulations 47.11 (4) speaks to a waiver authority for the Commissioner, and we are distributing now the change in the language for that waiver authority that we would like you to consider.
COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: This was recommended by Rhoda Schneider.

MR. BICKERTON: By legal counsel, correct.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you all very much. I have a couple of questions that relate mostly to how we're going to actually implement these regulations. There are a couple of questions -- I'm looking on page 10-11 -- mostly around some of the procedural steps towards professional licensure. Where there is some, I believe in all cases I'll mention, a new infrastructure needs to be put in place and new systems need to be put in place in order to actually make this thing real. So, for example -- and I'm a little out of my depth here -- there's a requirement to pass the communication and literacy portions of the existing teacher test, and then there is an ABE subject test. Where do we stand in terms of implementing or developing such a test?

MR. BICKERTON: In our research to date, it looks very much like the subject matter that's covered by the elementary teachers test comes closest to what we need to do, but it is not in and of itself appropriate as a subject matter test for adult basic education. What we believe we need to do is contract using that elementary test perhaps as a starting point and tailor it. We do not have the funding at this stage to do that contract, and that's one of the items that we'll need to pursue.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Are there any off-the-shelf or do other states have ABE tests of any kind?

MR. BICKERTON: I don't believe so.

MS. FAY: No, actually they don't. What some states do use is a practice test, but, again, it's affiliated with their K to 12 license. When we were speaking with the folks that have the current contract to develop the test, they said that they may within their databases have appropriate questions already developed between the test for this state and tests for other states. It would be just a matter of compiling what we would need for subject matter knowledge requirements for this license.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Moving to subsection (b) 4, it talks about an ABE Review Panel which would recommend licensure based on guidelines. Obviously the guidelines don't exist yet and need to be developed. But do you envision this review panel being a single panel, a regional panel, and is this a group that is constantly in session reviewing applications? Any thoughts on how much we need to put in place in order to make this real?

MS. FAY: Well, certainly that's going to be dependent on the number of practitioners that come forward for the license, given some past practices in the Department, that for maybe the first two years we might have multiple panels running across the state, and that could be as many as three or four panels running at the same time. In addition to that, we need to provide appropriate training, and we're hoping to provide a norming process for these panel members so that there's consistency across these varied panels, and then maybe in two years we could scale back to two, possibly even one panel running on a consistent basis.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: And that would be made up of ABE educators primarily, is that the concept?

MR. BICKERTON: Yes, it would be people who have demonstrated expertise in the field who would sit and review. What's important to note here is, although there's a streamlined process for people who have many years of experience in the field, five or more is route four in this process, we do have a provision that all adult educators to achieve this license would need to do a performance assessment, a teaching demonstration in particular, and that that panel becomes an integral part of signing off on whether people meet that proficiency level.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Right. That was actually my next question, because number five talks about the performance assessment, but it seems to talk about it as distinct from the review panel's work. Are those two things actually together? Does the review panel conduct the performance assessment or is it a separate step that occurs serially after getting approval of the review panel or recommendation of the review panel?

MS. FAY: Actually there are three options for the demonstration of teaching. One is candidates can submit a videotape of their teaching, and certainly we have to work out guidelines and criteria for that; a demonstration lesson which could be conducted with the review panel; and then in response to the public comment we've added a provision whereby someone who's been approved by the Department on site could actually observe a demonstration of teaching and submit that as part of the recommendation for the candidate's licensure.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: But this is part of the review panel process?

MR. BICKERTON: It's submitted to the review panel to determine if it meets the standards. Actually there's another process that when there are approved programs, through the practicum would be the method for that demonstration of teaching. So it wouldn't always be the review panel. The review panel would be when people don't go through that preparation program.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: In addition to what you have already mentioned, there are the teacher preparation programs. But in the absence of the subject matter test, in the absence of the teacher preparation program, in the absence of the review panels at the moment, and in the absence of the performance assessments, rubrics and guidelines, what's the implementation plan here and when can we expect people actually to start moving through this process?

MR. BICKERTON: There are several steps we need to take, the first of which is Mary Jayne Fay who has been working with us in Adult and Community Learning Services over the past two years will be moving to

the certification office because this will be located with certification. We anticipate piloting the process with a controlled number of educators in the first few months. We're asking that these regulations become effective in October. What will not be in place by October is the subject matter test, for example, and we'll be working therefore with primarily people from routes three and four who are already well along their way to achieving this in that piloting. And the review panel will, through the guidelines, receive guidance about how to apply the subject matter standards in the period before that subject matter test is ready to be used.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So certainly routes three and four can proceed in advance of the other routes, and the others will just proceed sort of as we're able to put the pieces together?

MS. FAY: In a needs survey we conducted back in the fall, we had 737 practitioners respond, and well over 500 of them actually qualified right off the top for route four, and route four doesn't require the communication and literacy skills test or the subject matter test.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Are there other comments or questions?

DR. GILL: Mr. Chairman, first I'd like to state my commitment and support for the specialization of this field which I believe is very important. I know that my comment is also shared by teachers in state colleges and those in community colleges who serve as adult basic education teachers, and I would like to commend you for the work that you have done. I would ask the Commissioner if we could continue the work that we have begun in terms of working collaboratively on issues related to teacher education, and in that vein convene a Department of Education and Board of Higher Education task force that would be comprised of individuals from the state colleges with respect to their work in developing a program. They would serve as the education arm for this certificate, and also the community colleges, those who are currently serving as adult basic education teachers, they too could be involved in this task force for the continuation of the work that needs to be done. But this is definitely something that I would support, and I think the Board would support also.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I would just add it certainly would appear that in trying to put together teacher preparation programs that meet these kinds of standards that there needs to be a strong connection to higher education in order to make this part of it work. Other questions or comments? There being none, there is a motion, again the yellow sheet in the back, to approve the new regulations.

DR. SCHAEFER: Do you need this amended?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The motion should include the amendment that's been handed out with respect to the waiver. Is there a motion?

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. Chapter 69, sections 1B and 1H and having solicited and reviewed public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. Chapter 30A, section 3, hereby adopt the Regulations on Licensure of Adult Basic Education Teachers, 603 CMR 47.00, as presented by the Commissioner, incorporating the updated version of s. 47.11 (4) distributed at the meeting. Said regulations shall take effect on October 1, 2001.**

The motion was made by Dr. Gill and seconded by Mr. Irwin. The vote was unanimous.

UPDATE ON UNDER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS: IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR ROOSEVELT SCHOOL, NEW BEDFORD - Initial Discussion

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The next item on the agenda is the update on under-performing schools: improvement plan for Roosevelt School in New Bedford.

COMMISSIONEER DRISCOLL: Mr. Chairman, I would like to admit that I continue to think about this process and this issue, and would ask Board Members to think about it as well. The idea of establishing a plan for a school, and we're dealing with the middle schools who easily face the largest challenges here in the Commonwealth. The ability to establish a plan that is first of all owned by the staff and yet addresses all of the issues that we expect to be addressed is very, very difficult. I want to be party to something that is effective and works, and my concern is that we not rush. I think we feel the need to ramp up school and district accountability as much as we can, because I've said many times publicly that it may be the most important aspect of educational reform in bringing about true change in teaching and learning and improvement.

There is a lot of focus on MCAS right now, and I understand that, but it is the school and district accountability system that I think ultimately will drive standards-based reform. But I'm troubled because it's a lot of hard work and important work, and if you rush it, you have a tendency to just go through the mechanical process. I was very pleased at the last discussion that Charlie Baker entered into the fray because of what he's gone through in a Herculean effort in the private sector. But while we don't accept excuses anymore, public education has to deal with the issues before them.
I think it is fair to acknowledge that the difficulties that schools face, which are rooted in the backgrounds and challenges that children face in their own lives, are challenging. So it's easy to draw a plan up and say, well, we're going to improve our math skills or whatever, but it's very, very difficult work. So I want to tell you that I'm troubled by it, and I want to try and develop a thoughtful process. Just as MCAS is providing an important external objective pressure that is causing action, I think the one thing that everybody will agree with is that MCAS has caused change everywhere, so too this issue of entering into this idea of evaluation and ultimately looking at whether or not schools need to be declared under-performing is a tremendous pressure. In a way that's a good thing, but, again, I don't want to just be involved in something that is ultimately not making a difference.

