COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF EDUCATION

*****REGULAR MEETING*****

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
350 MAIN STREET
MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2001
4:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT:	Mr. James A. Peyser, Chairman, Dorchester Dr. Roberta R. Schaefer, Vice-Chairperson, Worcester Mr. Charles D. Baker, Swampscott Mr. William K. Irwin, Wilmington Ms. Jody Kelman, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Concord Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington Mr. Charles Wall, Deputy Chancellor, Board of Higher Education Dr. David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, Secretary to the Board
MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ABSENT:	Patricia Crutchfield, Southwick Edwin J. Delattre, Boston
ALSO PRESENT:	Janis T. Young, Registered Merit Reporter

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Good afternoon, everyone. For those of you who were here earlier, thank you for staying. For those of you who weren't, we had a forum that began at 1:00 on Approaches to Leadership Development. For those who are interested, there will be videotapes available. I think it was a very useful forum. Some good ideas came out of the discussion which will help us in trying to craft an approach towards improving the quality and the scope of leadership development in the Commonwealth.

I wanted to make a brief opening statement, summarizing some of the main accomplishments of the last year, and then perhaps giving a bit of a preview of what's to come in 2001. The year 2000 was an extraordinarily productive year for the Board of Education. We adopted revised regulations governing special education, clarifying eligibility criteria, and introducing a modicum of local flexibility in the administration of the program. We put into place the Certificate of Mastery to recognize the achievements of the Commonwealth's highest performing students. We adopted district performance standards, which will serve as the basis for regular comprehensive district-level performance evaluations. We enacted regulations reforming the School Building Assistance Program, rationalizing the reimbursement formula to provide incentives for sound facilities management and cost-effective construction plans. We worked with the City of Lawrence to hire a new superintendent in order to bring stability and a renewed focus on academic achievement to that troubled district. We approved revisions to the curriculum frameworks in math, English and science, which will help clarify expectations for student learning and support local curriculum development. And we adopted new regulations reforming the educator certification system, in order to place greater focus on subject mastery in reading instruction, and to create new alternative pathways into the profession for highly qualified individuals, including mid-career professionals.

In short, last year the Board put into place most of the remaining policy changes envisioned by the Education Reform Act. This is a great accomplishment, and we should all take a measure of satisfaction in it. At the same time, we should recognize two things. First, we could not have achieved any of this without the dedicated and tireless support of the Commissioner and all of his staff within the Department. Second, putting policies in place is the easy part. Seeing them through to success in the classroom is where the rubber meets the road.

For 2001 and beyond, our focus has to be on the blocking and tackling of implementation. While there will continue to be policy issues that come before the Board, our primary task must be to guide and support the Department in its efforts to make educational reform and improvement a reality. Of utmost importance, of course, is ensuring that we complete the roll-out of our student assessment system in a way that ensures faithfulness to meaningful academic standards and fairness to all students. In doing so, the Commissioner and I will work together to reach out to educators in the field, to invite their participation, and to listen to their counsel. 2000 was a year of decision; 2001 must be a year of results.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr.. Chairman. I do want to comment on the school performance ratings that we disseminated. As usual, when we do something for the first time, we learn some things. I dare say most districts missed something important; I certainly did. That is, as we established the rubrics as to whether schools exceeded, approached, met or failed to meet their goal, little did I think that we would be giving out a whole series of F's. That caused a great deal of consternation, particularly in some of our high-performing suburban districts. A simple matter of using a different letter might have certainly helped.

I also think we need to look at the issues of schools that are performing at the high end, and what is the expectation level. It seems odd that a school that had a rating of plus 2 was an F while another school that was minus 2 was an F as well. There are some cosmetic changes that we could have made that would better communicate what we were trying to establish.

Having said all that, however, I believe many people have missed the real importance of the school performance rating system. Just as has happened in every other state, we saw mixed results. We also saw that many places with high expectations, aligned curriculum, and a focus performed well. For those that did not, it will remain to be seen over time. There are a lot of factors that go into school success, particularly at the 10th grade where we don't know if students are trying on the MCAS. I would like to point out that 44 percent of our schools did meet, approach, or exceed their goal. 38 of the 72 schools in Boston did likewise. And 19 of the 32 that didn't had a positive change over the three-year period. 204 districts had at least one school that exceeded their goal. So that certainly tells us a great deal.

If we look at individual schools or individual districts, some great things are happening. In the Woburn school district, for example, with the help of Assistant Superintendent Louise Nolan, we have a district that has focused on education reform since it began. We are seeing some great results there. We also see results in many other communities, including Acton, a high-performing district, and Lynn, a typically a low-performing district. The whole idea of the school rating system is to measure schools based on improvement; it's much fairer in that sense. Take the vocational schools, many of whom are here today. We have to recognize that in large part, not only do they have high percentages of special needs students, but most of the performance of the 10th grade students is based on what happened in numerous K-8 schools. We need to look at the 8th grade results for those kids. All in all, this has been an important first step even though there are some lessons to learn. Like other states, it shows that there's work to be done; our system is not any different.

I want to quickly mention a grant opportunity for Massachusetts, as well as for other states across the country. For the first time, five organizations have come together, including the Chief State School Officers, NASBE, and ECS, to develop a grant proposal which was accepted by Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. $9 million, awarded to the Council of Chief State School Officers, will be made available for states to compete. Up to fifteen states will receive monies on an issue that is important nationally as well as in Massachusetts, and that's the issue of leadership. We intend to be very aggressive on that issue.

I also want to report that I spent a full day in the Lawrence Public Schools, most of that day at Lawrence High School. I'm pleased to say a number of positive things have occurred. Lawrence High School has introduced a 9th grade academy, and the teaming of the teachers and the kind of relationship with individual students seems to have made a great improvement. They're talking about extending that to the 10th grade. I certainly feel that things are progressing at Lawrence High School. They have a report they will receive soon from New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and we expect that they will be invited to go through the process of accreditation. Hopefully, they can regain accreditation at Lawrence High School. In the meantime, they are looking to build a brand new high school. It's difficult to have five superintendents in five years, but fortunately, the acting superintendent last year, Jean Thayer, did an outstanding job. Superintendent Laboy is off to an aggressive, positive start. They're focused on a few key issues, which was not the case in the past, when they were trying to do too much.

We're going to have a presentation today on adult education and certification, but I'd also like to point out that MassINC did a very fine report, as did the people from Northeastern University and, I believe, Harvard, on the condition of our state's work force, called "New Skills for a New Economy." I think it's very important to note that there are 1.2 million adults in the Massachusetts who do not have the basic skills in English and mathematics that are necessary to compete in the work place. A stunning 667,000 of those workers are high school graduates. I think that report really says it all. It certainly speaks to why it's so important for us to see to it that kids have basic skills in, at least, English and mathematics.

Finally, I just want to ask that you pay attention to the annual report on schools and districts in OES. We need to pay attention, I believe, to Education Week even if, in some cases, they give subjective grades. I'm very pleased that in many categories, Massachusetts ranks very well. We did get a B-plus in standards; I think it was fifth in the country. We got a C in equity, in terms of financial resources. It's a little bit outdated, and I think that's not reflective of the $3 billion in new monies that have come in. More importantly, there are statistics showing the percentage of 8th graders that take algebra. On that standard, we're one of the highest in the country. As for the percentage of students taking an upper-level mathematics course, we again rank as one of the highest in the country. If you look at the top categories: English language arts, mathematics, and writing -- and we should tip our hat to Texas for writing, they're in the top five -- but if you look in those categories, we rank very high, the top five or six in the country.
The other states that are ahead of us are primarily states that do not have large urban areas. To some extent, things certainly are happening in a positive way here in Massachusetts.

Finally, I need to note, sadly, that this past week we lost a great champion, Jack Rennie. I think most of us who know of Jack's work are aware of the fact that he is responsible for education reform in Massachusetts. Although a lot of people are responsible, he was clearly the quarterback. He drove it with commitment and energy-- his commitment as a businessman working with school districts and his energy as a wonderful champion. Paul Reville presented the best eulogy I think I've ever heard at the funeral; I asked to get a copy, which I'll share with members of the Board. I hope it will be shared with the public because it absolutely captured the spirit and memory of Jack Rennie.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, Commissioner. I'm sure all the Board members join you in the sentiments you expressed about Jack; and indeed, if Board members concur, I will draft a letter to his family, expressing our condolences on behalf of the Board. On another note Judy Gill is at home recovering from an

operation. She will be out of commission for a number of weeks and in her stead, Charlie Wall is here. Charlie is the Deputy Chancellor of the Board of Higher Education. I'm told, and I'm now asking you to confirm, that you have voting authority on this panel?

MR. WALL: Yes, I do.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So we'll actually count you when you raise your hand today. We all wish Judy well and hope for a speedy recovery. We hope to have her back here as soon as possible. Bill, do you have something to say?

MR. IRWIN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This past Friday and Saturday, I attended the NASBE Government Affairs Committee meeting in Washington, D.C., and I wanted to give you all a quick report. We had a meeting on Friday afternoon with the Senate Education Committee staff, and then later on in the afternoon we met with the House Education Committee staff. Some of the areas we addressed are in the upcoming agenda for the President and the Senate and the House. They include block grants, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the education budget for 2002, school construction, which is important to all of us, and President Bush's education agenda. We've been told he is going to come out with his bill in March of 2001. There is a strong feeling down there of bipartisanship and compromise, and we're all excited about the upcoming legislative year. So hopefully we'll have a better year this year down in Washington than we did last year.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: If that happens, Bill, I'm sure it's all as a result of your intervention.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: With that, I'd like to go on to statements from the public. We have two people on the list. First is Phil Veysey of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, who I believe will be testifying on adult basic education licensure.

Philip Veysey, Massachusetts Federation of Teachers

PHILIP VEYSEY: Chairman Peyser, Commissioner Driscoll, members of the Board, for the record, my name is Phil Veysey, and I'm the Director of Educational Policy and Programs for the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers. And I'm not here to talk about MCAS. Instead, I wish to comment on the process that led to the proposed regulations for the licensure of adult basic education teachers, which you will be discussing this afternoon. I am a member of that committee.

Soon after I started working for the MFT, about a year and a half ago, I was asked to serve on the advisory committee. Although I had no experience working with adult education, I was coming from thirty years of teaching in the City of Boston with the knowledge of the process of licensure. I agreed; I'm very happy that I agreed. It's been a very rewarding experience. I quickly came to know and appreciate the breadth and depth of the knowledge and experience the other members brought to the committee. Over the past year or so, we have struggled with the issues of adult education and the need to add stature for teachers in the field. I have come away from this experience with an increased realization of the continuity of education from early childhood to the grave. Each level has its own needs and requirements, as well as its own outcomes. No single level can be viewed in isolation. The recent MassINC report, “New Skills for a New Economy” on the state of adult education in the Commonwealth, highlights the need to expand the field and to assure the excellence of the educational experience of our adult learners. Offering the opportunity for licensure will attract more quality educators. I ask you to approve the draft regulations for public comment and to support the endeavors of adult basic educators in Massachusetts. Thank you.

Joseph O'Sullivan, Brockton Education Association.

JOSEPH O'SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Happy new year to all the Board members. I'm here to comment about the re-testing proposal on MCAS. I made similar comments in September. I enjoyed reading last September's memo to the Board from the Commissioner, which characterized the focused re-test option that you will vote on later today as being, quote, "more legally defensible than MCAS." That memo should end any speculation about where MCAS stands legally and should end its misrepresentation as a minimum competency test. It is not now, nor was it ever. Yet it continues, recently assisted by an absurd ranking formula, to serve the primary function of generating the myth of public school failure. It also discourages students by increasing dropout rates with artificially high standards. Since MCAS came about, our night-school enrollment of 16- to 18-year-olds has tripled in my community. They're not all home-grown kids; they're from other communities.

Having read the re-testing proposals, I have some observations and some questions regarding re-testing. Focused test option: If I were a 16-year-old student, and I knew that if I failed MCAS, I would get four opportunities to take an easier test, with 20 percent fewer questions given in 20 percent less time, and the hard questions that differentiated between advanced and proficient were removed, I know what I would do. By allowing four shots at an easier test, you undermine the student effort on MCAS itself. I know what kids will do; I was in the classroom for 19 years with this age student. However, it will still be used to rank which schools are under-performing to determine which math teachers need to be tested and which ones need inspection teams, thus demonstrating more failure.

Secondly, the setting for re-testing: My system, even though we have 83 percent of our kids that go on after high school to two- and four-year programs, has 700 freshmen who failed one or more sections of Grade 8. We have been able to encourage 200 of them to avail themselves of focused help. That's summer programs, weekend programs, after- school programs, and vacation programs. Many of our kids leave school, go to work at 3:00, and get home at 10:00 at night. On top of that, we have a 37 percent transiency rate each year. The cost in time and money to re-test the numbers of kids we anticipate is astronomical. How will that cost be funded? And does this add to the $76 million price tag of MCAS already?

Three, several months ago, three groups of students were excluded from the determination of which math teachers would be tested, because to do so would be holding those teachers accountable for what students did not learn in other cities, states and countries. We have 1,600 students who have been in the country less than three years in our school system. MCAS, however, continues to hold those students accountable for what they could not possibly have been taught. As a teacher and a mandated reporter, I believe that withholding a diploma under those conditions meets the standard of putting a child at risk and constitutes child abuse under Chapter 51-A.

Four, what about the students who scored advanced in all categories and don't have enough credits for a local diploma? Will you award them a Certificate of Mastery? And lastly, some suggestions. Stop MCAS as a graduation requirement now; it's fatally flawed. As soon as you address the issues of transiency rate and the other things I mentioned, then you're going to come up with a separate test, which is not equal. Review the suggestions for accountability submitted by several competent groups last year and the year before. They're much broader than what you're basing your accountability on. And lastly, instead of a ludicrous call for 30,000 caring adult tutors, please look into the expansion of the successful Leaps in Literacy program with senior citizens, which is already operating in a limited number of schools. We've had great success with that. I wish you the greatest of wisdom in your decisions. Thank you.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you. Moving on to the business portion of the agenda, you have at your place a draft of the Annual Report of the Board of Education. What we'd like to do is have this report ready for publication at the conclusion of our next Board meeting. So if you've got any comments, additions, corrections, or other edits, please let me know or let Melanie know what those are so that we can incorporate them and get this out in a timely fashion. Moving on to the business part of the agenda, the first item is the approval of minutes from the last meeting. Is there a motion to approve the minutes?

