



- [BOE Home](#)
- [Board Meeting](#)
- [Schedule](#)
- [Board in Brief](#)
- [Board Meeting Minutes](#)
- [BOE Members](#)
- [BOE Advisory Councils](#)
- [Chairman's Statements](#)

Return to [12/15/97 Board in Brief](#)

[District/School Administration](#) ➤ [Administration](#) ➤

Board Of Education Regular Meeting

Minutes

Monday, December 15, 1997

Chairman Silber of Brookline called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Of The Board Of Education Present:

Dr. John Silber, Brookline, Chairman
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Vice-Chairperson
Mr. William Irwin, Wilmington
Dr. Stanley Koplik, Boston
Mr. James Peyser, Dorchester
Dr. Roberta Schaefer, Worcester
Mr. Micah Silver, New Salem, Chair,
Student Advisory Council
Dr. Edwin Delattre, Boston
Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci, Secretary

Member Of The Board Of Education Absent:

Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

Also In Attendance:

Nancy L. Catuogno, Certified Diplomate Reporter
Ms. Carline Gelé, Department of Education

Approval Of Minutes

Commissioner Antonucci said the minutes of the November 4, 1997 Board Meeting will be corrected on page 15 to read \$234 million for early childhood education, and to include comments by Mr. Irwin on that matter.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 4, 1997 meeting as amended. The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Ms. Crutchfield. The vote was unanimous.

Comments Of The Chairman

Chairman Silber reported on his meeting with the Governor regarding the Board's budget proposal for education for fiscal year 1999 which included discussion on charter schools, early childhood, labor negotiations, bilingual education and special education. The Chairman said the Governor seemed amenable to these proposals.

Chairman Silber reported that he continues to receive correspondence concerning Parent Advisory Councils for special education. He is responding to each one, saying that the establishment of PAC's should be up to each school district, and that the Board's main concern is that parents of children with special needs should have direct access to superintendents, principals and teachers with regard to the needs of their children.

The Chairman noted that there is a legislative conference sponsored by NASBE on March 12-13, 1998. Any Board members interested in attending should inform Commissioner Antonucci.

Chairman Silber distributed to Board members a [paper by Professors Dale Ballou of the University of Massachusetts and Michael Podgursky of the University of Missouri](#). They are two economists who analyzed and critiqued a report by the Commission on Teaching and America's Future. The Chairman asked the Commissioner to seek permission from the authors to post the paper on the Department of Education web site so that it is accessible to the public.

Chairman Silber asked Commissioner Antonucci to comment on the Lawrence Public Schools situation.

Comments Of The Commissioner

The Commissioner stated that the Lawrence situation will be discussed during the executive session of the Board meeting, since it is a matter in litigation. He reported that the fact-finding team will present its report at the January Board meeting. The Commissioner said he had asked the current Mayor and School Committee to refrain from taking any action that might impede the new Mayor and School Committee from negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement with the Board. He stated: At the present time, there is no Memorandum of Agreement. Formal action has been delayed by the Board until the new Mayor and School Committee have an opportunity to discuss the issues at hand. The Board must move ahead to ensure that the students in Lawrence receive a quality education. If we are not able to reach an agreement in January, we must go back to consideration of receivership. Another hearing is scheduled with Judge Bohn in Superior Court on January 22, and we hope to have an agreement by then.

Chairman Silber suggested that the Board should take action if the Acting Superintendent's contract is extended. The Commissioner noted that this issue can be discussed further in the executive session later in the meeting.

In other matters, the Commissioner presented additional information on the Dual Enrollment program, as requested by some Board members at the November meeting. Board members noted the difference in participation between males (35%) and females (65%). Dr. Delattre noted that there has been a rise in female enrollments at Boston University. Dr. Schaefer questioned whether private colleges wishing to participate in the Dual Enrollment Program would be entitled to reimbursement through the state. Nick Fischer from the Department of Education responded, first that it is not clear why more female students than male students participate, and second, that under the current law only state and community colleges are reimbursed for students enrolled in the Dual Enrollment program. In answer to requests from Dr. Silber and Dr. Schaefer, the Commissioner said the Board could propose a statutory amendment to include private colleges and universities in reimbursement at the state rate for the Dual Enrollment program. The Commissioner said he will develop an amendment for consideration by the Board.

