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## Board of Education Regular Meeting

### Minutes

**Tuesday, March 10, 1998**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.. The following were in attendance:

**Members Of The Board Of Education Present:**

John Silber, Chairman, Brookline  
Patricia Crutchfield, Vice-Chairperson, Southwick  
Edwin J. Delattre, Boston  
Stanley Z. Koplik, Boston  
James A. Peyser, Dorchester  
Roberta R. Schaefer, Worcester  
Micah Silver, New Salem  
Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington  
Frank W. Haydu III, Commissioner of Education (Interim)  
David P. Driscoll, Deputy Commissioner of Education

**Members Of The Board Absent:**

William Irwin, Wilmington

**Also In Attendance:**

Nancy L. Catuogno, Registered Diplomate Reporter

### Approval Of Minutes

Commissioner Haydu asked that the Board substitute a page he handed out for page 10 of the February 25, 1998 minutes. Dr. Delattre noted that page 5 of the February 10 minutes should read that he said 347 schools, not 350.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 10 special and regular meetings, the February 18 special meeting and the February 25 special meeting as amended.**

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

### Comments From The Chairman

Chairman Silber began by commenting on the search for a permanent Commissioner. He stated that the applications did not come in as they had hoped and recommended extending the deadline from March 16 to April 1, 1998 in order to get more response. He said that with the Board's approval, the advertisement would be changed to reflect the new date and be placed in national media publications. Dr. Thernstrom asked what the applications looked like. Dr. Silber responded that there have not been many applicants. Dr. Schaefer suggested extending the

deadline until April 15, giving another two weeks. The Board reached consensus that the application deadline would be extended 30 days and new advertisements would be put in the media.

Dr. Silber then commented on the budget testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee. He stated that he and the Commissioner strongly urged the funding of the preschool program at the \$169 million level. Dr. Silber urged individuals around the state including the superintendent's association and the teachers' unions, to use the influence they have to encourage the enactment of the proposals. The Chairman stated that the Board also recommended that the charter school program be expanded, stating that there needs to be a significant number of charter schools in order to test their value.

Dr. Silber called the Board's attention to the fact that the Senate has backed off the recommendations of the ad hoc committee to change the special education regulations to conform with the national standard. He continued that this recommendation was also made by the superintendents' association and the teachers' unions and he urged those groups to press their case with the legislature.

Chairman Silber told the Board that a group of examiners from England visited Boston for an inspection of a school. He said that the Boston Globe wrote an editorial on the subject reporting favorably on the experiment and suggesting that Massachusetts adopt a similar system. He stated: This, of course, is one of the things we had in mind when we arranged for this innovation. He also stated that he is looking into what it would cost to establish a system of school inspectors who could then provide the audit of school systems in a much more objective and careful way than can be done by simply filing reports.

## **2. Comments From The Interim Commissioner**

Mr. Haydu first thanked everyone who has made the transition "seamless." He stated that the Department of Education staff and the associations and their leaders and the media have been wonderful to work with. He stated that he has been scheduling meetings with each Board member, association heads and others to be held in the near future. He thanked the Board members for taking the time to meet with him.

Mr. Haydu stated that he and the senior staff of the Department are busy revising the organizational chart of the Department and said that it will be published at the next Board meeting. He stated that since he is a businessman more than an educator, he needs a different organizational structure in order to work more efficiently.

Mr. Haydu stated that he would discuss his priorities later in the meeting, but that he would like to make a few initial observations. His first observation was that public policy needs to be discussed in public forum. He also said that he hopes to have fuller discussions on policy as they move forward. He told the Board that he and the Chairman have discussed and agreed to have a series of public evening meetings each night before the regularly scheduled meeting. He explained that the Board would discuss one major policy initiative per evening and senior staff from the Department would present relevant information on these topics. He stated that the first of these meetings will be April 8 when David Driscoll and Jeff Nellhaus will present on testing. He continued that the May meeting will include a presentation by David Driscoll and Carol Gilbert on the teacher test. The June meeting will be on the subject of school and district standards and will include presentations by David Driscoll and Jeff Nellhaus.