There is a lot of movement in New Bedford. You can just sense it and it is a good thing. But I'm struggling with how to make sure that our process of evaluation, improvement planning, and support for and within the school is meaningful. It is very difficult. I'd rather have a plan that wasn't perfect but is truly owned and attempting to really make a difference. I just wanted to share that struggle with you. I don't know whether Joe Silva, the Superintendent of Schools, or Mayor Kalisz from New Bedford, who has done just a great job and is responsible, singularly, for seeing to it that there's a new Roosevelt School, might have anything to say; but I'd be interested in your views on that. We're here to review the improvement plan that has been submitted by the Roosevelt School.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I think you're right. There is this somewhat delicate balance we're trying to strike between ensuring that members of this Board are satisfied that the plan in place is credible and is one that has a high likelihood of leading towards improvement in school performance. At the same time, we want to ensure that the plan is one that has ownership on the ground so that it's not a matter of-- here's the template for school improvement which we fax out to everybody, and they sign their names at the bottom, and we think we solved the problem. There's no question that any kind of institutional reform, and certainly school reform, has to come from the people who are in the building themselves. Having said that, I think one of the

things we're struggling with here is what it is exactly we on the Board are trying to do and in particular who we are holding accountable for performance in this whole process.

Ultimately our relationship really is with the leadership team as opposed to the entire school staff. I think perhaps some of the difficulty we're having here is that, and certainly in my evaluation of some of the plans that have come forward, they tend to be plans that are so broad as to encompass almost the entire school staff itself. They don't necessarily reflect the leadership priorities that are going to drive the leadership team forward and which will serve as the basis for our interactions with leadership in the years down the road. There are a lot of things that go on in an organization on a day-to-day basis that are not necessarily the focus of leadership, in particular around some important improvement goals. That doesn't mean that that work is unimportant and doesn't need to occur in order for the whole organization to be successful, but it's not necessarily what leadership needs to spend its time on or what they should be held accountable specifically for.

So I don't know if that clarifies or confuses things, but in my view there are a few specific vital things that you can hold leadership accountable for. Obviously you can hold them accountable for the organization as a whole and its performance. But when you're looking at specific initiatives, there are only a handful of things that I think a school leader or a district for that matter can focus on at any one time. I think what we're struggling with is trying to identify those vital key things that really are the key priorities for the leadership team in their efforts to turn school performance around.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I don't think it improperly confuses things. I think it properly complicates things, which I think is my problem, because I think as soon as you simplify and think you've got this magic whatever, you're in trouble. This is a very difficult process. It's going to take a long time, and we have to understand that. So I think you're right to add that element to it. We're struggling together as we should, because I don't know that we're going to have a very good policy implementation at the state level unless we acknowledge that this is not easy, and to suggest as soon as we complete our work, as if we've accomplished something easy, we'd be doing a disservice.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I think this is an iterative process we're in. After all, this is the third one. So we're obviously still early in this process ourselves trying to figure out exactly how the process and the plans themselves ought to be structured -- what makes sense and what doesn't. It will take a while before we get it right, but I want to underline again that in any kind of improvement plan, generally, there are a vital few things the leadership needs to focus on in order to be successful. Trying to do all things at once will inevitably lead to failure, even though there are a lot of things going on day-to-day that need to happen in order for any organization to run and survive. It's the process of winnowing through and understanding what exactly are the crucial points of leverage that leadership needs to focus. To agree on a plan for which they ought to be accountable is part of the productive dialogue that we as Board Members have with these folks in front of us as well as the Department. It’s part of the discussions we have with the Department and the Department with school staff.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Joe, do you want to introduce your couple of principals and the Mayor? Joe Silva, Superintendent of Schools in New Bedford.

MR. SILVA: Thank you Commissioner. Commissioner Driscoll, Chairman Peyser and ladies and gentlemen of the Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I'd just like to take a few minutes to do some introductions and give you a little bit of background information. As you're aware, New Bedford is one of the major metropolitan areas in the Commonwealth, and it's with great pleasure that I introduce to you the Mayor of New Bedford, to my right, Frederick Kalisz. He took time

out of his busy schedule to be with us today to show how important he felt this meeting was with the Department of Education. He just returned from the Azores where he was attending a series of meetings, so it's great that he took the time out.

MAYOR KALISZ: Let me clarify that. I had to search for a man in the woods for the past two days, and that's where I got the sunburn.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: There's a story.

MR. SILVA: That just appeared on the news. You probably haven't heard that here. To his right is Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Ronald Souza, to his right is Brian Abdallah who is the principal of the new Roosevelt Middle School, and to his right is Mr. Steven DeRossi who is the principal of Roosevelt Junior High School. Now, let me try and give you a little background and explain why we have two principals here.

Last year Roosevelt Junior High School was involved in the review process. As a result of that process, this past fall it was designated under-performing. On November 1st I put the principal on administrative leave and reassigned Mr. DeRossi his position as principal of Keith Junior High School, and I vividly recollect his expression as I sat and praised his leadership ability and then informed him that he was being assigned to Roosevelt Junior High School, something that I'm sure he'll never forget. After Steve took over the leadership role at Roosevelt Junior High School, we posted the position of the principal of the Roosevelt Middle School, and Brian Abdallah was appointed to that position in February, and came on board full time the beginning of March. Both gentlemen are at the school.

Roosevelt Junior High School will no longer exist after June 30, 2001, and Roosevelt Middle School will open September of 2001. Commissioner, you talk about this process, the difficulty with this process, what people go through to develop the plans, the visions for their schools. This whole process was very worthwhile to us as a district as we sat, listened to what the Department of Education review teams had to say, what School Works brought to our attention, and looked at our own team that we had put together to see exactly what our goals were and what our vision was for the future.

This whole transition to a middle school -- we currently have a junior high school model, grades 7 and 8. The transition to a middle school is another difficult issue that is involved in this whole process. Much debate has taken place in our community. At the last school committee meeting we spent close to three hours debating the middle school model, and I must say that the school committee, the central administration and these gentleman and their staffs support the transition and the middle school model that we have in place for September of 2001. At this point, I'd like to turn the microphone over to Steve and Brian and let them go through and explain to you the process, the work that's been involved, the ownership that you point out that the administration and staff in that building have in this plan and the support that that staff has for this plan. Thank you.

MR. DeROSSI: Thank you. Commissioner, Chairman, Board Members, thank you for the opportunity for allowing us to speak today. I'd like to begin by making two points of clarification because, as Commissioner Driscoll pointed out, it's a very difficult task for all people involved in this process in terms of what do you put down on a piece of paper and how do you get people involved. I need to make a point of clarification. What appears before you is an Executive Summary, which is backed by a series of Content Action Plans that deal with some of the specific steps that the practitioners are required to follow with necessary benchmarks in order to meet some of these specific goals. It just seemed inappropriate to include a lot of this in your binder simply because of the fact that it's the practitioners that need to get that done. Also, backing this is a

great deal of data research that's taken place which also deals with some organization instruction improvement and similar action plans that deal specifically with the Roosevelt Middle School. So I need to stress to you that what's in front of you is an executive summary that we hope is sufficient enough to explain to you where we're going and how we hope to be successful.

The second point of clarification is, if you look at the second page of the summary, which is entitled "Executive Summary," there are two basic areas there. When you have a school that's declared under-performing, the reality is you have in most cases a myriad of problems in that particular location, and trying to narrow down those that are the most important, the most serious, becomes somewhat of a difficult task. There were hours and hours spent by a large number of parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, central office support in terms of trying to come to a consensus of where the basis was, where the core was in terms of the problem.

What we tried to do was to view this almost as a medical situation. We viewed the situation at Roosevelt as having been to the doctor, with the help of the fact-finding team, with the help of our own internal review of all the problems, and we came to the realization that we really needed two things. Number one, we needed an immediate operation to try to correct a serious problem. But following that operation, if we did not look ahead and begin to change our lifestyle, our way of life, the positive effects of that immediate operation might be short-term or short-lived. So what you see in front of you there, the instructional content improvements, are viewed as the surgery that needs to be done immediately, and the organization and structure improvements are the way of life changes. We need to start doing the exercising and stop the smoking and eating a little less and all of those things in educational terms. That's the focus on why we have this particular setup that way.