The Commissioner provided information on various states' funding for gifted and talented students. Dr. Silber said the information from the United States Department of Education is inconclusive, and he requested that the Commissioner obtain information on the per student cost for this program, which would be more helpful. Dr. Silber stated: The amount Massachusetts spends on gifted and talented programs is barely listable. The Commissioner suggested that the next step is to gather data on gifted and talented education programs from individual states that report large amounts of funds earmarked for these programs, such as Louisiana, California and Oklahoma. Dr. Koplik suggested that some states may be including funds that are spent by local school districts, which our number does not include. The numbers are self-reported, so the only way to find out the answer will be to follow up with individual states.

Next, the Commissioner reported on teacher certification testing. He said that National Evaluation Systems has been selected as the test contractor, pending the execution of a contract which focuses on two critical areas of the certification testing program - administrative procedures and quality of testing. He stated that plans are moving ahead and the teacher certification testing will be in place next year. The Commissioner will report back to the Board when plans have been finalized.

The Commissioner next addressed the response he received from the Assistant Secretary of the U. S. Office for Civil Rights regarding OCR's intervention in the Boston Renaissance Charter School. The Commissioner plans to meet with Thomas Hibino, OCR's Regional Director, to follow up on the letter. Mr. Peyser stated that he did not find the letter responsive and he would like to attend the meeting with Mr. Hibino. Dr. Delattre agreed with Mr. Peyser that the letter from OCR diverted the entire issue. Since there was no evidence of violation, Dr. Delattre said OCR acted beyond its authority and put undue pressure on the school. Dr. Delattre said he will also attend the meeting with Mr. Hibino.

Commissioner Antonucci reported on his visits over the past month with students, teachers and administrators in several different school systems, which he said were very enjoyable and rewarding.

The Commissioner informed the Board of the Department of Education's tremendous success in the recently-concluded annual state employees' fund-raising drive, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees' Campaign (COMEC). He stated: The staff at the Department of Education exceeded all expectations and received recognition from Secretary Charlie Baker on a job well done. I want to publicly thank DOE staff for their participation in this year's COMEC drive on behalf of those less fortunate.

The Commissioner commented that the Department of Education is responding to letters regarding the possibility of new regulations for vocational education. He explained that the draft regulations will be presented to the Board at a later meeting.

The Commissioner reported on a number of complaints he has received from some parent groups about particular school districts. In most cases the Department is able to resolve these matters through contact with the parents and the school district. Board members should inform the Commissioner of any such correspondence they receive, so the Department can follow up.

Statements From The Public

Mr. Paul Reville, Co-Director of the Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, addressed the Board on the issue of Time and Learning. He said Dr. Schaefer and Mr. Irwin had asked him to speak about his experience as chair of the Board's Time and Learning Commission several years ago. Mr. Reville said the Board took this initiative in 1993 because time was viewed as a key resource for students, and there was wide disparity in the amount of academic time and the quality of instruction that students were receiving. Extensive surveys were conducted, hearings were held, recommendations were taken into account and modifications were made, based on legal and financial issues such as Proposition 2 __; curricular concerns about subject areas that were being left out; and considerable differences in governance philosophy concerning local vs. state authority. The regulations that the Board adopted created an entitlement for students to have instructional time; expanded the boundaries of school for enterprises such as School-to-Work; restructured classes and school schedules; and conveyed the message that assessments would be the ultimate test as to whether districts were providing high quality instructional time for students. Mr. Reville suggested that before proposing to change the regulations, the Board should gather information so that policy development can be data-driven. He stated: Assessment should be the ultimate judgment on school districts and their use of time. He recommended that the Board offer technical assistance on time and learning as well as curriculum and professional development to school systems in order for them to bring students to optimum performance levels for the MCAS test in the spring.

Mr. Irwin questioned whether audits of programs to find out what they are actually doing would be beneficial. Mr. Reville expressed his concern at focusing on the use of time right now and

whether the Department has the numbers of staff necessary to perform audits of this type. His suggestion to wait until after the assessment would shift the focus to professional development for educators in the field, with districts themselves leading the way by requesting technical assistance. Dr. Schaefer asked if expanding the Time and Learning regulations would be an unfunded mandate. Mr. Reville answered that the Board has authority to mandate in this area, but due to the financial impact it would have on school districts, the issue would quickly become a legislative matter. Therefore, Mr. Reville said if there is going to be substantial reshaping of the Time and Learning regulations, the Board will need the cooperation of the legislature and the administration.

