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Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes

Minutes

Tuesday, October 13, 1998

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Of The Board Of Education Present:
Dr. John Silber, Chairman, Brookline
Dr. Roberta R. Schaefer, Vice Chairperson, Worcester
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Southwick
Dr. Edwin J. Delattre, Boston
Mr. William K. Irwin, Wilmington
Mr. James A. Peyser, Dorchester
Ms. Rebecca Urbach, Chairperson, Student Advisory Council, Falmouth
Dr. David P. Driscoll,
Commissioner of Education, ad interim

Members Of The Board Absent:
Dr. Stanley Z. Koplik, Boston
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

Also Present:
Nancy L. Catuogno, Registered Diplomate Reporter
Tony DeLorenzo, Department of Education
Juliane Dow, Department of Education
Greg Nadeau, Department of Education
Jeff Wulfson, Department of Education
Bill Amerosi, Saugus Public Schools
Susan Horn, Adams-Cheshire Regional School District
Jim McDermott, Worcester Public Schools

[At the request of the Chairman, these minutes are verbatim.]

Comments From The Chairman

Dr. Silber: Will the meeting come to order, please? There are several matters I want to call to the attention of the Board of Education, and also to make these comments for the benefit of public understanding and discussion. First of all, a little history. In 1985 the legislature passed a bill requiring tests for prospective teachers. This requirement was reiterated in the Education Reform Act of 1993. From 1985 to 1991 under the Dukakis Administration there was no implementation of that demand. From 1991 to 1996 that provision was not implemented. In February of 1996, and I think it is very important for the public to be aware of this fact, it was only in February of 1996 that I was appointed Chairman of the Board of Education and the new Board as presently constituted was established. This Board then has been in operation for only two years and seven months of the 13 years subsequent to the passage of the first act of the legislature requiring the testing of prospective teachers. This Board, however, has been dismissed

as dysfunctional by Mr. Harshbarger and he's even indicated that on election he will remove me as a member and Chairman of the Board. Now, I understand that he is trying to get my vote since 30 hours a week on a nonpaying job is not terribly attractive, so I understand that move to try to get my vote, but nevertheless, I think we have to review the record of a Board that has been described as dysfunctional. That line has also been endorsed by The Globe in today's editorial where they say that the administration's been slow to test even prospective teachers first mandated in 1985, reaffirmed in 1993, but not implemented until this past April, that's April 1998.

As a matter of fact, the present Governor has been insistent right from the time of his involvement with this Board on the importance of that piece of action by the Board, the testing of prospective teachers, and it is not true as stated in The Globe that nothing was done until April of 1998. If we hadn't done anything prior to that, there wouldn't have been a test at that point. Nine months after this Board came into existence, and that is November of 1996, that's over almost two years ago, we implemented the requirement of the test in the only way a test can be implemented. We voted unanimously and made public our announcement that no one would be certified as a teacher in Massachusetts following January of 1998 unless they had passed a test in literacy in the English language and in the subject matter they taught. At that point we also hired a company to design and implement that test. Thus in nine months this so-called dysfunctional Board established what had not been established in the 11 years preceding the appointment of this Board. In 1998 we gave the people of Massachusetts a clear indication of the quality of work being done in the primary and secondary schools and in the colleges of this Commonwealth as they pertained to the preparation of teachers. And, of course, the results were divisive. The results divided the competent from the incompetent and made very public the distinction between those programs that have high standards and those programs that do not have high standards. And it clearly indicated the deficiency in the requirements required for high school graduation. And this, although divisive, is divisive in a highly constructive way that protects our children.

Secondly, the Board in the spring of 1996 rejected the Common Core of Learning as a vacuous document full of educationese incapable of incorporating guidance on what must be learned. We indicated our insistence that there is subject matter to be taught and not just feelings, attitudes and strategies. Third, this Board revised and implemented frameworks in English and the Language Arts, and History and the Social Sciences. Those were two of the most difficult and controversial frameworks to be considered. Both of these frameworks have been appraised as of high quality. There is no question that our public discussion of these frameworks was highly tense and argumentative. The discussion was in public because public discussion is required by law. But that public discussion revealed to the general public of Massachusetts the issues that were at stake in the framing of these frameworks and the design of these frameworks and it also revealed to the public the very high level of knowledge and dedication of every single member of this Board of Education. For all of them contributed verbally, vocally, and intensely to this discussion. Despite our differences of opinion, we did come to agreement on those frameworks and they are, as I said, of high quality. Fourth, this Board introduced in the spring of 1997 the requirement of a 3rd grade examination in reading. That hadn't been required by legislation, it hadn't been required by anyone, but it was long, long overdue. This test was repeated in the spring of 1998 and we now have benchmarks of over two years against which we can measure the progress of our school systems throughout the Commonwealth as they pertain to reading skills.

Fifth, we began revision of the other frameworks in the Arts, Foreign Languages and Health Education. Those revisions are now underway and we anticipate bringing the results of the committee's work on those to the Board for their consideration in the next few months. Sixth, we are also revising and refining the frameworks in mathematics and science, further to improve them. Seventh, this Board has implemented the MCAS tests and they have been given in the 4th, 8th and 10th grades in the spring of 1998. Those results will be out shortly. They will provide the first benchmark for the Commonwealth. It is a benchmark that requires careful assessment because this is a new test and it is not a test that has been validated by national comparisons or international comparisons. We don't know and we will not know exactly what that test means on the first giving until we have correlated it with other examinations. And I should say with regard to the MCAS, that is the first time we will have any benchmark by which to measure subsequent improvements in the performance of our schools since the passage of the Education Reform Act. Eighth, we have approved a substantial number of charter schools and begun the evaluation of them.

Ninth, we took decisive action in Lawrence, first requesting the state auditor to audit the situation. On the basis of that audit we succeeded in the removal of the superintendent and in the appointment of a temporary superintendent. We also negotiated an agreement with the School Committee of Lawrence to share in the oversight of that school district until the problems there have been solved. We completed the search and the appointment of a new superintendent in cooperation with the school committee of Lawrence. And this Board is continuing its oversight of the Lawrence schools. To that end, I shall appoint an oversight committee that will evaluate the performance of the superintendent and the progress that has been made in that school, and that committee, I have asked Roberta Schaefer to serve as Chairman, I have asked Pat Crutchfield to serve, I have asked Bill Irwin to serve, I will ask Jim Peyser to serve and Stanley Koplik. They will constitute the committee of oversight for the Lawrence schools. We anticipate the restoration of accreditation for its high school within the next few years and this is one of our greatest concerns, to accelerate the level of reaccreditation.

Beyond these accomplishments, the Board has recommended to the legislature with varying degrees of success the following. We have consistently lobbied for a substantial increase in funds for early childhood education and on this we have had some success but not enough success to satisfy any of us. Second, we have lobbied vigorously for reform of the Transitional Bilingual Education Act and of Special Education. Our efforts have fallen on deaf ears but not through any fault of the Board of Education. The dysfunctionality has to be located someplace else. Third, we have lobbied for increased funding for charter schools, again, with some success, but only moderate success. Fourth, we have lobbied successfully for an increase in transportation funds for regional school districts and I believe in the next budget we will have fully reached the objective that the regional schools were concerned to achieve. Now, in my opinion this is not a bad record for a dysfunctional Board seeing that it has accomplished vastly more in the two years and seven months that it has been in existence than was accomplished by previous boards over a period in excess of 11 years.

To the extent that my leadership is divisive, it certainly has been divisive in a highly constructive way as demonstrated by the activities and accomplishments of this highly dedicated Board of Education. And I will say with regard to our dysfunctionality what Lincoln said with regard to Grant's drinking habits. When he was asked about removing Grant on the grounds that he was a drunkard, he said, Find out what kind of whiskey he drinks and give it to the other generals. And I would say if this is dysfunctionality, then let's have a little dysfunctionality in the other boards in Massachusetts and maybe we'll get more work out of them.

The next item that I want to call to the attention of this Board is a matter I'm now passing on to the Commissioner. I had a letter of September 28 from Mayor Menino. He is concerned about one of our regulations that would require, for example, in the state guidelines, that an average-sized elementary school of 740 students or pupils would require over 17 acres of land and they just can't find that kind of space in Boston. That is a problem for many urban areas and it probably calls for a revision in our guidelines. I put this on the agenda and ask the Commissioner to review this with the Department of Education, come up with a recommendation on how this problem is to be solved. We don't want to study this problem, we want to solve this problem. Let's see if we can have it on our agenda for the next meeting as a matter on which we take a vote. Mr. Commissioner, I believe that completes my report.

Commissioner Driscoll: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief but I did want to mention a couple things. First of all, the fall and the opening of the school year is an exciting time, and one of the best things that a Commissioner gets to do is to go around and give out $25,000 awards under the Milken Foundation. We have allotted four in this state and I was pleased to be able to do that in September to Wayne Boisselle, who is a grade 5 teacher at the Dawson Elementary School in Holden; Susan Pandiani, a grade 3 teacher at the Hoxie Elementary School in Bourne, and they have a great bumper sticker, Bourne to be proud; Sheila Smith-McAdams, grade 3-4 teacher at the Winthrop Elementary School in Ipswich; and finally William Henderson who's a principal at the Patrick O'Hearn School in Boston. We also awarded the Massachusetts teacher of the year award to Bruce Penniman, English teacher at the Amherst-Pelham Regional High School, and he will be on sabbatical this year going around the state promoting particularly English Language Arts throughout the Commonwealth. As we know now with the September 1 deadline we are now including a number of other categories in the testing. We now include administrators, guidance counselors and other school professional and support personnel, and so therefore I'm recommending that we change the name of the test which was known as the Massachusetts Teacher Test to the Massachusetts Education Certification Test

since it now involves more than just teaching positions.

Dr. Silber: Do you need a vote on that?

Commissioner Driscoll: I don't believe so, no. Finally, in September we as part of a program began by Governor Cellucci called Spread The Word where people in communities that have an excess of books, many of us have children's books around the house and so forth, a program called Spread The Word whereby those books are donated and then given to youngsters who may not otherwise have books, and so then late in September we did go to the Arlington School in Lawrence, 1,200 students in that school K-8, and we presented a bag of books, five books to every student K-3, which is 400 students in that building, by the way, and it was a very, very successful program. We did receive notification of two grants, one officially and one unofficially. We did receive a $10 million federal grant, $2 million over five years, for technology. And I want to publicly thank Connie Louie, who did such, or does such an outstanding job throughout this Commonwealth, and who was the key person in putting this grant together and quite an accomplishment and, Connie, thank you. Connie, stand up, please. (Applause) And rumor has it from Senator Kennedy's office that we are receiving a $10 million federal grant for startup of charter schools. Even though it's not official, I think it is warm enough to be able to say publicly. Two last items. We were able to develop, I'm very pleased about this, the idea that Jim Peyser brought before this Board at the last meeting about including in the academic support services program individual tutoring and reading utilizing the results of the 3rd grade Iowa tests, and I'm pleased to say we talked to legislative leaders and we have been able to introduce a separate grant program as part of that academic support services program for individual tutoring, and I think that's a very positive step so we do not lose a year in the grant cycle, and we are looking forward to the results of that program and the Department will be very aggressively supporting that idea. Then finally, Mr. Chairman, I have included formally the dates for Board meetings up through December of 1999. We have checked with all members, they seem to be working and so I just want to make sure that all Board members take one last look so that we can finalize that schedule. That's it.

Dr. Silber: There may be some surprises later. I realize I made a mistake in the appointment of that committee. That committee, since it's working on very sensitive matters of personnel in Lawrence, should not have five members. That would be a quorum of the Board and require all meetings to be public. For that reason, I'm going to just leave Stan Koplik off that committee.

Commissioner DriscolL: I must be psychic. I forgot to write him down. I know you don't make mistakes so I knew that was happening. Mr. Chairman, if we may, we have invited three of our lead trainers -- we do not have anybody for public comment I believe, right, Robin?