Dr. Koplik expressed concerns that May may be too late to talk about the teacher test. In response, Mr. Haydu asked Dr. Silber to appoint a subcommittee to work with David Driscoll and Carol Gilbert on the subject. Commissioner Haydu explained that he is not comfortable with a test that people in the field think they can sign their name and pass. Chairman Silber stated that he dispels any notion that the Board is abandoning the test which will be required for certification of teachers and which will start this year. He noted that the Board voted unanimously on this topic. He clearly stated that the test will count this year and that anyone who thinks otherwise is under a false impression.

Regarding the teacher test, Mr. Haydu explained that it is hard to transition from never having to take a test to requiring a test. He explained that he wants the senior staff to come back to the Board in May with a way to make the transition fair to both to teachers and to the policy that the Board wants. Dr. Delattre stated that just because the Board doesn't set the passing numbers until after they have some sense of how people have done does not mean that there won't be consequences of taking the test the first year. He continued: That conclusion is unwarranted and it would undermine the purpose of giving the test this year to have it be inconsequential. Dr. Delattre said that the Board should and can address this issue by the April meeting. Dr. Delattre also said that they do not know enough about this test or tests in other states to grant certification to those who pass a comparable test in another state.

Mr. Haydu continued his remarks by discussing the hearings on the Racial Imbalance Law. He said that there were three hearings across the state on the proposal to amend the Racial Imbalance Law. He stated that while this issue is important, he would suggest postponing any action on it until a later date since it was not a top priority at this time. Dr. Thernstrom, Dr. Schaefer and Mr. Peyser all agreed that it could be postponed for the time being.

Mr. Haydu then informed the Board that next meeting will be held at Micah Silver's school in Orange, MA, rather than in Springfield.

Mr. Haydu continued his remarks, informing the Board that a charter school review process is underway. He said that he will have the results of this process in April. Dr. Silber referenced Commissioner Haydu's op-ed piece which ran in the Boston Globe, saying that it outlined very succinctly and clearly the process by which the charter school review was made. Dr. Silber requested that it be placed on the website and the Commissioner agreed.

Commissioner Haydu then told the Board members that he and David Driscoll would attend a meeting the following day with members of the Senate in a briefing that Mass. Insight had organized. He said that he has scheduled meetings with the Governor's staff and the legislative leadership. Commissioner Haydu concluded his remarks by stating: I look forward to getting to know many of you who I have known a little bit a lot better, and those I haven't known. I'm looking forward to the dialogue and I will promise that if nothing else, I will try to always be the honest broker at the table of ideas and will try to always ask the question, a policy question, what works best for kids.

### **3. Statements From The Public**

The first presentation was made by Joseph D'Angelo, Margaret Hallasey, Doris Smith and Shelley Glantz from the Massachusetts School Library Association. Mr. D'Angelo referenced the library media standards which were approved by the Board of Education in 1988. He requested that the Board formally endorse a new version of these standards, stating that two years of work and research went into them. He stated that they are bound to the Common Core of Learning and the curriculum frameworks. Ms. Hallasey continued by saying that Massachusetts is number 47 out of the 50 states in the number of school librarians to students. She stated that excellence in educational media resources does not just happen and that a plan is needed. She said that Massachusetts does not have a plan. She said that libraries are an integral part of education and that state planning and leadership are needed. Dr. Thernstrom said that the statistics could be misinterpreted because often times, town libraries are used by students and they would not be accounted for in the report. Ms. Hallasey responded that a study by Lillian Gerhart has shown that using a town library as a substitute for school libraries only works well in communities of 10,000 people or less.

Ms. Glantz said that school librarians are trained differently than town librarians because they need to be able to teach the kids what to do with all the resources. Ms. Smith stated that there is also benefits to learning within the context of a school library rather than a town library.

Mr. Silver stated that because of time on learning, many study halls are eliminated and therefore classes are going to the library in groups. He asked if there was any data which reported that group usage of the libraries is going up. Ms. Glantz stated that since Time on Learning is so new, there are no such published figures. She continued by stating that her personal experience is that students are using her library more efficiently since they are required to go with their class,

rather than during a study hall.