MR. BAKER: Sorry. Page 12 -- Jim Hartman is Jim Hartad.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: We'll make that change. If there are no other amendments, we'll call the vote on approving the minutes as amended.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the December 21, 2000 Regular meeting, as amended.

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Thernstrom. The vote was unanimous.

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: RE-TEST OPPORTUNITIES AND RELATED ISSUES – Discussion and Vote

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you might remember, we had a discussion about re-test opportunities in September, and now it's back before the Board for a discussion and vote. Over that period of time, as the information has gotten out and people have talked about it, it certainly has, in my judgment, gained in its acceptability. First of all, let me say that I don't foresee any students purposely failing in the 10th grade test in order to take an easier test in grade 11. It's not an easier test, in the sense that it's still the same standard. The only difference with the focused test is that we've taken away those questions that are really there to discriminate between proficient and advanced. We want to see whether or not a student can demonstrate the 220 standard.

We would like to impose some criteria for students taking the re-test in terms of attendance, and seeking additional help. It's not going to be automatic. But having said that, I believe the spirit of the Education Reform Act, by having the test be in Grade 10, was to allow this time between Grade 10 and Grade 12. That, by the way, can also be used for students who may want to retake the test in order to get into proficient and advanced. I hope that we'll be able to continue to provide financial incentives for those students who do well, particularly as they attend our state colleges and universities.

We want to be fair, and I think that this is a great step towards fairness. We're providing students not only the four opportunities in Grade 11 and 12 but, as you know, the Lieutenant Governor calls for a commitment by the Commonwealth beyond Grade 12. We have community colleges that have stepped forward to provide help beyond Grade 12. We have business partners that have said we'll help the kids up over the bar. So I think we need to focus on what it is we're about, and that is getting kids to that standard of 220 in mathematics and English so that they can have a chance to succeed beyond high school. I think it makes sense. I very much endorse this idea for the Board. I think having these four opportunities beyond Grade 10 will make a big difference.

I also think we're going to be able to put in place a number of ways to help students, tutoring being one of them, mentoring being another. We've had literally thousands of people step forward. There are tutoring

programs online. We will have programs through Virtual Education Space, which we'll talk about later, where students can access examples of the standards and even try out questions. So this is a very important aspect of fulfilling our obligation to be fair and to allow opportunities for kids to succeed. I think this is a very important first step. We'll talk about others, Mr. Chairman, as time goes on, and even today; but I highly endorse the prospect of having four re-test opportunities in Grade 11 and 12, two of which would be focused tests. I don't know if you want to add anything, Jeff.

JEFF NELLHAUS: No; I think you've covered the basics of the program. Maybe I can talk a little bit about the focused test just to reassure the Board that this will not be an easier test in that it won't be any easier to attain the 220 level on the test. It's true, while the test will, as the Commissioner mentioned, not have some of these more difficult questions on it, questions that students typically need to get correct in order to get into the proficient and advanced levels, they will still need to demonstrate the same level of knowledge and skills to get to a 220 on the focused test as they would have had to demonstrate on the standard test, if you will. So to characterize this as being easier to pass is not an accurate statement.

DR. SCHAEFER: Are we in a position now to address the cost of this?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Do you have any information in terms of the cost?

JEFF NELLHAUS: We're getting cost estimates from the contractor now. Regardless of whether we have a focused test or a parallel test, the costs are not going to be that different. There are some differences in the cost for the development of the items, and we may have to develop some additional items for a focused test. But I wouldn't say that's going to have that great an impact on the budget overall. One way or the other, there will be a cost associated with the re-testing, and it's not going to make that great a difference whether we go to a focused test or a standard test or a parallel test.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: A related question is, in the budget proposal we submitted for 2002, is there enough money in there to accommodate re-testing?

JEFF NELLHAUS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Most importantly, in House 1, I think the Governor has even added to our assessment budget. That will be out on Wednesday. You may want to comment just briefly; in terms of the cost, something that's not a cost item, but a very important development item, and that is the sampling in the trial of questions. If we go to a focused test, will we not have many more forms of the test this year for 10th graders so that we can trial questions to be used on a focused test?

JEFF NELLHAUS: All of the questions for next year's re-tests are being field-tested this spring, that is, as far as the standard test administration this spring. So in order to accomplish that, we have developed twice as many forms of each of the Grade 10 tests so that we could field-test more questions. Typically we have about 12 forms of each of the tests, and there are common questions on each test, and matrix questions; and it's in the matrix part of the test where we do the field-testing. Rather than having 12 forms this year, we're having as many as 24 forms, and even higher in some of the subject areas, so we can field-test a greater number of questions and have them ready for the re-test next year.

DR. SCHAEFER: Since we've heard once again that the re-testing is allowing students to take an easier test, would you, just for the record, address the question, specifically the question of incentives. Mr. O'Sullivan said, “If I were a 16-year-old, I know what I would do; I would blow the initial MCAS off. “ It does not seem to me that we have built in, in this system, an incentive for not taking the initial exam seriously.

JEFF NELLHAUS: I think the incentive to take it seriously is not to reduce the opportunities you have to pass. As a student, I would want to get the test out of the way. I think most students will take this seriously. We have some anecdotal data that students haven't been quite taking this 10th grade test seriously up until now; but I think when it counts this spring, we'll find a large majority of the students will take it seriously. There may be a few who'll say, "Maybe I'll take my chances on the re-test". We don't have any data right now to come to any conclusion about whether students will blow this test off to take a focused re-test. You can have your guess about that; I can have my guess about that.

DR. THERNSTOM: But my point is, there would be nothing rational about that judgment, that the next test is going to be easier. It's not easier, as you've just said.

JEFF NELLHAUS: It's not easier to pass it. It's not easier to get to 220.

DR. THERNSTOM: Exactly.

DR. SCHAEFER: Well, I think we also know from the recent scientific study that Professor Wheelock did about how much students hate tests; and therefore, it would seem to me, if that's correct, that no student would want to take more than one test if he didn't have to.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Let me ask you a question about field-testing the questions. Has there been any thought given to field-testing questions this spring with some 11th graders in addition to 10th graders, in particular, 11th graders who may have failed the test in 10th grade, last year, or at least include some numbers as to who failed?

JEFF NELLHAUS: That's not part of our plans at this point, no.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Obviously, it creates a level of administrative complexity and pulls students out of class who otherwise wouldn't be pulled out of class.

JEFF NELLHAUS: Also, when you field-test, you need to get a representative sample of students in the state; and to do that with the 11th grade, at this point, it's possible, but it's more than just going into a few schools and asking students to try this out. To make sure the data is meaningful, you need to get a representative sample of students.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: And is there any reason to believe that by field-testing with 10th graders instead of 11th graders, who would actually be taking the test, that somehow the results from the field-test would be somehow missing the mark?

JEFF NELLHAUS: No; I think we're trying to determine the level of difficulty for -- basically these tests measure 10th grade standards. They're standards that, supposedly, students can reach by the 10th grade. We want to test the questions that are based on those standards with 10th graders this spring. That, to us, seems to be the best way to develop the test questions for the retest.

MS. KELMAN: I have several questions. Students are not going to get results back on their final re-test-- senior year -- if you take it in the fall of senior year, you'll get the results back in the spring of your senior year, correct? And if you take it --

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Jeff can tell you that.

JEFF NELLHAUS: That's one thing I wanted to add. In terms of the re-test, we're negotiating with the testing company right now, to turn the results around within ten weeks. So if a student takes a re-test in

December, that probably sometime in February, we would have the results for that student. So that if they were planning to take the next re-test in April or May, there would be time for further assistance for that student. Similarly, with the spring test, we would hope that by the beginning of the following school year, in September, we would also have results for them. So we absolutely want to turn around results for re-tests very, very quickly.

MS. KELMAN: So my question for you would be, are state colleges and state universities going to be willing to accept students contingent on passing the MCAS? Theoretically, you could have a student who would be admitted otherwise, but they have not passed the MCAS. Is there going to be some sort of admittance policy for them, or late application?

MR. WALL: We're on new ground here in terms of the sequence and timing. So I would answer it that way, for that. The community colleges and state colleges all have the requirement that for admission, you need a high school diploma or GED. But there are some timing issues, no doubt.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I think it's very clear that if a student were to fail in Grade 10, fail twice in Grade 11, and fail once in Grade 12, that they would not be eligible for admission in a timely way, because they wouldn't be able to earn a diploma until after the year ended. It wouldn't be in time. Now, it's unlikely that students who are going to be acceptable to the state colleges would have gone through all of that and not have been able to demonstrate 220. We'll talk later about the appeals and the accommodations, et cetera. But remember that community colleges are developing programs to take kids who have not passed MCAS. So, hopefully, there will be the safety-net opportunity for kids.

DR. THERNSTOM: And can students who do pass the MCAS in the fall, after their senior year, can they be admitted for the second semester?

MR. WALL: Yes. Certainly the community colleges, they could be, second semester. With a diploma, then later of course with a GED, where the months go by there. But certainly, yes.

DR. THERNSTOM: Actually, I have a question on the GED. Suppose a student were to say to himself or herself, I'm not going to be able to pass the MCAS, but I could pass a GED.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Well, you may want to talk about that comparability, but go ahead.

JEFF NELLHAUS: Still, students want to get a high school diploma from their local school district, and that will be their decision. Now, some students leave school before they graduate, and they later earn a GED. I don't see how it will be that much different under this system, although there may be some differences. The fact will remain that many students will still have an incentive to get a diploma from a local school system rather than a GED, and I think there's wide agreement that a high school diploma carries a little bit more weight than a GED.

MS. KELMAN: I had another clarification question, which is, you can achieve, on this test, above a 220, correct?

JEFF NELLHAUS: Of which test?

MS. KELMAN: On the focused re-test. You can't get above a needs improvement score, but you can get above --

JEFF NELLHAUS: Needs improvement goes from 220 to 239. As we're putting this test together, it may not measure as high as 239 or 240, but it's going to measure higher than 220. It's not like it only goes to 220 and

stops; it will probably go a little bit higher. Right now we're meeting with our technical advisors and with the company to really nail down just how focused the test will be, and to what point it will measure exactly.

MS. KELMAN: That was my last clarification question.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Any other questions? I would just underline the statements of the Commissioner and others that rolling out this re-test, first of all, has always been anticipated to be part of this program. That's essentially one of the reasons why the test is initially administered in 10th grade, to provide students with a chance to remediate, to improve, to expand their knowledge so that they can succeed on subsequent administrations of the test. What we're doing today is not only fleshing out that implicit promise as part of the Educational Reform Act and the testing program, but we're trying to introduce as much frequency, accuracy, and precision as possible to answer the critical question that is on everyone's minds: Am I above or below that line? The focused re-test will improve our level of confidence in that result so that students will know, especially after having a taken it several times, where they stand with a high degree of reliability. I think this is a critical step in fulfilling the promise of fairness to all students in providing them multiple opportunities to achieve this level of 220, and to get over the bar that we have set, which is the critical component of standards-based reform in this state.

I have one small amendment I'd like to make to the motion. It relates to Section 3. It says, "The Department shall work with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, legislative leaders and the Board of Higher Education to explore possible state-sponsored models within the state college and community college system, to provide students with unlimited state-funded re-testing opportunities." Just to ensure that we don't send the message that this is somehow an uncertain process, I would like to substitute for the terms "explore possible" the word "develop," so it would read, "to develop state-sponsored models within the state college and community college system," because I think this is not only something we should do; it's something we have a commitment to do. And when I say "we," I don't mean just the Board of Education, but the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, legislative leaders and the Board of Higher Education. With that change, would someone make a motion?

MS. KELMAN: I actually would like to make a comment, if you don't mind? It's an unmitigatedly opinionated comment.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Well, if I outlawed those, there would be silence at board meetings.

MS. KELMAN: I guess I think you're doing the right thing with the focused re-test option, with a couple of caveats. One is that I still think it's much too soon for us to be doing this. This is a nice Band-Aid solution for the kids in this year's class who may fail the MCAS, in that they'll have four more chances to take it. So at least we're not going to be setting down the axe right there and saying, you're not graduating. But school districts have not completely implemented your plans, and I just really feel like it's too soon, that we need to back up. Dean Delattre had talked earlier about a report, I guess a study that he had authored or looked at that said that we still need to give this more time; and I think rather than pushing forward with this so fast, we need to go back and look at the bigger problem.

The other thing I wanted to say just has to do with my own sensitivity to this kind of thing. There's a lot of talk of the Lieutenant Governor's recommendations in the Commissioner's report to us. While I agree with her recommendations, it feels very strange to me that we're letting a political figure determine where education in the state is going, that we're not looking to educators, that we're not looking to parents, that we're not looking to students. And I know that she's the education's czar; I know that this is what Governor Cellucci has set out as her role, but I feel like we should try and keep this as little of a political process as possible. To the extent that we can stay out of the political game, it would be a benefit to the students of Massachusetts.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: May I respond, Mr. Chairman? I think we need to understand how the word "politics" is used. We now have a new President, who's coming into a very divided country. To be sure, he ran as a Republican. He is a politician in the definition of the term. I hope, and I suspect everybody in the country hopes, he can pull us together. So it is a political process, but then people assume responsibilities. The Governor chose to appoint the Lieutenant Governor to take on a leadership role in the area of education reform, which is stated many times to be their number one priority. It is the newspapers that call her the czarina or the czar or whatever she calls herself. The reason I support the report and put it before this Board is found not so much in the report, although I think it worth reading and paying attention to; but I happen to like the appendix. It lists pages and pages of people the Lieutenant Governor sat with and personally talked to. That list included business leaders, many superintendents of schools, classroom teachers, and representatives of the unions. It is a stunning list of people that she took the time to talk to. And she took the time to visit many, many school districts. So I think the Lieutenant Governor should not be somehow criticized for being a Lieutenant Governor or for being a politician. The work should be judged on what it means.

