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Board of Education Regular Meeting

Minutes

Wednesday, July 1, 1998

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Of The Board Of Education Present:

Dr. John Silber, Chairman, Brookline
Dr. Edwin J. Delattre, Boston
Mr. William K. Irwin, Wilmington
Dr. Stanley Z. Koplik, Boston
Mr. James A. Peyser, Dorchester
Dr. Roberta R. Schaefer, Worcester
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington
Ms. Rebecca Urbach, Chairperson, Student Advisory Council, Falmouth
Mr. Frank W. Haydu III,
Commissioner of Education, ad interim

Members Absent
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Vice Chairperson, Southwick

Also Present:
Maryellen Coughlin
Registered Professional Reporter

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

Interim Commissioner Haydu: I have just a few comments I would like to make. The first is, I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Education, in particular the senior staff that includes David Driscoll, Rhoda Schneider, Carole Thomson, Jeff Nellhaus, Carol Gilbert, Juliane Dow and a lot of other folks that I work with every day, for allowing me into your lives. I've tried to be a good steward for the Department of Education senior staff, and I will regret not being here every day with you. I would like to also thank the thousands of teachers and principals and superintendents and educational-school professionals that have allowed me to chat with them and to learn through their eyes what we need to do as a group of professionals to cause educational reform to move forward. Education reform comes down to the interaction between students and teachers in a classroom. That is the reason to focus on the quality of our teachers. It is also the reason we are focusing on what is being taught through our curriculum. If we do not allow our master teachers and master principals a seat at the policy table, we short-change our opportunity to cause systemic change. Again, I want to thank you all. At this point I guess I would like to turn the meeting over to Dr. Silber, and I hope that David Driscoll will stand in my place as commissioner when this Board perhaps puts him in that place. But the Chair has suggested that it probably is best for this meeting to go forward and that I not be in this chair. So I thank you very much. And I will be returning to private life, and I will not be commenting any further because for the next month or so I will be in New Hampshire on vacation, and I will not be participating during that time at all in any political discussions with anybody, because I really do

believe there are very serious issues that need to be discussed, and this is nothing more and nothing less than my personal view, that I believe in a bottoms-up style, and I believe others believe this needs to be done in a top-down kind of way. And the individuals that sit on this Board of Education, I've tried individually to tell each of them that I believe all of them individually believe very strongly in the need for education reform and the need to do what's right for kids. I do have concerns, however, about the way this Board functions. And I've tried to raise in a positive way that discussion to the policy table, but I will have no further comments on this issue certainly during the next thirty days. Thank you.

Chairman Silber stated: All right. I want to thank Frank Haydu for the contributions he has made since March when he was appointed, and I'm sure that the Board joins me in that expression of appreciation. I called this meeting at the request, but I guess we are without a commissioner, so ---

Dr. Schaefer: Mr. Chairman, at this point I would like to make a motion that the Board vote for Dave Driscoll to be the Interim Commissioner of the Department of Education.

Dr. Thernstrom: And I second that motion, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Irwin: Mr. Chairman, before we go any further, to make this exactly legal, I think we should take a vote of the Board. That needs a two-thirds vote in the beginning in order to take this vote on the Commissioner. I understand what we are doing but ---

Chairman Silber: I am very happy to do that. There are two ways in which we can do the vote. One is on its being an emergency. Why not armor-plating on a vote? How many approve setting aside the bylaw that requires three days notice of the agenda of a meeting before a vote can be taken? How many in favor?

(The Board members unanimously agree.)

Chairman Silber: We unanimously vote to waive the by-law restriction, and we will now move ahead. I think we know Mr. Driscoll very well. We probably don't need a lengthy discussion. I believe you are ready for a vote.

Dr. Thernstrom: We are ready for a vote, I'm sure, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Silber: All in favor? The motion was made by Roberta Schaefer and seconded by Abigail Thernstrom.

(The Board members unanimously agree.) **Chairman Silber :** It was a unanimous vote. **Dr. Thernstrom:** Welcome to the Board.

Comments From The Chairman

Chairman Silber: I called this meeting at the request of Governor Cellucci, who is with us this morning. He asked the Board reconsider its vote that set the passing grade on the teacher certification test one Standard Error ofMeasurement lower than the standard proposed by a panel of teachers, administrators and college faculty who had been appointed to set the passing grade. This request by the Governor has been interpreted by Commissioner Haydu and bycandidates in the governor's race as political interference by the Governor and improper political pressure on the Board.

Let's get the simple facts straight: A request is not a demand. If the members of the Board do not agree that the higher standard - modest as it is - is appropriate, they will simply tell the Governor no. If I had not believed that the board erred in setting the lower standard, I would have told the Governor that I could not support his request. Instead I said that I would support his request, because at the last meeting I had voted twice for the standards set by the panel and argued vigorously in favor of their standard and against the lower standard recommended by

Commissioner Haydu. Commissioner Haydu continually referred to the concerns of the field and his fear that the higher standard - modest though it was - would fail 59 percent of the test-takers, giving rise to a counter-movement that might invalidate the test altogether. Four members of the Board, including myself, were insistent on the higher standard and held that it was not the prospective teachers or colleges from which they were graduated that should be our concern. Rather, we held that our proper concern was for the welfare of the children in our schools, who have the right to well-prepared teachers, and to the taxpayers who are paying for their education. Four other members of the Board favored the lower standard, some sharing the view of the Commissioner, others deferring to the Commissioner's view. One member who favored the higher standard was out of state and did not vote. The Governor could correctly conclude that if all members had been present a majority would have favored the higher standard. When I was unable to persuade any one of those favoring the lower standard to accept the higher one, I changed my vote to accept the lower standard in order to avoid an impasse which would have left us with no standard at all. I said at the time that it was a compromise that I did not like, but that a low standard was better than no standard at all. Our failure to set a standard could have resulted in certifying over 1,000 applicants who failed the examination at the higher level or over 700 who failed at the lower level. Thus I acceded to Governor Cellucci's request, not out of pressure, but out of my own and often-stated position that the higher standard was the appropriate standard. Let us be honest. I don't believe there is a single person in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who thinks that the Governor -- or anyone else for that matter -- could pressure me into doing anything that I didn't believe was right. Neither I nor the Governor is going to ask the members of this Board to vote contrary to their own beliefs and convictions. I hope the Board will vote for the higher standard but the decision is up to the members of this Board.