Dr. Delattre told the group that he shares their conviction for the importance of school libraries and for students learning how to read and use books. He pointed out for them a few caveats in their planning. First, he said that they should not refer to the learning styles of students under the Common Core of Learning since no one in the field wishes to be associated with the idea learning styles as relevant to good teaching and learning. He said that this notion is unlikely to survive in any Massachusetts Ed Reform document. Dr. Delattre also urged the group not to bank too much on comparing their standards to the mathematics framework since there are serious flaws in it. He announced that the Fordham Institute gave the framework an F. Dr. Delattre also urged them not to rely on the idea of constructing meaning. He said that the construction of meaning is not likely to be a part of Education Reform.

Ms. Glantz thanked Dr. Delattre for his helpful comments and stated that they only picked a few examples in the documents they gave to the Board in an effort to keep it concise. Dr. Koplik said that his main concern is that the students have access to resources, not the number of staff. Ms. Hallasey said that students need people who are trained to teach them what to do with those resources. She said that Massachusetts is about average in the number of resources available in libraries.

The next public speaker was Phyllis Dragonas from the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association. She said that she was pleased to see that Foreign Languages will be a component of the state test in 2000 and hoped that it would not be postponed. She urged the Board to appoint a committee to work with the Department of Education to revise the framework to ensure that all schools comply with the conditions of Education Reform and that a testing process be in place as soon as possible to measure performance in foreign languages. She stated that she has sent a letter to Dr. Silber recommending five people to be on the committee to review the framework. Dr. Silber responded to her by stating that a small subcommittee has been appointed and that once they are finished with their revisions, he would like to have it reviewed by some of the individuals that Dr. Dragonas recommended. Dr. Silber asked Dr. Dragonas to convey to her association that he would like to know how it would be possible to finance K-12 foreign language instruction. He said if he could get this information from them, he would pass it along to the legislature when he asks for the money to fund it.

The next speaker was Linda Fritts, a parent from Franklin. She expressed her concerns about Advanced Systems, the company administering the MCAS. She said that the fact that her daughter's eighth grade teachers had trepidations about the test and the articles in the Middlesex News troubled her. She stated that the company has had problems in Kentucky and Maine. She stated that she thought Stuart Kahl's responses to the errors were too casual and nonresponsive. She said that she was concerned that Massachusetts' students were being used as test cases in order for Advanced Systems to regain their reputation. Ms. Fritts urged the Board to re-evaluate the need for a test and asked that they look into other already developed tests. Commissioner Haydu responded to her remarks by stating that the Board will devote its evening meeting on April 8 to the issue of testing and all relevant issues would be discussed. He also stated that her concerns would be raised but that he suspects the Board will decide to continue to administer the tests as planned.

The next speaker was Susan Webber from Planned Parenthood. Ms. Webber urged the Board to continue Comprehensive School Health Education as a core academic subject in the Common Core of Learning. She said that polls continue to show that parents want health and sex education in the schools. She said that the Board should keep moving in the right direction and not eliminate health as a core subject.

## **Priority Issues - Discussion**

Commissioner Haydu outlined what he thinks the priorities of the Board ought to be. The priorities are: recruiting a top-flight Commissioner; implementing the new teacher certification exam; completing revisions on the foreign languages, health and arts curriculum frameworks, and planning the revision process for the math and science frameworks; conducting the grade 3 reading test and the MCAS tests in grades 4, 8 and 10 and addressing related issues such as public outreach and standard-setting; and developing and implementing an audit and

accountability system to analyze the impact of Education Reform in the classrooms, schools and districts.

Mr. Silver stated that the teacher test should be a top priority and Commissioner Haydu assured him that it was second only to recruiting a Commissioner. Mr. Silver also asked whether the teacher test would be given to only those applying for certification or if all teachers will be tested. Mr. Haydu said that they could discuss such questions at the policy discussion in May. Dr. Koplik expressed interest in attaching Lawrence to the list of priorities. Ms. Crutchfield agreed that the Lawrence resolution should be listed as a priority. Mr. Haydu told the Board that Lawrence will continue to be just as important as it has been and agreed that it was a priority.