This is a very good report that helps us move the ball forward. I think it's thoughtful. I think she tries to address the areas of special education, she tries to address the issues of limited English proficient students, and of vocational students. She cares very deeply and passionately about this. So I just get concerned sometimes. People say to me, "You're the Commissioner of Education; how do you feel about the Lieutenant Governor?" I tell them, "I don't care who it is; whether it's the Senate president or a businessperson like Jack Rennie. We need help. Public education is for all of us." Not only is every child a winner, as Jack used to say, but as the recent federal report said, we need to think about every child as ours. So I respectfully disagree.

I know you feel strongly about this issue. I know how the students feel. I know it's difficult. But the fact is that we have to go about this in a responsible way. I think the Lieutenant Governor's report was a step forward, and I think the recommendations in there, particularly those that need to be followed by the Department and Board, ought to be taken seriously. We may not agree with every single one of them; but in this case, in the re-test, she's really just giving back what this Board had already talked about. In this case, she doesn't claim it to be her opinion. As for the panel of educators throughout the state and accommodations, she's broken some new ground.

I respectfully disagree with you, Jody. I think the Lt. Governor deserves a lot of credit. You know, people get set up, unfortunately, because they're in the public eye. Richard Nixon once said, "Don't judge people by what they say; judge people by what they do." In this particular case, the Lieutenant Governor has done great work, and I respect it.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, § 1D, hereby approve the following policies with respect to implementation of the competency determination starting with the high school graduating class of 2003, as recommended by the Commissioner.**

1. **The Department shall annually offer a focused test administration in the winter for students who have previously failed the grade 10 English language arts and/or the grade 10 mathematics MCAS test. In addition, the Department shall annually offer a parallel test administration in the spring for students who have previously failed one of the grade 10 tests, as well as for students who have previously met the passing standard but who wish to demonstrate improved**

performance on either the English language arts test, the mathematics test or both.

2. **The Department shall provide a total of four retesting opportunities prior to a student's scheduled high school graduation date.**

3. **The Department shall work with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, legislative leaders and the Board of Higher Education to develop state-sponsored models within the state college and community college system, to provide students with unlimited state-funded retesting opportunities beyond their scheduled high school graduation date.**

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

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Behind the yellow sheet is a memo from the Commissioner which addresses the issue he alluded to a moment ago. I'd just like to make a quick comment about it.

One of the other recommendations in the Lieutenant Governor's report was that we should put in place an appeals process for students who believe that either their MCAS performance or their MCAS score was improperly calculated, meaning there was some technical error in the calculation of their score that would affect their pass-fail status. This also holds if there's a belief that there was some unfairness in the administration of the test, which did not allow the student to show his or her best work on that particular day and on that particular assessment. What is being proposed here is to begin a process that will involve consultation with educators in the field to design an appeals process for students. The key point is not just students who have special needs, who already have a method for essentially appealing their own performance in their own administration of their test and seeking further accommodations, but opening this process up to all students regardless of their category or program. We will create an appeals process and define the criteria that might be used in accepting appeals, evaluating appeals, and developing accommodations to respond to whatever unfairness is determined as a result of that process.

I think there are two things to take away from this. One is that what is necessary here is launching a consultative process with the field to identify exactly how this process should unfold and what its basic structure should be. The other is to send the message, quite clearly, that the purpose of this is to ensure that we take into account individual circumstances to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility built into the system. We want to make sure that all students are treated fairly through this assessment and are afforded accommodations when necessary and appropriate.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've talked about this, and I would hope to bring back a specific work plan and some ideas on who could serve, not only on a steering committee, but could serve in regional parts of the state, as is recommended. This is a very important aspect of looking for the fairness. I want to congratulate not only Jeff Nellhaus, but Dan Wiener, who I see here. I think the work that we've done on accommodations for special education students is some of the best work being done in the country. It complies with IDEA and OSEP, and it's difficult, it's very hard, but our people have done an outstanding job of providing and making recommendations and guidelines to districts. It's so important that we be clear on what it is that our expectations are with districts, and I think that's probably the strength of what we've done.

As the Chairman mentioned, I think this issue of accommodations for non-special education students needs to be looked at very thoughtfully. One thing I would ask from the Board, and it sort of gets back to Jody's point, is I would like you to think about some people who could serve as kind of a panel, if you will. We obviously could get some experts in testing, which Jeff and I have talked about; but I also would value the

Board giving me recommendations on people that you think would make a great contribution and would be willing to serve on such an important panel. It would be nice to have some people that are viewed as neutral, whatever that means. But there are people, either from the business community or from the education community or the higher education community; there are various leaders throughout this state. So I would ask Board members to think carefully about people that might be able to help us. This is a very important aspect of the entire assessment program. I will come back in February, Mr. Chairman, because I think we need to move on this and lay out a work plan.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The purpose of this discussion is to alert you to the fact that this process is under way. If you have any immediate thoughts or ideas about what the Commissioner ought to be doing over the next month, in particular, now would be the time to give him that advice.

DR. SCHAEFER: I'd like to comment that this is the political process at its best. As a professor of political science, I resent the notion that politics is dirty, and that because a politician has suggested something, that this is somehow crooked. We're talking about involving a lot of people. Public education is not simply the province of the experts in the field; it's all of our responsibilities. We're all parents or relatives and we have a stake in this, a stake that is not just for our own communities, but the state and the nation as well. I'm really very pleased with the process whether it's the Lieutenant Governor or anybody else at the state level who has gathered these recommendations. I do think that what we are trying to do is to serve the interests of all children, and for the common good.

APPROVAL OF IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR TWO UNDER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS (Lynch and Arlington) – Discussion and Vote

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: With that, let's move on to the next item on the agenda which is the review of the school improvement plans for the Lynch and Arlington schools.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I'd like to think that we're lifetime learners as well. I do think this is the first time we've gone through it, let alone the schools go through this process of being declared under-performing and going through the plan. I clearly get the sense myself personally, as well as the Board members, that when the two plans were presented last time, they were so dense and so much. Certainly the effort was there, and people were trying to do the right thing; but as a process, it did seem too voluminous. Therefore, the Board has asked for a shortened version, which I think both schools have done.

I think it's important to point out that they're focused on the right things in a broad way. The schools themselves own those plans and are going to follow through on them, but we're going to have periodic reviews and reports back here, because this is serious business. Once this Board approves these plans, then the clock starts to tick. And there is a statutory two-year period of time that that kicks in. I would like to recommend that the Board approve these two plans. We're not trying to suggest that they're perfect, but they are a very good first start. I can tell you that in both schools, there have been dramatic changes already. In fact, all of the schools that we visited, I daresay at least 50 percent of them have changed principals. I certainly want Board members to point out what they like and don't like. I want to recommend that you approve these plans today so that we can move forward with the process of implementing the plans and the oversight that we need to provide.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, Commissioner. I would agree. I think we ought to approve these plans today, which is not to say that the plans should be set in stone. Indeed, I would encourage, or even ask the Board to direct the Commissioner and the Department to go back and help the schools develop one further reiteration, not to come back to the Board for approval, but just to finalize following our approval.

The areas I'm most concerned about have to do, first of all, with trying to draw out from the documents that had been submitted earlier some of the key measures of progress that are largely absent in the shortened document. There is a need for some means of judging whether progress or success is being made relative to the solutions being put into place or recommended here in these documents. The second thing is that while improvement in math performance figured prominently in the larger documents, it takes a much lesser role in these two improvement plans; and indeed, it's almost absent. My recommendation is that unless this is, in fact, a conscious choice, that the schools elevate the importance of improving their math performance and define, in these documents in somewhat clearer language, how they intend to do that. Again, much of this already exists in the larger documents that were submitted, so the issue may be simply one of pulling some of the sections out and incorporating them in this document.

I do think both of these documents are significant improvements over the prior one, if for no other reason than it's easier for us to understand, digest, and evaluate. It represents clearer thinking in terms of understanding what the problems and root causes are, and therefore what solutions are appropriate. I would say that one of the areas where I think the Department might be able to continue to add some value, and this might also involve the fact-finding teams, is getting better at doing analysis of the data and of other information that's available in these schools to understand what the core set of problems are and what the real priorities are. That's certainly something that schools need to get better at, but I think that's an area where the Department can build up some expertise over time. I think that's a critical area where we need to get better. But again, I would recommend that we approve these, providing guidance, such as I've provided just now to the Commissioner, in terms of how the plans might be improved before being finally completed. Any other comments or questions on the part of the Board members?

DR. THERNSTOM: Have you asked either Holyoke or Lawrence why they've downgraded the importance of math in this--

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I don't believe there's any intention to downgrade it. There are two things I'd say, and Juliane, jump in here if I'm not adequately describing this. With respect to the Arlington School, there is, within Priority No. 2-- writing across the curriculum-- discussion of the importance of improving student responses on open-response questions in the math section of the test. It is implicitly stated here that this is the greatest weakness that the students have in their math performance. So it may be that the only issue with respect to the Arlington School is perhaps pulling that section out and making it more clear or more prominent as a principal strategy for improving performance. With respect to the Lynch School, in hearing us ask for brevity, they may have --

JULIANE DOW: Their understanding was that this executive summary would really be a supplement to the underlying document. They all intend that their major goals and objectives, which include goals and objectives in the area of mathematics, will be implemented. And I think what I discussed with the Chair, which I think is helpful and I think I've communicated to both the schools this afternoon, is that this next iteration of a document, by pulling some things out of that larger document, which contains a lot of detail that the Board does not need or desire to interact with, but which they may need for purposes of implementation, that the Board will in the future be able to interact with a single document that has the elements in it that the Board would need to reference for the future.

We are very willing, and it's a very reasonable request, that we now create a document that has the critical pieces in it; and clearly we would not be satisfied. We will be measuring them in the future on their improved student performance in mathematics and English language arts. There is no school in the Commonwealth that has a large percentage of students that are failing in mathematics that could think for a minute that they could wait for some other time to begin to be concerned about the quality and effectiveness of math instruction. Both of these schools are very concerned about that. I've gathered some more detailed information about the kind of professional development, the kind of coaching, the kinds of grade-level

meetings that are happening, the kind of assessments they are using in addition to MCAS. I'm satisfied that both of them are on the project, but it is not included in that summary document. So I think it's a fair request that we not create; rather, we take something that they intended as an executive summary that supplements that larger document, and we actually create a single document that can be for future reference by the Board.

MR. BAKER: I guess my first comment would be that I'm a very simple-minded guy, and one of the things that is helpful about the way the Holyoke people did it is they said: This is the problem, this is our analysis, this is our response. The only thing they don't have is -- this is how we plan to measure how we're doing against our response. I mean, there's a symmetry there. I had trouble figuring out how the problem statement and the improvement strategy related to each other on the Lawrence one. I sort of fiddled around with it and came to the conclusion that I could match some of the school improvement strategies to some of the problem statements, but I couldn't match them all. In some cases, the match wasn't terribly pointed. So I guess one of the comments I would have is that they should make sure that if in fact this is their problem statement, that they have a symmetrical set of responses and then some tools for measuring how they're doing against it in response.

If they think these are the things that they're supposed to do, or that would work best in terms of improvement, then they need to revise the way they've cast some of their problem statements, because there's nothing in the school improvement strategy about limited use of assessment data in planning. And the problem statement about expertise in English language learner instruction and an unclear approach to bilingual education gets touched at. The one that Jim mentioned before, about writing across the curriculum, is not referenced specifically. When I read these I came to the conclusion that the Holyoke people, at least, have got a pretty good simple-minded handle about what they think their issues are and what they can do in response to them. The one thing I still think they need is how they plan to actually measure how they're doing. I think the Lawrence folks need one more run-through to get there. My final comment would be, having done this twice now, we should try to get people some kind of a template on this stuff.

JULIANE DOW: I just want to say, we're doing this for the first time, and trying to figure out what kind of planning, at what kind of level. One of the things we're learning is that this is not something in which most school people and even district people have had much training and support to approach things. A lot of people work very intuitively, and they make a lot of smart decisions. Deconstructing that and really being able to articulate that to a wider audience why are you doing that is another thing. We have people who have started from a process they used to use and we're asking them to switch gears. I think it is going to take some assistance and some direction beyond what has been done in the past.

MR. BAKER: Let me volunteer something on this. I've had more experience with this sort of thing in the last eighteen months than I ever hoped to have in my whole life. I learned a lot about how to frame a problem, build a plan and then run at it. I'd be perfectly happy to meet with anybody from the Department or anybody from Arlington or Lynch to walk through that and the process we went through, if that would be helpful to anybody.

JULIANE DOW: That would be great.

MR. BAKER: But I really do believe that the most important thing in solving a problem like this is making absolutely sure you know what it is you're trying to fix, and having some confidence that whatever it is you're doing has measurable criteria for succeeding. You can monitor over some period of time, and there needs to be just brutal symmetry between what your people are focusing on as a solution and what your people believe to be the problem.

JULIANE DOW: Right.

MR. BAKER: You won't get from here to there.

DR. THERNSTOM: Has there been any discussion of moving teachers in and out of these schools, that is, if a school is doing badly in math, moving teachers with greater strength in math? Because the problem they don't talk about, really, here, they very lightly touch upon, is the problem of teachers who are weak in the subjects they're supposed to be teaching, and who have got kids who really need very strong teachers.
CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Well, Juliane, you can comment further, but there's been significant turnover, I think, in both of these schools; but there are continuing to be some issues.