Dr. Delattre stated that he believes the Time and Learning regulations nullified the Education Reform Act by not giving clear priority to the core academic subjects. He said the regulations allow districts to identify virtually anything they want as a core subject, simply by referencing the Common Core of Learning, which means there is no priority given to the core academic subjects identified in the law.

Mr. Peter Finn, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, addressed the Board on the issue of Time and Learning. Mr. Finn urged the Board that any changes in the Time and Learning regulations should be tied to the results of the assessment program, with changes targeted to schools and students that do not meet state performance standards. He said most changes in Time and Learning affect working conditions and collective bargaining, and are costly to implement. Mr. Finn said if the Board decides to tighten the definition of the core subjects, it should at the same time reduce the number of hours required for core subjects. Dr. Delattre stated that no one wants to limit 900/990 hours to the core academic subjects identified in the law. Dr. Delattre asked Mr. Finn if he knew how many school districts require foreign language, which is listed in the law as an academic core subject, as a condition of graduation. Mr. Finn answered that based on his experience, very few high schools have this requirement. In reply, Dr. Delattre said that as a result there will be no significant results for state assessment on foreign language study. He added that changing the definition of core subjects back to what the law lists will not resolve the foreign language issue, but it will set the stage by emphasizing that the subjects listed in the law have priority.

Ms. Mary Ann Shea from the Massachusetts Business Educators' Association addressed the Board on the issue of Time and Learning. Ms. Shea conveyed the concerns of 2000 business educators in the Commonwealth that business education has not been included as one of the core subjects and that it does not have its own framework. In support of Education Reform, the MBEA has been working with business and industry representatives to develop a curriculum guide which would serve as a resource to school districts in the development, implementation and evaluation of business and computer technology programs. Ms. Shea stated that approval of curriculum frameworks that do not include business education and instructional technologies has made it difficult for students to gain skills necessary to survive in a global economy.

Mr. Peyser commented that the recently adopted History and Social Sciences framework incorporates standards that deal directly with business management, entrepreneurship and investments. He asked Ms. Shea why the traditional business technology programs could not be included in strands of the History and Social Sciences framework. Ms. Shea responded that she sees this as a dilemma because teachers of social studies will view this as their area of expertise. Ms. Shea said those teachers do not necessarily prepare students for the business world. Mr. Peyser asked whether the question is one of content area or the structure of the teaching staff. Ms. Shea stated that business education classes and teaching positions are being eliminated in some school districts that no longer see the need for them since this subject matter is included in the History and Social Sciences framework. Dr. Silber stated that he does not understand why this would be a problem. He said: Teachers of business education courses can easily develop their business courses in terms of covering the core subject areas such as English, math, and computer science. Ms. Shea stated that superintendents and administrators are interpreting the frameworks in different ways and because of this have eliminated some business education programs.

The Commissioner responded to Ms. Shea that the Department of Education has attempted to work with the Business Educators' Association by sending a memorandum to superintendents explaining that there are specific learning standards in each of the frameworks that could be applied to business education. He stated: This is more of an issue on how the frameworks are

being interpreted and how the standards are being met by districts. Dr. Silber stated: This is not an issue of Time and Learning or what constitutes core subjects. The issue is for people to recognize that business education should integrate the core subjects. There is some fine tuning to be done.

Mr. Stephen Gorrie, Acting President of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association, addressed the Board on the issue of Time and Learning. Mr. Gorrie expressed the concern of the MTA that in order for education reform to succeed, the effort must be a stable, integrated, coherent whole. Mr. Gorrie said that amending the regulations by removing reference to the goals of the Common Core of Learning may undermine important programs such as School-to-Work or School-to-Career programs. He urged the Board to exercise leadership, not micro-management.