Other misconceptions have been raised in the media that call for correction. I am a Democrat, but I have not endorsed or contributed to any candidate in the governor's race because I consider it inappropriate in my position, in which I must serve the public at the request of the governor without regard to the party with which he is affiliated. Although I am a Democrat, I was appointed by a Republican, Governor Weld, who asked me to serve, and then by Governor Cellucci, who asked me to serve. And Governor Weld asked me to serve, as he stated publicly, because of the vision and determination I had shown in the transformation of Boston University. In appointing me he said he wanted an education czar, someone that would not be watching the polls or the weathercock but who would get the job done. He did not ask me to rubberstamp the decisions of the Department of Education. He did not ask that I indiscriminately compliment teachers, schools or colleges of education or any other group, but that I improve them. He also asked for my recommendations for members of the Board who were not selected by specific constituencies such as the Chancellor of Higher Education, the labor representative, or the student representative. I recommended Roberta Schaefer, Abigail Thernstrom, Ed DeLattre and Jim Peyser. I did not ask any one of them if they agreed with me on all educational issues, and so far none of them have. I only knew these were highly intelligent persons knowledgeable on issues relating to education, and I wanted a strong, dedicated Board of such persons. That is the board we have. Now, this is a fractious, argumentative Board. Why? Because we deal with difficult, controversial subjects on which feelings run high and issues are confused and complex, about which reasonable people of goodwill can disagree, and of special importance because the law requires that we meet and discuss all these issues in public. But I reject out of hand the charge leveled by political candidates and, I am sorry to say, by my friend Commissioner Haydu that this Board is dysfunctional and without effective leadership. After our prolonged and sometimes rancorous discussions, we have come together again and again, either unanimously or with a strong majority, to advance the cause of education reform. Each year we have submitted our budget recommendations to the legislature, unanimously placing the highest priority on increasing substantially the support of early childhood education and charter schools.

We rejected frameworks in the language arts and history and social sciences and began the long, difficult task of revising them. These frameworks were completed months ago, are now in place and represent major improvements. We instituted literacy tests for third graders, giving us the first statewide benchmark on reading competence of children in the third grade. We proceeded with the MCAS and administered the test this spring in grades 4, 8 and 10. Members of the Board were heavily involved in revising the MCAS examinations. And this involvement of the Board in the work of education reform directly with the Department of Education, far from bringing improper, is precisely what is required if we are to raise standards. The board also unanimously in refusing to accept -- the board was also unanimous in refusing to accept an acting superintendent as the permanent candidate for the position in Lawrence and successfully negotiated an agreement with the City Council of Lawrence by which we worked together to

improve the Lawrence schools. We participated in the selection of the new permanent superintendent, who could not have been appointed without our support, and that candidate was interviewed by members of the Board and endorsed by a large majority. And perhaps most important in terms of the contribution of this Board to education reform, we met on November 18th, 1996, that is November 18, 1996, and voted unanimously to authorize the commissioner to announce that, and I quote, "all candidates for teacher certification under General Laws Chapter 71, S.38G, shall be required, as of January 1st, 1998, to pass, shall be required as of January 1st, 1998, to pass a two-part certification examination covering communication and literacy skills and the subject matter knowledge for the certificate; provided further that the Board authorizes the commissioner to proceed in accordance with state procurement requirements to select a test vendor by October 1st, 1997, for this purpose." Please note that the Board voted unanimously and widely publicized this vote that candidates for teacher certification would have to pass, not merely take, this two-part examination. On December 15th, 1997, Commissioner Antonucci reported to the Board that he selected National Evaluation Systems to develop and administer the teacher test. Several members of the Board and selected teachers and professors worked tirelessly with NES in developing the content of these examinations. In addition, several members of the Board reviewed the examinations to assess their adequacy and fairness. And in doing this work, we worked hand-and-hand with staff of the Department of Education. On January 21st, 1998, Commissioner Antonucci mailed official notice of the teacher tests to all superintendents. On January 28th, 1988, he notified all superintendents, educations deans, presidents of colleges and universities that public information meetings would be held across the state for the Massachusetts Teacher Test. In that same month, the Department of Education published a question and answer booklet on the Massachusetts Teacher Test. The booklet included the totally erroneous statement that candidates who take the tests on these dates, and I quote, "will satisfy the testing requirement automatically." This action by the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Education was not known to the members of this Board, but was in clear violation of the explicit wording of the vote we had passed unanimously in November, 1996. In February 1998, Commissioner Antonucci announced his resignation, and on February 18th, the Board appointed Frank Haydu Interim Commissioner effective March 2nd, 1998.

When I learned that the Commissioner and the Department of Education had misinformed the public by stating anyone that took the teacher certification test would automatically be certified, in violation of the Board's explicit position, I pointed out at the March 10, 1998 meeting of the Board that the brochure prepared by the Department of Education was incorrect in suggesting that the first certification tests would not count. I gave public notice of the vote of the Board of Education that candidates for certification must pass the test and that therefore the test would count this year. I added that anyone who thinks otherwise is operating under a false impression. On March 25th, Commissioner Haydu informed all candidates by letter that beginning with the April 4th tests, anyone that takes the test will be required to meet the qualifying score on each part. On April 2nd, 1998, Commissioner Haydu issued a statement on the matter of the teacher tests, and on April 4th, the teacher test was given. The establishment of this test and setting the proper standards for certification is, in my opinion, the most important contribution that this Board has made thus far to education reform. It is not of primary importance that we concern ourselves with the standard of teachers already in the field, for, with the expansion of the school-age population and the aging of our teachers, the teacher corps will be largely transformed over the next ten to fifteen years. By setting a progressively higher standard over time for admission to the teaching profession, we ensure that all future appointments will meet the threshold of competence. It must be understood that this criticism of one action by the Department of Education involving relatively few of its members is not a blanket condemnation of the Department of Education and its personnel. In the course of our work, the Board members and I have explicitly commented on and commended the outstanding contributions of the following members of the department, among others: Carole Thomson, Carol Gilbert, Juliane Dow, Jeff Nellhaus, Scott Hamilton, Robin McCaffery, Susan Wheltle, members of the printing staff, Margaret Cassidy and David Driscoll. And no one has attempted to tar and feather all teachers in the Commonwealth. No member of this Board has engaged in any such blanket condemnation. Moreover, no blanket condemnation of this sort has been issued by Governor Cellucci or any other candidate for governor. Education reform is not easy. The issues are inherently difficult, and implementation of objectives, involving as it does so many people and restricted as it is by so many regulations and state and national laws, makes progress inevitably slow. This Board has worked long and hard to achieve the progress we have thus far made, and I have not touched on all aspects of that progress in this brief overview. I hope today the Board will complete its work on the teacher certification test by setting the standard that was proposed by the panel of well-informed and experienced teachers, administrators and college professors who advised us on

where the passing grade should be placed. In doing so, they took into account that this was the first time the examination was offered, but they also recognized that there was nothing unusual about the test on communication skills and literacy in the English language. Anyone who has spent 16 years in school and college should be able to pass that test without any special preparation. Nevertheless, the panel set as the passing mark 78 percent correct items on the writing portion and approximately 75 percent on the other two aspects of the test. It is a good start, and it is reasonable for us to expect teachers to pass that exam at a much higher level. In the coming years I am confident that we will raise this standard step by step. In the meantime, I hope the Board today will vote to accept the standard proposed by the Panel. Thank you. I now want to introduce Governor Cellucci, who has requested the floor to address the Board on this issue.