DR. THERNSTOM: I'm talking about the turnover that is guided by a superintendent, who is --

JULIANE DOW: If you take a look at the data—there was a significant reassignment of staff and/or movement of staff that occurred; and in the case of the Arlington School, there were 45 or 50 open positions that were filled with new staff. So we have a significant number of new staff. But that's a different question than as the district.

DR. THERNSTOM: That's right.

JULIANE DOW: But my response to that question is, when I look at the district and its available staff, it's not that a school over here is doing really well, and this school is doing really poorly; these teachers have got it, and these teachers have less skill. In fact, what we have is extremely poor performance across the whole set of schools.

Let's use the example of the Lynch School because the Arlington School has new school leadership. So they are in the earlier stages of planning and developing, and had all, when they did this plan, pretty recently arrived at the school, to figure out who the people were and what was working and what wasn't. With the Lynch School, they have undertaken to retrain all of their staff in mathematics, and they've begun to look at their disaggregated results and see, for students who are taught in those regular math classes with teachers who have had this training, there's a differential result for those students.

Now, in talking with them today, one of the things that they point out -- and it actually is in their original submission to us -- is that what they've identified is that many of the teachers that are teaching mathematics to their students are bilingual teachers in the TBE program or ESL, or special-ed teachers who have no mathematics background. And while they have undertaken to begin this systematic retraining of all of their teaching staff at the middle grades to strengthen their content knowledge, those that are math-certified teachers and full-time math teachers, they haven't had the same level of participation for this other whole set of teachers who teach math in fact to a large segment. So that's an example of where, if they're going to take some targeted action this year, it would be appropriate to show up, certainly in the plan, that the Board is going to check back in on to see if they've been able to address that phenomenon.

DR. THERNSTOM: And Juliane, that is not a problem that can be addressed by some retraining. If you come really not knowing math and not being prepared to teach math, that isn't your strength in life, a little retraining is not exactly going to do it. That's an area of concern to me. The heart of the problem may be staff quality, in some cases.

JULIANE DOW: I think in that case I would agree that as they begin to look at this, they're going to have to look at what kind of pairing they do. It seems to me what I would have done first, is sought to make sure that my math educators actually knew the subject area and were able to teach and understood the standards, and that the curriculum was aligned. I think that's been the focus of this first effort. At the Lynch

School, we do at least see, although it's small and incremental, some progress in math scores over each of the last two years, a declining number of students failing at the 8th grade. Again, they're only a couple of years into implementation of this new effort, but I do see that there are some things under way there.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I want to thank Charlie and Abigail for their comments. I'm struggling with the role that the Board and the Department ought to be playing with these schools. And the thing that strikes me, even though we have these models, like the Baldridge approach, is that there's always this sort of disconnect between what happens in education and what happens in other, similar organizations. Not to simplify it for educators; it is not easy. These are complicated issues. You're dealing with kids and families and language difficulties in Holyoke and Lawrence, and so on. The best thing would be to have this kind of paradigm. And that's why I value, Charlie, what you're talking about.

I used the word "template" not five minutes before the Board meeting began. I'm reluctant to have too much of a template, because then schools don't own it, and they have to own their plan. As for your offer, I want to take you up on that, because I happen to think, with all due respect, teaching kids may be even harder than the health industry, although you've got your challenges.

MR. BAKER: One comment I would make here is that when you read the big document and the small one, there are little nuggets of information that are buried in both that are, frankly, unbelievable. Like this thing that 40 percent of the Lynch kids live in houses that have five or fewer books? I mean, these people really have their work cut out for them.

JULIANE DOW That's why I say, when they start to make a list of the problems they're a lot longer.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: But herein lies the problem, Juliane. If you ask me, or any educator, what the problem is, they will give you 57 pages worth of stuff. But the problem is what are we going to do with it? We have to find a way, and it's hard, and the Chairman said it too: our job is to learn about each place. So we go to the fifth place and say, here's what you need to do and each time it will get better. It will never be perfect, because it's very difficult. But I like your idea, Charlie, and I am going to take you up on it. It doesn't mean we're going to produce miracles overnight, but we ought not to lose out on those threads that occur between the cause, the result, and having clear data. I'm glad that we're a little bit clumsy at this because I think we need to come to it in a logical way. So I thank you.

MR. BAKER: The final comment I would make is that I read both of these and felt that the notion of getting a handle on what they need to be worrying about is clearer in their minds in these two submissions than they were in the previous one. I think both groups have a better understanding of at least what they think they should be focusing on.

JULIANE DOW: It's a work in progress. This is hard.

MR. BAKER: Right.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Getting back to the question both Juliane and David proposing, which is what role is the Department supposed to play in this process, I think the key role is to help the schools through the process of understanding what their problem is and helping them identify the root causes and the solutions. Not to tell them what the problem is or tell them what the causes are and what the solution should be, but rather to help them through that process. Again, I think there is some real science and technology to it, which the Department will develop over time as they have more experience in helping districts actually come to grips with that. But certainly it's not our role to tell the schools how to fix their problem. I think our role, up front, is to try to help them understand what their own problem is and come to their own

conclusions about how to proceed, and then, essentially, hold them accountable for delivering on what they promise. I also think the Department ought to take Charlie up on his offer as soon as possible.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Absolutely. There are certain things we ought to look at even from a Board perspective: are there policies in place, even statutory changes, that we need to look at? I don't think it takes you long, when you're in Holyoke and Lawrence, to figure out we've got a problem in bilingual education. So I'll leave it there. I think something has to come back to this Board, and we can't just sit back and let it occur the way it's occurring. We've got to look for changes in policy and perhaps statutes that are going to give the kids tools. I don't know how many teachers in both Lawrence and Holyoke are on waivers because of the process that we've set up based on a law that's 25 years old. We've got to address that issue. So there are places where we, perhaps as a Board and a Department, need to learn what we need to do to provide some changes, broadly, both in regulations and statute.

DR. THERNSTOM: We also need to address the issue of how to recruit teachers, young people who are strong in math. We just can't assume that somehow they're going to drift into the schools. They're not; there are too many other opportunities out there.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: If I could ask someone to put the motion on the table with the condition that the Commissioner and Juliane and others in the Department will go back and help the districts in modifying these documents one more time, not to come back to the Board, but just to finalize them.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. Chapter 69, Section 1J and 603 CMR 2.03 (6), and upon recommendation of the Commissioner, hereby accept the improvement plans submitted by the Lynch School in Holyoke and the Arlington School in Lawrence; provided, further that said acceptance is subject to the following conditions:**

1. **The Department shall provide oversight and technical assistance as needed to ensure that the Lynch and Arlington schools and school district leaders develop and refine the more detailed work plans and timelines that will be needed to guide and track the progress of implementation of agreed-upon improvement initiatives; and**

2. **By June 1, 2001, the Lynch School and the Arlington School shall each submit to the Board a written progress report and copy of the school's detailed work plans for the summer months and for the 2001-2002 school year.**

The motion was made by Dr. Thernstrom and seconded by Mr. Baker. The vote was unanimous.

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPATIONAL PROFICIENCY: PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSED STANDARDS FOR FOUR OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS - Discussion

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: It's adopted unanimously. Thank you very much. The next item is Certificates of Occupational Proficiency. We're going to get a briefing on where we stand and the progress we're making.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you very much. Let me first of all introduce from my left, Fran Kane, our administrator, Karen Ward from our staff, and Sheila Herbert, who's the superintendent of schools at Greater Lowell Vocational School. Sheila has been very helpful, as have other people in the field. There are a number of other superintendents here as well. As part of the Educational Reform Act, it was intended that not only would there be a competency determination for students, but students would also be

able earn either a Certificate of Mastery, which this Board has already defined, or a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. It's been a while in coming, but I want to make sure that people understand that it's difficult work. It requires a very careful defining of the standards. We've come a long way towards defining what the areas are to be, and then eventually, of course, there has to be an assessment program based on the standards but I'll let our guests talk about those.

If you look at other states that spend even more than we do at the local and state level in vocational education, you'll see that they haven't got their arms around Certificates of Occupational Proficiency. This is not easy work, and I'm very pleased to bring you the first iteration of the Certificates of Occupational Proficiency in four areas. Let me turn it over to Fran.

FRAN KANE: Thank you, Commissioner. I think we're fortunate tonight in that you're not going to have to listen to me speak all night long. We've brought two members of the steering committee, as the Commissioner said, Karen Ward and Sheila Herbert from Greater Lowell Vocational School. They are two members of the steering committee who've been here since the beginning. They would like to bring you up to date on what has happened over the last year, and then we would be happy to take questions at that point and give you an idea of where we want to head. We said we would do two clusters as part of the goal; we're working on the four clusters, four out of the seven clusters; and I think Karen will bring you up to date on that.

KAREN WARD: Good afternoon. Thank you, Commissioner Driscoll and Chairman Peyser and members of the Board. We appreciate the opportunity to come here to report to you on the progress of our Certificates of Proficiency. This report, I guess, can be considered our Year One report, since we began work about a year ago; actually February 16, to be exact. Today we will provide you with a mission statement; vision for the future of the certificates, which is critical as we move forward; a look at the initiative today; and key areas of progress; and then of course our goals through the end of 2001. We'll conclude the report with a look at some significant challenges that face us and a view from the community outlining the contributions of our stakeholders, which are valuable to us as we move forward. The view from the community will be provided by Sheila Herbert, here to my left, who's the Superintendent/Director at Greater Lowell.

By way of introduction, it's important to note that the Certificates of Occupational Proficiency are being designed to measure the attainment of industry-based skill standards or competencies by secondary, post-secondary and adult learners enrolled in our career and technical education programs in the Commonwealth. The mission for this initiative is to work with business, labor, and education to identify the common technical skill proficiencies as well as the employability skills necessary to be an effective worker. Our business and industry partners are very concerned about the shortage of skilled labor, and at every level, whether it be entry level or advanced worker capacities. Current demand for skilled workers at all levels of proficiency represents currently 65 percent of the work force, and our Certificates of Proficiency are the assessment program for public career and technical education programs which answer the demand for skilled workers.

The skilled worker competencies for the Certificates of Proficiency are based on current industry standards and are being presented in a portable credentialing system, which will allow students to receive recognition and certification for what they know and can do, and also give them the opportunity to upgrade those certificates as their skill proficiency advances in their career or post-secondary education. Following the reauthorization of the Carl Perkins Act in 1998, the steering committee for the Certificate of Proficiency was established, and we began work on an aggressive work plan. We began by outlining a vision for the certificate, which we've presented to you, and I'm going to go over that for you a little bit to give you an idea of where we're going.

In the future, all career and technical education programs and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions and companies will be benchmarked to the competencies outlined in the Certificates of Occupational Proficiency. All competencies taught will be based on local labor market demand and workplace skills and state and national program standards. Certificates of Occupational Proficiency will be accessible to all students in the Commonwealth, and the Massachusetts Certificates for Occupational Proficiency will be designed to work with other state and national certification and program standards that are currently available. These points of our vision become very important with information such as the Harvard University study, which was already referenced once here today, which show that in the construction industry alone -- and Mr. Irwin will certainly concur with this -- that there's a need to replace 18,000 carpenters annually; and the demand on apprenticeship programs to fill this void is overwhelming.

Apprenticeship programs, on average, fill 5,000 positions annually, but the demand far exceeds the supply; and public career and technical education must work with our apprenticeship positions to help fill that demand with qualified workers. Also, our machining sector partners have told us that they have a grave concern about quality even more than quantity. There's grave concern about the competencies of workers to run the increasingly sophisticated and efficient equipment that's available in today's workplace. Our vision, if we follow the vision, the principles of the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency will hopefully -- and this is what we envision -- be recognized as an invaluable employment credential for all students, number one. Number two, create employees that employers prefer to hire. And it will boost the starting wages for people who hold Certificates of Proficiency from the Commonwealth versus those who do not. In the past twelve months, we've made significant progress toward the vision by focusing on the economy and the trend toward career clusters.

The steering committee, many of whom are here today, have established seven career clusters for the purpose of developing the Certificates of Proficiency. As we reported to you last spring, seven career clusters were developed by grouping occupations according to their relationship to each other and the classification of instructional programs or SIP codes that are assigned to them. The priority for development for the certificates was determined by two critical success factors: number one, current enrollments, our highest enrolled programs are being rolled out first; and number two, existing state and national program standards that we can benchmark as we move forward in the process.

In September, our steering committee selected a vendor to provide management services for the development of the certificates. The Massachusetts Center for Career and Technical Education, along with the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, and the Career and Technical Education Center at UMass Boston were the successful bidders. To date, four of the seven cluster content committees have been organized. They represent technology and engineering; hospitality, tourism and recreation; environment, resources and agriculture; and health and human services. Accomplishments from these committees to date include recruiting critical industry representation, prioritizing the development schedule for the occupations under their cluster, and developing an action plan for industry validation of the competencies selected. The first four occupational committees under these clusters are also well under way.

We're proud to report that automotive service technology, culinary arts, horticulture, and cosmetology, again being some of our highest enrolled programs, are well under way. They have met at least twice, and these are some of the results to date. All four of the committees are well under way developing their competency description with input from all stakeholders within that occupation. Three of the four are in the process of finalizing competency descriptions, and they're preparing them for industry validation as we speak. Industry validation of the competencies will take the form of meeting with business and industry leaders, such as the Massachusetts Auto Dealers Association for automotive, and the New England Growers Organization at their annual show for horticulture. All four of the occupational committees are expected to be presenting completed competency descriptions with industry validation to the steering committee by the

end of February. Lastly, the remaining three cluster content committees are scheduled for roll-out on February 8, 2001: business, finance and marketing; arts and communication; and construction and design.

The goals through the end of fiscal year 2001 include, number one, to pilot third-party assessments that will be developed for at least these four occupations that we're speaking of now; and the portfolio and local school validation portions of the assessment will continue to be developed and incorporated into the overall system. As we reported to you last spring, the assessment system for the certificates is a multifaceted system that's designed to clearly demonstrate what our students know and can do. The third-party assessment will include a written technical and employability skills assessment, inclusive of open-response questions, as well as hands-on performance assessment.