Dr. Schaefer noted that professional development should be included in the list. Dr. Thernstrom agreed and said that it should be part of the teacher certification. She also stated that recertification should be included on the list. Commissioner Haydu said that was an excellent suggestion and that he would add it to the list. Dr. Thernstrom expressed concern over the order of the priorities, stating that the public outreach on the tests and standard-setting should be higher than the framework revisions. She also said that with the Fordham Report's findings, the math framework should be looked at before the arts and health frameworks. Dr. Delattre explained that all of these priorities can be going on at the same time rather than in competition with each other. Commissioner Haydu stated that because of the long-term implications of the teacher test, it is his top priority, but that he agreed the others can be happening simultaneously. Dr. Delattre stated that all of the priorities are inter-related. He said: If you have good frameworks and lousy teacher preparation, the frameworks don't carry any freight. If you have good assessments and frameworks and lousy teacher preparation, the students will fail the test. If you have well-prepared teachers but bad frameworks and assessments, it still doesn't work. Dr. Thernstrom agreed. Dr. Silber stated that the priorities are all concurrent and not a series of events.

## **State Plan For Professional Development - Discussion**

David Driscoll, Deputy Commissioner, addressed the Board. He explained that the Ed Reform Act requires the Commissioner to prepare a plan for providing statewide assistance in the preparation, implementation and developmental plans for professional development each year. Then, the Commissioner is to consult with the Board of Higher Education and then submit it to the Board of Education for a vote. Dr. Driscoll stated that they have not yet consulted with the Board of Higher Education. He also said that this was not meant to be voted on that day because further discussion and revisions are needed. He said that he spoke to Frank Haydu about having a subcommittee work closely with members of the professional development cluster at the Department of Education. Dr. Driscoll stated that the professional development plan should be seen as in concert with a number of other things. He explained that since 1993 many aspects of the Ed Reform Law were implemented as discrete items such as school councils and teacher recertification. He said that the professional development plan each year is a good way to tie many pieces of Ed Reform together. He explained that with the frameworks and the first assessment test, there is an opportunity to talk about a focus on content and also on a relationship between professional development and student results.

Dr. Driscoll then introduced Meg Mayo-Brown and Melanie Winklosky of the Department of Education. Ms. Crutchfield stated that she was pleased with the systems approach to the notion of professional development. She was also pleased with the emphasis on evaluation. She said that she thinks they are on the right track. Dr. Koplik stated that he couldn't find much in the document on focusing on improving teacher content of subject matter. Ms. Brown agreed that the plan should be more explicit in that area. Mr. Peyser echoed Dr. Koplik's concerns and added more. He said: If we believe the appropriate locus of managerial control and leadership is the school site as opposed to the district or indeed the state, I think we need to find a better balance or a different and greater emphasis on the role of principals in schools in helping to craft these plans, not just for the district generally, but for the individual teachers as well. He continued by saying that principals and heads of schools need to be involved in the professional development of their staff so that it conforms with their school's plan. Commissioner Haydu told Mr. Peyser and the Board that this document is still being worked on and that he agreed with Mr. Peyser's concerns.



Dr. Silber said that he has asked Dr. Delattre and Dr. Schaefer to serve as the subcommittee to work with Department staff to develop a revised version of the plan. He said that they should plan to report as soon as feasible without interfering with matters that are of greater importance.

## **Lawrence Agreement - Progress Report**

Commissioner Haydu first said that he was impressed that Bob Antonucci had sent a copy of the fact-finding report to every superintendent in the state. Commissioner Haydu then asked David Driscoll to present his update to the Board. Dr. Driscoll started by stating that they are beginning to put things back in place in Lawrence. He said that the data collection is now being organized with the help of DOE staff. He said they have the potential to have an incredible student tracking system but they are not using it correctly at this point. Dr. Driscoll said that they now had an inventory of all of the 3,000 computers in the school, some of which were not even connected.

Dr. Driscoll told the Board that Lawrence also has an assessment committee to decide what types of assessment should occur at the local level to supplement the statewide testing and independent testing they have done in the past. Dr. Driscoll said that he and the Department staff are working with this committee to make these important decisions. Dr. Driscoll said that at the high school level, a team of outside experts has been appointed as a design team to talk about issues surrounding scheduling and course content and articulation of courses. He explained that their collective bargaining contract does not require many meetings that teachers are required to attend and that this is an issue he is looking at. He stated however that several members of the science department volunteered to come forward and meet.

Dr. Driscoll said that another issue that is being looked at is the professional development, stating that often times what is taught in 7th and 8th grade does not relate to what is taught in 9th grade. He said that he thought that issues with the budget and with teacher certification are now under control. He said that all teachers and administrators who are not certified have been identified and he is working one by one with them. Dr. Driscoll reported that every collective bargaining group is up this year and that the district has gone to bid on an attorney.