Governor Cellucci addressed the Board: Thank you very much, Dr. Silber. I do appreciate the fact the Board has convened today. I want to congratulate David Driscoll on his appointment as the Interim Commissioner. You know, 36 years ago President Kennedy said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that challenge is one we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win." No one ever said that improving our public schools would be easy. It is hard. But I know that this Board has accepted the challenge. And I want to say at the outset that I want to thank the members of the Board of Education because I know how hard you have worked. I know how determined you are to achieve the promise of education reform in our state, and I know that you do this as volunteers, so I thank you. And I know I speak on behalf of parents and students and all of the citizens of our Commonwealth. And I also know you are kind of on the firing line right now, and I think you all know that this progress towards education reform is not without conflict; it's not without controversy; it's not without some stumbles. But I believe that if we stick to it, if we persevere, we are going to get there, and I believe that's what it's all about. I agree with Dr. Silber; we have made progress. No one likes to talk much about the progress we have made. But with my support and the support of the state legislature, we have committed billions of new dollars to local school districts from the state government. And those dollars are already working, particularly in urban areas, to lower class size, to buy textbooks, to buy computers. And there is a lot of kids that are already getting a better education because of that unprecedented investment in our schools. And we've established core curriculums and emphasized the basics. We have established the standards. And we have begun testing students for the first time. We have tested prospective teachers, which is what brings us here today.

So we have made progress, and I think something rather remarkable has happened. You know, I have been up in the state legislature and in the Lieutenant Governor's office and now the Governor's office for a little over 20 years, and the history of ed. reform bills is one of broken promises. The state legislature would pass it. The Governor would sign it with great fanfare. And in the first year it would be funded at 100 percent, and in the second year it might be 90 percent, and by the fourth or fifth year it might be down to 50 percent. That has not happened with the 1993 law. The state legislature, Governor Weld, myself, we have fully funded ed. reform. There is a remarkable consensus in the Statehouse, and it is not a partisan consensus. It is Democrats and Republicans who have said with their votes that this is important for our children, and this is important for our future, and we put the money up. We've sent those dollars back to local school districts. And what the state legislature and what I have asked for in return is an accountability. And how do we get accountability? I believe we get accountability by setting standards and by achieving those standards, that's what the standards are for our students, that's why we are testing in the 4th grade, in the 8th grade, in the 10th grade. We are going to know how every student is doing. We are going to know how every school is doing. And the goal here is to make sure the students achieve the standards. And how do we know if they have achieved the standards? We give them a test. And the same applies here for new teachers. We are saying we want to make sure when a new teacher goes into the classroom they are capable, they are competent, and that's why we decided we would test new teachers. I think we were all a little alarmed at these results of so many teachers, prospective teachers failing, and it caused me to say, what about the teachers we hired last year, what about the teachers we hired two years ago and three years ago? Don't we have an obligation to our students to make sure all of our teachers are competent? So I am going to file legislation so that as part of the recertification process teachers will have to be tested, and I was very clear when I announced last week, when I wanted to file that legislation, that I believe the vast majority of teachers in our public schools today are capable, are competent and will have no problem passing this test. But I believe we have an obligation to our students and to our future to make sure that all of our teachers are capable and competent. Now, the legislator may act quickly on that bill or they may not, but I think that there's some doubt about our commitment to ed. reform. I think the vote of the Board of

Education a little over a week ago, in isolation it might be able to justify it or say that it was appropriate. But when you look at it from the concept of we must hold all of our teachers to a high standard, and if you look at it in the perspective of moving ed. Reform forward, I believe that that vote should not stand. I believe that this Board has an opportunity today to send a clear message that when it comes to accountability, that we are going to insist on high standards for our students to achieve in the classroom and for our teachers before they go into the classroom, and that is why I wanted to stop by this morning. I wanted to thank the Board for your efforts, for the progress that we have made, and I do want to urge you to send a clear message to every city, to every town, to every school district in this state that we are going to hold the line on standards. It is how we will achieve the promise of education reform, and that promise is that we're going to make sure when every young person graduates from a high school in Massachusetts they have the skills they need to live and to work in today's world, so that they can have a good life in our state and future generations to follow. And we're also going to ensure that we have the skilled, educated work force that our economy needs to continue to grow and prosper and enable all of our citizens to have a good life. So I urge you to send that message today so that we can, in the words of John Kennedy, win this battle to improve our public schools and secure the future of Massachusetts. Thank you, Dr. Silber.

Chairman Silber: Thank you, Governor.

Dr. Thernstrom: Mr. Chairman, I move we raise the standard for the passage of the certification test to that which was initially set by the education panel. Obviously I need a second on that motion.

Dr. Koplik : I second.

Chairman Silber: It has been moved by Abigail Thernstrom. It has been seconded by Stanley Koplik.

Dr. Thernstrom: And I would like to talk to the motion, explain my vote here. Look, this was a tough call from the outset. Those of us who voted -- I think most of us who voted as we did were on the fence. I voted to lower the standard out of deference to Commissioner Haydu because it was suppose to be his call to begin with. He brought it to the Board, although he did not have to.

Chairman Silber: Abigail, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I want to call to your attention that there are several people who would be heard from in statements from the public, and you might prefer to -- you made the motion, you put it on the table, but you might prefer to delay your remarks.

Dr. Thernstrom: Thank you. I'm terribly sorry. I should have looked at the agenda probably.

Governor Cellucci: I'm very grateful for this opportunity. Again, I thank the Board for all of your hard work.

Statements From The Public

Kathleen Kelley, President of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, addressed the Board on the issue of teacher testing. She stated: Massachusetts Federation of Teachers' position on this issue is that we have always been in favor of the highest possible standards for teachers entering our profession. It is critical that that indeed happens. That has been the position of my national organization and the position of all the locals that I represent. In 1985 under the ed. reform act, I testified as the MFT legislative representative in favor of teacher entry-level testing. That position remains the same today. It remained the same in 1993 when the last ed. reform law was passed. In the 1960s and 1970s, teachers did take tests. I took a two-day test in order to enter the system of Boston. And let me make one other pertinent remark about the districts. Not only have they required tests in the past for entering teachers; districts set up their own screening and interview process for teachers. Just because a teacher passes a test does not mean they are going to get a job in a district. Now, let me come to the crux of the matter and what has generated enormous controversy and more heat than light. This was a very difficult decision that was put before the Board, to weigh all of the issues. The standards are very important issues. What the Board did is,

they considered recommendations of staff and testing experts of which, by the way, I am not one, that recommended that some trial testing be done to test the validity and reliability of these tests and to be fair to the candidates that were taking them. There was concern about experience in other states that was raised, legitimate concerns, because a number of states have had experience with lawsuits, and the Board, I think, was taking that into account. The process was flawed. There was misinformation, unfortunately, given out to the field; and teachers, prospective teachers, did not understand all of the rules of this particular administration. And the validity of the tests, I think, has to be critical.