The portfolio and local school validation pieces are integral to the system. The portfolio is our best measure of a student's growth and progress over time, and the local school validation piece of the assessment allows for current quality assessments in career and technical education to have an impact on the final assessment of the student. Career and technical education programs are, and always have been, competency based, and capturing the assessment of a school and employers at the local level is critical to meaningful assessment of our students. It is intended that pilot testing in four to six occupations will be conducted in late May or early June of 2001 for approximately 250 to 400 students. The steering committee is aiming to bring proposed competency descriptions for at least the first four occupations to the Commissioner and the Board of Education for initial review and comment by late spring. Finally, the system as I have defined it creates some significant challenges in its development. Some of the most pressing are as follows, and we'd like to share them with you.

First, the alignment of the secondary and post-secondary systems, and eventually industry training programs to allow for a true portable credentialing system will be challenging. However, given the development of career pathways and the motivation of our post-secondary institutions to provide quality opportunities for these students makes the future bright for the system to work well. The average age for a student in a post-secondary training program in a community college nationwide is 28 years old. However, the fastest emerging population for post-secondary career and technical programs is students looking to upgrade existing credentials. So the market is good.

The second challenge is standardization of the assessment instruments currently used by employers who participate in co-op or other work-based learning experiences for our students. The employer evaluation at the local level will become critical to a local school validation piece of the assessment, which will call for high-quality assessments of students in a work-based learning experience. Significant progress has been made through the workplace learning plan initiative to capture the assessment of employability skills learned in the workplace, and now we turn our attention to the technical skills that are learned in the workplace and the assessment of those skills by employers. The third challenge is matching the efforts of the Certificates of Proficiency with high-quality industry systems. Industry is taking action, as we speak, on many fronts to answer the shortage of skilled workers. The automotive industry's AYES, or Automotive Youth Education System, puts two years of high school automotive instruction with two years of post-secondary automotive instruction, based on instruction given by employers and educators. The dealer service training program at Caterpillar, which combines on-the-job training with college instruction through a community college, both of these programs are key to aligning our system with current industry standards.

Finally, we are also challenged to secure adequate funding for this initiative. The groundwork has been laid for a comprehensive assessment system for career and technical education. However, from this point, progress will be minimal without the funding to support the efforts. At full implementation, nearly 10,000 students annually will be eligible for assessment under this initiative. While the assessment is not mandatory, the potential is for at least 10,000 students per year to be eligible for this assessment. The

students will be mainly program completers in secondary career and technical education programs, but will increasingly include post-secondary and adult learners and eventually program completers wishing to upgrade their certificates through post-secondary education and workplace training initiatives. However, due to the careful prioritization of the occupations, we will see a significant group of students able to be assessed in the near future.

The first four occupations being developed represent nearly 10 percent of the total enrollment in career and technical education. The net result will be an assessment opportunity for nearly 2,000 of the eligible 10,000 within the first two years. The Certificates of Occupational Proficiency calls for collaboration and partnership of all stakeholders. The success of the system as I have described it requires all stakeholders to embrace and invest in the process, participate at all levels, and to maintain and to improve the system over time. We're fortunate to be able to report significant success in this area as well. To conclude the report, Sheila Herbert, the superintendent director of Greater Lowell Technical High School, will detail our efforts in the area of community involvement and support for the process.

SHEILA HERBERT: Commissioner Driscoll and the Board members, I want to take this opportunity to thank you very much for inviting me to be part of this presentation and to work hand in hand with Karen. As Karen indicated earlier, our technical programs statewide have always been competency based. Partnering with business and industry in the development of up-to-date competency based programs is and has been an integral part of our schools in enabling us to meet the demands of the work force that we serve across the state. When the steering committee first met, it was the consensus that our business and industry partners needed to be very much involved at all levels from the very start. Since we routinely and successfully utilize technical advisory boards at the local level to develop and validate our competency task listings or descriptions, it was obvious that they needed to be involved in this entire process.

A concerted effort has been made to solicit input from business and industry to serve on cluster and occupational committees in an effort not only to involve them in the competency description validation process, but also to validate the entire COP developmental process. MAVA, the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, has been a critical supporter of this entire initiative. As one of the MAVA officers, I have served as a liaison to MAVA throughout the development of this process. My MAVA colleagues, many of whom are in attendance today, have been extremely supportive of this endeavor and responsible for our success to date. They have nominated teachers in the occupational areas to serve on these occupational and cluster committees in the area of auto, culinary, horticulture and cosmetology. They have afforded teachers and administrators in their schools the opportunity to be actively involved, and it provided them with release time. They've afforded them professional development opportunities as well, which will enable them to work with industry and their colleagues in the competency development and validation process. And they have been extremely supportive of the initiative and a champion to the cause of the COP every time they have been given the opportunity. They have done so because I think they believe that it's a balanced assessed system, which when all is said and done, will enable us to offer a balanced assessment to students enrolled in technical education programs statewide.

Myriad opportunities have been afforded to us to deliver the message regarding the assessment system, which we're in the process of developing. MASS, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and MASC have provided opportunities at the annual conference for us to get the message out. The Massachusetts Vocational Association, an organization for vocational teachers, has provided us last spring with an opportunity to convey the process that we're involved in. MAVA, at their annual meeting has given us the opportunity to speak, and the professional development conference in Fitchburg has also been a forum at which we have been able to deliver this message. I think this is very, very important for you as the Board to understand that the entire educational community is extremely supportive of the process as it had rolled out at various stages when they were making presentations with regard to the progress that was being made, and very supportive of the direction that we're going in. I think that's important because all of

these individuals are stakeholders. They all have a very serious involvement and interest in the progress as it's developing, and I think that that's very, very important. Business and industry have long been involved with us in technical schools in the competency validation process.

When the Department of Education launched a statewide initiative to develop a statewide competency-based technical education program a few years back, probably longer than I want to remember, technical schools and those comprehensive schools with Chapter 74 programs were very much involved in that. As the statewide director of the CBVE initiative, hired through the Department of Education, we trained, through Fitchburg State, hundreds of educators in the development of competency lists and competency based programs; and all of these were validated with local advisory board involvement. So this process that's been in place for over twenty years has always involved business and industry.

In fact, if you take a look at -- and I've brought a copy of mine, shared this at a meeting within the last year, with the Commissioner, and I think I've mentioned it to Chairman Peyser -- we have, and most of our schools have, these kinds of document, which is a document that details the standards of the competency profiles for all of our technical programs. We've been operating with this on a computerized basis for over twenty years. All of these are done on a local basis annually. Business and industry looks at all of our programs on an annual basis, more often than not twice a year.

Because of the training that many of our schools had through the development of this statewide competency-based program, many of our schools already had experience in the validation process, in the yearly updating and validation process of competency profiles as they applied in our own technical schools. And because we work hand in hand with business and industry, we now have very experienced individuals within the local business and industry community who work with us; and because of that, can pretty much almost step in and make an immediate contribution to the process that we have at hand.

As Karen explained, we chose the technical areas carefully. We chose them because of their high enrollments statewide, and because the programs selected already had national standards upon which our programs at the local level are based, some mandated by the Department of Education, like the automotive technology and the NATEF standards; others such as the culinary arts were chosen because some of our schools have an affiliation with ACF, or the American Culinary Federation, which has made significant strides in standards-based education. With regards to cosmetology, our programs must comply with regulations as outlined by the State Board of Cosmetology, and we felt it was critical to get a local board involved in the development of a process, because there may be others like that when we get into some of the union-based programs. We want to get those organizations very much involved with us.

And then, of course, we have our agricultural schools, and we wanted to make sure that from the start, they were involved in the process. The horticulture program also is very standards-based and governed by some very strongly established and well-defined standards as they develop programs in those communities. We are very grateful to the Commissioner and the Board of Education for the faith that they have entrusted in us. We are grateful for the opportunity to be involved at the ground level in such a critically important process. We believe the experience that we bring to the table as technical educators with a long history of working with standards, coupled with the experience we have in involving business and industry, and our own local program development and test validation process will without doubt serve us well. More importantly, it will assure you that the accountability that you desire and the value of technical education that you support will be guaranteed. I believe that it will enable you to feel confident that all students, not just a select few, will be afforded the best technical education possible, one which we can be proud of as a state, and one which will enable us to continue to provide the quality work force needed for the business and industry sectors that we serve.

I want to make one other comment and that would be to the Commissioner, is that you made an excellent choice when you selected Karen Ward to serve as the chairman of the steering committee. She's a product of our technical schools. She graduated from one of our technical schools, went on to get an advanced degree. I think she's an excellent spokesperson for technical education, certainly one that we're very proud of, and she's done a tremendous job to move this whole process forward over the course of the last year. Without her, we would never be at the point that we are at right now, and I want to thank her as a technical educator very much.

KAREN WARD: That does conclude our report. We would be happy to answer any questions. I know we threw a lot at you in a very short period of time. Feel free to call us if you have additional questions, but we would be happy to answer them now, if you have some.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I just want to note, by the way, that Emeril Lagasse is a graduate from one of our vocational schools here in Massachusetts. He made a surprise visit last spring and signed hats for the kids. Joe wasn't there that day; he was his former teacher.

KAREN WARD: Yes, sir, he is. He's a graduate of Diman in Fall River and does come back and help out.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The one question I have harkens back, in part, to the Commissioner's opening statement, but in part to a general perception that I have, and I think the Board members may have, that the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency is somehow analogous to the Certificate of Mastery on the academic side. And the question I have has to do with what segment of the student population we're shooting at here, in that Certificate of Mastery -- and these aren't obviously directly analogous -- is pointed at the very upper end of academic performance. The question I have is, in fact, does that analogy hold true for the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency? It harkens back to a comment you made at the outset that one of the vision statements is that the COP should be recognized as valuable employment credential for all students. I'm wondering whether our expectation is, in any reasonable time frame, that all students going through vocational technical programs will be getting Certificates of Occupational Proficiency, whether that's a long-term, twenty-, thirty-year kind of vision, or what.

KAREN WARD: Well, I think the answer to your question is that the Certificates of Occupational Proficiency are being designed for all students that are program completers in career and technical education. You may see, at the outset, the best and the brightest sitting for a COP, because it is not mandated. Certainly students that will feel success in that process will be the first to sign up, of course. The way the system is being rolled out is, you will have students at all levels of proficiency getting certificates. Where it's competency based, entry-level skills will represent cut scores. Cut scores will equal entry level. And then beyond that, you're going to have students with certificates that have significantly higher levels of achievement. So the number of students we see will be increasing that will actually sit for a COP, because it will be an attainable certificate by all students, and with the value of the certificate to employers will make it something that parents want their children to have; educators want their students to have as well. So that's how it's rolled out in the vision.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: You anticipated my next question, which is, would we use the assessment to provide either certification or recognition for students who achieve at other levels, let's say lower levels than the proficiency level?

KAREN WARD: Yes. The certificates are being rolled out with a set of technical skill proficiencies and employability skill proficiencies. Obviously, there will be a cut score established for the minimum level of competencies which will equal entry level; and then beyond that, you're going to have students with certificates that hold greater value, because the competencies outlined on that certificate are of a higher value to an employer.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So the expectation over time is that we, in fact, develop not an endless spectrum, but several gradations of certificate, of which the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency would reside at the high end of the spectrum. There may be other levels of certification that, over time, essentially all students would seek.

KAREN WARD: There will be a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, and you will achieve that certificate, provided you make the cut score and have entry-level skills; and then beyond that, it would still be a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, but at higher levels of competency gain and attainment.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Bill, I'm going to kick this over to you: what I'm hearing is a little different than what I would have expected to hear, which is that occupational proficiency is somehow above, and maybe the terminology is inexact here, but above entry-level skills.

MR. IRWIN: I agree with you, Jim. I thought the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency was for the top people in their field; and to call it a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency at different levels, I think, is the wrong naming for it. And that's what it seems like I'm hearing here. Throughout all of this, we haven't heard anything about the MCAS test, either, and the current requirement under law about the passing of the MCAS test in order to get a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. So we're hearing here there's going to be different levels; yet there's going to be one Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. And I don't think that's the way it's all set up to be done.

KAREN WARD: You can call it whatever you want, in terms of the level of the certificate, but I think it would be premature to say what we would call that at particular levels of proficiency. Certainly there will be a discrimination amongst the certificates that students hold. The higher-end students certainly will achieve a certificate that may become an advanced certificate.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I guess my point is, there's a statutory issue we have to deal with here. The Certificate of Occupational Proficiency, in that language, is called out in the statute, and it was intended to be representing the upper end of performance, not the lower end of performance. I think, as you've described here, in developing an assessment system to determine whether students are achieving at that level, it will almost naturally lead into a system where we can make other judgments at different levels of skill that we can acknowledge and reward and recognize. We may be able to create a system underneath the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency; but my understanding, much of which is driven by Bill's involvement with this from the beginning, is that that terminology, "Certificate of Occupational Proficiency," means something fairly specific. It is designed to be focused on the upper end of the performance spectrum, not the lower end or the middle, either.

MR. IRWIN: That's correct.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: So some of this may be terminology; some of it may be more than that. But I think this is an issue we need to pay attention to.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Well, it is, but I don't want to lose sight of some things here. First of all, it's clear in the law that you have to have a competency determination in order to issue a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. That's clear. That was part of the law that I didn't mention, because it's obvious; it's part of the law. As we're developing the system of setting the cut score for whatever the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency will be, which will be determined based on the competencies and by industry standards, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that we want all skills to be competency-based. In fact, as Sheila has said, this has been going on for a long time in vocational schools. I happen to know of a student that earned a certain competency who was a highly disabled special education student. We know how well

vocational schools do for those kids. This student was able to earn a certain skill level, become gainfully employed, and self-sufficient; his parents thought that would never happen.