Mr. Gorrie also addressed the proposal to change the Racial Imbalance Law to remove racial criteria and replace them with economic criteria. He said this shift would be a step in the wrong direction and would de-stabilize education reform. Other criteria may need to be considered such as poverty and rate of growth in a community but they should be in addition to, not in place of, race. Mr. Gorrie suggested that the Board proceed with caution and convene a broad-based summit on race to discuss whether race has ceased to be a consideration in public education.

Mr. Peyser questioned whether the issues of Time and Learning may deal more with the definition of what constitutes structured learning time as opposed to what constitutes the core. Mr. Peyser commented further that school districts should not focus on the structure of their staff but on the delivery of content that is necessary for a student to succeed on the MCAS assessments and to succeed generally. Dr. Silber said he believes strongly that reforming the regulations to conform to the language of the Education Reform Act in regard to the core subjects will in no way cause major revisions to educational programs in school districts. This would happen only if superintendents and administrators deliberately intend to subvert the intention of the proposal. Dr. Delattre expressed his concern about school districts that have reduced the amount of time they spend on core subjects and have required students to take subjects that are not mandated. Dr. Delattre added that he has never suggested that instructional or structured learning time should be limited only to the core subject areas identified by law.

Mr. Herb Levine addressed the Board on the issue of Time and Learning. He said he agrees with the comments of Paul Reville and Peter Finn on this subject. Mr. Levine asked that the Board proceed with caution. He said it is very important to include music and art and all the performing and fine arts in schools. He asked Board members to visit schools and speak with the students before making any changes in the law. He stated: Education reform is good and things have been moving forward in the school districts. Any change would be viewed as counterproductive by practitioners. Mr. Levine invited Board members to visit Wakefield, Chelmsford and Methuen High Schools where they have successfully implemented double block schedules with excellent results. Dr. Silber noted that the proposed changes would stop abuses, and would not adversely affect schools that are in compliance.

2. Student Learning Time - Presentation Of Proposal For Discussion

The Commissioner distributed and read a motion based on Dr. Delattre's proposal to amend the Student Learning Time regulations. Dr. Delattre offered the motion and explained that the intent is to eliminate the practice, permitted by the current regulations, of school districts counting anything whatsoever as a core academic subject. He said this practice nullifies much of what the Board is trying to accomplish under Education Reform. As an example, Dr. Delattre said that foreign language has been eliminated in some districts yet it is one of the core subject areas. He said he hopes the confusion and misrepresentation in school districts will be eliminated by the changes he has proposed. He stated: The purpose of the Student Learning Time regulations is to assure that public schools provide students with the structured time necessary for the student to achieve competency in academic core subjects listed in the Education Reform Act. Regulations that allow anything to count as an academic core subject cannot do this.

Dr. Schaefer asked the Commissioner to describe the process that would be necessary to amend the Student Learning Time regulations. The Commissioner said that at the January Board meeting, he would present a proposal to replace/clarify specific language in the regulations. The

Board would then approve the proposal, or amend it as presented. If the Board decides to proceed, then the public comment period would begin. This will take several months before final action by the Board. The Commissioner noted that schools are already planning for next year, so it will be important to adjust our time schedule to get things on the right track. Dr. Silber reminded Board members that at the January meeting the Board will consider revisions to the Common Core of Learning.

Mr. Irwin suggested that if the Common Core of Learning is on the agenda for January, it would be wise to defer action on the regulations until then. He asked the Board to proceed with caution. Mr. Irwin added that it would not be good policy to amend regulations that have been in full effect only since September 1997, particularly if most school districts are doing their job. He said school systems should not perceive the Board as wavering and changing regulations every year. Dr. Silber responded that it is very important to remind schools systems now of how they need to conform to the law. Clarifying what the law actually states will be a first step in this process.

Dr. Koplik agreed that the Board should revisit the definition of core academic subjects. He asked the Commissioner to clarify the process. The Commissioner replied: A Board member brings an issue to the table with a request that the Board study it. The Board must have a consensus that is the right thing to do, which is what is being asked of Board members today. In January I would bring a recommendation to the Board of how this could occur by amending the regulations. The Board will then agree, disagree or leave the regulations as they are. Today the Board needs to decide whether they will look at this seriously at the January meeting, at which time there will be a vote required either to amend or not amend the regulations based on a specific proposal.