Ms. McCaffery: Right.

Commissioner Driscoll: So if we may, we have three people coming before us as Roberta Schaefer asked, based on her attendance at a workshop this summer in Holy Cross. These three trainers were part of the summer writing institute and so we have invited them to come before the Board to share their experience, so I would like to have Susan Horn, who is a K-12 curriculum coordinator of the Adams-Cheshire Regional School District, Bill Amerosi from Saugus Public Schools grade 8 Language Arts teacher, and finally Jim McDermott who many of you know from his work on the framework, English teacher in the Worcester Public Schools. And Susan was a trainer at grade 4, Bill at grade 8 and Jim at grade 10. So welcome, I don't know who is going to start. Jim has probably rehearsed you, so someone may start.

Commissioner Driscoll: Roberta will introduce.

Dr. Schaefer: You said it was a summer writing institute but it was actually grading the MCAS, for those of you in the audience who may not know of this.

Ms. Horn: We didn't really rehearse for this particular part. We thought that we would come here and address questions or share some stories about what happened this summer, and the type of professional development that occurred in the scoring institutes that we did this summer. I was with the 4th grade and the very first time that we were doing this particular scoring session

in Mansfield, and I saw a teacher become very distressed and upset, and being the teacher and the nurturer that I am, I thought I had said something wrong or did something wrong. So I went to find this teacher at lunchtime to find out how I could make it better and make this person happy or understand what we were going to do with this particular venture. I sat with her at lunch and she said to me, I'm very concerned and upset about what I'm seeing here with how we are scoring these papers and what we are considering good writing because what I have come to understand as good writing is really only mediocre in comparison to this scoring guide that we are looking at. And so I said to her, "So what is the problem here?" And she said, "Well, I have been telling my students that they have been writing very, very well and really they aren't writing well in comparison to what other students are doing across the state." So I said, "What can you do about that?" She said, "I need to go back to my classroom, put up the examples of good writing so that I can make changes in my classroom and make much more positive directions as to what I'm doing in my classroom to make writing better." And I said, "You've got it." That's exactly what we want to happen. We want you to improve your writing. We want you to go back and see what goals you need to change and what strategies you need to use and how you can ultimately improve writing in your classroom. And that was on the very first day in Mansfield. And to me that was very powerful. We have scoring guides and those scoring guides don't mean anything unless you look at student work. And because they were looking at student work it was a tremendous eye opener for that teacher as to what good writing really looked like. So what this really helped me to understand is that not only was this a scoring session, but it was an opportunity for professional development that really helped create ambassadors to go back to their classrooms to look at what they were doing, reevaluate what they were doing, and be agents for change to embrace higher standards of writing. And if that's what we did this summer with over 700 teachers, I believe that we are spreading the word and we are really making change happen in a very, very meaningful way.

Mr. Amerosi: In terms of the scoring guide that was used to score the MCAS essays, I was in charge of training people to score the persuasive essay at the grade 8 level. I would really like to complement the Department of Education and the Board for making the decision that the topic idea development was going to be given a separate score from the standard English conventions, grammar mechanics and usage score on the MCAS test. I think that this separate score that is being given was given to each one of the essays in terms of the children's ability to use the language, their knowledge of the English language, is a reflection of standard 5th grade ELA curriculum framework which, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned a revision of earlier on, and I might say I'm a great proponent of this revision because it is a very clear, succinct and easy document to use. The policy in separating the two scores is helpful because it stresses to teachers that separate instruction in sentence structure, grammar and usage and mechanics is important and it does this by giving the score, which represents the degree of competence in these areas, a good deal of weight in the essay's final score. Separate instruction in these is necessary because there is so much to be taught. I'm pleased with the stress on grammar instruction because all students must understand how to describe the nature, structure and function of the building blocks of their language in order to become fully literal. How can a student who does not understand these things converse effectively with a teacher who is trying to get him or her to improve writing style if he or she does not understand the essential terms of the discussion? If a student doesn't understand parts of speech, how can a teacher efficiently discuss the need to use verbs in a composition that agree with their subjects and that are more active and varied. If a student has not memorized preparations and drilled their correct use, how could he or she be expected to place prepositional phrases correctly in sentences or to use them to create some sentence variety? I think the emphasis on this whole idea of the students having a better knowledge of standard English conventions and of the building blocks of their language is one of the strong points that is coming out of the scoring of the MCAS essays, and that's the piece that I would like to offer at this particular point.

Dr. Silber: In commenting on what you've said, if it's important for children to be able to know these things in order to be able to write effectively, how much more important is it that the teachers should know these things? And yet that is one of the things that we tested on the teacher certification test and many people thought it was irrelevant that we should expect prospective teachers to be able to know those things. The comment that you made about what the students need to know applies even more succinctly and directly to what teachers must know if they are to be able to help these students.

Mr. Amerosi: Knowledge of one's language, Mr. Chairman, I think is an important component of being a literal person.

Dr. Silber: Exactly. Yes?

Dr. Schaefer: Could I ask if you could, one of you could describe the scoring process itself? I think it is important for the Board and the public to understand exactly what transpired at these sessions.

Mr. McDermott: I guess that's up to me, huh? I begin every scoring session with a quote from Emerson: People wish to be settled but only insofar as they are unsettled is there any hope for them. And because people don't believe it in the first day and a half of the training, people really don't believe that they are going to agree, be consistent and accurate across the board and across sites and across tables and even across states on the standard, and so what happens is that you have to anchor yourself to the anchor papers which are the standards and that's really -- that's what's really good about this process, the good messages that we are sending out. First of all, in order to assess student writing we are saying to students and to teachers that we're going to look at actual student writing. That doesn't happen all the time. And so we have teachers agonizing in the beginning, really agonizing over getting each and every single paper right for each and every single student. And if they don't get it right, they go off into the back room and they arbitrate and when they arbitrate they go back and they take the standard and they look at the standard and they say, Well, listen, you scored it such and such and you scored it such and such, but then they'll look at that 3 paper and they'll say, Well, gee, that anchor 3 is really not a 3, it must be a 4. And so they look at it in that kind of a context and that's really, really terrific. But the other message it gives out is even far superior to that, I think, and that is that we are saying, This isn't a 20-minute writing prompt that we are giving students. We are saying to students that writing is the hard copy of thinking, that it takes time, that it's very messy, and that what they have to do is then they have to brainstorm, they have to write a first draft, they have to rewrite that draft, and then they can run around the building if they want for ten minutes and come back, being a little facetious, they come back and rewrite or recreate their piece, and neatness counts, grammar counts, spelling counts, thinking counts. And it all weaves together in the process. And so the message we are sending out is a powerful one.

The last thing that is really, really important is this isn't a message simply for our elite students. The question on the 10th grade exam was a difficult question. It was a question one might find on an AP English exam. We are saying that, Hmm, that question is good, it's a reach for people who are elite students. But we are saying to the students who we usually have labeled as at risk, we are saying to those students, we expect those students to contemplate the true and the good and the beautiful as well. They also as people have to express themselves in writing and even though their writing may not be as good as the elite people, just as we take somebody on a ski slope to show them how to ski, if somebody is an expert skier, that person is going to go up the mountain. But the person who is a novice skier is going to go up the mountain as well. He is going to fall a few times, we are there to help him up, but he is still going down the mountain. He is not in the lodge practicing ski pole implanting all day long. We have to get him up there. So that's what we said. I'm really pleased with the message and the way in which the teachers throughout the state, after that first day of getting beaten up, grasped the message and went back. I have already noticed that in school systems throughout Massachusetts people who were trained during that process are out giving workshops themselves on writing.

Dr. Silber: Now, could I ask you about your last comment? What is the extent of your having been around the Commonwealth, so how extensive is that replication effect? Because that's very important.

Mr. McDermott: I'm getting e-mails from people from the western part of the state, from Cape Cod, from Falmouth, and I have been called to various school systems in central Massachusetts to oversee some of the staff development processes that are going on. In Worcester it's going on all the time.

Dr. Silber: Do you think there's something that the Board of Education should do to accelerate that process so that we make this of universal accessibility? This is the kind of professional development that is definitely related to teacher performance. It is substantive in transforming and I'm wondering if there's something we should do to try to make better universal accessibility.

Ms. Horn: I definitely think so. Being from the western part of Massachusetts, I have to say that I would like to see them be regional, I would like to see people going out and doing training so that not only the people have the opportunity this summer but everybody has that same opportunity, so that our students across the state have the same opportunity, not just the teachers who have been exposed to it can bring back the little secret message. It's not a secret, we want it out there and we want to share it.

Dr. Silber: Good. Any other questions? Any other comments?

Dr. Delattre: Thanks a lot.

Dr. Silber: That was an excellent report. We are really very happy to have you.

Mr. Amerosi: Thank you very much for having us.

Dr. Silber: As this relates to professional development, it is of top importance. Next item on our agenda is, I guess, the approval of the minutes, isn't it? It's about time we did that.

Ms. Crutchfield: So moved.

Mr. Irwin: Second.

Dr. Silber: Anybody have any corrections or additions to the minutes? If not, I presume all of you are in favor of the approval.

All: Aye.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED: that the Board of Education adopt the minutes of the September 14 special and September 15 regular meetings, as presented by the Commissioner.

The vote was unanimous.

Dr. Silber: The minutes are approved as read. That's the first time I think it's happened in two years and seven months. We are making progress.

Dr. Schaefer: Nothing dysfunctional is going on here. (Laughter)

Dr. Silber: So number 2 is the school and district accountability. This is a matter for discussion. You will find it under your tab number 2.

Commissioner Driscoll: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, school and district accountability is one of the three major responsibilities under the Education Reform Act, beyond educator responsibility and establishing high standards and, of course, establishing high standards for students. Juliane Dow is finally getting comfortable in her role, having switched positions from legal staff to heading up this unit. She has been working extremely hard without much staff, although we're going to fix that soon, and has had a large working group and a number of meetings with a number of people representing a number of associations and so forth. What we would like to do, Mr. Chairman, in our brief time this morning is bring the Board up-to-date with where we are now, some of the thinking that has gone on and some of the possible recommendations that we'll be bringing back to this Board in the near future. Juliane?

Ms. Dow: Thank you. Good morning. I have just handed to each of you, and people are giving it to people in the audience, some supplemental materials. They are materials that you can take home and take a look at in more detail and which I will invite you to give me feedback on over the next period of time. I'm going to walk through, however, give you a progress report on what we have been doing over the last several months as we have begun to roll out this initiative and

begin to develop a school and school district accountability system. I always like to start with the frame of thinking that accountability means sort of a four-stage process in the way I think about things. You establish standards, you create the conditions for success in meeting those standards, you evaluate progress, and then you take targeted action to fill the gap where progress is not satisfactory. We focused the first part of our work here on both what the standards will be for schools and school districts, and how we'll evaluate progress against meeting those standards. And we have also begun the work of developing a program of targeted assistance so that we can intervene as necessary, as we have begun to have that experience in Lawrence, to intervene in a variety of ways as needed in districts once we determine that there are gaps between what needs to happen and what's happening now in order to achieve our goals. I would like to point to a few of the handouts that I have given you and maybe start there, but speak some about the school performance rating system.

In your book, for those of you on the Board, I outlined briefly a framework with multiple components of the system as we have discussed what it will take to evaluate school and school district performance. It's clear that it will take looking at schools and school districts separately because they each have a separate role, and also that it will take more than one stage of the process for each of those. So I have outlined it in terms of four components. A rating system that looks at data and a few elements of data, not all the data or all the information that's available about a school, but a few data points that let us have an initial screen, an initial lens to look at performance that will identify both schools that are doing exceptionally well and schools that seem to be having trouble meeting the standards. The school performance rating system will do that. We will then need an on-site evaluation process is what we have concluded in order to take real people to talk to other real people who are working with real kids to find out what's going on in the school in more detail, in more depth, so we really can diagnose where the weak points are and help to prescribe assistance and support that can make a difference for kids. Likewise, with school districts, we need a rating system to help us focus our attention and our efforts where they are most needed, and we need an on-site process in order to look in more depth at the systems that are in place, the leadership that's provided, the management systems that are working in a district to know whether or not they are in fact serving schools well.