I don't want to lose sight of the fact that the overall picture is competency based; it's been competency based. The fact that we now have a system of clusters, and that we will pick out these particular areas and establish the cut score for occupational proficiency, should not detract from the fact that we always want to build the other system for competencies for all kids up the road. I don't want us to pit one against the other. I think the most important thing is that we establish a system based on competency, industry standards, and real assessment -- a third-party assessment that complies with the law that sets the Certificates of Occupational Proficiency in the areas we're setting. But we don't want to lose the whole system; we want to be able to allow kids to go wherever they can go. That's what's really exciting about the whole system.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I think that's right and I think it's important that, as you've been talking about, those are two systems integrated into one. My only point is related specifically to the certificate. My impression of what it means is something different than I've heard you saying. I just think we need to be consistent in understanding what that certificate means, and then need to design the rest of the program to fit within that statutory constraint.

KAREN WARD: And again, what the certificate means is yet to be completely fleshed out. As we meet with employers, who will tell you what that certificate is going to mean and what is going to be considered valuable to them, and as we form committees who'll they tell us what would be valuable to them, then students that have the Certificates of Proficiency, that will identify at what level those students are. And clearly the students at the top end of the spectrum will be carrying Certificates of Proficiency. So we're a little premature to get close to the mark on that right now.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: But you do understand the issue?

KAREN WARD: Oh, absolutely, yes. And the fact that the competency determination has to be achieved prior to getting a certificate lends itself to the certificate being a high-level certificate, certainly.

MR. WALL: I think you're making really good progress. I commend you. My nuts-and-bolts question is: Is higher education fully represented on the cluster committees, particularly the community colleges?

FRAN KANE: Yes.

KAREN WARD: We're really proud to say that we've made significant strides with the community colleges getting us representation on these committees. They're doing an outstanding job of recruiting people. The presidents of the colleges have been notified, and they're providing us with some really great support. In addition, we also have representation on the steering committee as well.

MR. WALL: I think that's really important, to keep that involvement growing and alive to make this all work; but I think you're making some real good progress.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Any other questions or comments?

MR. BAKER: Could you e-mail us the prepared remarks? That was a lot of information.

KAREN WARD: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I want to thank you. We have two more presentations, and I'm aware that this Board isn't always used to these show-and-tells, but it's very important in this case; and I thank you so

much, and everybody that's here. This is a major step forward for us. I think we've come a long way, and it's great to see.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

a. Renewal of Charters for Benjamin Banneker Charter School, North Star Academy Charter School, Seven Hills Charter School and Somerville Charter School – Initial Discussion

b. Report on Pending Applications for New Charters - Discussion

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: The next item on the agenda is charter schools; and in particular, we have four renewal applications before us. Two were submitted to you in the package that you received last week; two more have appeared magically in front of you. Those two are the Somerville Charter School and the Seven Hills Charter School. The two in your book were Benjamin Banneker and North Star. We're not voting on these today; we're discussing them. You're not going to have to read and consider what was just put before you instantly, but we do want to make sure at next month's meeting that we are able to take a vote. So we want to get all of this material on the table and afford some opportunity for discussion and consideration today. Commissioner, if you want to turn it over to Susie.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you very much. I'd like to make a very quick opening statement. I realize the hour is getting late. There was a method to our madness. First of all, because of the Schaefer rule, of course, we have to discuss this now but vote next month. And we wanted to get you the North Star and Banneker reports in time for this meeting, because we have concerns in both, and I'll go over those in a minute. We will be recommending and asking you to vote next month positively on both Seven Hills and the Somerville Charter Schools. So you have those today, but they're less controversial. Frankly, we had a real problem with the North Star Charter School, and were prepared not to recommend renewal. It turned out that North Star decided to cease operation a week ago Friday, so they took us out of the need to do it, although --

MR. BAKER: As of when?

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: As of a week ago this past Friday. They notified us before they closed, and we notified the Springfield Public Schools, and the acting superintendent went in, and they assessed the students and so forth. So they've made arrangements; in fact, they're using the facility, I think, to take care some of the students. One problem with North Star is that the enrollment was inflated. When we got to the real number of students, we took care of those that needed to be placed. So that is not before you.

With respect to Banneker, while we are recommending renewal, we are doing so with conditions. I will simply say that as far as I'm concerned, the report is more optimistic than I am. While I will be recommending that we renew it with conditions, I am personally going to meet with the director and the board at Banneker to make it very clear, as Susie and Joe will, what our expectations are. We do want to see improvements there, and we want to be very clear about that. I don't know if there's anything you want to add, Susan.

SUSAN MILLER BARKER: Just that we'll ask you to vote on Banneker with its conditions, Somerville, and Seven Hills, at the February meeting.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: A couple things that are related -- One is, what's happened with North Star, I think, is evidence that charter school accountability is for real. This is actually the second charter school that has returned its charter, in both cases really under threat of losing its charter, as a result of the accountability

system in place. That's very significant, and even though I think in either case, it was not a close call, the fact that the call was made is extremely important.

Historically, in public education, that call has not been made. So I think it's one of the real triumphs of the charter school design that this has happened. Obviously, it's very disappointing that North Star did not live up to our expectations, or even its own. I'm very sorry for that, and I'm disappointed, not only for the people who in good faith tried hard to make that school work, but for the students and families who were associated with North Star Academy. Nevertheless, the fact that accountability is real in charter schools is, I think, a great comfort to me personally. It should be a comfort to those who have supported charter schools over the years. However, not all calls are easy ones, and I think the Banneker case is a good case in point.

There are certainly student performance data, MCAS being one data point, the Iowa as being another, and some other student performance data with respect to Banneker, that suggest that the school is not meeting our expectations, or even the school's own aspirations. This is disappointing. There are some positive indicators, as you'll note in the report: the Stanford 9 data suggest upward trends in reading, math and English language arts. That's encouraging. The report itself, as the Commissioner mentioned, is quite optimistic about the capacity of the school to improve and some of the changes that have occurred over the last year to eighteen months that seem to be moving the school in the right direction. This is a difficult choice, because the design of the charter school accountability system is that at five years, you take a snapshot, and you decide sort of up or down whether the school has made it or not. In practice, we've discovered it's a little more complicated than that, and we need to walk a fine line of ensuring we're not closing schools simply because they got off to a rough start, but that in fact we're giving schools a fair opportunity to succeed. But by the same token, we're not making excuses for poor performance, and that's a very tough line to walk.

The other related comment is that the recommended conditions are valuable and will help the school succeed. They will certainly help us ensure that the accountability system, with respect to Banneker, fulfills its obligations. But there's a fine line being walked here, too. In our effort to help schools, we need to make sure that we don't essentially manage them and take them on ourselves. The whole theory behind charter schools is that the accountability is part of the trade-off for autonomy and authority to act. In trying to make it work, we've got to make sure that we don't smother them with kindness by taking away their authority. With that, I commend the recommendations the Commissioner has made with respect to the conditions on Banneker. I commend the office, Susie in particular, for the work around North Star and bringing it up to conclusion, and I would open it up for any further comments or questions by Board members.

DR. SCHAEFER: I just wanted to say that when I was reading this, I was thinking exactly the same thing about the seriousness with which we've taken our responsibility in terms of the accountability of charter schools. I also think it shows that the law is probably a model in the country. I don't know if anybody from the press is here, but I really think that this is a story that needs to be repeated. We're not just giving out charters indiscriminately; we're carefully monitoring them. There have been some successes, but we have to recognize that, and we knew that there would be some failures, but they've actually been acted on. Again, I also applaud Susie and her staff on the work they've done. Also, I just think that this should be noted on the record, how we have carried out the responsibility with respect to the charter schools.

MR. IRWIN: I've got a couple questions or comments. On the Banneker, is May 1 going to be enough time, David, to get the information? And if it doesn't meet the requirements to move these children into another education system, is that going to be enough time to get them...

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Well, if we renew them with conditions, then they're renewed.

MR. IRWIN: Right. But my question is if they're not renewed.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: If we find problems, then we obviously try to work it so that it doesn't conflict with the school year. By the way, beyond North Star and the other charter school that turned in their charter, we've had these conditional issues with two or three schools. I think this emphasizes the accountability aspects. We almost had a school close last year and they did find financing. We're going to deal with the timing, and I do think May is enough time. I agree with the Chairman, and remind me not to smother them with kindness when we meet, but we want to send the message that it's real. I'm just concerned that the report is more optimistic than I am, and I want to make sure they understand that we're very serious about some of these things. I'm comfortable with May. I just feel the obligation personally to make sure they understand that I just can't let the report stand as it is. I think that might help.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Just to clarify, I think the process would be that if they fail to meet these conditions, their charter would still be valid, but that would initiate a process where we might put them on suspension or notice.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: On notice, so they'd have an entire year to--

MR. IRWIN: I am afraid of pulling the rug out from underneath the children. And the other one is on North Star. When you made the comment that we got incorrect information from them as far as miscounting students and everything else, what legal recourse do we have, not necessarily to the Department, but as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts? Do we have to send a message out there to anybody -- whatever school it is -- that if you're misrepresenting yourself and giving us incorrect information, that we're going to do something about it? I think that's something we should look at, seriously. Just to say you did wrong and please stop doing it --

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: With the other public schools that are part of cities, towns, or regional school districts, we can take away their Chapter 70 funds in the future. With charter schools, because they usually have five years, there's usually an adjustment that's being made. While there might be some unfortunate financial losses to some vendors here, and we'll have to see how that all plays out, we were clearly catching up to them on the issue of enrollment. In fact, we held some monies. They had enough monies to pay payroll, and then we held the payment, and obviously, they won't get the third and fourth quarter. It's unfortunate. Perhaps we learned a little on the closure issues, which we never thought we'd have to deal with. It does raise the point that we need to be very careful. In any place where we think there's a problem, we've got to get into auditing very quickly.

MR. IRWIN: But more so, are people legally responsible? The people who are actually signing things and saying "I'm in charge here" --

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: The Board of Trustees.

MR. IRWIN: But where does the responsibility end? And what happens to people if they lie?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: That's a open question that I don't have an answer to. What are the sanctions for falsely submitting enrollment numbers?

MR. IRWIN: Right.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: And this is not just a charter school issue, obviously; it's also a public school issue.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: School and municipal officials sign a statement for our annual report, saying under the pain of perjury and so forth. I don't know, Kristin, if in this particular case, whether they're going to be liable, because I don't know that they accrued money ultimately.

KRISTIN MCINTOSH: Typically what we've done is, they get four installments and payments, and it catches up over time, because the school districts have to in fact validate the enrollment as well, because they're losing that money. So it doesn't usually snowball past the current school year, and we're able to compensate for it in the later payments.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: The question before the house is, assuming that after all is said and done, the inflated numbers they gave us in the first quarters resulted in more monies than they should have gotten, and they knowingly inflated and falsified their numbers: What, if any, legal responsibility do they bear, let alone the financial issues?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I also want to interject here, I think this discussion is a hypothetical one.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Yes, of course. Absolutely.

MR. IRWIN: Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: There's no evidence being presented here or accusation being made that anything was knowingly done.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Rhoda, did you want to add something?

RHODA SCHNEIDER: Just what you were probably about to add, which is, any time we have evidence that a school official, whether it's a charter school, a public school, or private school that we regulate has knowingly falsified information, we send that directly to the Attorney General's office.

MR. BAKER: The other possibility is, if you're on the board of a nonprofit, and you go out of business or go bankrupt, you end up usually stiffing somebody; and the people you stiff can sue you personally, most of the time. You may have D&O insurance; you may not. I don't know enough about this situation. Dave, you said there might be creditors who are going to be stiffed. I mean, if creditors get stiffed, they've got some options.

MR. IRWIN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Well, we'll keep you posted.

MR. IRWIN: Hypothetically.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: We'll keep you posted, really, on the situation that was hypothetical and will become real.

MR. IRWIN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: The last comment I want to make is that, again, thanks to the Schaefer rule, we will be coming back in February to ask for you to vote on the new applications. I want to thank not only Susie and Joe, but Hannah and Barry. The whole office has really done yeoman's work here. They've done about four years' work in a matter of months. So not only are they dealing with all of these renewals -- we're happy about it -- but thanks to the new legislation, they're in the middle of reviewing and meeting with all these groups. So you've gotten a summary of all of them. As decisions are made to narrow it down, we will get you that information. It will go out before your packet in February, so that we can vote in February. We have a statutory limit of March 1. We have to issue them by March 1. So we will be bringing the new charter schools before you in February. I want to make sure the Board members know that we will set up

individual sessions if you want to come in and go over the recommendations. I want to make sure that you know that we will sit down for a couple of hours and go over the recommendations for Board members who want to do so.

MS. KELMAN: Is there going to be a time when we can ask very detailed questions?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Well, certainly at the next Board meeting; but in terms of the application and the renewals, if there's something you want to pursue in greater depth, it might be useful to either give Susie or Joe a call. You can even schedule some time to sit down with them and go over these things in whatever depth you want.

MR. BAKER: I have one question. How are the Somerville folks getting along with everybody in Somerville?

SUSAN MILLER BARKER: Well, they're in their building. They had the opportunity to occupy the building. I'm not sure if it was an emergency occupation -- that's not the right thing.

MR. BAKER: I was just looking forward to the letters from the aldermen and the members of the city council.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Better.

PROPOSED REGULATIONS FOR LICENSURE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS (603 CMR 47.00) – Discussion and Vote to Seek Public Comment

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you very much. The next item is adult basic education teacher's license; and we have here draft regulations that we intend to vote on to send out for public comment.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Let me introduce our panel. It includes Sandra Stotsky, Bob Bickerton, Mary Jayne Fay, who has done such great work in this particular area, Suzanne Martin, who's a teacher from Brockton Adult Learning Center, and John McGovern, who's administrator of the Worcester ABE program. Let me say first of all, as a result of the MassINC report, not only did they do an outstanding job pointing out the problems that we have, the challenges we have and some recommendations, but in the course of that, they were very complimentary, as I was pleased that they were, towards our adult education program here in Massachusetts.