Now, one other point I want to make about these tests and what I have read in the papers. The people who didn't spell and didn't use grammar correctly and couldn't write a complete sentence would not pass under either standard that this Board discussed at the last meeting. They wouldn't have passed. But the impression has been given that that indeed would happen. There were some people on the borderline. There were some people that the Board decided to give leeway to, and the one Standard Error of Measurement lower was used. Other states have used far lower. Now, I think the Board has had a discussion on the standards that I think is an important one, but I want to talk to you about attracting teachers to the profession and retaining teachers in the profession, and could question high standards for the teaching profession is incredibly important for the future of public education in this Commonwealth and across this country. It is a crisis that is confronting every single state across this nation. Attracting teachers into the profession and, more importantly, retaining them because the figures, the latest figures that we see, is that in the first five years, teachers leave. Forty percent leave in the first five years. So not only do we have to look at attracting the best and brightest into our classrooms; we have to think about how we are going to retain them. And that means looking at other aspects of the ed. reform law that many of the policy-makers are ignoring, and that means a induction program and a mentoring program and a strong system of evaluation. Those kinds of programs are necessary to be put in place. Certainly others are important: the loan-forgiveness program that has been lost in the shuffle. And other kinds of programs which a number of school districts have looked into must be proposed and implemented immediately. Now, the future of ed. reform, as the chairman said, is very, very complex and demanding work. It requires calm, rational deliberation. Decisions that this Board make and that we make out in the field must be based on solid evidence and experience. But above all, the dialogue must be of a caliber that sheds light on the issues, and not heat. I am going to disagree with the Chair. I am a person who loves debate, who loves to listen to different viewpoints and feel that we learn from one another, and I learn the most from people who disagree with me. I do think that rancor and disrespect is not appropriate in discussions and deliberations about issues of this kind of importance. And that, I think, has occurred over the course of time. The teachers I represent are not perfect, but they are working day in and day out. Constructive criticism, challenges to us to do better and to constantly improve are welcome. We are the solution to this issue; we are not the problem. We want to join with people who are committed to making sure that we ensure excellence in every school and that we raise student achievement across this Commonwealth. That is a commitment I have made. That's why I'm not on a beach right now, but I am in the Board of Education, because I consider the deliberations that we do here, but most importantly what my members do in the field day in and day out, is what's going to make education succeed. Thank you for your attention to my remarks.

Mr. Peter Finn: I'd like to preface my remarks by indicating I am representing an association that has long asked for and supported the implementation of teacher-testing programs, who frankly supports the standards that were recommended by the panel, but who also thinks that the vote taken at the last Board meeting was a reasonable and prudent vote, and that I think the Board has been unfairly criticized and, hopefully, will not be unfairly stampeded into changing. The first thing I would like to point out is that the numbers are relatively minor that we are talking about in terms of the two standards under discussion, and I'm talking only about the literacy and communications tests because we haven't seen the kinds of information on the subject-area tests that would allow comment. But on the literacy test there are three sections, and what we are talking about in the first section is between getting 25 right and getting 28 right. And the other sections that deal with writing, the difference is whether you get 16 or 17 points in one section or 15 or 17 points in another section. And I think the feeling is that the panel set very reasonable standards. But frankly, who is to say that the same panel meeting on another day might not have set a standard that was somewhat higher or lower. The fact of the matter is, as we looked at the results with many other people, there were clearly a group of students who should have passed and clearly a group of students who should have failed. And frankly, to me, the failure rate and the level of the performance of the failures was appalling. My comment was "shame on us" for graduating them from high school, shame on colleges for graduating them

from colleges. But there were a group of students in the middle that even those of us who looked at the results had some discussion about whether this is a passing mark or not. And one of the comments that a number of people made was, well, if this were an English teacher, no way is it a passing score. But if this is a high-school physics teacher or if this is a teacher in one of the trade programs, maybe it is not important they got a definition of a part of speech or their summary is not written in exactly correct English, and maybe for this time, this one examination, we ought to err on the side of caution because those may be corrections that could have been made by this student if they had known exactly what they were going to be asked to do and had some time to do it. So I think there was some prudence in making the decision you made, and I would hope you would not automatically jump to invalidate that decision. I can't say that about the subject-area tests. Frankly, we haven't seen them, and I would be less likely to find a need to find that someone could be less prepared on a subject-area test. You either passed that or didn't. Finally, I would like to comment on something Kathy just brought up, and that's what I consider, not necessarily by this Board, the very unfortunate and unfair teacher-bashing that's taken place as a result of legitimate questions about the decision made at the last meeting. There has been a leap by some to bash teachers because of poor performance by students who would like to be teachers. There has been an unfortunate labeling by some people that has extended, whether intended or not, to people in the field, and I was very happy to hear the Governor's comments about his feeling about teachers today. You need to remember, receiving certification is not a guarantee of a job. Less than half of people, probably, in any year, whether we had the test or not, didn't end up in the classroom that fall. Most school districts have an oral interview, a writing sample, and in many cases even classroom demonstrations. So there are certainly procedures in place to ensure that the people we get in classrooms are qualified, and I think the people that you do have teaching in the classrooms would not have a problem passing this test. And, finally, one of the most disturbing remarks to be made out of this whole thing was I think something Kathy just referred to which said the people in the field are the problem not the solution. There will not be a solution without the people in the field. Speaking for our association, we have tried to be part of the solution from the beginning of the education reform movement. We'll continue to try to be that solution and look forward to working with the Board towards that end.

Stephen Gorrie (President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association): As far as the decision today that you were going to make regarding the prospective teachers' certification exam, I think the decision is yours and yours only. What we would like to emphasize as an organization and as individual practicing teachers in the classroom, and I am one, a fourth-grade teacher from Winchester, is that we too want the best possible teachers in the classroom, with high performance standards and accountability to raise student achievement. The students in this Commonwealth deserve no less. It is rather unfortunate the distraction that has been laid in the path of ed. reform by the recent events surrounding the prospective-teacher test or the new-teacher test, how people have made the quantum leap, if you will, from there to teachers that are already in the classroom. And if your concern is very deep about putting the best in the classroom, and I believe it is, then we must continue that road of high standards, but it should be noted that -- and I think this was alluded to earlier today -- that a prospective teacher test has been on the books since 1985 with Chapter 188, and of course was never implemented until this year of 1998. And in that 13 years, that's about 20,000 teachers that have gone into the classroom that may have been tested properly under an ed.reform act of high standards.

Chairman Silber: And that's 30 percent.

Mr. Gorrie: That's correct.

Chairman Silber: 64,000 teachers.