Now, that may not be clear to you in terms of the steps we're going to take, but at this time I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Abdallah who's going to be the principal at the middle school so he can relay to you some of the specifics that are in place to address some of these things and how we hope to achieve them. Even though it appears that there may be an awful lot here, if you look at the first three as the keys and then the rest the follow-up to maintain, I think you'll better understand where we're going.

MR. ABDALLAH: Thank you, Mr. DeRossi. Mr. Commissioner, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, colleagues, Mr. Mayor, citizens, first of all I'd like to thank Commissioner Driscoll and Associate Commissioner Dow for their guidance and their support. It was a positive experience. I've been involved about 50 or 60 days. I've been a school administrator for a long time in several school districts and led two restructuring efforts junior high to middle school, and I wasn't positive what I was getting into, but I recognize the tremendous challenge that we have, as both the Commissioner and the Chairman have said.

I think it's important to note that this is a plan that the school owns, that the community owns. I think it's critically important, and perhaps even understated, that the City of New Bedford has taken a giant step towards middle school philosophy after some contentious at times debate. There were 50 percent of the staff members at faculty forums that were held. There have been 50 to 60 percent at the school committee meeting where the vote was taken on about a 40-page plan for the Roosevelt Middle School modeled after full implementation of the Turning Point Study. The issue is are we going to try to do full implementation of a middle school or are we going to checklist and go one thing at a time. I recognize that school reform comes through as maybe a million small incremental changes, but at the point that we were, it was a question of: Do we try to put together a plan for the new middle school that will be piecemeal, or go into a structure that's going to fully implement the best practices for middle school education according to New England League of Middle Schools, the Collaborative for Education, Dan French's Turning Points group and all the research that the faculty had done?

The faculty buy-in has been a gigantic steering committee that's been working at least all of this school year, if not begun earlier, a variety of sub-committees including parents, paraprofessionals, a number of steering committees, sub-committee meetings, and they've put the package together for the new middle school, and my job coming on, and there are also department heads coming down from the high school looking at curriculum and putting together a good part of the package that you saw working with their staffs, a tremendous amount of professional development that's gone on. My goal, which I stated to the school committee when I was hired, and which I state to you today, is to go not from under-performing to, okay, we're out of the woods. It is to go from under-performing to become a beacon for middle school level education in the state of Massachusetts, first in New Bedford, we have two other middle schools coming on board, and then secondly the state of Massachusetts, so that you can come to us and say, there's a school that was rated under-performing which is now a model middle level school.

We have the package put together that will present that. We have the support of our leadership team. We have a team approach. We have the support of the faculty and the staff at the school. Is everything perfect? Of course not, but it's about as close as you can get, having been involved in two other major educational restructuring efforts. I'm not going to go on anymore except to say that I'm real excited about the process. Even though the under-performing school's process is not perfect, it has been extremely helpful and enlightening to the staff as well as to myself. Working with Mr. DeRossi and the New Bedford educators has been a great experience. I would not be sitting here saying this to you if I didn't believe this with my heart. I'll pass the microphone on to anyone who wants it or we'll certainly open it for questions.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I just want to add a couple of quick things. I don't think anybody thought that, in effect, things would result in having an internal receiver for a while, in that Steve was put in the school and picketed on the first day. I hope you saw to it that Brian didn't get picketed.

MR.ABDALLAH: I was met by the review team.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I really want to compliment you, Steve, for taking on this very difficult challenge.

MR. DeROSSI: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: You showed great professionalism, great enthusiasm, and high expectations of kids. I heard you say that you wanted the kids to view taking MCAS this year as if they were going to Disney World. I'm not sure you can pull that off, but I like the attitude, so I want to thank you for that.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: And, Brian, I would like to point out that there is a middle school in Ocala, Florida that was just highlighted in Education Week as a school that was declared under-performing, or whatever their term is in Florida, which has just recently scored in the highest levels in Florida. It wasn't just a case of being the best in Ocala, but among the best in Florida. So it's not unrealistic, it's the right goal to set, so I will compliment you. Mr. Mayor, I don't know what's wrong with this chair of the school committee that you can't control three hours of middle school. I don't know if you want to say anything or not, but, again, I look at this as a work in progress. I think it's come a long way from the first plan that we presented to the Board, so I think we're getting there, but of course the proof will be in implementing.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Commissioner, I have one procedural question: When will this likely come back for more formal action by the Board? Will it be next month?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Yes, the plan is for next month.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Do Board Members have any questions or comments for the panel?

MR. BAKER: First of all, I have some appreciation for how hard this type of a task can be, and I admire your willingness to take it on. Just having looked through some of this, I think the first thing you need to do, in any one of these, is a diagnostic that everybody is comfortable with. It sounds to me like you're pretty comfortable that you've got a diagnostic that works. The second thing is to try and come up with a set of objectives that represent what you're trying to get done, in the short-term, keyed on some general set of objectives that are farther down the road. Again, I think you have a general sense that you're where you need to be on that one.

I might have presumed that four, five, six and seven are the key building blocks in achieving one, two and three. Is that the way this works, that strengthening the math content knowledge is a function of professional development, the instructional techniques, the curriculum piece and the bilingual and second language learners? Is that basically true across all three of these categories?

MR. DeROSSI: Yes. There are some specifics obviously because of the content nature of the first three items that are contained in the action plan specific to that content area. But regarding item number three, the literacy one, it was obvious to us that once you improve reading comprehension, you positively impact all of the areas. So that combined with the specific deficiencies that we found in the math and the writing skills areas we thought needed to be immediately addressed. Within the context of dealing with those specific things, we also realized that we needed a healthier learning environment in order for the specific things we were going to do to be successful. So to some extent, they are part of the goals, but in reality it's the correcting the environment at the same time we're dealing with the surgical procedure on those efforts to ensure that we're going to have the long-term success rather than just a short-term fix.

MR. BAKER: The third piece in most of these is usually making sure that you've got the right people with the right skill sets assigned to the right tasks and some understanding between you and them about what's expected and what kind of support they need, and where they don't need support and that type of thing. I guess there's nothing in here about this, and that's fine as long as you're comfortable that in terms of actually chasing one, two, and three using four, five and six that you've got the right people. And, from your point of view, that they are in the right positions with the right skill sets, or to the extent that they don't have the right skill sets that you've got some idea about what the support requirements are going to be to make sure that they succeed.

MR. ABDALLAH: Good point, thank you. The school committee has essentially voted in additional teaching positions and an additional assistant principal for curriculum and instruction that will be at the building full time. In addition, we will be having the house system where there are three houses, red house, white house, blue house, about 300 kids per house, and we will have a counselor full time and an academic coach full time for each house. Along with that we have the department heads where the structure will continue, it will become grades 6 through 12 for our school, and they will be visiting on a regular basis. So we feel there's a good amount of supervision that will be done both at the building level full time as well as by department heads.

MR. SOUZA: We also have an action plan which specifically identifies the strategies that we're looking at, the person responsible, the time line and the evaluation process and how that matches up to the district plan. So it does identify the strategy and the individual people or person who would be responsible for that objective.

MR. BAKER: My first piece of advice, gentlemen, is that if you don't think you have the right person in the right task, don't think that bad feelings are going to get better just because time is going to go by. That's something you need to pay attention to. There are some key capacities needed for this type of thing. One is the capacity to communicate effectively across your leadership group and your rank and file about what it is you're doing, and what they should expect to see coming, so that when whatever you expect to see coming good or bad does come, they don't feel surprised. The leadership has given them some confidence that if you say that so-and-so is going to happen or such and such is going to occur, they have some ability to be comfortable with it when it does, even if it's not good. One of the things that I found in my experience was that predicting bad news actually turned out not to be a bad thing. People were less horrified by it when it occurred because I said to them, "You know what, there's going to be bad news here, and we just all need to figure out how to deal with that."

The second is some mechanism, and maybe it's in the longer report, you don't need to tell me if it is, to be sure that you have the ability to monitor how you're doing on some fairly frequent basis. And then if you need to make adjustments, recognizing that no plan is ever implemented perfectly as intended-- stuff happens.