We're very proud of our adult basic education program. We have enormous needs in this Commonwealth, including enormous waiting lists. We have adults who are trying to raise families and stay gainfully employed despite language difficulties and educational challenges. We've provided wonderful programs across the state for such adults. One of the major things we've done is to establish a system of high standards.

Here you have, as a result of a statute driven by a particular state representative who would have liked to have been here tonight but couldn't, regulations which we're asking you to approve and send out for public comment. The big key here is these are not only voluntary because we say it, but because the statute says it. It's very interesting that these are voluntary, although the field is very anxious to support the standards, as you've heard Phil Veysey and others say. They want higher standards; they're willing to do the work to comply with these regulations. These fit very nicely with our own Chapter 71 regulations, by introducing things like performance assessment and so forth. So I'm very proud of this. In fact, after we finish the public comment period, get them back, and vote, they will be the first adult basic education certification regulations in the country. So we're very, very proud of that. Bob, why don't you take it from here.

BOB BICKERTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, and members of the Board. This is a great opportunity for us to advance the field of adult basic education in the Commonwealth once again. I am going to keep my comments quite brief. It's actually Mary Jayne Fay who will go through some of the substance, the major provisions, what's similar to the regulations you've already reviewed and passed in pre-K to 12, and where it varies in some cases. Mr. Chairman, I think I can reduce from twenty minutes to about two by leaving out all the thank-you's. I will personally thank the many people who contributed to this, many more than you see before you. What I'd like to do is provide just a very brief context for adult basic education so you understand, where these regulations vary from pre-K to 12, why that's the case.

The field is structured in some ways that are different. First of all, we're talking about 2,500 adult educators that we support through grants and other kinds of public support; and although there are other adult education programs in the Commonwealth, actually many of them are entirely supported by volunteers or very limited numbers of professional support. So the 2,500 is potentially the universe that we're looking at for this opportunity. We support a very diverse group of provider agencies. Included among the adult learning centers in the Commonwealth are centers located at school districts, but also at the community colleges, other public higher education institutions. Community-based organizations are the largest single group of providers. Libraries, correctional facilities, that list goes on. But this is important because it goes to the heart of why the legislature chose to make this available but not required, since many of those institutions, like higher education, have a set of standards for hiring that do not necessarily follow certification as the means to do that.

The providers are selected in a very competitive process for five-year performance periods, and I'd emphasize "very competitive." You became somewhat familiar, in your votes for this year's funding where we started a new five-year cycle, that many of our prior providers aren't with us this year, and other new ones are. But that also creates a lack of stability in the field in the long run that makes this a challenging standard to market in terms of advancing professionalism. You heard about the MassINC report. I won't repeat that information, but it is one out of every three Massachusetts workers have a need to upgrade their skills. We're talking about over a million adults. What I'd like to point out for the Board is among that over a million adults, almost half of that number have children under the age of thirteen, who are living in poverty and whose parents need to upgrade their skills.

The Department manages $42 million in combined state and federal funding for adult education. We'll serve an estimated 25,000 students this year. That represents an increase in annual capacity of about 10,000 seats over the last five years, due to the large increases in state funding we've received in that period of time. Despite this, we still have waiting lists at the current moment slightly in excess of 14,000. This issue, as I mentioned, because of the diversity of providers in different groups we work with, has been contentious.

There's actually a 25-year history debating the issue of certification and licensure in adult basic education. In the mid-'90s, we made some substantial progress by convening the field and really looking at what common ground we can work from, and it was that common ground that Representative John Binienda of Worcester took advantage of in filing this legislation to create the license. The vast majority of adult educators have college degrees, and over half already possess a pre-K-12 professional license. Their concern is, why do I need to pursue renewal of a license outside the field I'm working in? I'm an adult basic educator and should not be looking solely to replace a K-12 license.

One of the things we will need to come to grips with is that there are almost no preparation programs in higher education in adult basic education. We will need to be working with the Board of Higher Education to resolve that. As the Commissioner mentioned, this would be the first license of its kind in the nation. Although there is some movement in this direction in the other 49 states, none of them have the same standing and the same set of standards to meet as the pre-K-12 licenses. They're often add-ons, or they're not recognized by the relevant office in their state Department of Education. Two major issues we are

resolving with these regulations, and I believe we've done a pretty good job with it, is ensuring professional rigor in a voluntary system, and recognizing the skills and experience of people who may be working in this field as much as thirty years as we transition from a field without licensure to one that will have that.

JOHN McGOVERN: Good evening. I just would like to provide a little history, what led up to this statute. Several teachers from the Worcester area met with John Binienda out of a concern over their recertification. Many of them are already certified in other areas, but some of our teachers have been teaching for ten, fifteen, twenty years in the field of adult education. They didn't want to give up their certification, though. So when they looked at recertifying, it just didn't make sense to them to recertify in an area that they hadn't been in for a number of years and had no intention of going back to. So they were interested in creating some kind of certification for adult educators. Also, those of us who work in public schools need to be certified in something in order to apply for merit promotions, so there's a lot of concern amongst people who can't apply for promotions. We've worked in the field for a number of years. Again, we've committed to it, it's our life's work, and we thought that that should be recognized. So Representative Binienda filed the legislation, and the legislature obviously agreed with him; it passed. And we've spent a lot of time and effort in developing this certification or licensure.

SUZANNE MARTIN: As part of the process for developing licensure, two years ago the Commissioner established an advisory committee which is representative of the many different teaching positions and administrative positions within adult basic education. As a starting point, we looked at models in other states and in other countries, which Bob alluded to, and we also looked at the pursuant pre-K-12 regulations to see what was appropriate to ABE. In addition to the advisory committee, the Department, along with SABES, which is the primary professional development group for our field, conducted focus groups across the state. We presented at statewide conferences. We had postings on list servers and we had discussion groups so as to gather as much information from the field, as we went through the process, as we could. Approximately a quarter of those 2,500 practitioners either attended, responded, or provided input to the various drafts; and there were many before we came to this point. The committee reviewed the comments and recommendations, and those are reflected in this current set of recommendations.

MARY JAYNE FAY: One of the goals in developing this model was to make it as equivalent in stature and rigor to the pre-K-12 licenses; and as such, there are six main areas that parallel the existing K-12 model. The similarities are the college degree requirement, of either a bachelor's or a master's degree; rigorous professional standards; an identified body of subject matter. In ABE, many practitioners have to know a foundation of subject matter that ranges from English, math, history, social sciences and ESOL. Also teacher tests, and while right now not all teachers in this model are required to take the test, there is a sunset clause within the model that will bring that into alignment with the K-12 model within five years. Also, field-based experience, prepracticum and practicum, professional development requirements.

The legislature actually stipulates that the license is valid for five years, and teachers must pursue recertification every five years. The differences in this model are mainly due to two factors. The first one is that working adults voluntarily attend ABE programs, and ABE programs as such are driven by the needs and the goals of the learners that attend those programs. The second reason is that the legislation stipulates that again, this is a voluntary license, that the Department be required to offer it, that it be available, but they not require it as part of the legislation.

This license differs from pre-K-12 in four main ways. There are four routes to certification that recognize the varied skills and experience of adult educators in the field. Also, the licensure process itself, there are two options available. There is the traditional teacher preparation program when those are established, and for the time being, a licensing review panel option. Performance assessment is also required of all adult educators in this model. As for many of the standard, it's the most reliable way to assess proficiency and certain standards within the model. Also a field survey. In addition to the prepracticum and practicum

requirements, a field survey is important to this field, because unlike traditional pre-K-12 fields, this field, as Bob alluded to, happens in a range of contexts, and also in a range of levels, for instance, basic literacy, ESOL, pre-GED and GED levels. The differences are meant to respond to the realities of the field while also maintaining the rigorous standards. In developing this license, the question became, how do they transition a field that has no history of certification or licensure to a field that we hope will embrace this process? We felt that the way to transition the field would be to develop multiple routes to licensure that would provide opportunities for both novice and experienced teachers. The four different routes to licensure help to acknowledge the varying backgrounds that ABE practitioners bring to this field.

We have practitioners who are retired K-12 teachers, we have former lawyers, we have people who hold Ph.D.'s, and we also have students who have graduated from community-based organizations and then have been asked to teach within them. So these routes are designed to help encourage those practitioners to come into this process. Route 1 is for the novice teacher or the prospective ABE teacher. Route 2 is designed for teachers who already hold a K-12 license, but don't have any experience in the field. Route 3 is designed for those teachers who have one year of ABE teaching experience and a K-12 certification. And then Route 4 is designed for the very experienced ABE practitioner who has five or more years of experience in the field. We've conducted a needs survey in the field and have started generating some data from that, and we found that 50 percent of those that responded to the needs survey would qualify to use Route 4 as a route for licensure. That wraps up our presentation. If you have any questions?

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: This is not a question that you need to respond to now, but I'd be interested in knowing what is the likely administrative burden placed on the Department by this certification program? That relates to what percentage of the applicants are going to come through which route, because the routes have differing levels of administrative requirements attached to them. Just what percentage of the total teaching population is likely to go for this certificate, and how soon this will start to spread across the industry, if you will? That's obviously a serious question for us to think about in terms of future budget requests, but also in trying to understand what the implications for this are on the Department and other management issues related to that.

BOB BICKERTON: Mr. Chairman, I can give a preliminary answer. We've done some costing, but obviously we have more to do as we work out the remaining details and also respond to whatever remaining changes need to happen. We estimate a staffing burden of about three full-time-equivalent staff. We also have to develop the subject matter test, which would be in the ballpark of $200,000 to potentially a bit more than that. But the ongoing operational cost will largely be in the staffing, and then some measure of support for the licensure review panels. Not substantial, and probably, as happens with almost all other developmental initiatives, the adult education budget needs to find ways, and is prepared to find ways, to respond to that; but for the one-time costs, we're going to need some assistance.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was;

VOTED: **that the Board of Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 69, sections 1B and 1H, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. chapter 30A, section 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed Regulations for Licensure of Adult Basic Education Teachers, 603 CMR 47.00, as presented by the Commissioner.**

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Schaefer. The vote was unanimous.

APPROVAL OF GRANTS

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: There are grants behind Tab 7. There are three categories: community partnerships for children, after-school and other out-of-school-time programs, and transition planning for full-day kindergarten. The total value is something under $6 million.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was;

VOTED: **that the Board of Education approve the grants as presented by the Commissioner.**

The motions was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Dr. Schaefer. The vote was unanimous.

UPDATE ON VIRTUAL EDUCATION SPACE (VES) – Discussion

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I realize the time is a late but I want to get this before the Board because I think it's extremely important. I think it may change teaching and learning as we know it, but I'll leave that for another day. I truly believe, that if there's a chance to make up the difference for kids whose lives do not allow them to compete, presently, VES provides the potential.

I want to indicate that Mary Skipper, from the Boston Public Schools, is out sick today, so we do not have her, but let me introduce Greg Nadeau, Kim Joyce, Steve Miller from Mass. Networks, and Tom Vreeland, all the way from southern Berkshire. Thank you, Tom.

GREG NADEAU: My only role is to introduce the team. Fifteen months ago, the five of us started out on a mission to design and deliver, statewide, this year, to every teacher -- and next year to every student and parent -- a set of interconnected applications to bring the power of the Internet and standards-based curriculum to increase student achievement in a measurable way. It's been my pleasure to work with these three people, and Mary, our missing colleague here today, over the fifteen-month period. Some people might say, for Kim -- for a hammer, everything's a nail; for Kim, she sees a database in things. And about three years ago, when I met her, she was a fourth grade teacher in North Andover Public Schools, and trying to make sense of the state curriculum frameworks. So let me just turn it over to Kim to start.

KIM JOYCE: This is a great opportunity, as I got involved with this project before it was a formal project as a fourth grade classroom teacher. We were very committed to education reform, and as a self-contained classroom teacher, I was also the chairperson for our elementary science and technology committee. Our charge was to work with our middle school and high school committees in creating a pre-K-to-12 curriculum aligned to the state frameworks. We were also supposed to work with our other committees to make sure we were looking at it from an interdisciplinary approach and project base. So we did that, utilizing a database. The relational database that we had set up was, we put the Massachusetts frameworks in one, we put our local curriculum in another, and we put the national science standards in yet a third; and we set them up so they would talk to each other, just so that as we made our revisions and the state made their revisions, we could learn from each other and go along from there. We applied for a Lighthouse grant in 1997, which we received, and through the dissemination process, started working with other districts.

We thought we were sharing technology, and that we were giving away this database so that other people could be utilizing it and learning from it. What we actually realized is we were sharing and giving away curriculum. We started working with Dartmouth and Martha's Vineyard and Lexington and Lawrence and Haverhill, and as we got together and started looking at each other's curriculum documents, we realized pretty quickly we were doing the same kinds of things; we were going through the same kind of process. And we could learn a lot from each other as we were going through, trying to identify what we expect our students know and be able to do, and to identify evidence that learning actually occurred. So that process

then spawned a year-long process called CLASP, which stands for Curriculum Library Alignment and Sharing Project. Can't have a project go statewide without it having an acronym. We started working with Mass. Networks, and we had monthly meetings where we looked at a software tool, this database, and we actually made comments and suggestions as we went through this evolution.

It was a really exciting opportunity, but we needed to do a lot more. We wanted it to be a web-based application. We had all these hopes and dreams. And that's kind of where VES steps in. We all started working together to really look at, how can we take this curriculum process, and close it with the communication and collaboration and assessment piece? So what we have here represented is kind of a smart desktop for teachers. We have a handout that's kind of a brief of all of the different pieces of this project. It's very complicated, and it's been going on for some time, so there's a lot of different components to this. But through CLASP, we learned that this -- I didn't even mention what this big packet here is.