Mr. Gorrie: But those teachers that are in the classroom now that people have made that quantum leap to, as the Governor did in his press conference last week, say the vast majority of teachers are doing the job. There may be thousands that are not making the grade. I don't know what the difference is between thousands and vast majority, really throws a pall on the hard work that our teachers are doing in implementing ed. reform. They have worked very long and very hard, and they are dedicated, competent professionals. They have been working on curriculum design, restructuring the school day and countless other tasks. And this whole issue has become a distraction to them. They have a system that is in place already for evaluation as dictated by the law of 1993, and it is very, very disheartening making that leap from prospective to the practicing teacher. As a matter of fact, the law that dictates their performance standards is very rigorous. It

is also very fair and can weed out the incompetent teacher in the standards that have already been set. Most districts, in fact, have implemented a system that is more rigorous than called for by the state law. Again, we too want the best in the classroom. The decision is yours and yours only. We hope that the decision you make is the best for public education, but we also hope that we can get out of the finger-pointing and the leaps that have been made by the press about the teacher force in Massachusetts. And just one little footnote - I returned at three o'clock this morning from New Orleans where our national convention is being held, and state leaders that I met from the NEA around the nation were commenting on nothing but what's happening in Massachusetts; that this has been played out in the national papers, including *U.S.A. Today*, where again the press got it all wrong. But unfortunately, because of comments that have been made, that it was all teachers that were being talked about, it took five paragraphs, sometimes, into the article before you realized it was prospective teachers, and I think that is extremely unfortunate, and I hope we can get back on the road without the finger- pointing and sit down and stay the course of ed. reform.

Mr. Fred Balboni, (a teacher candidate from Revere): I'm saddened that you, Dr. Silber, have allowed politics to infect and impugn education in Massachusetts. You have paved the way for a myriad of politicians to spew their rhetoric and subsequently adulterate and exploit the educational system in this Commonwealth. Mr. Chairman, this is completely and totally unforgivable. If your intentions are truly not politically motivated, then your vote to accept Interim Commissioner Haydu's recommendation for a fair passing score would stand, and we would not be here this morning. If this issue is not being subjected to heinous political exploitation, then the media would not have been supplied any statistical information until all the test participants received their scores and Commissioner Haydu and his competent staff had an opportunity to determine the validity andfairness of the exam. If this issue is indeed not being manipulated as a political convention,then I am confident that Interim Commissioner Haydu would not have submitted his resignation to this Board. Shame on the Governor and shame on his colleagues in government for grandstanding on this sordid Sumerian period for education here in Massachusetts. I, nor the over 1700 other people that sat for the teacher test on April 4th, have received the results of our exams. Yet, we have been subjected to bashing in the media because you, Dr. Silber, have placed your political agenda before the cause of education in this Commonwealth. You, Mr. Chairman, appear to make your leadership decisions based upon the swing of the political pendulum, as evidenced by your recent flip-flops on standards and testing issues. Combined, this has caused many of us to suffer from unnecessary anxiety and stress. You and I both know, Dr. Silber, when experienced educators encounter a failure rate of 40 percent, never mind 59 percent, they look long and hard at their teaching methodology for the cause of their failure as an educator. They then scrutinize the testing instrument that they utilized as a testing vehicle. Once this period of reflection is complete, then they scale the exams according to the performance norm of all the test participants. The flawed exam is then discarded because it has been found to be invalid. This happens at Boston University where you once presided and are now Chancellor. This practice occurs in every elementary, middle, high school and college in this state and across this nation. At some point this common practice of testing validity was recognized by the Department of Education. This registration bulletin that I received indicates that the results of the first two administrations of the teacher test would be used for analysis in order to determine a fair score based on the average performance of exam participants. This standard educational practice was abruptly changed by this Board three weeks before the April 4th test date. Why? Because a political agenda was being abetted, and sound educational practice was being impugned. Why such poor test scores? I draw your collective attention to the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report by James Coleman. This document commissioned by Congress in 1964 and released in 1966, is commonly referred to as the EEO report. It carefully examines test performance amongst students. This infamous rumination on the effect of social economic status as a primary determinant of student achievement certainly provides probable answers for the high incidence of failure on the teacher test amongst minority populations. This may also provide significant insight for reflection and investigation once we know the demographic breakdown of the non-minorities that tested as well. Perhaps the Interim Commissioner had this study in mind when he recommended to the Board the bar be lowered for the first two test administrations. Whatever your contemplation, the Commissioner should be commended for his foresight and wisdom, not chastised for it. Dr. Silber, Honorable Members of the Board, stop, think about the ramifications of your actions today. Universally, no one in this room, in this state or in this world wants illiterate people teaching our children. You are charged with safeguarding education. Model yourselves as defenders of the educational process. You're educators, not politicians. Our job as educators is to facilitate learning. We must ensure that our students are caught, not taught. As teachers, we are charged with the momentous task of raising a generation of people that will make our society, our nation stronger. A major premise of ed.

reform in this state is to remove politics from education. Do not set a double standard and allow this August body to succumb to the vermin of political whim, and consequently the furtherance of someone's personal political agenda.

Mr. Richard Feinberg (Swampscott School Committee): I speak here simply as an individual involved in education. I rise to speak regarding expected reversal of the Board of Education on their vote regarding prospective teachers. My premise is, a test does not a teacher make. And in that regard, the teacher is the one vital necessity in the accomplishments of the great purpose for which our schools were established. A splendid building, however well equipped, does not constitute a school. Fill it with the best of the children of the community, and even then you do not have a school, probably nothing more than a mob. It becomes a school only when the teacher enters, and the kind of school it is to become depends upon the kind of teacher that takes charge. To all intents and purposes, then, the teacher makes the school. If she be neat and cleanly in dress and personal appearance, the children will be inclined in the same direction. If she have noble thoughts and lofty ideals, these will influence the character of pupils. If she be kind and thoughtful of others, firm but fair, accurate in thought and word, earnest, enthusiastic, cheerful, loyal, encouraging, happy, these all will find lodgement in the character of her children. When the excellent teacher enters the room, there enters a power for good, immeasurably greater than all the books and apparatuses it is possible to supply. Indeed these are useless without her. Teachers love their work and put their heart and soul into it. They aim at securing the attention and confidence of their pupils. And after securing these, hold on to them. They stimulate effort on the part of their pupils, and the work in their room goes on without friction. They do not expect all pupils to toe the same line, but they recognize the weaknesses of some and mental vigor of others, giving all just consideration. Dr. Silber, that was written in 1909, and it was submitted to the Town of Swampscott for their annual report by the then superintendent of schools. I could go on, but I think you get the point. A good teacher is so much more than a score on a test. Everyone in this room has had one of these types of teachers, and I'm sure you have never asked to see their college transcripts or their Graduate Record Examination scores. They were simply good teachers doing their job, as the very vast majority of teachers do every day, even as the society we live in gets tougher and tougher to deal with. I urge you to leave the pass/fail barrier the same, let the local school systems determine the teachers they want to hire. I can assure you we will do a better job than the state government will do. Finally, a tip of the hat to the commissioner who resigned on principle. Finally, I would like to say, in closing, I'm very disappointed in the Speaker of the House for using the word "idiot" in regards to the prospective teachers. As the gentleman said, we don't even know who has passed or failed yet. He probably should have listened to his wife, who told him that his words were inappropriate. It reminds me of Chairman Burton, from the House of Representatives, who called President Clinton a scumbag in dealing with the investigation by Kenneth Starr. His words hurt his cause. I urge the Board, leave the standard alone, let the local school committees, let the local superintendents. We'll select our teachers. We've done a good job. We've kept a pretty high standard. Let the pass and fail stay where they are and tinker with it as the tests come through future years.