The third is that you have some capacity or ability to celebrate successes when you have them. This is going to take a long time. You're going to need a certain amount of determination and endurance on the part of the people who are involved, and they're going to need to hear from you when things happen that are positive that are related to this plan. And don't presume that if something good happens on the math side that the folks that are worrying about reading and literacy are going to know about it. One of the things that I learned in this whole process is that just because I know something good happened doesn't mean that anybody else in the organization does. You really need to have some capacity to continually reinforce across the organization that something good happened and everybody needs to know about it and celebrate that for a minute. That doesn't mean you succeeded, but it at least means you can get up the next day feeling like it's not just a treadmill, you're actually moving forward.

Finally, you will be pulled in a lot of directions where people will try to drive you away from your primary focus, whatever that happens to be, because, again, in the maelstrom staying true to the message, staying on objective, staying on task is really hard to do when there's bullets whizzing by from every different direction 24 hours a day, and you're going to have to have some way, maybe it's through the monitoring process, to make sure that you stay on what it is you're seeking to achieve over a significant period of time despite all the externalities that are going to be whaling away on you. To the extent that you have some mechanism or some device in place to help you do that, I think that would be really important. By the way, congratulations on finding the guy, that was a big surprise I think to a lot of people.

MR. ABDALLAH: If I might quickly or briefly respond, we're in the process of a true teacher run school where the principal is more of a facilitator, not immediately but that's where we want to go. I proposed a Roosevelt leadership counsel, and there will be a number of correlate subcouncils, and our goal is to have everybody on the faculty and staff involved in at least one of those committees. So we're really looking at teacher involvement, continuing the teacher involvement, with what they've done from the steering committee and their subcommittees, to operate the school in that fashion, that form of governance. The monitor process, we're hoping -- we have applied for a Turning Points grant and have met with both Bob Spear from the New England League of Middle Schools and Dan French from the Turning Points Center for Collaborative Education, and we're hopeful that the state department would look favorably on that.

They both see this as a potential cutting-edge model kind of a program. They will come in and do a lot of the modeling and provide us with a coach and help us out to that extent. If not, we do have some other ideas in place. Celebrate the successes, I think that's a great idea.

MR. BAKER: By the way, I'm not looking for you to necessarily respond to what I've suggested.

MR. ABDALLAH: I'm just excited about telling you about this, because those are the kinds of things that I've been through. I've been through a couple of real difficult situations, and this one has the greatest propensity and the greatest potential for success. I've been through some tough ones that didn't have these things in place, didn't have the strong resolve, the strong team effort on the part of the school committee and the mayor and the central office and the teachers. This one as I say is a little bit different. Lastly, I think it's also a great idea about being pulled away from your primary goal when all the bullets flying. I've been through that one too, so I anticipate it. Thank you.

DR. SCHAEFER: I'm sorry for showing my ignorance, but I was wondering about Turning Points; I assume that there's some vision behind this, can you just quickly elaborate?

MR. ABDALLAH: Turning Points is the seminal research in middle level education. The first study came out about 1989. There was a recent study called Turning Points 2000 that just came out. It cites major issues in middle level education and what the research states about how to best improve middle level schools. There's also been some --

DR. SCHAEFER: Can you just summarize that for me quickly about what that means at this point in terms of middle schools, of what the approach is?

COMMISSDRISCOLL: It's a comprehensive school reform demonstration. It's one of the nationals done by Carnegie, so it's a comprehensive look at reforming middle schools. I don't know whether there's a quick fix. We can get you the materials. It will be easier to look at I think.

DR. SCHAEFER: Okay. I was just asking what the approach is for middle school now. I realize I should know this.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: That's okay.

MS. DOW: I'd be glad to pull together some of that information, because actually this model is relevant to a number of the schools that we are working with and will be working with in the middle schools that we've reviewed.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Can I ask a couple of specific questions? One relates to math in particular. One of the issues that seems to be pervasive in middle schools, in particular, is the absence of qualified mathematics teachers, qualified to the extent that they have substantial and adequate background in mathematics. What's the status of the teaching staff in the school in terms of both certification in mathematics and in terms of their overall level of academic preparation in math?

MR. DeROSSI: Not only are we doing math individually at Roosevelt but across the district now we're looking at those types of things because that's obviously an area where we need more math certified people. The reality is in many cases they're not there. So what's happening internally at the building through the work of the current math department, the department chairs, we're also involved with Project Impact with UMass Dartmouth where we're trying to get some additional training in the instruction of mathematics for

those people who are teaching math that may be general middle school certified. So even though at the present time we may not have math certified people, we still look to get the math certified people. But we have to have bodies there in those classrooms, so in the interim, in the process, what we're doing is we're providing additional training for people in those areas to raise their level of expertise.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: What percentage of math teachers in the school are certified?

MR. DeROSSI: About half of them are specifically math certified.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Are you undertaking any efforts to actively recruit new math teachers with math certification?

MR. ABDALLAH: I have one meeting with the Title I supervisor this afternoon at two o'clock. I'm going to look at the assignments, the way that they've been made in the building. We're looking at a new model of Title I. I found two Title I teachers who were in what we call like a tutoring situation. And the Title I situation model that we used in my last middle school, which I found to be very successful, was to have the Title I services delivered right in the regular math classroom. So I think there's going to be a reassignment of some of the staff this September, and I'll do everything possible to get the best math teacher.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The idea behind that is it gives the students more contact time with certified math teachers?

MR. ABDALLAH: Absolutely. I t also is more of an inclusive model versus having a certified math teacher sitting in a tutoring program working with one or two kids. If they're working collaboratively with the math teacher in the classroom, you have two adults there working with the youngsters.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Isn't the reality that you're going to have to have this backup plan because you're not going to be able to find certified people? Let's just be clear about it. In our MINT program, we're trying to recruit 50 percent in math and science and certified and so forth, but they don't go very far, and there aren't many out there. In fairness to the Chairman's question, even though you obviously want to A) get certified math people, and then B) provide training for people that have general, you're going to be dealing a lot more in B than you are in A. That’s the reality.

MR. ABDALLAH: Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The other comment I'd make, and I'm not an expert in these matters, is that it seems to me that in addition to providing training for non-mathematics specialists in how to teach math, I think they need courses in mathematics itself in order to develop their skill level and knowledge of mathematics to a point where they can adequately teach it. So it's not just methods, it's content as well.
MR. DeROSSI: One of the things that we've begun to do, at two of the three junior highs we were involved in some vertical team that we're looking at, and through some grant monies what we're looking at is to provide opportunities for middle school math and science teachers to go to the high school and interact with AP math and science teachers at the high school level, and the reverse, so that we can begin to see more clearly from both ends what's going on up there, what's required up there, allow the people up there to see, that type of thing, and to build a level of competence on the part of some of those teachers and an understanding. It becomes part of that teacher empowerment and collaborative type of activity, and that's something that is actually beginning now at the tail end of this school year and is intended to kick in a little bit more during the summer of next year.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I have another quick comment on math, and you don't need to respond to it. I just want to underline the point that you've got two math curricula that are under evaluation, Connected Math Project and Math Thematic. It's not described in the document, but I want to make sure that you have specifically looked at both of those with respect to the problems identified in math content knowledge based on the framework's standards and based on the MCAS results. It's not clear to me that those programs necessarily address those specific weaknesses. I think that the key issue is to make sure the alignment is right.

I have one other comment on something that I found to be a glaring bit of information, which had no reference in the document, coming out of the Fact-Finding Report. On page 4, it says that 30 percent of the students in 1999 received one or more out-of-school suspensions, which seems to me, without having a lot of comparative information, to be an extremely high number. Yet I don't see anything in the improvement plan around issues having to do with discipline or with school culture. It would appear, by this statistic, that this is a major problem. I wonder if you could comment on that.

MR. ABDALLAH: I share your concern, being still relatively an outsider. I think it's a function of the system that doesn't work well quite frankly and the reason why perhaps or one of the basic reasons why the Department stepped in. I asked for the statistics on suspensions and student referrals to the office, just to look at what was going on, and I saw an alarming rate myself and an increasing rate. I think the best way that I can describe it is, if you get 25- 35 kids being sent to the office and X number getting suspended, I think you have a school that really isn't working that well, and that was basically put into the report, and it was identified the first day that it was there on the board just as a corollary issue if you will. I think the best way to address it is to address the needs of young people ages 10 to 15, and the way that we addressed it was structurally, by putting in the houses, by putting in the interdisciplinary teams of teachers, by putting in the guidance counselor and the academic coach on each house, by having the academic coach deal with some very first level kinds of discipline, by having the kids own ownership in a team. These are all part of the Turning Points recommendations.