Dr. Delattre noted that this will be separate action from revising the Common Core of Learning. Mr. Silver stated that it is a good idea to clarify the language but he is concerned about applying hourly requirements to the more specific definition of core academic subjects. Dr. Delattre explained that there is a need to be explicit that hourly requirements for the academic core subjects do not total the 900 or 990 hours, in order to assure schools that we are not ruling out the study of other subject areas.

Commissioner Antonucci said he would classify the change as a technical amendment to the regulation in order to clearly define core academic subjects and other subjects that are taught in schools. Dr. Silber further explained that the statute also refers to other subjects covered in vocational-technical education which clearly indicates that the intent of the law was to include those courses as well. Dr. Silber said he would like to see clarity in the regulations so that superintendents recognize their ability to cover core subjects in areas such as business education and other areas. Ms. Crutchfield agreed with Dr. Silber that it would be helpful to clarify the language of the regulations.

Mr. Peyser suggested reviewing the supporting materials on the issue of physical education as well as how structured learning time is defined in the core academic subjects for primary and secondary education. He also suggested that the Board consider whether there needs to be a transition period for any changes that may be made.

Dr. Schaefer asked the Commissioner if the data he presents to the Board in January will be specific about what is happening in the schools in regard to hours spent on core academic subjects. The Commissioner reported that the data are self-reported from the schools. He added that the effort continues throughout the Commonwealth to tighten up academic programs. He said: More of the problem has been with lunches and study halls than with the academic programs. The data will give a good overview of time being spent in the core subject areas.

Dr. Silber explained to Board members that what they are voting on is to state their intent to amend, not to propose any specific change at this time. Dr. Schaefer suggested that the language of the motion should be changed to "consider amending" rather than intent. She said the Board should review the data before deciding whether to move ahead. Dr. Delattre agreed to amend the motion to "consider," but added that he believes it is a question of whether we will stand by the law or not. Mr. Silver suggested that the motion be clarified further to state that there would be one hourly requirement for all academic subjects and other subjects. The Commissioner explained that it is not possible to have a 990-hour requirement for core academic subjects. Dr. Silber requested that the discussion conclude, since the Board will have the opportunity to review

this further in January.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education consider amending the Student Learning Time regulations, 603 CMR 27.00, by eliminating the reference in § 27.02 (b) to "subjects, other than those defined as 'core academic subjects,' focused on helping students acquire the knowledge and skills described in the Common Core of Learning established by the Board of Education," and further that the Board request the Commissioner to present options for alternative regulatory language that replaces the reference to the Common Core of Learning with specific subject areas and makes other corresponding regulatory changes as needed, including hourly requirements for core academic subjects and other subjects, and further that the Board request the Commissioner to present a proposed timetable for this regulatory action in accordance with General Laws Chapter 30A, the Administrative Procedure Act.

The motion was made by Dr. Delattre, amended by Dr. Schaefer and seconded by Dr. Koplik. The vote was unanimous.

Statements From The Public (continued)

Yu-Lan Lin from the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association addressed the Board on the issue of World Languages. Ms. Lin requested that the Board begin the process of reviewing the World Languages curriculum framework as soon as possible. Ms. Lin further stated that the foreign language teachers in Massachusetts are ready to implement the framework and are looking forward to the assessment plan. She said: Without implementation of the assessment there can be no district-to-district or statewide accountability for measurable success. Dr. Silber informed Ms. Lin that the World Languages curriculum framework had not been reviewed yet because it is the easiest area in which to make an assessment. The more difficult academic areas of assessment were developed as a first priority. It is Dr. Silber's hope that a committee will be ready in January to make revisions to the foreign language curriculum. The assessment will probably be based on the judgment of the teachers of foreign language.

Patricia Ruane, Superintendent of Needham Public Schools, addressed the Board on the issue of proposed changes to the Racial Imbalance Law. Supt. Ruane said she represents the Needham school system as well as eight superintendent colleagues as president of EMI, the Empowering Multicultural Initiatives Consortium. Supt. Ruane explained that the Boston Metco students are a vital part of the school population and programs. She spoke in opposition to any changes in Chapter 76, Section 12A that would eliminate race as an eligibility requirement for Metco. She stated this would undermine the intent and effectiveness of the Metco program. Supt. Ruane said Metco is more than a voluntary interdistrict school choice program; it is a voluntary desegregation program. She said the success of the program depends on the exchange between a socioeconomically diverse minority population with a socioeconomically diverse suburban population. She encouraged the Board to clarify its intent about race-related eligibility and socioeconomic limitations and not compromise the original intent of the program.