Dr. Driscoll then addressed three major issues: Choosing a new superintendent; Personnel; and the issue of facilities. Dr. Driscoll said that NESDEC was hired before the agreement to search for a new superintendent. He reported that the deadline for applications was March 10 and that he will know what type of candidates they have very soon. He said that a nine-member screening committee had been appointed by the Commissioner and the Mayor of Lawrence. The Commissioner's representatives to that committee include former superintendent Matt George who was a member of the fact-finding team, current superintendent Christine McGrath from Tewksbury, Sheila Upchurch who is a parent in Lawrence, and Bob Sperber who is a former superintendent in Brookline and currently works for Boston University. He stated that the mayor had appointed 5 members including the chairman of the parent advisory committee and the president of the teachers' union.

Dr. Driscoll addressed the issue of personnel. He reported that all four major positions in the Lawrence Schools will be vacant as of June 30. He said the positions of superintendent, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, assistant superintendent for community outreach and business manager will all be vacant, as well as five other positions that are currently vacant. He continued by saying that there is also a vacancy on the Lawrence School Committee for which they will hold a special election to fill under their rules.

Dr. Driscoll's third major topic was school building facilities. He said that the facilities are intolerable and they need to be immediately addressed with a sense of urgency. He said he felt that the people in Lawrence have not yet recognized the urgency and importance of the issue but that he is working with them to help them understand. Dr. Driscoll reported that the high school is over capacity by 1300 students. He also said that 5 elementary schools in the city were built prior to 1900. He said they have two early childhood centers but that they are both in old, inadequate facilities. He said that the city would qualify for 90% state aid to help them re-build some schools. He told the Board that he understood that they were strapped for money but that the issue of inadequate facilities needed to be a top priority. Dr. Driscoll then thanked the Board and offered to report to them on Lawrence every month.

Dr. Koplik cautioned Dr. Driscoll that Lawrence should not restrict themselves to negotiations pertaining to only attorneys to address the collective bargaining. He urged the people in Lawrence to think in terms of who will give the best advise so that they have a practical and legal side.

Dr. Thernstrom asked what the pool of candidates for the superintendent position looks like and Dr. Driscoll told her that they really do not know yet since the search firm is coordinating the search. Dr. Thernstrom also asked what is keeping them from moving forward to get newer facilities. Dr. Driscoll told her that they just don't yet understand the importance of the issue. Dr. Schaefer pointed out that even with state aid, the city needs to come up with 10% of the money and that is not easy. Dr. Driscoll reassured her that he knows it won't be easy but that it is important. He said that they may need to build smaller buildings to save money but that to simply throw up their hands and give up was not acceptable to him.

Dr. Delattre asked whether or not the school buildings were safe for the youngest children. Dr. Driscoll told him that every building was safe. He said that they had to spend some extra money to assure basic safety. Mr. Silber had some questions about personnel and certification of teachers in Lawrence. Dr. Driscoll told him that the issue of teachers who were not certified is being quickly solved. He also said that professional development is something that they will need to work on for a long time. He said that the collective bargaining will bring opportunities to enhance the professional development in Lawrence. He also mentioned that good and solid leadership by a top-rate superintendent will also help these issues.

Dr. Silber thanked Dr. Driscoll for his report.

## Approval Of Grants - VOTE

Commissioner Haydu recommended that the Board approve 5 Technology Literacy Challenge Grants totalling \$584,000. The five districts receiving the grants were Boston, Douglas, Hudson, Springfield and Watertown. Mr. Peyser asked whether the information in the packet was a summary of the grants to be approved or of the criteria for a grant. Dr. Driscoll told him that it was a summary of the grants for approval and that the criteria is much more broad.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the Technology Literacy Challenge Grants as listed.**

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

## Mailbag Commissioner

Haydu passed out a package on the Massachusetts Teacher Test to all Board members. He urged them to read it before the May meeting.

Commissioner Haydu stated that there were a number of letters in this month's mailbag and that all of them have been responded to.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: that the Board of Education adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.**

Respectfully submitted,

Frank W. Haydu III  
Secretary to the Board

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