One of our target goals was to reduce the number of hours for in school suspensions. I also have worked with Steve and with the assistant principal very recently to use more of this wonderful Saturday detention, which I think is great because you don't have to put them out of school, they can come back on Saturday morning for some of the offenses that they were being suspended for, a short-term fix. Long-term, I think it was of very grave concern to me, and I anticipate a significant decrease in the level of suspensions and office referrals in a good middle school program.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The only comment I'd make is that there were a number of things that you mentioned in your presentation, in particular the formation of the three houses and the academic coach and even the leadership counsel, that have to do with organization governance that would appear to be very fundamental reforms and restructurings for the current school design. But that didn't come through in the improvement plan, even though it seems to be a core of what you're building your improvement around, so I would say that that deserves more emphasis than it received.

The other thing, especially in terms of MCAS performance, but also in terms of academic achievement, are the two reforms you talk about around writing and reading across the curriculum. You mention all teachers, regardless of their specialty, being provided with reading and writing instruction, and to my lay ear, this sounds extremely important. It appears to be one of the major changes happening here and potentially one of the vehicles by which to improve achievement in those two areas. It will be, if for no other reason, by essentially extending time on task so that it's more than just the English language class where they're

getting that sort of instruction. Again, based on my reading of it, it sounds like that may need more emphasis or maybe should get more emphasis of the report. Are there other comments?

MR. THOMAS: When we talk about how we address challenges within the system, we underestimate the social service needs of students that impact their readiness for learning and their behavior in many respects. On that note, I'm curious as to whether you see social service related challenges of young people having an impact. Do you view such needs as impacting students' educational academic status within the school and if so, do you have any capacity for dealing with it?

MR. ABDALLAH: Most definitely. A middle school program, to be appropriate, is not just test scores. It's the improvement of learning and addressing the needs of kids ages 10 to 15, social, emotionally, cognitively and physiologically, helping them to deal with their physiological issues during that tremendous growth spurt that they undergo. One of the committees that was fully functioning under the steering committee addressed those very issues and made recommendations, and that's why we have a counselor going to be assigned to each house who will maintain the student assistance program. We will have some of the youngsters who tend to have developmental difficulties have individual education plans, not all but some, and we will have a special needs teacher assigned to each team within each house that will deal specifically with youngsters with special needs working with the team of five teachers. So if we have English, math, science, social studies and literacy, there will be a special needs teacher assigned to work in any of those classrooms at any time with youngsters as well.

MR. THOMAS: Do you have linkages with the broader community?

MR. ABDALLAH: Absolutely.

MR. DeROSSI: Yes, we're involved with the CS Squared program right now at the Roosevelt. Those people who are familiar with the junior high schools know that sometimes parent involvement at the junior high is really difficult. The same students that love to have their parents come visit the elementary school want their parents to stay a mile away from the junior high school. And knowing that we're moving into the middle school concept and we're going to bring in fifth and sixth graders, we've already started our efforts to develop a parent organization along with it. We are going to the feeder schools that are coming in to enlist them, and that they are now working with the people from CS Squared to get volunteers from the neighborhood basically to make those ties. The CS Squared person in the building along with the student assistance program person have been doing those things right now.

MR. THOMAS: Thank you. My last concern is that because you've been designated as a under-performing school, the self-esteem of the student population and the teacher population is probably a factor that you will have to consider when you think about how you go from where you are now to success. And my question is, have you considered that as being a reality and have you put any things in place to deal with raising that self-esteem, notwithstanding?

MR. DeROSSI: That's been pretty much ongoing since the day before I walked into the building, from the day before I showed up when I saw 300 kids with picket signs and saying that's where I'm going to be tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. From that very first day we went in we basically said, "Hey look, we have reached rock bottom. We've looked underneath the rock. We don't like where we are. We have only one place to go but up." In some respects it's become almost a battle cry, not only with the staff but with the students. After acknowledging that there's a negative about this and a cloud hanging over our head the fact remains that there are a lot of positives going on here and this whole self-esteem has begun to develop.

We've instituted a lot of things in terms of attendance awards, Student of the Month, Roosevelt Number One Club, that type of thing. We instituted MCAS focus assemblies so that we could give them a little rah-rah periodically leading up to that airplane trip to Disney World, or at least imagined one. So that's stuff that's been going on already, and the staff and the students have really fortunately and thankfully bought in to the process. It hasn't been without bumps in the road, but it's certainly something that is ongoing. And what we're really trying to do right now, and we are in an unusual situation, Mr. Abdallah is trying to focus on those 7th graders that are going to be the leaders of next year's middle school, and I've been trying to focus on the 8th graders who have the advantage of being the last graduating class from Roosevelt Junior High School, and we're trying to spotlight them in terms of their role in this whole process to give them a little empowerment as well, and to this point in time it's worked very well.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I think we've given you a lot of feedback. If Department folks have other questions or if Board Members want to follow-up by all means do so, so that when we come back in a month we'll have a document that everyone will be happy with. But I congratulate you all for the effort you're undertaking. It's quite clear that your attitude is a positive one, and you've got a lot of determination to see this through, and that's the essential building block for any successful turnaround. I think you're off to a good start. Thank you all very much.

We've got two relatively quick items coming up to be followed by the final item which may take a little longer, because it's more discussion oriented. The next item is the Proposed Amendment to School Finance Regulations. This is a relatively small change.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SCHOOL FINANCE REGULATIONS (603 CMR 10.00) - Discussion and Vote to Seek Public Comment

MR. WULFSON: This issue was first identified during some of the EMAB field reviews which identified some discrepancies and deficiencies in the accounting practices in a number of schools districts. Years ago, the Department had a full-time external audit unit; we have not had that in a number of years. We have had to rely on the assurances by the municipal audits that are conducted each year under the auspices of the Department of Revenue to provide us with assurances that the data that's being submitted and collected relating to school operations and school finances is accurate. And one of our findings, in discussion with the Department of Revenue, is that in many cases the municipal auditors spend relatively little time looking at the school accounts in the context of a much larger municipal audit. So the approach we adopted last year, on an administrative basis, was to develop a compliance supplement that would be made available to the municipal auditors as some additional tests and questions that we wanted them to address in the course of the municipal audit, specifically relating to school department finances. This is the same approach that is used by the federal government in its single audit requirements, in that they come up with a compliance supplement for each of the major federal programs and that becomes an additional piece of the required audit.

We did implement it administratively this past year for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2000. Most communities have been moving promptly to implement it and to meet the intent of the new requirements. In a few instances, however, school officials indicated that the municipal folks were reluctant to add to the scope of the audit without some more formal designation of the requirement, and therefore we'd like to codify what has been an administrative requirement into the school finance regulations by action of the Board of Education. The proposed amendment does exactly that. It is proposed to go out for public comment, and we will obviously come back to you in probably June with any feedback that we get from the municipal community on this.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: You may have some information on this as well, but in the public comment it seems to me that if we got some feedback as to the additional cost in dollars or time associated with conducting municipal audits with the additional protocols that might be useful information for us to have.

MR. WULFSON: We actually, of course, have looked at that issue. Jay worked very closely with the school business officials and the Mass ICPA's Government Audit Subcommittee to try to keep the scope of it reasonable, and I think the experience -- obviously there's a range depending on the size of the municipality, the district, but the intent was to keep it, you know, in probably the under 10,000, certainly more in the $5,000 incremental cost range that we felt would be affordable for municipalities. And again, this is part of the quid pro quo of getting millions, in many cases more, in state assistance over the past few years.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: But, again, if you could perhaps as part of the formal process just ask that question.

MR. WULFSON: We will certainly ask the question.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. Chapter 69, §1B and chapter 70, §§ 2, 3 and 11, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. Chapter 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendment to the Regulations on School Finance and Accountability, 603 CMR 10.00, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Gill. The vote was unanimous.