Dr. Silber explained that the Board is not opposed to Metco and that in fact, he believes the program should be expanded. He asked how many more Metco students the suburban districts would be willing to accept. Supt. Ruane responded that many would welcome an expansion of the program, however, increased per-pupil expenditures must come with it. Dr. Silber suggested that Supt. Ruane meet with the other superintendents to come up with a proposal of how many additional students they could take into the program. Dr. Silber added that he would like to dispel the notion that the Board of Education is against the Metco program. He does not see any hostility towards racial integration or towards Metco, and this legislative proposal will not have any implications for the program.

Dr. Delattre also questioned Supt. Ruane as to why she believes the Metco program will be affected by the proposal. He stated: The purpose of the amendment is to eliminate reference to race when dealing with School Building Assistance, not the Metco program. Commissioner Antonucci added that the intent is for the Metco program to stay the same as at present, using the same criteria currently in place for admission of students from Boston and Springfield.

Sheryl Goodloe, President of the Metco Directors' Association, addressed the Board on the issue of proposed changes on the Racial Imbalance Law. Ms. Goodloe requested that the Board postpone changes on the Racial Imbalance Law in order to grant additional time for the proposed changes to be examined by all who will be affected. She said: Legal experts should also be given time to examine the proposed language to speak to the issue of possible civil rights violations. Ms. Goodloe explained to the Board that Metco offers diversity to 38 communities that participate in the program. Ms. Goodloe questioned whether the changes are based on preconceived notions and biases which may have excluded other members of the Board of Education from contributing to the proposal.

Jean McGuire, Executive Director of METCO, Inc., also addressed the Board on the issue of proposed changes on the Racial Imbalance Law. Ms. McGuire made note that she is also speaking based on her experience as a former employee of the Boston Public Schools and a former member of the Boston School Committee. She requested that the Board postpone making proposed changes on the Racial Imbalance Law. She said there has not been adequate time for the public to respond to the proposal. Ms. McGuire voiced her strong opposition to using economic criteria for student admission to the Metco program. In closing, Ms. McGuire asked for additional hearings across the Commonwealth in order for teachers and students to have a voice in what is happening.

Dr. Silber and Ms. McGuire engaged in a dialogue on the legal and practical aspects of metropolitan school desegregation. Dr. Silber also asked Ms. McGuire to offer specific data in support of expansion of the Metco program, which she said she will provide. Dr. Silber stated again that no decisions on the Racial Imbalance Law are planned for today.

Mr. Peyser asked if Ms. McGuire thought a town such as Northampton, in which one of the schools had less than 50% white students, should be entitled to 90% reimbursement on school reimbursement projects. Ms. McGuire replied that funding would be appropriate. She stated: In order to deal with school integration all aspects of society should be involved. The best way to deal with this issue is to target all schools that have poor children. Mr. Peyser and Ms. McGuire continued to discuss the question of funding based on both poverty and race.

Manuel Fernandez, Director of Metco in Wayland, addressed the Board on the issue of proposed changes to the Racial Imbalance Law. Mr. Fernandez agreed with the statements from the previous public comment, particularly Ms. McGuire's. Mr. Fernandez explained the role of the Multicultural Initiative as being committed to diversity and equity in education by promoting initiatives that create an anti-racist school climate. He emphasized that it is very important that the Board not accept the proposed changes in the law which would substitute the word "poverty" for "race". He stated: It would be a disaster to trade off one for the other. In answer to Dr. Silber's earlier question to other speakers on the expansion of the Metco program, Mr. Fernandez noted that administrators would be happy to expand the program but funds must go hand-in-hand with any expansion of the program. He said that the program has not been adequately funded in ten years. Dr. Silber noted that superintendents must demonstrate that they are willing to accept additional Metco students, as there would be no point in trying to obtain further funding if there are no additional spaces in the receiving districts.

