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## Board of Education Special Meeting

### Minutes

**May 15, 1998**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m. The following were in attendance:

**Members of the Board of Education Present:**

Dr. John Silber, Chairman, Brookline  
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Vice-Chairperson, Southwick  
Dr. Edwin J. Delattre, Boston  
Mr. William Irwin, Wilmington  
Mr. James Peyser, Dorchester  
Dr. Roberta Schaefer, Worcester  
Mr. Micah Silver, Chair, Student Advisory Council, New Salem  
Mr. Frank W. Haydu III, Commissioner ad interim

**Members of the Board of Education Absent:**

Dr. Stanley Z. Koplik  
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom

**Also Present:**

David P. Driscoll, Deputy Commissioner of Education  
Carol Gilbert, Administrator for Educator Preparation  
William Gorth, President, National Evaluation Systems (NES)  
Russell Aims, Asst. Chief of Staff to the Governor  
Senator Robert Antonioni, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities  
Virginia Buckingham, Governor's Chief of Staff  
Representative Hal Lane, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities  
Michael Sentance, Governor's Advisor on Education  
Sylvia Smith, Senator Antonioni's Office

The Commissioner welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the early morning meeting. He opened the discussion by recounting the decision to require all who take the certification test to meet the qualifying score, even in the first round of tests, in order to ensure that the test is taken seriously. Mr. Haydu outlined the goals for the meeting: to focus on the certification tests, especially the timetable for setting the qualifying scores; to seek Board views on immediate certification test issues; and to identify issues and a timetable for future Board consideration and action.

The Commissioner then turned over the meeting to Deputy Commissioner David Driscoll, who gave an overview of the sequence of educator development. Dr. Driscoll outlined the six stages as recruitment, preparation, certification, employment, recertification and continuing professional growth. He then introduced Carol Gilbert, Administrator for Educator Preparation and Professional Standards.

Ms. Gilbert explained the different types of teacher certificates and the different routes to certification. Dr. Silber asked whether the requirement of a master's degree is statutory or

regulatory. Ms. Gilbert answered that a master's degree or the equivalent is a statutory requirement, and that the master's degree does not necessarily have to be in education. Dr. Silber said that a master's degree does not ensure that a teacher is qualified, and added that it would be better to focus on competence and performance rather than on credentials. He noted that it is crucial to attract talented people into teaching, and suggested that the Board seek legislation to remove the statutory requirement.

Ms. Gilbert then described the process for selecting the company to administer the certification test. Two companies responded to the Department's Request for Responses (RFR), National Evaluation Systems (NES) and Educational Testing Services (ETS). After a paper review and interviews and based on the fact that NES had experience in California, Texas, Colorado, Illinois and Michigan and could meet the timetable, the Commissioner chose NES. Ms. Gilbert then introduced Dr. William Gorth, President of NES.

Dr. Gorth gave a description of the tests, which include a test of Communication and Literacy Skills and 30 different Subject Tests. He explained that the Communication and Literacy Skills Test is given in a four-hour block of time and consists of a Reading Subtest and a Writing Subtest. The Reading Subtest contains both multiple choice and open-ended questions and tests vocabulary, main idea, writer's purpose, relationship of ideas, reasoning and outlining/summarizing. Dr. Gorth said that the Writing Subtest has four sections: Grammar and Usage, Written Summary, Written Composition and Written Mechanics (Dictation). He noted that the Reading and Writing Subtests assess knowledge and skills that entry level teachers must have in order to be effective. Dr. Gorth made reference to the sample test questions and answers which showed examples of weak and strong answers.

Dr. Gorth informed the Board that the Subject Tests measure the subject matter knowledge necessary for teachers to prepare lessons and teach effectively. He said that the tests contain both open-response and multiple choice questions. Dr. Schaefer asked about some of the Subject Test areas such as Middle School. Ms. Gilbert explained that the Subject Tests are based on the current areas of certification available in Massachusetts. Dr. Delattre explained that the Board will need to review the Certification Regulations at a later date. He said that the certification categories precede Education Reform, noting, for example, that the certification categories include social studies, which term is not used in the Education Reform Law.

The next topic of discussion was test validation. Dr. Gorth began by stating that in order to ensure that the tests are valid in Massachusetts, they need to be consistent with the frameworks and the regulations. He went on to say that the tests will be changed if and when the frameworks and regulations change. Dr. Gorth informed the Board that 3700 Massachusetts public school teachers and 900 Massachusetts college faculty were surveyed to verify that the content of the test objectives is valid. In addition, Dr. Gorth said that 338 educators participated in review meetings to address the issue of freedom from bias, and some items were changed as a result.

Dr. Gorth told the Board that the first administration of the test was on April 4, 1998 and 1800 people registered. He explained that the tests will be scored this month, using computers to score the multiple choice questions and qualified educators to score the open-ended questions. Mr. Peyser asked how NES ensures the competence of the scorers. Dr. Gorth explained that all scorers are chosen based on credentials, then trained and compared with NES expert scorers. In response to a question from Mr. Peyser, Dr. Gorth said that scorers need a bachelor's degree and typically teaching experience in either arts and sciences or teacher preparation programs. Dr. Silber pointed out that they must also have experience grading papers.

Regarding the qualifying scores, Dr. Gorth explained that panels of teachers and others will look at the tests and the test questions to determine a recommended qualifying score. Mr. Peyser asked how this testing differs from the MCAS, which went through try-outs for validation before scores were reported. Dr. Gorth explained that the MCAS tests children from a wide variety of backgrounds and the Teacher Test deals with a specific group of professionals. For certification applicants, he said, it is not hard to test who does not know the English language or who does not know the content areas.

Dr. Silber commented that when dealing with adults who aspire to teach children, the Board needs to ensure that those adults are competent; that is different from imposing penalties on

children. Commissioner Haydu reminded the Board that anyone who took the test on April 4 will be allowed to re-take the test in July. He said that making the test fair and consistent is a primary goal, and the qualifying score will probably be set low in the first test administrations. He said it is important for these decisions to be legally defensible, while at the same time barring certification for people who clearly lack the essential competencies. Dr. Delattre added that with the MCAS, teachers need time to align the curriculum with the frameworks, but that time is not needed with the teacher test, because of the nature of the test.

Commissioner Haydu expressed his support for NES, stating that this Massachusetts-based company has done an excellent job. Dr. Silber agreed that NES has done a splendid job and that he has great confidence in the exam. He commented that teaching is essentially more important than any other profession, and that is why this test is so important.

Commissioner Haydu reported that the information and recommendations from the panels on the qualifying scores will be given to him by June 5. In response to a question from Mr. Peyser, Dr. Gorth stated that this is a pass-fail test. Ms. Gilbert explained that individual results will be sent to the institutions candidates designate on their registration, to the individual and to the Department. Dr. Delattre asked if a prospective employer could get an applicant's raw score. Commissioner Haydu responded that this decision will be made in the near future. Mr. Irwin added that a school district could request the scores from the candidate.

In conclusion, Commissioner Haydu said that setting certification standards and attracting first-rate candidates are major concerns. He outlined related topics for the future, including: making certification more performance-based, requiring mentoring of beginning educators, revising the certification regulations, revising the standards for approving preparator programs, revising the recertification regulations and looking at the personnel evaluation standards. He summed up that these are critical issues, and he looks forward to working with the Board and with the Department staff to address them.

On motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: that the Board of Education adjourn the special meeting at 9:25 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Frank W. Haydu III  
Secretary to the Board

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