This first stage of our work -- and again, David's mentioned, there's not many of us yet on this effort because the process of hiring takes some time, but we have accumulated a lot of support by creating a working group and we have had six meetings of a group of varying size up to 30, we have 30 plus members that have joined us at one point or another in the process, both to look at a conceptual framework for school and school district accountability, to talk in more detail about the use of the MCAS results for measuring school performance, the use of attendance and dropout data, some of our concerns about that data, how we need to make sure that it's reliable and consistent and also what standards we should expect of schools over the next ten-year period as we have these measures and as we have set specific expectations and then support schools and school districts in making progress toward those goals. We are at the point where we are ready for technical review of some of the specifics of the system but I have described -- I have drawn you a picture and you will see on the side a diagram and we'll see if it's true that a picture is worth a thousand words here. I have some words in it too, but generally it gives you a sense that what we will do is take three indicators, MCAS results, attendance, and dropout, take a look at those on behalf of every school, and on the basis of those categories, a school's performance. And here is a list of categories. All of this is a work in progress, nothing is set in stone, but this will give you a sense of where we are headed, what our thinking is and what we have in draft form now. And then based on what the outcomes are of those ratings, we would choose some schools that may be candidates to serve as exemplars for other schools because they are being very successful in their implementation of strategies to improve school/student performance and others which will be a priority for intervention. As you can see from this scheme, it says District Intervention, and that's because in talking about schools, it's clear that in the first instance it's the district's responsibility, not the state's responsibility, but the district's responsibility to ensure the quality of schools and to ensure the attainment of students in those schools.

And so we're going to try to create an integrated system that really sets standards for school districts to meet their expectations in helping their schools and then for us at the state level to have assistance available to districts, and that will take the form of targeted assistance of a variety of sorts that are described somewhat in the documents that I've given you. Although we are speaking about using only three indicators, in this initial screening process, initial rating process, it's actually quite a complex undertaking because within MCAS we have three, soon to be four, and then subsequently to be five subjects, and we're talking about looking at multiple

dimensions on each of those subjects asking schools or requiring schools to make specific improvement both in raising kids up from the Failing category and getting them out of the Failing category, but also moving kids up from Needs Improvement to Proficient. We'll be taking a look at their progress on both moving kids from the very bottom up and moving kids who are, where we have many of our kids in the state, in that Level II up to Level III and IV. So while we are only looking at three indicators, we are looking at a complex process of analyzing the outcomes of the MCAS results. Likewise on attendance, we are looking at not just a standard for average attendance, but using a process that will let us look at schools that have a high incidence of kids who are out of school a lot. We know that school attendance is a matter of law but it's also a tool that's essential for kids to have success, and some of our school districts -- notably Boston has just made an aggressive new policy to try to improve attendance.

We think that that kind of a lead can be followed in other districts. We can expect average attendance to increase but we can also expect districts to look at the children who are out of school for long periods of time and take special steps and intervene for those particular kids. We have published dropout rates for some time, really just using data on high schools, but in fact we have an incidence of students dropping out in the middle grades. We need to pay attention to both the dropout at the high school and the middle grades and we need to pay attention to kids who are dropping out for part of the year who may be there for the beginning of the year and then leave for months and then may return. They don't show up right now in our dropout statistics. If they return by the last day of school, then they are treated as if they were not a dropout, but in fact we have a lot of kids in that category, too. So we are looking at within each of these indicators, we are drilling down to look at what can the data tell us and how can we use that data to prompt action by schools to improve results for kids. We think it will be essential -- because this is a system in order to try to raise up the performance of all schools, it's not just a screen to look at who is performing at the very lowest levels, but to have expectations for raised performance for all schools over time, and so we would propose a program that will have public commendation and recognition for school districts and schools that are making good progress toward teaching the standards. You can see in the bottom right-hand corner of this handout the diagram of a proposed school performance rating system. What is under discussion now is proposed performance standards for the first six cycles of our rating system. We have proposed that we would conduct this rating every two years rather than every year, so that there will be time to look at results, do improvement planning, implementation of those plans before we take the temperature again. And we think that to do that on an annual basis, given the delays, unavoidable delays in getting results back, is unrealistic in terms of measuring progress.

So we have laid out expectations that we are discussing and that we are anxious to have a broader public discussion on about what would be reasonable expectations by the year 2010 would be the data year, 2011 would be the reporting year, at the end of six cycles and you can see there that we have -- we are missing, we don't yet have the data we need to look at what percentage absent more than ten days we would be concerned about, but in the other data elements, we have put out some proposed numbers. I have also given you in the packet of handouts a chart that shows one scenario for measuring improvement. Our system, our statute, says that we will look at not just absolute performance but also that our major focus will be on measuring improvement over time toward meeting the standards that we set. This is of course one of the thorniest issues in looking at a rating system. What amount of improvement do you expect, what's your improvement expectation per cycle per school for each of the indicators. And so we have spent considerable time in looking at that and in looking at some of the options for that.

I should back up to say we have taken a look at what is going on in other states and we have examined the process, the accountability system in Kentucky, taken a look at New Jersey, at New York, and at Oregon, and Texas, and we found in Texas a model that was very well developed with very good accountability materials that we have been able to use as something of a road map to make sure we are asking all the questions that need to be asked. We are not necessarily going to answer all the questions the same way Texas has, but they have a good framework that has in common with us a focus on results and a use of a limited number of indicators to get a focus, get a beat on how things are going. It also has been used in certain cities in Texas in conjunction with an on-site process, an on-site review process particularly in Houston, and when I was before you in June I brought a chart that showed some of the progress that they had made in Houston in raising the level of performance in individual schools in the system, and we have continued -- that really represents a local initiative in the City of Houston to raise, to really go on site and provide the kind of targeted assistance that's necessary, and that's an example of where we need a state system that interfaces with a district level system that promotes the kind of performance

that we are looking for.

This chart that you can see gives you some sense over time that it will take time, in any of these scenarios, to reach the standards, even for some of our schools that we consider to be very good schools under current conditions, I should say, or past expectations, or the lack of uniform past expectations. There are still, if we look at today, one of the things our group has done is take a look at the existing data on attendance and dropouts and take a look back at the MEAP data as a potential predictor of what we can expect on the MCAS test results, and there are even in some of our best districts, the highest performing districts, many, many students that are Failing. And there are still limited numbers of students that are in the Proficient and Advanced categories. So it will take time and we are trying to create a system that is realistic and that has goals and room for success. It does not have goals that say we'll all arrive tomorrow at the ultimate point, but it's still very aggressive in its expectations. The model that we are currently discussing for improving performance varies and graduates the expectations so that those who are furthest from the goal have very aggressive expectations in the early years to get kids out of the Failing category, and as you get closer and closer to the standard and it becomes harder and harder is our judgment, that the expectations then graduate as you approach the standard. So you will see that in this chart. It's, again, just one scenario and it will show you that not everybody gets to the same place at the same time and we think that although it would be desirable for everybody to be at the standard by a fixed time, 2005 or 2010, in reality we would have to set the standard very low in order to accomplish this or, alternatively, we set a high standard and we give everybody an aggressive expectation and we celebrate their success as they proceed along, and that's really the approach that we have taken in this.

I have also included in your packet a preliminary design for the district performance rating system. This has not received the same amount of discussion yet internally from our group, we started with schools, and now we will look next at what it is that districts must do to support their schools and to effectively and efficiently manage the resources on behalf of their schools and their students. And so we have just a preliminary design here. The things I would point out to you about it are that we will use different indicators, because we'll be looking at not just students' performance but at the performance of whole schools. We'll also be looking at the district's range of services and programs, because all schools don't have all programs and some students within any one given district need to be served including off campus or off district in other programs. We'll also look at compliance with state and federal requirements and at financial management and human resource management. Clearly, the systems for both recruitment and for evaluation of teachers and administrative staff, all of those who are providing leadership, is really critical. The allocation of budgets, the allocation of money, to back up those priorities are critical and we need a process for looking at that.

We currently do on-site district reviews for program quality -- excuse me, for program compliance purposes. We have been on about an every seven-year cycle, we have moved that up now to a five-year cycle and we expect to utilize that infrastructure and that process to be able to conduct on-site inspections in school districts. I would like to talk just for a minute or two about the models that we are looking at for on-site inspection because this is perhaps one of the most interesting areas of inquiry and one that we are just starting in earnest to look at the different models. We have a meeting coming up with a couple of senior inspectors from the British school inspection system, it's coming up at the end of October. The British model offers some interesting potential, we think, both for use at the school level and for us incorporating some elements and some of the protocols and instruments from that system at the district level as we sample what's going on with teaching and learning in a district as part of a district level review. We are also looking at the systems, or starting to gather more information about the on-site process that's used in New York City and in Houston and in Rhode Island. The Rhode Island folks use a survey instrument and then also an on-site process that's also used in the Carnegie Middle Schools project, and that is an interesting in-depth survey that looks at attitudes as well as content and has been used as part of a whole school change process. So we are looking at those.

We also need to talk with the folks at NEASC, the regional accrediting agency, to look at the interface between the work that they do and have started now to do at the elementary level as well as the secondary level, and look at how that will interact with and interface with what we do in our state accountability system. In many of our states they actually accredit schools or license or register schools from the state level and they have a review of many indicators in connection with that. And we are not inclined to do that, we do have an association that does accreditation,

but we would use that in a targeted way with districts as we would with schools to look in depth, on site, at what's going on that's good and what's going on that's not working. Am I talking fast enough?

I have been doing a lot of things. It's very interesting work. It's a work in progress and I would like to perhaps just ask you if you have questions or comments on the school performance rating system, I would be glad to take those questions. In the outline that I have provided to you is a variety of other information, some on where we are headed with the development of targeted assistance to low-performing schools and to school districts. I have laid out in that some of the features of the proposed rating system other than the ones that I have mentioned. Perhaps one to which I should point your attention that's perhaps one of the most controversial ones is the idea of measuring improvement not just for all students on average but for all individual subgroups of students that are identifiable within the district. The state of Texas uses this and they measure your outcome and rate your outcome as a school or school district based on the performance of your lowest performing subset of students within the school. Now, this is heavy medicine to take but it is the real way that we will reach all students and make sure that we are providing a quality education for all students. So we are taking a serious look at that. If not used well and carefully, it will become just pointing out, Here are the kids we know can't perform well and aren't and this just confirms things, and we need not to use it for that purpose. If we just report information, it becomes a statement of fact rather than a challenge to action. If we rate progress and performance on that, on the progress of all student groups, it becomes an urgent priority of the district and of the school to make sure that all kids are making progress, and so we are considering the best way to incorporate that performance indicator into our system.

Dr. Schaefer: I think that needs to be thought about very carefully. I did hear that about the Houston schools and I'm just wondering about the impact of that on particularly urban districts in terms of people's perception of, you know, what's happening in a district, if you're just reporting out a district's performance by the lowest subgroup.

Ms. Dow: We would certainly report all students -- this is the difference between what we report. We'll report on all students on average and on each of the subsets. I think reporting is the easy part. When you say this is your expectation and this is when you have failed to perform up to standard because we measure your performance by this subgroup, that's where it becomes more contentious as to whether or not this is a good idea or a bad idea, and we are working on it. It's one, I think, that we can find a way -- one idea that came up at our last meeting, this is why this working group has been very valuable, we would all like to see a way to use this because we are concerned that this system really make the dream come true, if you will, for all students and that is a way of really taking the lens and looking at what's happening for language minority students, for low socioeconomic background students. But at the same -- so one idea is maybe not measure the overall rating but create improvement expectations for every subgroup, so if you were expected to make a ten percent improvement, you would be measured on your improvement rating for all subgroupings. So we are taking this all under advisement, we invite your participation and discussion, written or oral feedback back to me. If any of you would like to sit and talk at another time in more depth, I will be glad to do that with you individually. I think before we come back to the Board with our detailed proposal, or at the time that we do, we will probably need a special meeting where we can have that more in-depth discussion either on the day before the meeting or on the day of the meeting to be able to really have discussion about the details, because there are a lot of details.