3. Racial Imbalance Law - Discussion

The Commissioner clarified to those present that the proposed changes to the Racial Imbalance Law were not an attempt to eliminate Chapter 636 funding or the Metco program. The only change proposed is to use a different standard for a district to be eligible for 90% School Building Assistance funding, changing the standard from one of race to one of poverty.

Dr. Schaefer thanked Mr. Peyser, Dr. Thernstrom, the Commissioner and Rhoda Schneider for their work on the proposed amendment. Dr. Schaefer explained that the proposal was about the School Building Assistance formula. She said she and Mr. Peyser recommended the change due to demographic issues facing the Commonwealth, where a concentration of poverty in certain communities has led to disparities in spending among school districts and an inability to finance new construction in those communities. The change would also make the formula consistent with the foundation aid formula in the Education Reform Act, which also addresses the issue of poverty. She continued: No measure to determine which schools should receive 90%

reimbursement for school construction would be perfect. The free and reduced-price lunch standard was settled on as a measure of poverty. If 33% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch the school system is eligible for 90% reimbursement. Sixteen of the twenty-one districts that currently receive 90% funding would be eligible under the new guidelines, which indicates correlation between race and poverty.

Mr. Irwin stated that he would like to see the formula changed so that all school districts could be reimbursed at 90% regardless of the wealth of the school district. Mr. Peyser said that the program should be revamped but he does not necessarily agree that all school districts should receive the same amount of funds. He stated: That would create no incentive to districts to take responsibility for building requirements and maintenance. Mr. Irwin suggested that the Board study this issue further, noting that it would be important to look at the entire plan for school building assistance rather than part of the program.

Dr. Koplik asked about the per pupil cost for students who travel to another school district for the Metco program. The Commissioner answered that there is a \$12 million allocation for over 3,000 Metco students, and a portion of this money is allocated to transportation and placement. The amount per student would work out to \$1,000 to \$2,000 per student depending on the community, which is much less than school choice reimbursement. Mr. Silver noted that numbers used for free and reduced price lunch are not always accurate, since some students who are eligible for these programs do not apply. Dr. Schaefer again noted that no standard is perfect, but if there is another standard that should be used they would be willing to consider it.

Ms. Crutchfield noted that there are many issues involved and the proposal is a good basis for beginning discussion. She recommended that the Board take additional time to review and discuss the proposal and allow the public to comment, before making any decision. Dr. Silber stated that the Board will not vote on the proposed changes at the January meeting as planned. The plan will be to try to refine the proposal and perhaps bring it back to the Board for the March 1998 meeting. He asked Board members and others to keep in mind the problem that gave rise to this proposal: school districts with low percentages of minority students that may have been encouraged to manipulate student assignments in order to qualify for 90% School Building Assistance funding. He suggested that there may be several alternatives to deal with this issue.

4. Charter School Applications - Status Report

The Commissioner reported that the Board of Education received 48 Commonwealth and 13 Horace Mann charter school letter of intent. Out of these, 25 Commonwealth and 10 Horace Mann charter school prospectuses were chosen for advancement to the final stage of the application and review process. There will be a special Board meeting on February 26, 1998 to make final determinations.

5. Approval Of Grants - Vote

Commissioner Antonucci noted that all requirements have been met for approval of the grants. He recommended the Board's approval.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the grants for Workplace Education and Community Service Learning as presented by the Commissioner and that the Board of Education approve the semi-annual list of School Building Assistance grants and reimbursements as presented by the Commissioner.

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

6. "Mailbag" Correspondence

Dr. Silber noted that "mailbag" correspondence will be postponed until the January 1998 Board meeting.

At 12:35 p.m., on a roll call vote, the Board voted unanimously to go into executive session to discuss litigation and personnel issues. At 1:35 p.m. the Board returned to open session.

Upon return to open session, the Chairman announced that one vote was taken in executive session, as follows:

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education set the annual salary of the Commissioner of Education at \$140,000 effective January 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999 and that a sub-committee of the Board be established in the Spring of 1999 to review performance and recommend future salary changes as of July 1, 1999.

The vote was unanimous.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education adjourn the meeting at 1:35 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Robert V. Antonucci
Secretary to the Board

[E-mail this page](#) | [Print View](#)