APPROVAL OF GRANTS - Discussion and Vote

a. School Business Assistance: Grant Rescission and Approval
b. State and Federal Grants

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Next we have some school building assistance grants.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Mr. Chairman, I want to present to the Board a slight change.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Are we going to do this separately? There are four separate motions, are we going to couple them together?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Well, these replace those four. Essentially what has happened is that the amount of money available as a result of the removal of the Worcester project is enough to fund more than we first thought, and it's coincidental I want you to know --

MR. WULFSON: It's actually five total projects. Just for those Board Members who may not be familiar with how the School Building Assistance Program works, we place projects on the waiting list for funding. Projects are free to go ahead, but many projects decide to wait until they actually get their funding. Grants are made by this Board each year after we see what the authorization is from the legislature, and the Board's regulations require that a project start construction by the following June after receiving its grant award or it will not be eligible to receive its first payment in the following fiscal year. In this case we have five projects, as the Commissioner indicated. I think the largest is the Worcester Vocational High School. That received

grants last summer, last fall, whenever, and for various reasons are unable to start construction. So rather than allow them to hold on to the grants and then just hold up on their payments, by rescinding the grants we will allow new grants to be issued as part of these motions to other projects that are ready to start construction or have started construction. The projects for whom the grants are being rescinded are being returned to the waiting list and will be back again, assuming that they've addressed their construction difficulties, will be back to ask you to re-award them grants next year, the next funding cycle. So it's just a way of making sure that we use all of our money that's available.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: The way things are going I think the reality is these buildings that I look at are not only all under construction, they're completed and kids are in them, as I look at them, so I think, you know, that's the way the process is.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So it's already built and paid for, why should we do anything?

MR. WULFSON: I don't think the municipality would think that way.

MR. BAKER: Did Attleboro get dropped?

MS. LYNCH: Attleboro was passed over because they had not started in this fiscal year, so they will be replaced in the beginning of the next cycle of applicants to be awarded a grant. So they'll be back before--

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: They're ready to go forward, I mean eventually.

MS. LYNCH: Yes. There's no particular issue. They have just not been able to start yet.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: In the case of Worcester, it was a major lawsuit that ultimately the judge determined there were vernal pools there.

DR. SCHAEFER: The vernal pools won out over a thousand kids who are in a dilapidated building.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: That's one way of saying it.

DR. SCHAEFER: And about a dozen residents brought suit.

MR. BAKER: I'm confused now because it looks to me like you added a million dollars for Marshfield and Melrose and took out a million dollars for Attleboro, so how does Worcester factor in?

MS. LYNCH: Worcester is in Category One. The project that you're looking at -- the revote or the blue sheets that represent an amendment to the original motion is Category Two.

COMM. DRISCOLL: Category One is in your book, the white. We're adding Medford, Fall River, Springfield and Springfield. The white sheets which is Category One. And we're -- today I'm adding Category Two grants which --

MS. LYNCH: We're recommending rescinding the Worcester vote along with the Somerville vote and replacing those projects in Category One with four new projects, Medford, Fall River and two Springfield.

MR. BAKER: All right, it's not on here (indicating)?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: No. It's in your regular packet. Your regular packet that you received, Charlie, that we knew was going to occur today is the white, Category One.

MR. BAKER: Okay, I got it.

MR. THOMAS: I was curious as to whether -- Harris Elementary, is that add and renegotiate?

MR. WULFSON: Addition / renovation.
CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Is there any recommendation on how we should proceed on these motions? Should we take these four motions in blocks?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: You can take them all at once. The blue sheet represents the updated, which, Charlie, again, just simply fixes Category Two, takes Attleboro and I believe Quincy, right?

MS. LYNCH: It just removes Attleboro and replaces --

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Attleboro with Marshfield and Melrose.

MR. BAKER: Okay, that's the part I understood, so the Worcester thing just confused me.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I'm sorry. I was referring back to the original motion that you had which was Category One. In the original memo of your packet, if you look at the first page, we were talking about what happened in Category One, which is Worcester Voc. And then I confused matters by giving you the blue sheet which is just a change in Category two now that Attleboro --

MR. WULFSON: There's no change in the recision. The reason why we had to update the new grants is because we didn't want to skip over anyone unless we were absolutely sure they weren't going to go to construction, so we were still getting information as of last week.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 70B and 603 CMR 38 and on the recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby rescind two Category One school construction projects totaling $7,303,360, provided that they be returned to the priority list;**

hereby approve four new Category One school construction grants totaling $7,123,306;

hereby rescind three Category Two school construction projects totaling $3,914,023, provided that one of these projects be returned to the Priority List; and

hereby approve nine new Category Two school construction grants totaling $4,206,543.

The motion was made by Dr. Schaefer and seconded by Dr. Gill. The vote was unanimous.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: : There are additional grants which follow the yellow sheets in the middle of the section. Commissioner, any comments on the grants before us?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: No, not really. They're pretty straightforward.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the grants as presented by the Commissioner.

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Gill. The vote was unanimous.

BOARD OF EDUCATION GOALS, STRATEGIES AND MEASURES - Initial Discussion

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The last item on the agenda is an attempt to revisit some of the earlier discussions we had around Board goals and measures that we might use in order to determine whether we're making new progress in the various areas outlined in the goals and strategies document. The idea of this discussion is not really to revisit the goals and strategies, but rather to really focus on the measures themselves.

There are a couple of things you might want to think about in having this discussion. One is the importance of these individual measures in actually evaluating whether we're making progress. Some of them may be more pertinent than others. To the extent practical, we want to focus as narrowly as we can on those measures that really provide us with some useful information. The other thing is that there are a number of measures here that require us to do something new, to collect data in a new way. It's not necessarily free to do it that way. To collect some of this data, I'm not sure the nominal expense is all that much in many cases, but it is new activity, new staff time, and in some cases asking people in the field to provide some information that they currently don't provide. And so getting some sense for whether it's worth expending the effort to collect some of this data will also be valuable. So maybe with that, if I open it up to Board Members if they've got any immediate questions or comments, and then we can talk some more with the panel.

MS. KELMAN: I was just going to say I thought there were some very good ideas in here such as decreasing burden of state mandates. I know that there has been a lot of concern in the education community about that. And decreasing the performance gap between low-income and high-income districts and decreasing the gap in MCAS performance between demographic groups across all grades and subjects. I think those are key areas to hit, especially given all the opposition to MCAS. If you're able to meet those goals, then you may be able to decrease a lot of the major opposition to the test.

MR. CROWLEY: I think without yet having the experience to judge which of these are the most important targets, I think we need to make them measurable. So where we say decreasing certain items or increasing percentages, I think it would be important to come up with what we think is a realistic percent and actually have that number in there on the ones that we feel are important. I think also with the number of the items we have here, comparing the costs, to the extent that there are additional costs that would be incurred to come up with these items. I think you have plenty of targets here, and I would gravitate towards those that don't incur additional cost yet are clearly measurable so at the end of the process we can judge whether or not we've done well as opposed to just a general percent.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Any advice on how we might actually establish the numerical goals? So instead of saying increasing percentage of -- well, let's say decreasing the gap in MCAS performance between demographic groups. How might we go about saying decrease by X percent per year or something like that the gap between the different groups?

MR. CROWLEY: What I like to do is create usually three ranges, what I call the low, expect, high. And the expect is usually the one, at the end of the day, where you want to be. At the same time having a high target but also having a low target. So rather than just come up with one item, I think not only do you want to judge how you've done but also weigh whether or not you've strongly exceeded. And at the end of the day, you have multiple goals, which I would recommend. For example, if you have ten, at the end of the process if you're able to end up on average with an expect throughout the whole category, then I think you've been very successful. And if you end up at the high end, that's wonderful, and I'm talking about weighted averages. If you end up at the low side, then really you haven't done as well as you would have thought. But rather than just coming up with one target, say increasing, moving the percentages from the failure rate, picking one of the -- we were talking the other day about 45 percent down to 40 and 38, actually have three targets, and you then can determine did we really do well as opposed to just made it or we just failed. I just don't have the experience yet to understand what the percentages mean. I think you can get into each of them and determine what type of movement is significant, which at the end of the day is what we're after. We're not after just a percent that says, okay, it's moved, but it should move more than that if we've really done a good job.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Maybe at this point folks on the panel might be able to comment a little bit on some of the measures here that are described as new measures. In brackets after a number of the items it says "new measure" which means of course that this is data that we don't currently collect, but some of it we actually are starting to collect in one form or another and that might be helpful. Melanie, would you like to walk us through this?