Margaret Mckenna (President of Lesley College): Good morning. I come here this morning as a representative of Lesley College, an institution with a long and rich history of preparing able and committed teachers. Teachers today, in Massachusetts alone, affect hundreds of thousands of young people in a positive manner. Lesley is an institution where the vast majority of our teaching, preparing teachers, is in our graduate school of education. Many of those teachers are already certified to teach. And I come here concerned about our liability now, after discussion over the last couple of weeks, to convince young people in our undergraduate school to enter teaching or think about teaching rather than go into management or into a profession that has not received the same kind of criticism and badgering that teachers has in the last couple of weeks. Is there bad teaching? Absolutely. There is bad teaching at Lesley. There is bad teaching at BU. There is bad teaching at Harvard. There is bad teaching in the Boston schools. There is bad teaching everywhere, but it is a minority, and in the last couple of weeks the public has lost track of that. Certainly the press and national media have lost track of that in Massachusetts. There are screening mechanisms in place for teachers that don't exist in any other profession. Let's convince people to go into teaching rather than medicine or law. I am a lawyer when I pass the bar exam. About 50 percent of people pass the bar exam. In New York it was 40 percent. No one talked about law schools and preparing lawyers, as we are today. Certainly there is a lot of criticism, as I assure you there should be, but there hasn't been criticism of the lawyers as there has been with this test. In medicine, people talk about entering medicine. Try to get rid of a doctor who is not doing a good job. In ed. reform, there is a way to evaluate teachers. If that process is not a good one, let's fix that process. Let's not substitute a test which is a poor substitute for a real, true evaluation and a process to get rid of poor teaching. Let's go to the facts

for a minute. Standardized tests are not tests that get A, B, C, and it is -- everyone is talking about this test as if it were a C or D level. That's not what we were talking about. SATs, all tests like that, are standardized. The testing people pick a passing point to call pass or fail, not a C, not moving from a C to a D, but it as a passing point. I think it is incumbent upon us who are educators and the people in this room to start educating people about what we are talking about when we are talking about standardized testing. 44 states have tests. 38 of them use the same testing company, not Massachusetts. Let me just tell you what the process is in 44 states. The tests we're talking about today -- competency, literacy, reading, communications as we call it in Massachusetts -- is given in most states, the opportunity, at the end of the sophomore or junior year. Why? Because it is seen as a developmental tool. If in fact there are parts of it you don't pass, you have an opportunity to make up that gap while you are in college as an undergraduate. This is one of the few states that gives it to you as a gotcha: You finished your education, but you didn't do it well. It is supposed to be used as a developmental process, to ensure we have good teachers not just to weed out those at the end of the year who will not do well. Standardized tests are available, and they are developmental in their process. The Globe this morning said 30 to 60 percent fail around the country. That's not true. 30 to 90 percent pass, depending upon the states. Some states, it is over 90 percent, but there is hardly any states that do what Massachusetts does here. Look at the states that have tested teachers the longest with the national standardized tests, DC and Arkansas. Let's look at their school systems. This test, I haven't seen it. I don't know who has seen it. It was done in a hurried manner. I don't blame the people involved, but let's look at the company as opposed to the other 30 states that are doing this. This company's test has been challenged in every state it was given. It has been eliminated in a number of them. In one state a court found it fabricated its validation results. In every state it was given, there was a significant adverse racial impact which has not been remedied. This test we talk about, we talk about validating, again, we need to talk about what validation is. It is a scientific term of art. It is not something we throw around because people have looked at the content of this test. If I gave this test to the teachers of the year, where would they fall on the test? There is no disagreement about that, but what does this test -- it has not been validated, not in the way that anyone in education or in testing would rely on.

One other comment about standards: In the whole history of education -- look at California. You raise the standards. What happens next, unless there is a comprehensive plan put in place developmentally to use the test to make your teachers better, to make our schools better, training them, there will be waivers. 60 percent of the people in LA schools are teaching on waivers. They haven't passed the test, and they have no training. We keep talking about schools ofeducation. The majority, vast majority of people we are talking about who took this test did not go to a school of education, did not go to a college or university that even had a school of education. Students today are all liberal arts majors. They are in college and universities across this Commonwealth. They have chosen to take education courses. Those courses are delivered by an education department or a school of education. If you are an undergraduate, you are not in the school of education, except in a few places. So let's again correct what we're saying as educators and talk about what's really going on. These students, however they did on this test, which I haven't seen, are taking the same courses in terms of liberal arts as other students at Fitchburg State or Salem State or Emmanuel or Lesley. They are not taking different courses. So this is probably -- if this test were valid, this would be really an indication. We look at colleges and universities across the ---

Dr. Schaefer: Some statements were made about the testing company, and I was wondering if it would be appropriate at this point to know whether in fact what she said was correct.

Chairman Silber: Do you wish to respond, Mr. Gorth?

Mr. Gorth: I think the process that I described in detail to the members of the Board is a process for developing a test and validating it that is professionally acceptable. The testing program that was developed for your state was reviewed by educators in your state to ensure that all of the testing materials were appropriate for use in Massachusetts. Educators reviewed the scores and recommended qualifying scores to the Board that represent their best judgments of what educators in Massachusetts need to know to teach effectively in the public schools. I have a lot of confidence in these tests. I think they do what we were asked to do here in your state.

Dr. Schaefer: Well, first of all, is it the same test, similar test that's been used in the other states, and is it true that your tests have been challenged in every state where you have given

them?

Mr. Gorth: The communications and literacy skills test was developed for your state and is not similar to tests in other states. Your test is very, very rigorous and I think has lots of elements that we talked about in other Board, at the Board meeting that describes and explains why educators here in Massachusetts recommended the different components of that test, so that's a unique test here in your state. The content tests share elements with tests from other states. We have sets of test questions that we use. We develop some materials specifically for states, and there are specific requirements. Those tests have been validated in other states and used in other states. They have been validated here independently by Massachusetts education and I think are appropriate here for your state.

Dr. Thernstrom: Mr. Chairman, in any case, challenges to tests across the country are routine. I mean, it's, you know, not an issue.

Chairman Silber: Let's go to the central issue before the Board today, the Educator Certification Test. You have the floor, Abby, to develop your remarks following your introduction of the motion. All of you are aware of the motion.