This is what I refer to as the "thud" factor of standards-based education. In that, we've got our seven curriculum frameworks, we've got our district curriculum guidelines, we've got our MCAS questions and the MCAS results. There's all kinds of things I'm supposed to be intimate with. And that isn't all of it. This is great material, and this can really help me individualize my instruction; but I can't utilize a document like that every day, and there's lots of things in there. So what we looked at is, and these are pulled from CLASP. So the state frameworks come out with the state standards. Our districts then come up with our student performance descriptors. Those are aligned with instructional resources, our courses, units, lessons and activities. We then have student samples or anchor and exemplar documents that are aligned as part of that that are the result of assessment instruments or questions. We have MCAS questions that are also aligned to those reporting categories, how we did by state district and school, and then professional development that we can go to and utilize to both collaborate and learn more about the content in that area. I chose math, and this is content that we pulled out of CLASP -- CLASP is an off-line application currently -- to show the connection between the curriculum, the instruction, the assessment, and professional development in what we think is kind of what teachers need to really be able to individualize student instruction, to be able to make a difference.

GREG NADEAU: Next, Tom is going to be talking a little bit about what we'll be launching next year for student tools and some of the things happening today with indicators. Tom, I should say, was the technology director for Southern Berkshire Regional District, and Tom, as technology director there, really was the leading tech director in the state. The things that he was doing there have consistently been five to ten years ahead of really every other district in the state. So we've been very fortunate to have his technical savvy working with us.

TOM VREELAND: Thank you, Greg, and good evening. My job tonight really is to bring some messages from the hinterland and to try to paint kind of a human picture of what this VES thing is about and what it looks like. It's clearly about a bunch of technology things. Some of them are advanced technologies, and they're very interesting; but I think, for you and for me, it's much more about the richness of the human interactions that it makes possible. So I want to bring some of those stories, and in that process try to bring into focus a picture for you of what the VES environment really is. First and foremost, VES is a place where teachers can collaborate and learn and share.

John from Northampton and Mary from Ware are now routinely using VES to share ideas about their fourth-grade math curriculum. Last week, eighteen teachers, running on the support and guidance of the Hampshire collaborative, participated in the first multimedia conference based around curriculum and the alignment of local curriculum objectives with state standards within the VES environment. So for almost every one of those teachers, this was actually the first time that they had participated in online conferences. So VES is about a lot of new beginnings. Districts are also beginning to use the space, the VES space, to share standards-based units and lessons and resources with their peers in VES.

Second, VES takes professional development to a new level. Kathy Peloquin, in Worcester, is exploring the intersection between graduate-level professional development as we know it and the day-to-day realtime teachers' need for just-in-time development in the classroom. Cal Carpin, from Medford, has a very ambitious program that's just starting this week, which will provide five courses online for teachers within the Medford district and area, on such things as bringing the tool "Inspiration" into the classroom and using it to support curriculum and instruction. VES is also going to provide professional development in the areas of standards-based education for every teacher in the Commonwealth, and technology-based competency skills for use of technology in the classroom.

Third, VES is a place to explore new modalities, techniques, for teaching and learning. On Martha's Vineyard, Kathy Flynn has been looking at the problem of how, in a very compressed five-district area, she could work with individual second-grade teachers to enhance the second-grade math and science curriculum; and they're doing a very exciting promise with Lego, Logo, and some robotics stuff for 2nd graders to enhance the standards-based math and science curriculum.

Fourth, VES is a powerful delivery system for delivering resources and content and assessment tools to teachers across the state. And dozens of educational organizations and collaboratives have started to stake out their claim to the virtual space. So right now, we're only a couple of months up and running, but already the Hampshire collaborative, the Mass. Family Literacy Consortium, Project Meet, TLCF grants--the teacher mentoring grants and other programs have started establishing themselves within the virtual space as a way of more directly reaching their audiences and facilitating communications. We've also started bringing some, and we've just tapped the starting point of commercial and public domain resources from organizations like Marco Polo, the Encyclopedia Britannica, the gateway for educational materials and a set of world-class tools for every teacher.

Fifth, VES is a place for empowering kids, and challenging kids to take charge of their own education. And I think already it's begun to illustrate the crucial role that we knew it was important to be investing in technology all along, but there's a certain set of technology and a certain level of conditions that are necessary to really make use of the VES tools. We know districts will never get a one-to-one computer-to-student ratio. We know that districts will never be able to provide, out of their budgets, enough online resources to provide K-12 standards-based portfolios for kids to be able to manage and store their standards-based classroom work in the best examples of exemplars of their work. VES can do those things, though. VES can provide an individualized online virtual hard drive and computing space for every kid in the Commonwealth. VES can provide for every teacher a set of free tools that enhance the things they do every day, and VES can provide a place to manage and store individual learning plans and to provide K-12 portfolio space for every kid.

As a brief example, in the Southern Berkshire school district, Ernie Fitzgerald is now using VES as a framework, as a place, to support classroom instruction in English language arts. All 7th and 8th graders in the district are now using the VES program in a pilot program. Paula Brian is using this; Bill Giguli, for the social studies programs. And advanced math teachers using this to support the instruction in geometry, trig, and calculus. One of the things that the librarian, Marie Irwin, said a couple of weeks ago was that she used to have a hard time getting the kids off of chat on the computers. Now she can't get them off of VES.

Let me go a little bit further to say that Mary, who's not here tonight, was going to talk about some of things she's been doing with parents and kids to broaden the environment, and teachers' needs for a standards-based curriculum in Boston and building the web curriculum tools as part of the metro link program. Mary is not one to sort of wait for things to happen. So as soon as VES was launched, she set up a program which was an advanced technology, Oracle database administrator program which was set up for after school and Saturdays. It's a voluntary program, and they had many more kids wanting to get into this voluntary program than could get in, and they've got thirty kids working with Mary now in this program. She's using

the online space to support the real face-to-face collaboration within the classroom, but she's also finding that it opens up channels for kids that are reticent to participate in class. They will participate on line, get into the online environment, and then would see that new empowerment that they felt translate back into the face-to-face, classroom where those kids are now taking more of a leadership role.

VES does open new channels for communication between teachers and kids. It extends the day in the classroom, and it makes the opportunities for learning and involvement of parents much greater. It's a place for teachers to collaborate and learn and share, a place to take professional development to a new level, a place to explore new modes of teaching and learning, a place for powerful delivery of standards-based education, a place for empowering kids and for opening new channels to work with parents and teachers and kids.

GREG NADEAU: Let me introduce Steve Miller. Steve was the person who introduced Net Day for Massachusetts in our schools. Under Steve's work with Net Day and with Mass. Networks, we've gone from 2 percent of our classrooms being connected to the Internet to now 80 percent of the classrooms connected to the Internet.

STEVE MILLER: Kim told you a little bit about the content. Tom told you a little bit about the incredible stuff that teacher pioneers and student pioneers are beginning to use this environment for. That's exciting, but not enough. We think the real measure of success is majority adoption. So what we want to be pushing for is real structures and activity within districts across the state. We're not trying to pretend it's going to happen tomorrow. So we are focusing on the working districts. Each of them has put together, or identified, a sabbatical teacher or two, and creating teacher teams, not brand-new teams, not yet another team, but teams that they already have working on curriculum, on administration, on assessment, and we're integrating the use of VES into these teams to make this a scalable model that makes it a valuable tool for people across the district. Technology is a tool; education is a relationship. And what we want to do is use the tool to foment better relationships. So we're starting in the working group districts, we're spreading to some of the grant districts, and we're beginning to get calls across the state saying, can you come and do our training? And that's the last piece here.

The core of it, software; district programs; and we're actually putting together a whole series of central services to support the efforts of districts, but you can't expect them to just pick it up and run it totally on their own. Pioneers, maybe; but most people need some help. So we're now in the process of spreading across the state with training and support programs that we think will not only lead to majority adoption, but on a more fundamental basis, what's important about this is it creates a structure and an environment to really build out an equity of environment for kids who would not get these resources and for school districts who couldn't do it on their own. So by pooling our resources, by sharing across districts, we're able to leapfrog and build on each other's efforts, and that's really what's most exciting.

MR. BAKER: Governance?

GREG NADEAU: Can you hit the governance slide? VES is very different from the information management system we've been developing for the past five years at the Department of Education. VES is very much driven by the school districts, and the Commissioner signed last week a letter which brings into existence a new educational collaborative called the VES Educational Collaborative. The intention is for the VES Educational Collaborative to be the ultimate owner and manager of the systems associated with VES. So what this slide shows is administration and finance, giving $10.7 million to the Department of Education, which in turn creates VES and gives it to VEC.

MR. BAKER: I would suggest that one of you go talk to John Halumpka, who is the Chairman of NEHEN, which is New England Health Electronic Network. It was a nonprofit set up by Harvard Pilgrim Tufts

Partners and Care Group; now has about twenty participating members that are using the Internet to basically conduct administrative transactions around member eligibility, claims processing, utilization data and all that sort of thing. Basically it's an alternative to using traditional claims-processor services, most of which are for-profit organizations that make you pay to play. John works at Care Group; he's their chief information officer. In fact, he was on the cover of CIO Magazine; he's the only nonprofit CIO to have done that. He's the one to talk with. His goal is basically to have every health organization in New England at some point participating in this thing. And he's thought a lot about how to order the governance piece in such a way so that you get participation from the majority of the probable participants. But my view on this is that, if you structure it right, and people understand what the opportunity is and how to use it, you can go a long way.

GREG NADEAU: Thank you. We'll follow up with him.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to save time, on another day, to discuss this further; I think this is worthy of the Board's attention.

MR. BAKER: I'd go further than that, Dave. I would say that the little bit I heard of this, you ought to be rethinking a lot of the things the Department does to support the field, based on this. There's a lot of things you could do this way if you really believed you were going to get majority participation. It would change the way a lot of things get done here.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I absolutely agree, Charlie. It's secondary, in my mind, to the following. American public education has historically produced the finest results of any educational system in the world. You talk to the greatest leaders in our history, and they'll talk about the teacher or teachers that made a difference in their lives. But almost invariably, those people had a support system other than their schools. Most had a family, and perhaps even two parents. What we've not been able to do in America -- which, by the way, they've done in other countries which are not democratic -- is provide opportunities for kids based on effort, not ability. We in America have been short on that, and we do very well for those that have ability, but we have not closed the gap. The fact of the matter is education reform, standards-based reform, MCAS, school district accountability, takes longer than we thought. It's taking longer across this country. There's so much noise in kids' lives today. You think about the average kid, not even the kid who's dealing with even more noise. They're bombarded by media and a host of distractions. What happens in schools is there's an awful lot of regression, not only over the summer, but over the weekends and overnight. There's so much that interrupts learning.

I absolutely agree with Charlie on what the Department should be doing and how we should do it. It's unbelievable. They talk about the eight districts; that's just the tip of the iceberg. I really see this as an opportunity to give that kid that has heretofore not been able to make it. You can't work any harder than Worcester is working and other public school systems around the state, but there's just so much you can do because of the noise in these kids' lives. This, in my judgment, provides the opportunity. The kid can access it twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Time is the big factor, and we can empower the kids themselves. Then the teachers, of course, it's a phenomenal tool for teachers. That's my speech for today.

I remember in Kentucky, the first state that really had comprehensive reform, hearing of a young lady who got on the Internet and started to interact with kids from New York and ultimately became the first college graduate in the history of her little town. All because she started to interact; it opened up her world. The promise of technology has always been about it as a tool and I agree, but I always look for one thing: Does it put the kid to work? Not does it entertain them; does it engage the kid? If it engages the kid in meaningful, thinking activities, then we have something.

That's what I think is so great about this potential. We've been meeting with Steve Crosby and A&F, and we do need to talk about governance. Nationwide, we have fourteen states interested and lined up with us, a hundred million dollars maybe for the whole country, and there will be some other costs associated with it. This really is an exciting area that isn't necessarily costly, if we manage it right. I think that's the challenge. So we will be bringing it back, Mr. Chairman, at various stages; but I wanted to at least get this preliminary presentation before the Board.

DR. SCHAEFER: Is there a report of where you're going? Is there a written report of where you are at this point?

GREG NADEAU: There is a bunch of material that we have here for anyone who wants it. It's got some interesting articles about it, looking at VES from a lot of different perspectives, and so we have these for you.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Why don't you mail it out, so we can do it to the whole Board.

MR. BAKER: The way I would try and do this is I would figure out some way to sell memberships in it -- and I don't mean expensive memberships; I just mean some price of entry that makes somebody part of the gang. I would build the participatory structure around the membership designations, and use that as part of a pull strategy to try to pull people in. You would try to generate a little money, but that wouldn't really be the point. The point would be treating it as a community as opposed to participants. As you start to run with that, you're going to find out, Dave, is that if you can get people to play, there will be a lot of things you can do that you could never do before; and it will dramatically alter the way you relate to constituents.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: One of the weaknesses of technology programs in the past is they have been push-oriented, and they have not attempted to generate the pull from the field, from consumers and users. This of course results in leading you down a path that doesn't have value. It isn't valued by the people that use it, and you've got this huge investment in a tool that no one wants but everyone's stuck with. So in our eagerness to push this thing out and build users and build membership, if that's the right terminology here, I want to make sure we're doing it in a way that's demand-driven. And I think the creation of the collaborative is a piece of that. It's sort of turning the keys over to the driver rather than the manufacturer. I think that's important. I want to make sure we're keeping that in mind as we're rolling this thing out, and not, for lack of a better word, shoving something down people's throats.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: You know, it's a simple application. I think this is right. We're going to be able to send the MCAS scores to the individual student a year from now, and they'll get it faster than we get it the Department. Then we can give the kid, in his or her space, examples of areas that they're weak in. It just goes on and on.

DR. SCHAEFER: I guess I need to say one thing. I was bothered by what you said. I don't think technology can replace the family.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: No, I'm not trying to say that. Somehow we have to make up that deficit. We've got to try.

DR. SCHAEFER: I don't think we should hint at the possibility of technology being in any way a substitute.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: With that, are there any other comments or thoughts? We are adjourned.