MS. WINKLOSKY: Actually, I am going to turn it over to Ann because she's doing the mentoring surveys.

MS. DUFFY: I'm Ann Duffy with Educator Quality, and we do have a couple of survey initiatives that we're implementing as part of the endowment grants that we award both as incentive grants for signing bonuses in master teachers and also to provide the district to establish a mentoring and induction program. So we have a draft of an induction survey which incorporates mentoring that's being sent to districts this year. It's building on a survey that we sent out last year, so there's some trend data that we can gather.

We also have a second survey that's going out on the issue of leadership, which is part of a consortium project that we're submitting, a leadership grant with the Council of Chief State School Officers, and that's going to require us to do some extensive leadership surveying over the course of the next few months, but essentially our strategy is going to be building on some of the good data that the associations have accumulated over time in creating a standard set of boxed date that each association will use as it surveys its membership, and then doing some additional targeted research on urban leadership issues. So let me hand out those two drafts. You can add, subtract, or tear it apart as well.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: When are the surveys likely to go out?

MS. DUFFY: The mentoring and induction survey we do need to send out sometime within the next two weeks, and then they process the data over the summer and provide feedback to districts so that they can begin planning for their induction programs next year. The leadership is a little bit more complicated. We're going to be doing some initial leadership survey work before the end of the year, and then some work through focus groups this summer in partnership with the association. That work will continue through the fall as part of this larger leadership project. I should say that, just as an aside, which I think you'll probably get to in a minute, that none of this is of course connected to actual teacher data that we would potentially have acquired through the redesign of the certification data system.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: This issue, which some members may not be familiar with, but we have data about certified teachers. It's not always in the most convenient form or the most successful form, and there are efforts underway to change that, but we don't really have data about employed teachers. Some teachers may be certified and may not be working at all, they may be certified here and in other states, they may be working elsewhere. There are a whole lot of different permutations here. Where do we stand in developing a database that will allow us to actually know who's teaching in Massachusetts schools?

MS. DUFFY: There are two parts to that question. One is the certification data, to make sure that we have good certification, and then I'll turn it over I think to Juliane to talk about the data warehouse. The Department of Education is the recipient of the E-Government award which allows us to move our entire certification system to an on-line data collection effort and allows us to do a better job of tracking that data over time. That project is actually underway. As of this week, we got $2.5 million to implement the system starting July 1st and have some design money to begin that process now. So we expect that over the next 18 months we'll actually have good clean, accurate, accessible data on all folks who get certified in the Commonwealth, which is a huge step forward. Now, how does it connect to employment?

MS. DOW: There is underway an effort, and I say this wearing my hat as the interim coordinator for our information systems work, work on a data warehouse that includes both all of our student data and our educator data, and right now we're drawing up educator data from several different sources. Our old certification system, which because of its design, and much of it was paper based, and has been, continues to be, much of that's not in the database at all. But we are putting some information in from there and then from NES who does our teacher testing, from the teachers retirement board system.

As we begin collecting some more information, we do this now with the schools that we're doing individual school reviews on, but we have the potential through our opening up of educator space through the virtual education space project of getting more teachers registered through our directory administration application as part of our new IMS system. So we have the potential in the future, clearly we have the foundations built to begin to have better data that we can query about educators and their current employment and their current assignments and their levels of professional development as well as initial professional qualifications, but we're not at the point where that's available to us now, and we really are looking over this next one- to two-year period when we can realistically expect to have the capacity to really inquire of that data and begin to track trends.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: A couple of specific questions I've got on two of these measures. One is about increasing percentage of special needs students meeting IEP learning objectives. The issue here it seems to me is that while we are testing students, including special needs students, through MCAS, we don't track very well whether special needs students are achieving objectives, some of which are outside the domain of those things that are measured through MCAS, and therefore don't have a very good way of measuring the performance of the special needs system as a whole. Now, we are getting more data through MCAS of special needs students, especially obviously academic achievement, than we've ever had before. Attempting to measure this apparently is a very big data collection problem at a minimum, but also one that has a great deal of variability because of the determination of whether you're achieving your learning objectives is based on the team evaluation, and obviously teams vary greatly from one place to the next. Do you think there's any value in kind of continuing to pursue this and figure out a way that we might be able to collect some better data on this or does this at the moment at least present kind of an insoluble problem based on the nature of IEPs and the special education system as a whole?

MS. DOW: I don't know what Jeff can offer us in terms of talking about where we're headed with some of our assessment program, special needs assessment, but I think it is not realistic as it's framed here. It’s not

really just a question of collecting the data, which obviously we do not now do, but the reliability and consistency of the information that we would be getting would not make it comparable so as to aggregate it and to begin to be able to talk I think about district or state results.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Is it possible in the context of program reviews that some type of -- I don't know if auditing is the right word, but sort of spot checking of IEPs and interviewing of team members around the achievement of learning objectives could be done, not as a way of collecting aggregate data but as part of the evaluation process to try to put some of the emphasis on actual performance rather than compliance in the context of special education?

MS. DOW: You can actually think of this as part of the compliance, which is to make sure that the team is reviewing progress and not simply re-upping the same goals as last year for kids, and really using the IEP process in its intended manner, which would mean that they have reviewed progress against the designated goals for the individual students, and that certainly is something that is currently looked at to some extent in that we could review, you know, whether or not we're doing all we could be doing in that regard. But are there things related to the assessment program that will in the future give us more, Jeff, data around how kids are doing who are in special education?

MR. NELLHAUS: Not in terms of whether or not they're meeting the objectives of their IEP. We have students who are participating in MCAS either in the standard assessment or in certain cases in the alternate assessment. So again, those assessments are based on the curriculum framework learning standards and not necessarily on the student's IEP. We hope there's a connection between them. Certainly there is a large connection, but we know that students with disabilities may have other learning objectives beyond the curriculum frameworks that are identified in the IEP, and right now I think it's through the review process that we'll gain most of that information.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: In a similar vein, the next measure which has to do with LEP students. It talks about acquiring English language proficiency within three years. There's also more testing being done of LEP students or students who are graduating from bilingual programs. Is this also an area where we're better off tracking MCAS performance of these students when we can break out that data over time rather than trying to collect a measure like this one?

MR. NELLHAUS: Actually we're in the process now of identifying standards for students who are learning English, English as a second language standards. In fact, they'll just be an extension of our own English language arts framework but adopted for students who have just entered this country and are beginning to learn English. Once we identify those standards, our plan is to develop a common statewide assessment based on those standards. So we will eventually have performance data for students who have just arrived in this country and are just in the first, second and third years of instruction here. So down the road we will definitely have better data in this area.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Right now what's the policy for testing LEP students?

MR. NELLHAUS: Right now students, unless they are being recommended for regular education in the following school year -- we have the spring test. If they're being recommended for regular education the following school year, they take the MCAS test. If they're not being recommended, they can be exempted. However, that exemption only lasts for three years. So if they've been in school for more than three years, and regardless of whether or not they're being recommended for regular education, they must participate in MCAS.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: One of the things that's always complicated is a student moves into a district this year, and then moves out to another district next year, in some cases even just another school within the same district next year, may be counted as a first-year student. How do we --

MR. NELLHAUS: The definition has to do with attending schools in the United States regardless of the district. As long as you've been attending school here, that's counted as time in school.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So in theory, students who have been in schools in the United States for three years are all taking MCAS?

MR. NELLHAUS: Right. However, there are a number of students who haven't been here that long. We don't have appropriate English language assessment for them. That's what we're trying to develop at this time, so that we do learn more about those students acquisition of English in the first three years that they're in the country.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: And are we also tracking the percentage of students who have been exempted from--

MR. NELLHAUS: Yes. By and large we've done some studies on it, and for the most part districts are complying with our guidelines. They're testing students after the three-year period. Also the students who have been here for fewer than three years who speak Spanish and are literate in Spanish, we have Spanish versions of the test in the content areas. So it's just in the area of English that we need to collect more data about the students' performance.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The last comment I've got has to do with the last item in the Accountability for Results section. It talks about increasing number of state-funded programs with performance measures linked to student achievement. Obviously it's in our goals and strategies around measuring performance improvement, but I think this is a critical part of expanding the accountability ethos beyond just the MCAS system itself and the school and district accountability systems we have in place to include those grants programs in particular, but other line items programs where we're spending money but don't necessarily know that there's a payoff educationally. One of the problems with this measure is what's the denominator, how many discrete programs do we have? The second thing is how do we ensure that we've got performance measures that aren't just input measures dressed up like performance measures? Any clue as to how we might proceed on this? Maybe one suggestion where I think there's some work already being done and where there's some obvious connections, where we're spending now $40 million this year on MCAS remediation grants. What kind of performance measures are we asking of schools or are we tracking with respect to schools and districts receiving those funds?