Dr. Schaefer: I also do think that the idea of stating a percentage that should be in the Proficient or Advanced category is preferable to what the Houston district does which I gather is saying we want this number to pass, to increase the pass rate. But that does not, then, address the issue of how you get the students who have passed to improve.

Ms. Dow: Exactly. Their system is really a pass/fail system on their test. We have not taken that approach. We know that this Board expects and we expect as the public in Massachusetts to really raise the level of education beyond the basic point and to have a very high expectation of all students. We don't yet know what the magic number is and our test data will be the next thing that tells us both how to set the levels, the baseline levels. We have come up with some initial percentage proposals about where schools would be categorized as their start point and what the expectations would be. The next stage, once we have the MCAS data, we will plug that data in, we will run some models for this and be able to, by the time we come back with a proposal, really say

if schools do this and they have these expectations, then this is where they'll be in five years, this is where they'll be in ten years if they are successful, and it will give us a good look at progress over time. And I think the most important message really here is that the MCAS results are, as the Chair said, giving us our first point of reference from which we can see growth in a predictable, understandable way that's lined up with our frameworks and represents our hopes and expectations for students in the Commonwealth. And so they will represent -- they will be the baseline, and we'll move from there and this is a system that will show growth over time from the baseline.

Dr. Silber: I think this is a remarkable advance over an issue that we were all seriously concerned about. If we had this report before, I would have added number 9 to the progress made by the Board in this period of time because this is highly impressive. There are a few questions that I would like to ask. I think it is very important that we break it down in terms of those that failed and those that are Proficient and Advanced, and all of that it appears has been done. But we are also, you know, very concerned that those children who score in terms of that third category, are really in to a certain degree deficient and consequently the dividing line between that Needs Improvement and Failing becomes a critical assessment that we have to make. And if the Needs Improvement is watered down, it could include a large number of failures. And that's something we would have to guard against. But one thing that I wonder in the school performance rating system, I wonder why we have not included the results of the Iowa reading test. Now, I believe that test should be given at the 2nd grade instead of the 3rd. We have given it now at the 3rd but we know that that means remediation begins in the 4th grade, and that's too late. And I wonder if we shouldn't change that Iowa test to the 2nd grade and that would certainly be, it seems to me, an extremely important guideline in terms of assessing the adequacy of elementary schools. I would like for you and your committee to take that into account.

I also think it's important for us to note that Needs Improvement is easy to understand, if it's low performing it needs improvement, but one thing we can say with regard to a high-performing school is that it's improving or it's not improving. A successful school can be improving or not improving. An improving school is clearly improving but it could be low performing. See, these categories are ambiguous at times. You could have a successful school in terms of its rate of improvement and still be a low-performing school. Now, not improving says a great deal but it could be attached to a low-performing school, to a successful school, or to a high-performing school, and I think those refinements, those complications need to be brought out because that was one of the things the English emphasized is the valued added. If you have a school district where there are very few students who are poor, most are two-parent families, great stability, no mobility in the place, most of them are speaking English in the home, if you have all of those things going for you, small percentage of special needs kids, what those school districts do is ever easier to accomplish than when you get into districts like Lawrence or Chelsea or places where you have a high rate of single parents, very high poverty level, large percentage, perhaps even majority, from non-English speaking homes, you have high level of mobility, high level special needs, and you have a significant percentage of simply unruly children who need alternative education.

Now, I think all of those factors need to be brought in. I saw recently an evaluation made of three school systems, one with Superintendent Zimmerman's program, one which they implemented in Woburn, and one other as doing extremely well considering the complexity of their program. And I think that complexity of that program probably is a part of the model. I suspect you have already taken that into account, you just haven't mentioned it.

Ms. Dow: Actually, our use of those categories reflects at the top and bottom end those who on the absolute standard really have arrived or really are at critically low levels. But the three middle categories all represent improvement. So you could be a school in Boston that has many kids, as my son's school is, many kids who are performing at levels I and II and put in a program that really is moving you forward and where you meet your improvement expectations and you would be rated a successful school. These words have that meaning. You would be a successful school because you were meeting all of your improvement expectations. So the five categories that we have here don't simply represent where you are on the absolute performance. They represent where you are on improvement. If you are meeting your expectations -- if you are, on the other hand, a school in Weston, let's say, that has many children who are performing at Needs Improvement, you have nobody Failing hardly, and you have mostly kids who are Needs Improvement and Proficient but you're not meeting your expectations of moving kids up into the

higher category and of getting as many kids into Advanced as you could and should be able to by adding value to the students, what they come to school with already, then that would be a school that's not improving. Even though they have a high level of absolute performance, they would be a school that's not improving. So we sought to use terms that represent the forward motion or lack of it and then at the two ends of the spectrum that identify schools that are either meeting the standard or that are low performing because those represent where we most need to pay attention at the state level and make sure that there is intervention and/or make sure that they are exemplars.

Dr. Delattre: You will have to be careful about relying entirely on the categories. If a school has a percentage of students in Advanced and a percentage of students in Proficient and the percentages are not changing but how well the students are doing improves within the categories, the school is improving.

Mr. Peyser: Just to get back to the Chairman's point as well, maybe it's similar to the way Houston structured their chart, if you will. It's not a one-dimensional problem, it's a two-dimensional problem. As you've outlined it, it may be just a little difficult to try to use terminology that captures all of that in a one-dimensional format. Couple of other quick comments. It would be interesting to know the linkage between this and the other responsibilities of the Department and the Board around underperforming school districts and chronically underperforming school districts and receiverships and all of the rest of that. I mean, to the extent that targeted assistance is provided to low-performing school districts, is this in effect kind of a probationary period, after a certain point in time they get thrown into a different category? How those two things fit together would be useful to explore. I think also in terms of the on-site quality review, it seems to me there ought to be some way of feeding that back into the performance evaluation or rating system to the extent that the numbers do not adequately reflect what's actually going on in the school and the system. And while I will grant you that this is a somewhat difficult administrative problem since the data is available every year on every school and the on-site reviews can't be, using it in some ways not simply as a preparatory step to remediation but as some way to improve your evaluation of the school itself or the district. In that context there's some reference in terms of with respect to what the evaluators will look for, and one thing which is not clear, it may be in here but it's not clear if it is, is some evaluation of the quality of the standards, the curriculum and the instruction at the school as opposed to programs, services, operating and management systems.

Ms. Dow: I consider that the education program of the school, so when I use the word program, the regular education program is the curriculum, their teaching quality, and it's not just whether they have --

Mr. Peyser: It might be better to make that more explicit because program is a somewhat ambiguous term. And the last thing is, it seems to me that you have a recognition system, commendation system, but in my view money is sort of the coin of the realm here quite literally, and somehow we ought to provide some kind of a pay-for-performance system. I know this was problematic especially in linking into statewide assessments in Kentucky in particular, but I think that's worth exploring nonetheless. In other forms of endeavor the state is trying to use pay-for-performance as incentive for quality. We don't do it here and we ought to figure out a way to integrate that into the program so that additional resources don't flow only to those schools and districts that don't perform well.

Ms. Dow: We have begun to gather the available research on the use of rewards. Texas does have a reward system built in, it hasn't been funded up until now, but they actually have a reward for principals and so they have taken the approach of trying to target the school leadership. We, of course, have at least one example that we know of in Texas as a result of that where we have had cheating, and so one of the things is that this sometimes -- the notion of pay-for-performance as opposed to professional pride and expectation is that it can encourage that kind of behavior. We have talked about identifying exemplary schools and both rewarding them but also giving them funding to let them really perform as exemplars and provide leadership, so give them a grant that would allow them to free up some of their staff to have time to interact with people from other districts. And I think rewarding leadership rather than just rewarding accomplishment is where we are headed in our discussions and where I personally would come down at this point and what I hope the Commissioner would ultimately recommend to the Board.

Mr. Peyser: But if, for instance, a low-performing district is showing significant improvement, why shouldn't we be focused -- why shouldn't they essentially be rewarded for that performance, regardless of whether they invest time in model elsewhere? Isn't that reason enough, isn't the service they provide to their students reason enough to reward them? Again, I would grant you that in other places there have been -- especially to the extent it's tied directly to personal or personnel compensation, there are a lot of incentives built in the system for manipulation and there's a high degree of reliance on the assessment instrument itself and the scoring of it and any glitches that may occur in that process suddenly leads to kind of irrational distribution of funds. Perhaps to the extent it's linked to the in-depth reviews and other kind of more thorough evaluations that might be helpful, I don't know. All I'm saying is I think it is worthy of exploration. And it's important to send the message that financial rewards and additional funds flow not simply as a means of remediation, but rather as reward for excellence.

Dr. Silber: I think you've got some very serious considerations there to take into account. One, I don't know why you should particularly reward somebody for being caught doing his job. It seems to me that that's what you've already paid for and, consequently, when you find out that they are doing it, I don't know that anything extra is involved. There's a second problem, and that was revealed by a reading of the story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Lincoln Steffans retold that story. He said that when God came down to the Garden of Eden and asked, you know, why Adam had sinned, he said it was the woman's fault. And the woman when he asked her said it was the snake's fault. He said the actual problem was the apple. When you introduce that extra financial reward, you're going to build cheating into the system, you're going to build efforts to connive with the people who are doing the evaluations, all of these problems of potential corruption are going to be introduced by adding those financial aspects. I think we should be distributing those funds according to reasonable need and it certainly is not going to be helpful to deprive systems of funds when they are having problems because they need them. I think we ought to disassociate that from the kind of objective evaluation we make with all the consequences that go with evaluation of saying, This is an excellent school. That helps enormously. Saying, This is a deficient school, that hurts. This school is so deficient that we have to take it over, that really hurts. I think we have enough incentive built into the evaluation itself without introducing all the complications that go with putting money on the table.

Dr. Delattre: There are several other things I would like to mention. When you do the assessments, I think you want to take into account what textbooks are used, what other books are used in the curriculum, the evidence of library use, adequacy of library holdings. I don't think your assessment of programs can be separated from the classroom visitation, from the acquisition of data, from the amounts of homework expected, the time available for systematic professional development. I'm not eager for teachers who are very good at what they do to be taken out of the classroom to be going to other districts. I'm eager for them to be made available to other teachers in their own school systems or schools and to be observed by others locally. The nature of evaluation of teachers and administrators ought to be supplemented, I think, by evaluation of the labor contract and by whether the school district really has the wherewithal and the means to appoint and retain the best people. I think the state should also have system audits that tell enrollments, budgets, and actual expenditures for personnel throughout the system by name, if possible, and submitted under oath by the superintendent of schools. There's a lot to be done.

MS. Dow: We do have quite a bit of financial data. It's not necessarily -- it's how we have been collecting it for the last 40 years, so I think part of the project that I'm on is to take a fresh look and get people together to take a fresh look at what's the information that we need, what really is most relevant, what should be the focus of our attention, what are the things that make the most difference in a school district, providing good service and good resources and support to its schools and in a school providing all of the best that it can to its kids. I think that many of the things that you've just mentioned, Dr. Delattre, about what we would be looking at in a school are exactly the kind of things that the British inspection model looks at. They spend a great deal of time -- 60 percent of the time of each visit by the inspectors, who are educators, is spent in classroom observation. That's not simply observation and recording, but that also involves interaction with the teacher and with the students. And so we are looking at this model to see how it might work or some components of it might work here and whether we might be able to train a cadre of people here that could provide that kind of evaluation in a school and provide very valuable and very concrete and detailed feedback to school systems about what it will need to do to improve.

Dr. Delattre: Yes. As you may know, Susan Goldsmith has just returned from ten days with the British inspectors and I think you will find her helpful.