Dr. Thernstrom: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for, I came into this room a little rattled this morning. Let me say just in a preliminary way, let me respond to two comments that were made in the public comment, one from Mr. Balboni and one from Margaret McKenna. Mr. Balboni referred to the mid 1960s report by James Coleman. One of the things he did, he's suggesting that how you do these tests simply reflects your social economic status. One of the things Mr. Balboni has not referred to is the fact that James Coleman subsequent to that report said there was one finding that he was reluctant to report at the time, and that was, and this is in print, he wrote it in an article subsequently, and that was there was the closest possible correlation between word smart teachers and student performances, that is vocabulary tests, how a teacher did on a certification test that assessed vocabulary was very closely or correlated with how the students in that teachers class would do, and that was an extremely important finding in that, as part of that, the inquiry that he headed up. Margaret McKenna referred to the D.C. certification test as somehow putting -- she put them on a pedestal. D.C. students of course are at the bottom of the barrel in terms of the national, in terms of the spectrum of proforma, the national scene in terms of their student performance. To go back to the question of raising the standard. As I started to say, look, this was a very tough call. Reasonable and credential people, in Peter Finn's words, could come down on either side of that line. I came down as I did for lowering standards in great part out of deference to Frank Haydu. This was suppose to be his call, the Commissioner's call. He did not have to bring it before the Board, and I felt an obligation to work with him, and I felt an obligation as a team player. Obviously he is no longer commissioner and that consideration is now off the table. I would not have voted at the time for the lower standard had I not known it was going to be raised in October, that was extremely important, I believed. I did not believe we were compromising standards. A legal issue was raised at the time about the vulnerability of the test were we to set the bar as high as thepanel recommended. At the time I had questions about that argument because I believed that there would be a challenge to the test no matter where we set the bar, that has been the experience of other states. And in fact in California the CBEST test, that was the longest running employment discrimination case in the country, but California did prevail, so I had doubts about it. Nevertheless, I did weigh what I understood to be the Attorney General's recommendation on that score. I did weigh that in the decision I made. Subsequently since then it has become clear to me that my initial take on that was correct, that we are equally vulnerable to a legal challenge, a legal challenge that I believe we can prevail on and always believed we could prevail on no matter where we set the bar, so that consideration is again off the table. I never thought -- it never occurred to me that the message we delivered in lowering the bar would be heard as a message of reduced commitment to high standards on the part of this Board. The messages we deliver are extremely important, and it was incorrectly heard. I think, therefore, as the Governor suggested today, that it is important to once again, more firmly this time, deliver an unmistakable message of commitment to high standards for both students and teachers. And finally it is now time to move this process forward with as much consensus as we can possibly get on that, on this Board. And for that reason, I have made the motion that I offered some minutes back.

Mr. Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just would like to make a few statements here concerning the prospective teachers certification test and all of the misinformation that is out

there in the press on this. First off, I firmly believe, as I think the rest of the Board members believe, that there must be high standards, high standards for our students as well as our teachers. Very, very important. But there is a process to get these higher standards that are called for right now. In Massachusetts we have started a first time, a trial test which is very unique as far as literacy and communication parts of this test goes, so it hasn't been tried out yet. This is the first try. When a school system hires a prospective teacher, they look at the student's transcripts whether they be from their high school transcripts as well as their college transcripts, and shame on any school system that will hire a teacher who got Ds in college. That is up to the school system to decide. On November 18th, 1996, I voted in favor of having the teacher certification test, and I still believe in it, and I always will believe in it. The difference in the one percent error is minute. We need to raise the standard step by step. Should we have a higher standard, absolutely, but we need to do this in time. People who couldn't write or spell would not make it in this test whether it was, whichever bar we set it at. I would like to make a statement I am not as a Board member afraid of any lawsuit that would be brought against myself or this Board as far as this testing goes. This does not influence me at all as far as what my vote is going to be. And with that statement, I would like to stand by my original vote.

Dr. Schaefer: Yes, I appreciate the people who came here for the public comment because there was, I think for the first time, a rational discussion about this weighing the pros and cons of the vote we took last week. And I would like to summarize that because I had to go through this process myself to determine how would I vote, and I would hope that this time the media would get it right and perhaps layout what the pros and cons are of each position, because everyone has said this was a difficult vote, not a clear-cut decision to make by any means, and I would like to mention a few things on each side. First of all, the people said with the vote that we took we were lowering the standards. As the previous speakers have said, there is no member of this Board of Education who is in favor of reducing standards. In fact, I would argue that with the introduction of this test, we have set standards for the first time. Standards which we said at the last meeting would be ratcheted off by the October test to the score set by the education panel. A second reason for voting the way the majority voted last time was the question of needing to give sufficient notice, did that in fact occur. There seemed to be some mix-up along the way. So there was the fairness issue. Third, other states have reduced the passing score by one to three SEMs during the first administration of their test. As was pointed out by Mr. Finn and I believe others, the difference between the two scores in some of the portions of the test was one point fewer correct answers. Fourth, as has been said also, that we were told we would be less likely to challenge with the lower school. What's to be said in favor of the panel recommendation for the passing score? First of all, communication and literacy is something that everyone should know by the time he gets to college. This is not something that you can cram for. Mr. Finn made the statement that perhaps its less important for a teacher of physics to have a grasp of literacy and communication than it is for a teacher of English. I would argue the contrary. Every teacher needs to be able to communicate with parents. All of you who are parents and have gotten letters from teachers with misspellings or incorrect grammar, you yourself know and are appalled by what you see, and I have seen it. So that in favor of the high standards is that everyone should have those skills, not just teachers of English, not just elementary teachers but the physics teacher as well. Second, in favor of that higher standard is that the test can be taken repeatedly until the candidate passes. They have multiple opportunities to pass this test. Third, we now learn based on the opinion of other legal counsel that no one cut score is more likely than another to generate the legal challenge. And finally, if there is a perception out there among the public that we have lowered the standards, then this perception must be corrected. And for all these reasons, after weighing these, the pros and cons, I have decided that I will vote for the higher standard.

Dr. Koplik: I will reaffirm my vote for the higher standard today, just as I voted for the higher standard last week, and this was not a tough call for me last week. It is not a tough call for me today. I have three objectives in mind, as I stated last week, and they remain the same. I am foremost interested in improving the statute of the performance of the teaching profession. I am interested in truly standing for higher standards and expectations from teachers, just as we do and will expect higher performance and standards from students. And thirdly, I will continue to search, and I think this Board will continue to search, for programs, policies and strategies to identify poor performance on the part of all students, not just those seeking teacher certification who happen to be identified in this most recent debate. And with that particular point in mind, I would inform the Board of Education here that on behalf of the Board of Higher Education we are calling and letters I believe will go out today to every private and public institution president, academic vice-president and dean of school of education or person responsible for the training of teachers that we will convene a summit on July 27th at Framingham State College to address the

issue, which is a larger issue than simply teacher training, but we will start with the idea of how can we put in place policies, practices and strategies to improve the teaching profession. That is our foremost goal of that particular meeting that we will have on the 27th, and I will be sure this Board receives notice and invitation to that---

Dr. Delattre: Let me thank my colleague Doctor Thernstrom for this motion and for its second. It is known that I have favored the higher standard, and I am very grateful to have this chance to vote for it. I don't dissent from anything that my colleague Mr. Irwin has said about this being the beginning of a process of elevating standards over time. I share that view wholeheartedly. My view has been and is that the recommendation of the panel for the cut score sets the initial cut score low enough that it is an appropriate place to begin the process of elevation, and I was loath to see it sent lower than their recommendation. It seems to me that there have been some things said in public comment today that are a bit misleading about what this Board stands for and is doing. Tests have been criticized this morning on the grounds that they do not prove that a person will be a good teacher, that places like the District of Columbia and Arkansas have had conspicuous histories of educational failure in the modern era despite tests. It is obviously true that the mere fact of tests accomplishes nothing. It is also obviously true that the mere fact that a person can pass a test does not show that a person will be a good teacher. We have held to the position since, certainly since late 1996, many of us for much longer, that being literate, and proving it, is a necessary condition, but being a decent teacher, not a sufficient one. And we have never stood simply for testing. We have stood for good testing. We have stood for testing that takes seriously the content of the tests and the kinds of work prospective teachers are able to do. I'm very grateful for the work this Board and the Department has done with respect to teacher certification testing. My view, to put it bluntly, is there is no state in the union that has both high standards and high stakes for the certification of teachers, and I believe that Massachusetts is distinctively positioned to become the first to do so.