MS. DOW: I'm glad to talk about that one. There is this larger universe of all of the programs, and really right now we are looking at gathering performance information with regard to the academic support services program. We are also gathering performance information on after-school programs that are not, which is more complicated when they're not specifically of an academic nature, and we are doing it with our various reading literacy programs. In the case of the literacy programs, we are using -- and there are certainly other people nearby who could talk more about this, but we are using a particular test that we've mandated for people who want an assessment tool so that we can have some consistency across multiple applications of this model that are being done for that.

With academic support it's proving to be much more complex in that we're trying to see -- for students who are getting an after-school academic hour, let's say three times a week, it's a little hard to separate out. So if they improved in math, was it because their math instruction got better during their regular day or how

much is attributable to that after-school hour or to something else that may be going on? And do we give them a discrete math pre- and post-test for that after-school program or do we look at their math results that they've achieved on MCAS or on some other form of assessment that they're doing on an annual basis pre and post that applies to their programs more generally?

What we've concluded at this point -- we've had people report to us. We first required that they do some kind of pre- and post-testing for every student that's in an academic support services program, and most added an additional layer of assessment, something new in addition to whatever else they were already doing. But because everyone is not doing the same thing, we don't have any way to do comparisons. It has been effective to ask people to give us that data in that it's caused them to change the method by which they evaluate their program. They've had to explain these objective results through these assessment measures, rather than just giving us the kind of evaluative information of saying everybody liked it, it went well, kids were happy, which is a lot of how the evaluations might have otherwise been. So they've been able to talk about their own measures, but we haven't been able to compare the measures using one community with that of another community.

I think as we now go to having MCAS testing at more grade levels, and we're looking now at math at 4 and 6 and 8, it gives us more frequent opportunity to track the progress over time and look at longitudinal progress for individual students, and I think that the more we can see and study the difference between those students who had their math results in a district including the whole program of service that was provided by the district, we can look at the differential results for those who participated in the after-school program and those who didn't, rather than having them do a special pre- and post- assessment for the after-school program.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Now, this implies that we've got essentially an IMS system in place with a unique identifier for each student that allows us to --

MS. DOW: That's correct. At this point, we have most of the districts registered using MCAS, for MCAS, and we have pretty much all the students in the state at this point registered --

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Which would imply that, with the results from this year, we'd have a baseline for which to track.

MR. NELLHAUS: Actually from last year. Most students are identified by their SASID even from last year's test score results.

MS. DOW: But we're now able to use the SASID. Last year they assigned them for the tested grades. Those were the first students to get them assigned. Now we've got them assigned pretty much system- wide which allows us to collect the individual student data on academic support using the SASID as well, so we'll be able to use the crossmatch from those databases.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Will we be asking schools or districts to report -- when they report back on their grants or maybe on a going forward basis will they be asked to actually report who participated --

MS. DOW: They do. They have been since the onset of this program. We started them the very first year with that, but we didn't at that point have unique identifiers. We had names. And then we had local student IDs, and now we have state IDs, but we have data going back to the beginning of the program for all the students who were served.

MR. THOMAS: There's some bar code technology that -- I don't know if it's relevant for this particular situation, but I know in Springfield the Time-Out for Kids Program, which is a comprehensive after-school network of programs utilizing public schools as the time-out sites, we introduced the bar code system so that we could gather data on students utilizing the time-out services, and we were able to get all different types of demographic and other social information. I don't know if it has any transference or implications for what we're doing with respect to the data collection from students taking MCAS, but you might want to check that out.

MS. DOW: I think it's certainly relevant for some of the kinds of programs that are more drop-in programs in trying to understand impact, who actually attends and how do you collect the data. If you have kids who are regularly signed up to a program where they're required or expected to go or they're registered to go and you're taking attendance, then you're able to give one kind of data, but we do have a number of programs that are more in the after-school category where they may be on a drop-in basis, and in order to try issuing kids ID cards or something where you can scan them in and have them register that they were there that day might be some technology that would help us in the future with some of that. But we otherwise do use, because we do have the IDs, we actually do use bar code technology related to the student identification for MCAS.

DR. SCHAEFER: I wanted to ask -- I see that this is a discussion only, there's no vote. How do you intend to proceed?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I think what I'd like to do is to come back in a month or two with this list with some suggested targets attached to them with some information around the frequency with which the individual measures will be collected, including in some cases a description of the phase-in for how long it will take us to get to the point where we can actually be tracking this data, and probably delete a couple of the items that just don't seem practical or useful for us to collect.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Let me tell you what I'm taking away from this. First of all, let's acknowledge that in public education we do a terrible job collecting and more importantly using what we collect to change any practice, and that's just a fact, so the Department is just as guilty. The good news is we are building systems. We do have -- you hear this term LASID and SASID, that's basically a number that's assigned at the local level and then a superimposed state number, so we can collect a number and they can maintain some individuality at the local level. So we're going to be able to track kids. We're also building this data warehouse, we call it the Data Mart, and that's a very good thing. We probably should do a demonstration at some point. So we are moving in great ways towards being able to collect data.

We had to rely on the teachers retirement board because we figured if they were having 7 percent taken out of their pay they were probably a teacher. That's as sophisticated as it was. So the first thing is there is good news on the front that we are developing and building the system. We still have the fundamental problem, which is that we have to rely on the locals reporting good data, and it's been my experience that they're not going to pay a lot of attention to the kind of effort needed to present good data to us if they don't think it's -- because, believe me, they've filled out a thousand surveys, and we come back and ask them the same things again. I think now we're going to be able to prove it. When you can prove it, you collect it and you give it back to them and say, see, now it means something, that will be helpful. As I look through this laundry list, I think it's very important to prioritize as Jim and Rick have said.

Let me just give you a quick example of where we don't use data the way we should. The last item under student achievement is students scoring three or above on AP exams. We happen to be sitting in the state that has the highest percentage increase of students in the country that scored three or above. We went up

11 percent here in Massachusetts on the number of kids who scored three and above in AP exams. We're usually aided by the fact that all of SAT and AP data includes public and private schools, and frankly we're quite assisted by the private schools. In this particular case, interestingly enough, the public school kids went up 13 percent, and the private school kids went up 9 percent. I use that as an example of where, when we set guidelines and rubrics, low, high or medium, we need to also provide you the background. I'm not expecting us to go up another 11 percent. I think we have to recognize that we have the highest percentage increase.

So what I'm taking away from this, Jim, is first of all, we need to make this in priority order and some background as to what can and can't be done, and we start getting into these areas where it's very difficult, we're making up a pilot and like the IEP trying to get the objectives and that kind of thing. One of my greatest frustrations is the fact that where we do put out tremendous material, for example the item analysis for kids -- people complain all the time about the late results, and I understand that, but this past year, by the 10th of September, Jeff, right, all schools -- wasn't it the 10th of September?

MR. NELLHAUS: That's our goal for next year, Dave.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I know. But early in September we were able to provide schools with their item analysis of every child's results on every question of MCAS. Not only whether they got it right or wrong, but even what they got wrong. Some districts pull that stuff apart, and they look at their math curriculum and they start to realize there's a pattern there of what they're missing and so forth. Others don't seem to do much with it. So, I think we have to prioritize, start to put rubrics, start to separate those things we absolutely can start to do. We need to ratchet up what we're doing at the Department, and I think it has to have meaning and come alive, but I think this is a great beginning, and I just think it can make a tremendous difference in driving reform as we start to get better and better at it. That's what I came up with. We've got a lot of work to do, Paula.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. That's it for the agenda. Are there any other items that Board Members want to raise? If not, we're adjourned until next month.