Ms. Dow: Okay. I knew she was going.

Dr. Delattre: On the financial data, let me stress again, having reviewed a fair amount of that that is not submitted under oath, I think a lot of that information is cooked and I think it should be submitted under oath.

Ms. Dow: It certainly does not also contain the level of detail that we need in order to understand how -- when they spend money on administration in a district, what they are really buying and paying for, when they spend their money on textbooks, what they are really buying for textbooks and materials. I want to show you -- it's my last word, I promise, David. David tells me to stop already. But there's a picture in here. I just want to tell you why I did this. It's not only because I learned how to draw using the computer to draw this, but as we begin to tear apart all of the -- who are all the players and what are all the responsibilities that people have and who is accountable to whom for what, it's really a complex picture. But the thing that made me feel very good putting this together was to see if this is sort of a Rorschach test or something, there's a lot of support, there are a lot of us that together, if we really do pull together, we can really move the boat forward. So I think that the answer, my answer to you, Jim, about the money is that this really is the picture of the Love Boat, really, we do love our kids, and teachers really love the kids that they are working with, and school administrators are really there for the kids, as we all are, and so I think that if we all have high standards and people feel support and we are part of a large effort, that we will get the results that we are looking for, over time, with concerted effort and continued communication.

Dr. Silber: Thank you very much. Very impressive report. We come now to the third item on the agenda, the proposed regulations for teacher quality enhancement under 260. This is an initial discussion.

Commissioner Driscoll: If I may, Mr. Chairman, there were three quick parts, I will just take a minute. On 3(a) we're talking about the actual regulations that we need. Chapter 260 is fairly definitive but there are a couple of places where we need the Board to establish regulations. And one is in the area of establishing the criteria by which bonus recipients will in fact receive their bonuses. We want to start this program this spring, we would like to have bonus recipients go through a training program this summer and late spring in conjunction with our academic support program and have them in classrooms this September. So time is a little bit of the essence, although there's no vote needed.

Secondly, I have asked for a couple of statutory changes which we'll talk about, and the third item is really just an update and may be preempted by the report that Chancellor Koplik is submitting today to the Board of Education. I have had discussions with a number of people about the criteria which is item A, and I have proposed even this morning some changes based on those discussions and I would like to give that out, Mr. Chairman, as an update. Again, this does not have to get voted until it comes back before this Board in November, so it is all preliminary in one sense. There are really four basic changes that I'm suggesting even today from when the Board packet went out. First is that we expand the definition some way so that we are including mid-career candidates or others. The regulations that I proposed in the Board packet really focuses on college graduates or those that are currently seniors and we need to talk about those that have been perhaps home for a while, those that are changing careers, whatever. We need to attract people, not just those that are seniors in college.

Dr. Silber: In that regard, you have, for example, a serious cutback in employment at Raytheon. That is a marvelous opportunity to focus clearly on those individuals. That initial bonus would enable them to attend an intensive summer program, be ready to teach in the fall, and that bonus could help in the transition from the salaries they have at Raytheon to the salaries they have in teaching, and we need to open up regulations so they don't have to wait 11 or 12 years to move to the higher salary so that we can retain those people. Secondly, particularly with the cancellation of the SSC, I found out that the there was a very large percentage of the physicists who took Ph. D.'s in the department at Princeton, an excellent department, who are really not working in the field of physics. This is happening -- if it happens at Princeton, it's happening everywhere,

because there is a superb department of physics. We have got physics and science Ph.D.'s, persons who finished everything on the Ph.D. except the dissertation, who are obvious candidates for high school teaching in mathematics and science. And this program ought to be oriented toward them. And then we have those housewives whose youngest child is now in school who have an excellent academic background and it's not just a low grade point or a relatively high grade point average from a mediocre school, but very high grade point averages from superb schools.

That focus, it seems to me, of this bonus program should not be directly centered on schools of education but on alternative candidates who can bring a new dimension of quality into the school systems and a professional standard. So I think it has to be very carefully thought through to emphasize that. I don't think that calls for any change in the regulations because they say under the regulations that the purposes of the incoming signing bonus is to encourage high-achieving candidates, especially those who would not otherwise consider a career in teaching, to teach in the Massachusetts public schools. That gives us all the latitude we need. But I don't think that this program should be trapped by the educational establishment by the schools of education. It should definitely be focused outside that area.

Commissioner Driscoll: Also, it has been suggested that not only have the candidates just been required to pass the Massachusetts education certification test, but that in fact their scores on each part, the reading and writing part of the communication and literacy, be at least an 80, so we have incorporated that. There also has been talk about a number of other things and I have listed them there as criteria. For one thing, people were concerned about a 3.0. We were using a model Teach For America and most states in fact have a 2.5. I think 3.0 would have been the highest in the country. And yet because it's only a floor they produce an average of 3.6, grade point average of 3.6, so we were really looking at it as minimum, but I agree with people that have raised the question, Why not make it 3.5? So we have included, or I have included, this is really an update, I will hand it out in a minute, a new version of the draft regulations. Again, we have the time between now and November to make further changes. So we made changes on their percentile of nationally recognized exams, people who have brought up either the GREs or the LSATs or other measures that people ought to be able to put forward. Also nominations by the institutions themselves. We are looking for writing samples and then four letters of reference and then finally, Chairman Silber has suggested the version that I gave out talked about the Commissioner may give priority, he suggests it should be, and I agree. The Commissioner shall give priority in selection to candidates with higher grade point averages. And so I have what is a working draft.

Dr. Delattre: Dave, that's not just higher grade point averages, that's higher test scores.

Commissioner Driscoll: Right. So what I have done is incorporated them in the regulations and we did make a change, Mr. Chairman, to reflect the sort of nontraditional, if you'd call it that, but to the point that Ed just made on page 3, the part 2 in parens indicates, The Commissioner shall give priority in selection to eligible students with higher grade point averages, test scores or class rankings, and to those candidates with higher scores on the Massachusetts Educator Certification Test. So it is more than just the --

Dr. Delattre: The ‘or’ doesn't work.

Commissioner Driscoll: Okay. Well, we can change that as well to ‘and’. Okay. And on the issue of the way we handle it on page 3, part 6, if a candidate graduated from college ten or more years before applying for the program, and so forth, that was our way of including sort of the nontraditional. But I think you're right, Mr. Chairman, it really could be included anywhere. So what I've done is another working draft, my hope is that Board members and the general public will make further suggestions and we'll bring back to you in November what will be, at least from my perspective, a final draft to present to you so that we can hopefully get these approved in November and move to implement the program. We are hoping to do aggressive site visits at colleges and universities. I think by the very fact that it talks about people who would not otherwise consider a career in teaching, it really does steer you away from schools of education in that regard. But I think we should be doing some site visits at Raytheon and other places as well.

Dr. Silber: I think we should be advertising in the newspaper the fact that this is a possibility

and focus clearly on mothers at home whose youngest children are now in school who might be interested in this. If they have an excellent liberal arts background or something of that sort, that they should consider it. And we should address graduate schools with regard to their graduating Ph.D.'s because, you know, there's nothing unusual in a German gymnasium to have somebody with a doctorate degree teaching in a gymnasium. That's where Hegel started and other very important professors. If they are out of graduate school and don't have a job, the 25,000 beginning salary of a teacher is not very far from the initial salary of an assistant professor, if you leave the research universities aside. If you're talking about the liberal arts colleges and others, that's not far off. If you've got an $8,000 bonus going with it, it's better than they are going to be doing. So I think this is a real opportunity to fill that gap with regard to mathematics and science.

Mr. Peyser: Clarification. Is this going out for public comment?

Commissioner Driscoll: No. Not until it's voted by the Board.

Mr. Peyser: But in other words, in November we vote on it, then it goes out for public comment?

Commissioner Driscoll: Correct.

Dr. Silber: I have asked to be passed out and to have put into our website and to the minutes the proposal that I sent in an Op Ed piece to the Wall Street Journal about exempting the first $30,000 of a teacher's salary from income tax. That's about the only realistic measure we're going to have for raising teacher salaries. It would mean an increase in total pay of a person earning 30,000 or more of about $9,000 a year. And that would be felt. That's more than even the first year of this bonus program. And any teacher would be eligible, those who are already hired, it would be a benefit that would occur every single year, not just once in a lifetime, and the condition on this would be that they are willing to pass an examination that demonstrates their competence. This would be a great incentive for our ablest teachers to take that test and then peer pressure would be working to encourage other people to go back to college or do whatever they needed to enhance their skills so that they too could qualify for that tax exemption. The cost to the federal government would be minuscule, would do a lot more good than the billions of dollars they propose to appropriate.

Dr. Delattre: Just a couple minor things about the regulations in progress. If you're going to have things like logical thinking and written expression demonstrated through writing samples, you're almost surely going to have to acquire them under proctored conditions because the incentives for cheating here are great as they are with respect to financing. The other thing that I hope you will consider is that reliance on such criteria as leadership activities is reliance on a matter so vague and not necessarily having anything to do with competence in a classroom that I think it is likely to become a red herring and to give weight to things that we ought not to be giving weight in trying to draw these people in.

Commissioner Driscoll: Well, thank you for that. And part of the reason for that is trying to draw on the examples of the experience of Teach For America which was a program that was started out and was counter-intuitive in the sense that they, in fact, were able to attract very accomplished students into the teaching field. They used leadership qualities, Ed, because they found it was another data point that was helpful. So I think that looked at in that way, that the regulations are such that they are cumulative, it may help. Your point, if it's used somehow as a substitute or as an escape hatch or something like that, because it's nebulous, it's just that some people have provided tremendous leadership skills in urban centers or whatever, and so it is helpful. But that's something we can think about.

Mr. Peyser: Just to follow up on that point, this may be an overstatement, I guess, but it's not entirely clear the distinction between eligibility and selection, the criteria for eligibility versus the criteria for selection. So, for example, leadership activities appears to be eligibility criteria, meaning if you have not demonstrated any leadership activities, you are not eligible to participate, whereas that might be something that you would take into account as part of your selection process. The other general comment has to do with the selection process and your expectations for how much judgment will need to be injected into the process in order to come up with the right number. Obviously if it's well over-subscribed, you have to come up with some way

of doing it. And this in part leads to the issue about taking into account higher scores and essentially rank ordering eligible candidates on the basis of some quantitative measure. So it is not entirely clear in reading it what the mixture of quantitative versus qualitative judgments are, and therefore it's a little hard to know exactly how you're going to pick from an over-subscribed pool.

Commissioner Driscoll: Well, I think as Ed used the term, sort of working drafts, I think as we introduce the concept of 'shall' rather than 'may' on the criteria, it becomes far more quantitative. So I think I will answer it this way: In the original draft I think there was a lot more leeway for the Commissioner. I think as we change these criteria, I think there's less and less and more reliance on the quantity which, by the way, is fine with me. This program will only work -- and I have been a strong advocate for this program since it was first announced, this will only work if in fact we attract very, very accomplished students. If we start to lower the standard, lower the standard, it's going to make -- I think that's where Teach For America has had their greatest success, maybe it's a perception issue, but certainly they are viewed as a program that has attracted what people feel, at least, and I think the data will show in most cases are very accomplished. So we have to do that and it seems to me as this working draft is moving through various people, it's getting tighter and tighter. And so it is far more quantitative today than it was last week.

Dr. Silber: Can we go on now to the next issue?