Mr. Peyser: Just briefly, I want to commend Doctor Schaefer and Thernstrom for their open-mindedness and indeed their courage and action they have taken today. And I want to address one of the comments that Peter Finn made which I think was actually reflected with other comments that others made, which was that we should err on the side of caution, and I endorse that wholeheartedly. The subsequent question, and the more important one, is on whose behalf should we exercise the caution, and it is my belief we should exercise the caution on behalf of the students who may be subjected to poor teaching rather than the prospective teachers who, as we have discussed in the past, if they have been unfairly judged by this test or if they performed poorly on this test because it was a bad day or wrong set of questions have another opportunity to take it to remedy that error. But to the extent we protect anyone or be cautious in protecting anyone, I think it must be on behalf of the students.

Chairman Silber: I think it is also important to note among other comments that are made by the public that if school committees and superintendents rely on the college transcript to determine the quality of the students, they will be making a very serious mistake because of the phenomenon of grade inflation. There are very few colleges that give Fs and Ds. The gentleman's C is now a gentleman's B or A minus. The dunce's D is now a C or B. I think we have had grade inflation systematically occurring all over this country, and I think it is very important we have some way of checking on the objective significance of the kinds of grades that institutions are giving. I don't want to add anything more, so I think we are about ready for a vote.

Dr. Thernstrom: Mr. Chairman, a procedural question, I believe my motion was seconded by Stan Koplik. Stan Koplik was on this side.

Chairman Silber: Roberta seconded it.

Dr. Thernstrom: Okay, good, because we needed somebody on the majority.

Chairman Silber: I want to thank a sunburned Stan Koplik for leaving his fishing in the west in order to be here. He came in on the red eye last night leaving Denver at midnight, so I want to thank you, Stan, for that considerable sacrifice.

Dr. Koplik: I would not say I would do it at any time.

Chairman Silber: All in favor of the motion?

(Motion passes with dissent of one, Mr. Irwin).

Chairman Silber: Let the record show four of us voted in favor of the higher standards. The one of us that voted in favor of it today, was not here last time, already expressed his view of favor in it. You are in favor of the lower standards and still are there. And consequently there are at least five members of this Board for whom there is not even a prima facie possibility they were influenced by the Governor's request. The other two whose votes have been changed have offered more than ample explanation as to why they changed their minds. And I think anyone that comes out of this meeting with the notion somehow this Board has been pushed around by the Governor are making a serious mistake. With regard to Abigail Thernstorm, I might as well say here what I said last night on New England News when they talked about the capacity of the Governor to intimidate people. I said nobody could intimidate Abigail. I said she would whip a bear with a switch, and that's exactly the way I feel about her. This is a board of strong-minded people, and this is not a political decision in any sense of the word but rather a decision that was made on principle. Now, let me just -- I think that one thing we have done is we have elected David Driscoll as the Commissioner ad interim. And while he holds that office, I think that it is reasonable that he should enjoy the salary that was provided by the previous interim commissioner, so if --

Mr. Irwin: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Silber: Bill Irwin moves this motion.

Dr. Schaefer: Seconded.

Chairman Silber: Seconded by Ms. Schaefer. I don't think we need a discussion on that. Normally we would have this meeting in private and announce it publicly, but I think we are able to vote. All in favor of this motion?

(The motion passes unanimously.)

Dr. Delattre: Now that the motion has been passed and the standard set and the Interim Commissioner identified, I have had a number of calls from the field, and I want to make a request. It was noted this morning that people are waiting anxiously for the test results. I urge that we get the test results to them as soon as is humanly possible, that we get the test results to their home institutions as soon as possible. That any reporting to the institutions that, such that the institutions can use that for diagnostic purposes in the improvement of their own programs and instruction of their programs, I hope we will have to them as soon as we can, and I don't, I don't have a specific remedy for this, but there is apparently some confusion in the field about the requirement to take the communication and literacy skills test after September 1st for those who are not required yet to take the subject-area test. I want to be sure that it is clear throughout the Commonwealth that everybody has to take the communication and literacy test, that nobody is exempt from that test simply because there is as yet no subject-area test for their area.

Chairman Silber: That motion was passed last meeting.

Mr. Driscoll: But I think we need to make sure that is clear.

Chairman Silber: You should get that announcement out to everyone.

Chairman Silber: Abby had another point on the agenda which she only wants to raise for discussion but not for a vote, but I think it should be put on the record so we have time to think about it and so the public is aware thisis something we are thinking about.

Dr. Thernstrom: Well, I am proposing to put on the agenda for the next meeting the following motion: That the Board of Education direct the Department of Education to administer the

Massachusetts Teachers Test to a randomly selected group of certified teachers employed by school districts in the Commonwealth. And let me say that the duties of this Board, statutory duties, include the establishment of policies and criteria for professional development including the establishment of instruments of assessment in order to maintain the highest performance, performance standards of teachers. Randomly administering the teacher test to already certified teachers would I believe provide data on the basis of which we could shape professional development policies. It might also provide further insight into the quality of the test itself. No consequences, I repeat, no consequences for individual teachers would flow from the results of these tests. Teachers would take them anonymously. They would be teachers randomly selected, as I said, and would not be individually identified. Now, I understood yesterday, I have been trying to research, and my understanding yesterday was that this would not require legislative action. This is still an open question that we will need to explore further. I would also -- as it is now stated, it would not give us the insight into the quality of the test itself that I would like to see ideally. What would be really nice is to be able to get some correlations between how teachers do on these tests and how, and their evaluation by the local district so that we could see the degree to which the two squared. That would take a different motion. We need to explore this. We need to discuss it further, but we might be able to get some very valuable information if we structured this in a useful way.

Chairman Silber: Abby, when you spoke, you said you would put this on the agenda in the next meeting, but I think it was passed out in the September meeting.

Dr. Thernstrom: I believe that is the next meeting.

Chairman Silber: We might have to call one for some reason in the summer, just as we are gathered today in an unanticipated meeting. I think you should leave it for the agenda for the September meeting.

Dr. Thernstrom: The September meeting, yes. Thank you very much for that suggestion.

Mr. Irwin: I move we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Silber: So moved.

Mr. Delattre: Seconded.

Chairman Silber: Mr. DeLattre seconded.

(The motion was unanimously agreed

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Driscoll
Secretary to the Board