Commissioner Driscoll: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have proposed that the Board consider two statutory changes. The first is that the current statute and regulations talk about a provisional certificate with advanced standing valid for only five years of employment, and therefore those candidates who, generally speaking, have graduated from college, recently graduated from college, under our regulations have to earn a master's degree or equivalent, and we haven't defined equivalent which Jim Peyser has brought to this table, so that the certificate with advanced standing is only good for five years. I have a concern about that. We are now seeing the first group, if you will, that's been affected by that. They graduated in 1994. In fact, that was the year at least and so they are coming up in 1999. Many of them are new teachers, new to the classroom, and it seems to me that they are busy enough trying to deal with the first couple of years of teaching and all of a sudden they realize they need to enroll in a master's degree program. Some were being told it's interrupting their teaching career and so forth, so it seems like a constraint to me that should not be there. So that the first change that I would like to see is that that be extended. I'm suggesting that it be ten years. That doesn't mean that we can't put criteria in for something to be accomplished at the end of five years, but I'm looking for something that is more in keeping with what people at that age, at that career stage need, and it seems to me they need more flexibility. The interest in having a master's degree, whether people like that or don't, and that's again up to this Board, but even if you do think that that's an important criteria, the incentive generally speaking is there in the school districts because they get a financial reward. So it just seems to me that these are restrictive and needlessly restrictive, and I would like to see us work on a change in the statute.

Dr. Silber: Why don't we have discussion on that before we go to the next one? Any discussion on that point?

Dr. Delattre: I think the Commissioner is essentially right and that we ought to have some flexibility here.

Dr. Silber: I think we ought to also look, maybe not today, to get rid of that master's degree requirement or specify that it's got to be in a liberal arts subject, subject matter or something.

Mr. Peyser: I think the real burden, as the Commissioner has described, is the requirement to go out and accumulate a lot of credits and at great expense during a time when young teachers are trying to figure out how to do their craft. And to the extent that standards certification becomes something that is more aligned with their day-to-day work activity and interaction between experienced teachers and young teachers, that I think we are putting too severe a time constraint on them.

Dr. Silber: Are we ready for a vote on this part? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Dr. Silber: That's unanimous from the Board.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:VOTED: that the Board of Education authorize the Commissioner to submit to the Legislature the first proposed amendment to the certification statute, General Laws, chapter 71, § 38G, as presented by the Commissioner.

The vote was unanimous.

Dr. Silber: Now you have a second one.

Commissioner DRISCOLL: Correct. The second one is a situation that occurred, as many of you know, this summer where more and more, which is a good thing, people are coming to Massachusetts from other states to teach. Now, sometimes it's because their husband or wife got relocated or whatever, but nonetheless, superintendents placed a number of very qualified candidates from out of state last year. And this past summer, of course, they applied in June or they may have applied in April or May, but were being considered in June and so forth. They are not certifiable because they have to pass our local test. So what other states do that have a unique test, and I'm not prepared to have reciprocity just to accept another state's test, which we are not, there is this mechanism whereby you give them a temporary certificate for one year and allow them to teach and gives them time to pass the test. They must have three years, I'm suggesting three years, of teaching in the other state. So that really a number of people had to turn down out-of-state candidates who were very capable. I know of one superintendent that had a very capable physics teacher and another community that had a very capable mathematics teacher who were not able to hire them because they were not certifiable. So that's my recommendation.

Dr. Silber: Any discussion of that?

Dr. Delattre: Why weren't they able to take the tests?

Commissioner Driscoll: Because the test was only offered in July, so they may have missed the date and if they -- that was the problem, and they may have been late enough in June or early enough in July, they just missed the July test. Now, we can talk about some of the dates of the test, that will help. This just gives us, gives the students and districts or principals, you know, the ability to hire someone who has been successful in another state. Gives them one year, if they don't pass the test, they can't be hired the following year.

Dr. Delattre: I wish we wouldn't act on this today unless it puts you in an impossible situation.

Commissioner Driscoll: Not at all. It probably won't be a problem until next summer.

Dr. Delattre: I want to know --

Ms. Crutchfield: How many people?

Dr. Delattre: I want to know what any of us in state can do about administration of the test in summer where principals, where superintendents know in advance the test will be administered say for out-of-state people at a date certain in the summer, late in the summer when they might all take it.

Ms. Crutchfield: I agree. I would rather have flexibility around that than this.

Dr. Silber: Is there some reason why we wouldn't talk to NES about giving the test on an ad hoc basis where the need arose? Because I don't suppose you're going to have more than say 50 of

these in a year. And there's probably not more than one in the state, so why the hell would they go through a big elaborate process of announcing a test in other states instead of just arranging a test the way in which you can do other tests on an ad hoc basis? Why don't we explore that, see if we can't do that? If so, that will give us a better solution to that problem.

Commissioner Driscoll: Very happy to do it.

Dr. Silber: Shall we then take a vote on the first proposal, having tabled the second, and that will say to the supporters on the yellow sheet that the Board of Education authorize the Commissioner to submit to the legislature the first proposed amendment to the certificate statute, Chapter 71 section 38G, as presented by the Commissioner.

Ms. Crutchfield: Yes.

Dr. Silber: Are we all in favor of this?

Ms. Crutchfield: We are.

Dr. Silber: All in favor? Any opposed? No. It passes unanimously. All right.

Commissioner Driscoll: The last issue, and I know the stenographer is signaling us for a break, the last issue which we may or may not want to discuss, it's really background information, I know that the Chancellor's report to the Board of Higher Education today talks about an element whereby all students would have to pass the communication literacy test before going on to student teaching. So this whole issue of the approval of educator preparation programs specifically as it relates to passing grades. Jim and I talked about that. Is it 80 percent? 80 percent of what? That really hasn't been defined. Somehow I think that the 80 percent as a goal has accomplished more than if we have to define it. But this issue I think that's been raised for institutions as to whether or not they should have the ability not only to identify those students who are clearly part of their institutions and shouldn't be saddled with someone who just put their name down and is not a member of their institution, but also those that are not, in the view of the institution, ready and prepared or approved to take the test at a certain point. So I think there are an awful lot of issues about that specific aspect of the passing rate for the educator test as it relates to institutions. And then there's the larger issue of the overall approval program which will be coming up next year in December of 99. So there's a lot to be discussed, perhaps not now, Mr. Chairman, but I wanted to at least put the background information in the packet.

Dr. Schaefer: Does it make sense that we need -- well, since this report is coming out today, that we have this discussion in the context of whatever is released by Higher Ed? And I would just like to raise one issue at this point. I mean, I have had a number of discussions with people at different colleges about these requirements, nonstate institutions, and, you know, they are serious about trying to use the teacher test to improve the quality of the education that they are offering in the subject matter areas because a lot of these schools don't have -- they are not schools of education that we're talking about with the subject matter test, and they need -- there's a sense that they need some more specific information about the tests themselves. For example, if you were looking at the history test and you find that the subject matter test has 70 percent of the questions on U.S. History, well, that's going to be the pattern. They need to know that so that the students are going to take or that the college is offering courses that will meet those requirements so that people who are in charge of the teacher certification programs at a liberal arts college can tell the students, You have to take this, but it's also a way of getting the colleges to offer the kind of courses -- whether it's two semester surveying U.S. History. I think as many of us know in many places these things are not being offered anymore. We are into very specialized courses about 10th century French peasant rebellions and not offering a broader picture that the students can then take those courses and they know they'll be able to pass the test. They may be doing very well in college but in a narrow field that's not covering the material that will be on the test. So we need to work on this so that these students at good liberal arts colleges will be able to pass the test.

Dr. Silber: I think that recent publication developed by NES on the literacy part of the test

should satisfy anybody. It makes it clear enough the kind of expectations we have. But with regard to the subject matter test, many of those fields are so large that unless the test is designed where the person can have an alternative of question A or B or C, to find out what the student knows, you may just find out what they don't know and it could be very helpful to have the kind of information that Roberta is talking about, and we have a little time now to try to develop that. One point, number 5 here on your list here in this memorandum, they require candidates to pass an additional assessment for certification such as a test of teaching knowledge and/or portfolio-based performance. I would never accept portfolio-based performance as a substitute for a test of knowledge. I think portfolios can be done by anybody, and trying to find out who did what is almost impossible. I visited a school on the North Shore that was basing their work for seniors on portfolios. I asked four students questions about their portfolios, there was only one student who had any clue about what was in the portfolio that they had submitted. Obviously there was a great deal of cheating going on, it was systematic, it was systemic, and I think we have got to have criteria that will hold up better than that.

Dr. Delattre: Let's take a break.

Dr. Silber: Okay. We'll take a break. Try to hold it to ten minutes if we can. (A recess was taken)

Dr. Silber: The next item is item number 4 in the book. We are discussing the year 2000 budget draft.

Commissioner Driscoll: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have our budget director Tony DeLorenzo and Jeff Wulfson who is our chief financial officer here. We have put a draft before you and it's a work in progress and Board members should feel free not only today but at any point to make recommendations. We do need to submit it in what, December?

Mr. Wulfson: At the latest. Certainly the earlier the better to get the attention of the legislature.

Commissioner Driscoll: Ought to be on the agenda in November.

Dr. Silber: Definitely ought to be on the agenda in November and any suggestion you need to have to amendments to 260 need to be on the agenda, so don't fear, we'll have an agenda that includes votes on amendments to both the budget and to 260, so that this is putting it on record to be under consideration. So take a good hard look at both of them and be ready to go.

Commissioner Driscoll: Okay, you're on.

Mr. Wulfson: The Commissioner's recommendations are listed in blue, I won't run down all of them, but I will point out some of the highlights particularly of the major increases. Obviously there is a significant increase mandated by statute for the Chapter 70 program as well as mandated increases for school building assistance for the regional transportation program as well and the charter school reimbursement program. Those are all in terms of statute. As far as proposals, we have several significant proposals in here. One is to consolidate our four special education funding programs into a new single line item and that is partly in response to the new federal requirements that currently we do not meet in terms of special education funding, and we would like to bring ourselves as a state in compliance with that. We have a significant increase for the early childhood program as has been requested by this Board. I believe 160 million has been proposed. We have a new line item for early literacy programs which is basically taking funding from two other line items and putting them into a single program where we'll have more visibility and hopefully more impact. And there's a proposal to split out the Department's operating budget into three separate line items to better reflect the way in which those funds are used. I'd be happy to respond to any particular questions. We have, obviously, a lot of detail behind each of these requests.

Dr. Silber: Looks like this is getting easier because the views of the Board are pretty well incorporated in this I think this time, so we don't have as much to talk about. One thing that I think is very important is that next year we offer that Iowa literacy test at the 2nd grade and the 3rd grade. We don't want to abandon the 3rd grade because we have a benchmark for it, but if we give it to the 2nd grade and the 3rd grade next year, we will then have the benchmark established

for the 2nd grade and thereafter we can go to the 2nd grade exam as the standard. But I think it is very important that we have enough money in that budget. I would like for the Commissioner and you to assure us that there's money in that budget that will take care of giving the examination at both the 2nd and 3rd grades.

Mr. Wulfson: I don't think it was budgeted and we can do that.

Commissioner Driscoll: I just checked with Jeff and it has not been so let's add that to the budget.

Mr. Wulfson: In general, the assessment costs are basically an estimate. As you know, our contract with Advanced Systems is due to end this year, we have to go out with a new solicitation with a new contracting firm. There may be some overlap if a different contractor is selected, so to some degree the assessment costs in here are estimates.

Commissioner Driscoll: Of course we will know what it will cost for the grade 2 Iowa, so we should definitely add that.

Mr. Peyser: The teacher quality line item includes a $2 million appropriation which is meant to supplement the interest on the endowment fund. Can you explain the shortfall?

Mr. Wulfson: I don't know if it's so much a shortfall as at the time that the endowment interest was put together I don't know that we had any estimates, but based on the program statistics estimates of both the bonus program and the mentoring program, two million would not be enough. I think the two million or three million from the endowment is basically going to cover the teacher signing bonuses but the cost of the master teacher mentoring program and administrative costs really are going to go beyond that. So the program staff has requested five million for that year.

Mr. Peyser: Does that mean that on an ongoing basis, depending on interest and market variations, we should expect to continue to appropriate funds in order to finance these things?

Mr. Wulfson: My understanding is that the intent is there would be contributions made to that endowment fund over the next several years so at some point it would build up to a steady level, but this was obviously just the first payment into the fund. Given the uncertainties of the committee, whether we'll be able to keep up with that plan, I don't know.

Mr. Peyser: So your understanding is $60 million is not intended to be a one-time and forever investment in the endowment but rather the first in a series of investments building to what? Is there a goal?

Mr. Wulfson: I think the legislature is in part looking to the Department to put together a plan for the Chapter 260 program that indicates here's what we think it's going to take to fund the different parts of it.

Mr. Peyser: You don't need to do this right now, but could you break out the $5 million into the three different components? That would be useful for me to know. The other question I had may just be terminology here, but School-to-Work is now Work-Based Learning. I'm wondering if you could explain that.

Mr. Wulfson: I personally can't but I will let the Commissioner. (Laughter)

Commissioner Driscoll: The School-to-Work?

Mr. Wulfson: The change to Work-Based Learning.

Commissioner Driscoll: This particular line item has been part of the Board's budget for, I'm going to say, Tony, ten years?

Mr. DeLorenzo: Easily.

Commissioner Driscoll: So that preceded the federal grant that this Commonwealth applied for and is one of eight successful states to get that original five-year grant for School-to-Work, specifically the national School-to-Work program. I felt all along that that's very confusing because it's School-to-Work. It preceded any talk about our program in which we received federal funds. Really this is a program for work-based learning. This is specifically a grant program established by the legislature for specific programs that offer work-based learning, so I'm recommending the change because I think it is confusing, makes it look like it's part of the national federal School-to-Work program, which it's not.

Mr. Peyser: So there are additional federal funds that come through the School-to-Work which are just funneled through a grant mechanism rather than this line item?

Commissioner Driscoll: There's a significant School-to-Work program coming through the federal government program that funds all our partnerships that is quite separate and distinct from this program which existed before that which is really misnamed School-to-Work to begin with. It's really work-based learning programs. This has been established with a number of high schools throughout the Commonwealth for years. It's an excellent program and so that's why I recommended the change.

Dr. Silber: Any other discussion? If not, I think we will work on it next time and I think it would be a good idea to have you back next time.

Mr. Wulfson: Certainly. Any thoughts anybody would like to have incorporated in what we bring back before you next time, please let the Commissioner know.

Commissioner Driscoll: Thank you very much.

Dr. Silber: We have now the technological briefing, number 5.

Commissioner Driscoll: Right. I wanted to take the opportunity just to make a brief presentation on what's going on in technology at the Department. There' a number of initiatives and it's a fairly significant part of our organization, and somehow we haven't had time to make a presentation before the Board. So I thought Board members could get at least an overview of what it is that we are doing in technology, what kind of systems we are building as we get ready for the MCAS results and what Juliane talked about today, school and district accountability, data points, and that's going to involve technology and so forth. So Greg, you're on.

Mr. Nadeau: Thanks, Dave. I just handed out a four-page executive summary, there are copies going out to the audience, additional copies will be at the back door. I will be going very quickly because I know you're on a tight time frame, but please interrupt me because I will be going quickly and I will come back for a more detailed briefing if you want more information. Since 1994 when the Education Reform Act directed the state to develop a statewide plan to implement technology in schools, we have really been grounded by three assumptions. One is that technology can provide powerful learning opportunities for students. Two, that technology can provide powerful tools to enhance the professional capability of teachers. And three, that technology can increase administrative efficiency and effectiveness. Now, while those are clearly in the order of importance we would expect of their impact on schools, it's really in the reverse order that we have been focusing our implementation efforts. The reason being is we know today how technology can have a direct impact on administrative efficiency and effectiveness. Principally, going from anecdote policy to data-driven policy with MCAS results is going to allow us to have a whole different type of policy discussion.

So to that end the Department in 1996 began a very ambitious five-year, $17-million project to develop the five-year information infrastructure for the Education Reform Act. We are now in our third year of that five-year project and we will be rolling out the two principal strands of that this year, those being a student information management system and a district information

management system. The student system has two main pieces to it. It has a state student registration system, and in order to really have any ability to track data between school districts across time, we need to assign an ID number to each student record. We're going from getting information on students that are just summary at the school level, we ask how many students of different types are in every school, to collecting a million student records four times a year and to be able to use disaggregated individual student information connected with the MCAS results to drive the types of accountability discussions that Juliane presented earlier. The second piece to that -- so the first is the student registration to create an ID that tracks the record. And one thing I would state on that is that we will be, the ID will be able to keep confidential the student's name and other identifying information while allowing the system to know that a student who leaves the school, maybe leaves the country for four years, comes back to a different district, it will be the same student. I'd be happy to provide more details on how we are doing that if you like.

Mr. Peyser: Just a question. Does that mean the state does not have actual names associated with the numbers, that only exists at the district level, or does the state have both the name and number?

Mr. Nadeau: Basically what we do is sort of create three data bases. One is the student locator database which does have name and identifying information, the type of information you would expect to be in a yearbook, basically, sort of public information. Second is actual database that has all of the MCAS results, all of the demographics information and everything else. That has an ID that is not knowable by anyone. And then there's a third database which is effectively a crosswalk database that allows us to be able to evaluate that the right records are going into the right place. So hopefully we'll be able to make available the raw data of student's MCAS results across the specifics of their demographic information to researchers, policy makers and other people while preserving the privacy and confidentiality of individual student results.

Mr. Peyser: Presumably the state can merge the two together. I assume it has to for the MCAS results, it produces a report with a name on it.

Mr. Nadeau: Yes. The second piece is there will be a student data filter. In Massachusetts, unlike Florida, Texas and other states, we don't believe that we have the context, the local context in which we could mandate a specific software package for every single school district. So what we are doing is allowing school districts to continue to use whatever administrative system they currently have, collect their report card information and everything else and publish all of their information, and they will then export their data into a data filter which will then send the data up to the state. So that's the student information management system. We'll be rolling out those two pieces this year. Second piece, the district information management system, we have 250,000 pieces of paper that go between us and school districts every single year. It currently takes between four and fourteen months from the time we send out a survey for any question that the Board might have or other policy members might have until we get back the information in clean enough form that we can actually issue a report. With web-based Smart Forms where the district goes on line, puts the information right in, it's validated at the point of key strokes, goes right into a database so we can report it, we go from four to fourteen months down to forty-eight hours. We have done this successfully already with four Smart Forms we have rolled out. We started with the technology plan update. By the next day after the deadline, instead of waiting months and months and months to key in all the information, go back and forth with the districts, that doesn't add up right, call them, say, Your information isn't right, back and forth like that, the next day we are able to issue a report on it. So that will be a tremendous benefit to all the types of information that policy makers want while saving districts who already feel the burden of having entirely too much paper being requested of them. So that's the information management system, that's an example of where we believe technology today has a concrete impact on driving Education Reform. T

he second piece going backwards now, tools for teachers. Teaching is the only profession in America that hasn't benefitted from the technological wave of two generations ago, the telephone. If any of us can imagine trying to communicate with our peers or doing anything else without access to a telephone, you can see why people report the isolation of the classroom being one of the primary reasons why good ideas don't flourish in education. It turns out the telephone isn't actually the best technology. E-mail is. As Reed Hundt, the former head of the FCC, says, e-mail is the killer, and for teachers it's the thing that makes technology worthwhile for teachers. We started last year with a program called MassEd.Net and we will provide teachers with E-mail

access where they normally will want it, which may be in their classroom, but they'll be very busy in the classroom and they'll want it principally in the morning and evening when they are home. So we offer this service to teachers. We have had 24,700 teachers register for their MassEd.Net accounts in the first eight months. This is the fastest growing Internet service provider in Massachusetts of all the public or private ISP's, and it's only available for Massachusetts educators. It's been a tremendous success which is going to revolutionize the way we communicate with teachers and communicate with each other.

Dr. Silber: Remember, you can spread error and folly with the speed of light just as surely as you can spread interest. (Laughter)

Mr. Nadeau: Fundamentally we do believe that free flow of ideas, that the truth will come out as the free flow of ideas is expanded.

Dr. Silber: Howard Stern has proved that. (Laughter)

Mr. Nadeau: So, for example, we're going to be developing an on-line database of lesson plans in which teachers can start to trade lesson plans. We are looking at different ways that the state can put filters on those lesson plans to be able to make a determination about the quality of lesson plans, but for starters we want to have some way we can transact them.

Finally, instructional technology. This is obviously the most important use of technology within schools. It's the most far-reaching and the most difficult. While there have been some initial surveys as recently as two weeks ago that connected proper use of technology with test scores on the NAEP, the national assessment program, we still believe that it is premature for the state to endorse one particular type of instructional technology over another. There are lots of surveys that are going around now but we are really in the absolute earliest stages of understanding what impact technology will have on the information intensive industry of education. We are putting out grants for rewarding best practices, so-called lighthouse sites, which have been identified by Vice President Gore last week when he was here in Boston, and we are beginning the process of trying to compare specific uses of instructional technology. So those are really where we are coming from on our thoughts about technology.

The piece that I have handed out talks about a cost model of what it cost to put technology into schools, the bottom half of the page, and basically it would cost $400 per student per year to put technology, with this model, into schools. The next page talks about where we are today which is that we believe that it need not cost districts $400 if we do things correctly. For example, procurement reform is a way to save districts a tremendous amount of money in their acquisition of technology, implementation of their local technology plans. So this shows in 1993 districts were spending an average of $30 per student, in FY 97 it was $137 per student on technology, and that we expect to keep going up until it plateaus at district expenditures of about $250 per year. A couple quick indicators where we are on this infrastructure, we went from 48th in the nation for computer/student ratio, which is just one measure of the amount of technology information out in schools, and with the new technology this year it puts us from between 34th and 31st. So there's a tremendous amount of advancement in the number of computers out there. Also, percentage of classrooms connected to the Internet, a year ago 25 percent, it jumped in one year to 44 percent putting us really on the forefront of our classrooms being connected. There is basic infrastructure which we believe is necessary before we can really expect teachers to fulfill the potential of what technology is capable of in the classroom. The third page talks about the elements in the Board budget request that have to deal with technology and a brief one paragraph on what each thing is. And then the final page talks about some of the other interesting initiatives that we are taking under the auspices of Massachusetts Community Network doing things like Youth Tech Entrepreneurs, which we'll be training high school schools in Malden to do support for the school, the On-Line Library, and other initiatives. That's it.

Mr. Peyser: Can I ask you a question about the graph on page 2, the spending graph? I have seen this before in prior years. My memory is it looks sort of the same. I'm wondering if in FY 99 those numbers which rise, including the Efficiency line, to $350 per pupil, is that's what's actually being spent in this current fiscal year or whether that's a projection from a prior year?

Mr. Nadeau: As is the case with data with the Department, the most recent data we have is

from the school year that ended not last July, but the July before.

Mr. Peyser: So FY 97 --

Mr. Nadeau: Is current data we have.

Mr. Peyser: And this graph would reflect that.

Mr. Nadeau: Yes.

Dr. Silber: When you spoke about the Internet access in the classroom now 44 percent, which classrooms is that? What percentage of high school classes have it, what percentage of middle schools have it, what percentage of elementary schools have it?

Mr. Nadeau: I don't have that data now. I could get that to you.

Dr. Silber: I think that would be important for us to get that data because one of the ways we are misusing funds is by focusing it on K-5 instead of concentrating on getting all the high schools and middle schools connected first.

Mr. Nadeau: One data that I do know is when you look at the percentage of teachers who have applied for MassEd.Net accounts, that it is very evenly distributed not just across gradespans but subject matter and, interestingly, years of experience within the classroom. So we are really kind of hitting all types of teachers all over the place with MassEd.Net accounts.

Ms. Crutchfield: Do we know what communities are involved with technology? Is there a breakdown of those demographics?

Mr. Nadeau: Yes. Last spring we published a report which looks district by district at the student ratio, percent of classrooms connected to the Internet and technology spending, and we put that information out to communities so they'd know where they stood as compared to state averages.

Dr. Schaefer: But that's a few years ago.

Mr. Nadeau: Frankly, it took us 14 months to collect that data. We then collected the update on the data and 48 hours later we were able to publish the new report.

Dr. Schaefer: So you do have something fairly recent.

Mr. Nadeau: Yes, and we are in the process right now, we did the last update on that and we'll have the most current as of September information available probably by the November Board meeting, we'll have that information available because actually we close our collection cycle October 31. So we'll test it to see if we get the information closed by October 31 for your Board meeting in November.

Ms. Crutchfield: November 10.

Mr. Nadeau: No problem.

Mr. Peyser: Among the Smart Forms I guess you said there are four Smart Forms out there and in use. Is one of those the schedule 19 form or the October financial enrollment report?

Mr. Nadeau: Yes. The October financial report. Not the schedule 19. Schedule 19 is end of the year financial package which is electronic but not on line. It's submitted in spread sheets so there is a cumbersome process of going through the spread sheets, extracting them, putting them in

the database and going back and forth to districts. We don't yet have plans to automate that system because there is a question about whether or not we ought to be automating that or replacing it with a wholly different standardized accounting package across every single school district. There's Coopers & Lybrand's package being used in Maryland. For those of you using Quicken, it's kind of the equivalent of Quicken for schools, so is gives a transactional characterization of financial data.

Mr. Peyser: At the moment the financial reporting through schedule 19, that's sort of up in the air in terms of the application of the web-based format for reporting that data? In terms of the October enrollment reports, are those now being made by Smart Forms?

Mr. Nadeau: Yes.

Mr. Peyser: Is that true for all districts or only some, or what's the rollout plan?

Mr. Nadeau: We are doing it now so I will by the November meeting give you a participation rate on that if you'd like. In the next update we got 93 percent participation at deadline which is tremendous when you compare it to the average which is 18 percent at deadline with paper-based forms.

Mr. Peyser: Does that mean, let's say it's due on the 31st of October, that by November 15 or indeed by November 2, you're able to produce an enrollment report for the entire state assuming a hundred percent participation?

Mr. Nadeau: Absolutely.

Mr. Peyser: So we can do that essentially now.

Mr. Nadeau: I'm not sure what the deadline on foundation enrollment is now, but we can produce a report on that information the next day.

Mr. Peyser: Thank you.

Dr. Silber: If there are no other questions, then we will move to the next item on the agenda. Thank you very much. Next item is update on Lawrence.

Commissioner Driscoll: There are a few things, Mr. Chairman, and hopefully there will be plenty of work for the subcommittee that you named because we are asking under the agreement that Lawrence Public Schools must present to us their plans and their progress, so we are in that process. First of all, since our last meeting I'm pleased to announce that there was an agreement signed between the Lawrence Teachers Union and the Lawrence School Committee so, in fact, they have a contract. You may have read there were some problems with the teachers contract. The thing that we are pleased about is that it includes a couple things.

First of all, it's a very significant salary increase for the teachers. In fact, the ultimate salary increase was seven percent. It's for a one-year contract. However, in addition, you may remember that the Lawrence teachers have the shortest school day of anyone around. They in fact start their school day when the students enter the building and they end their school day when the students end their school. Very unusual situation. Now, it has some history to it, but be that as it may, the school committee did get time before and after school, the superintendent was able to get 21 hours of professional development that is being directed by the superintendent, that replaces a system whereby the individual teacher decided what he or she wanted to do for theirs, and it was 18 hours. We did add one school day to the school year. New hires must go through a three-day orientation program at no additional compensation. They did provide a $400 stipend for all teachers to be able to take a graduate level course as long as -- and they would be reimbursed up to $400 as long as they earned a B or better. And then finally, in cooperation with the Department of Education, Juliane and I asked that there be a number of commitments made by the teachers to specific action plans as they address high school accreditation, as they address the language acquisitions, language acquisition for students, which

is going to be all part of their report to us. So I think on balance, it's a good agreement, because it not only -- it gives them -- and by the way, they were behind neighboring communities in terms of salaries, but it also builds in a good deal more time, and so that was voted.

Dr. Silber: What about the management rights? Is the superintendent and the principal free to hire on the basis of their assessment the best qualified candidate or are they encumbered by contract rules that specify having to go inside the system first on the basis of seniority?

Commissioner Driscoll: No, they don't have a seniority clause in that regard. For all things being equal, they have seniority, but the superintendent and/or principals are free. In addition, I should have added that the superintendent did get additional management rights, if you will, with respect to reorganizing the high school. The current contract would have or the former contract would have tied the hands of the superintendent all the way up to arbitration and they waived that in order to allow the superintendent to make significant changes, reorganize with consultation with the union, but not so as to tie her hands. So that was a significant -- that I should have mentioned, that was a significant provision. People recognized there has to be changes at the high school, both structurally and personnel. The only other thing I would like to mention is that we were successful in getting legislation passed which is allowing the Lawrence Public Schools to put aside any monies at the end of the year if they are able to stay within the five percent that's allowed for Ed Reform, those monies can go, according to the legislation, towards new buildings, and that's very significant in Lawrence. From a community that's lost over a billion dollars in property value in the last six years, they have no ability at all in the city to provide even the ten percent that they are required to come up with. We were able to effectuate a savings of $3.9 million in the last fiscal year and that, according to the legislation, can go towards their share of new buildings. So they certainly should be able to start construction fairly soon, we are looking for a plan by them in the next six weeks, and so that will -- as you remember, there are 1,700 -- their population is they are overcrowded by more than 1,700 students and they have a number of buildings that are pre-1900. They have, as the Chairman saw, deplorable situations in the classroom, so we are hoping to see a building program put before us very soon.

Dr. Schaefer: Does Lawrence have many empty new buildings, I think it probably does, that could be renovated?

Commissioner Driscoll: They do have -- and I know you had success in Worcester in that regard, I do think that some of the space that is available has been looked at. The Lawrence Public Schools did put out a prospectus so they are looking at that as well, but I think clearly the sites that the city owns are better suited for, are better suited for the kind of schools and facilities they will need and the mills that they have are not.

Dr. Schaefer: It's just it's a lot faster and cheaper and it should be looked at very carefully.

Commissioner Driscoll: Absolutely.

Mr. Peyser: Also, in the theme of looking at very carefully, the extent to which this one-time waiver, if you will, of allowing Lawrence to use accumulated surpluses up to the five percent limit for construction purposes or for facilities purposes, whether in fact that makes sense to generalize more broadly in terms of looking at Lawrence's experience over the next year in its application of those funds. It may make sense for us to relax the rules in the use of those funds for more districts if not all districts, so I would be very interested in getting your view on how that works, mechanics and pitfalls and opportunities.

Commissioner Driscoll: I agree and, of course, it's statutory changes, not something we can do.

Mr. Peyser: Right.

Dr. Silber: Now we go to the grant section.

Commissioner Driscoll: If you will, Mr. Chairman, with the Board's indulgence I would like

to add two grants. The first are two breakfast programs that have just come on line, and we have recommendations on those. One is a school breakfast demonstration project and the other is a universal school breakfast program. And as you know, there's been studies to show how significant serving school breakfast can be. And also the gifted and talented which really should have been before you. You had before you the portfolio grants which had already been awarded. So it should have been the gifted and talented, so I apologize for that. So I'm looking for the school breakfast demonstration project, the universal school breakfast and the gifted and talented.

Dr. Silber: If the school breakfast program is universal, why do we need the other one? In other words, what is the meaning of universal in this one?

Commissioner Driscoll: It would be for all students. So we have the eight programs that have --

Dr. Silber: All in favor?

All: Aye.

Dr. Silber: Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Driscoll: How about these? These are all taken care of? Are these special occasions?

Dr. Silber: They just all voted unanimously.

Ms. Crutchfield: Usually we do a blanket vote for grants.

Dr. Silber: You bet it all.

Ms. Crutchfield: Done the whole thing.

Dr. Silber: Now we come to our sports -- mailbag. The first two are letters that we received from the Southbridge School Committee and from the Fitchburg State College. And from Sudbury, essentially endorsing things that we are doing. We are very pleased to have those votes of confidence from those various organizations. We then have a letter from Professor Allen Rudnitzky of Smith College concerning our Massachusetts teachers test of communication and literacy, and I think it is worth commenting on some of the objections that he is raising. First of all, over 99 percent of all tests that are given in our schools from kindergarten through graduate schools and universities are validated on the basis of the professional judgment of the person who has designed the test. If you have to have some kind of nationwide or district-wide evaluation of every test that's given, the school system will screech to a halt.

I suspect we have answered many of the concerns Professor Rudnitzky has by the recent publication of that report by NES which gives samples of every aspect of that particular test including the specific dictation example that we use from the Federalist papers, so we understand there are not 130 subordinate clauses in that very short paragraph and other scare reports that were given. But the validation of the test, he writes, must go beyond mere approval of objectives. Ours certainly has, it's been done with regard to content on how you measure those objectives. He says, I can imagine vastly different tests that claim to measure these objectives. Of course. If you want to know do people understand the meaning of the parts of speech, you can ask about three parts of speech. You don't have to ask about all nine. You could have one test that asks about nouns and verbs and another that asks about prepositions and adjectives on the theory that if they are preparing for this test and they don't know which of the nine they'll have to define, they'll know them all.

This is a principle behind all testing. So obviously there are a variety of ways in which one can structure a test to find out if people understand English grammar and can read correctly and can write correctly. A spelling test doesn't have to have 16,000 words in it to find out whether they

can spell in English. You can have a test with 20 words and get a fair idea. So he says that a full validation effort looks at concurrent and construct validity of this test. If you would translate that into English, we'll try to respond to it. Are there any other comments that anyone wants to make before we adjourn?

Mr. Peyser: On the mailbag?

Dr. Silber: On the mailbag. Yes, that's correct, the only item we've got left.

Mr. Peyser: I'm not sure of the source of the Thinking K-16 memo, but I think it is excellent and also points towards a couple of the sources of what seem to be the most promising research in the area of measuring value added on the part of school systems and teachers in particular. The one paragraph I would point out in here is one that states the large scale, page 6 of Thinking K-16, under Teaching Skill, The large-scale studies we have reviewed are not particularly helpful in identifying ways to quantify teaching expertise. Neither education courses completed, advanced education degrees, scores on professional knowledge sections of licensure exams nor, interestingly, years of experience seem to have a clear relationship to student achievement. And I think just in the context of our discussions around certification, recertification, process of essentially establishing thresholds for teachers, that we ought to take this cautionary remark into account. There really is no evidence demonstrating that anything that we are doing in terms of the more traditional forms of teacher preparation are shown to work. They may work on small scales and individual cases, but as a statistical matter across the Board and across the broad spectrum of teaching in schools, there does not seem to be more of a correlation. So we should approach all of this, I think, with the requisite humility.

Dr. Silber: Do you know who did prepare this?

Commissioner Driscoll: Yes. This came from The Education Trust which was listed on the back page.

Dr. Silber: Oh, yes. Education Trust. Just didn't get to the last page.

Mr. Peyser: Actually, I was wondering who had the foresight to include it in the materials.

Commissioner Driscoll: I had the foresight.

Mr. Peyser: Congratulations.

Ms. Crutchfield: Thank you.

Dr. Schaefer: If we are finished with the mailbag, I would just like to go back to something that we discussed earlier in the meeting for just a moment. Is that okay?

Dr. Silber: Sure.

Dr. Schaefer: On the scoring of the MCAS, one thing that the teachers did not mention, which I think is important, is in the process two teachers scored each paper and then if there was disagreement, they had to concur. Also in the course of the process the table leader was constantly checking, and then the room leader would constantly check to validate that they were all still on the same wavelength. And I think that this should give the process, should give reassurance to parents in particular that these tests were taken very seriously by those who graded them, and then that while there is some subjectivity, obviously, in everything, that they did as careful a job that they did in this and I think that should be noted.

Dr. Silber: Thank you very much. If there are no further items to come before the Board or

comments to be made, I will vote that the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54.

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

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Driscoll
Secretary to the Board