

CREATING TOMORROW: PREPARING THE COMMONWEALTH'S NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS

Introduction

The results of the 1998 Massachusetts Teacher Test called into question the Commonwealth's programs for preparing teachers who will possess the skills and knowledge needed to enable public school students to reach the high standards established in the Education Reform Act. In response, Governor A. Paul Cellucci asked the Board of Higher Education to develop a plan for ensuring that public and private institutions of higher education will prepare their graduates to be outstanding teachers.

The present call for strengthening teacher education in the Commonwealth is not the first, nor is recognition of the need for change in this area limited to Massachusetts. There is growing national consensus on the need for improvement and on how to achieve it. During the past decade, many reports have focused on ways to strengthen teacher preparation and some positive steps have been taken. The report of the Joint Task Force on Teacher Preparation (1987) and the Education Reform Act (1993) led to the requirements that all teachers must have a liberal arts or science degree or its equivalent and that all prospective teachers must pass a two-part certification test.

The plan that is presented emphasizes performance-driven change, measurable results, and mechanisms for evaluation and continuous improvement. It is grounded in comments from legislators, college and university presidents, education deans and directors, teacher education faculty, and K-12 teachers. These were discussed primarily at meetings held at Framingham State College, University of Massachusetts Amherst and Tufts University. In addition, the plan was influenced by the report of the Massachusetts Education Reform Review Commission (September 3, 1998), the *12-62 Plan* (Chapter 260 of Laws of 1998) developed by the Governor, legislative leaders and the Commissioner of Education, and the more than 40 letters submitted to Chairman James F. Carlin in response to his request for recommendations for program improvement.

The issues affecting teacher preparation go beyond the high failure rate of candidates on the Teacher Test. They are tied to the quality and accountability of teacher education programs and to the recruitment and retention of new teachers. The plan sets specific goals for improving program quality and performance, for strengthening both the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, and for ensuring that improvement will be a continuing

process in all of these areas. To achieve these goals, it recommends actions, assigns responsibility for their implementation, and provides a timetable for their accomplishment.

Call to Action

Responsibility for the unsatisfactory results of the 1998 Teacher Test must be shared. Many groups should be held accountable for ensuring that the high failure rate on the exam is never repeated: the Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education, boards of trustees and school committees, superintendents, principals and presidents, and teachers and faculty. The plan calls on three groups – elected officials, the Boards of Education and Higher Education, and the colleges and universities – to respond to the recommendations rapidly, constructively, and aggressively.

Elected Officials. Ongoing leadership and support from the Commonwealth's highest elected officials are crucial to the success of this plan. The Governor and many legislators have made a commitment to support creative solutions that will lead to a better future teacher workforce. A commitment of resources is imperative if lasting change is to occur.

Boards of Education and Higher Education. The Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education must use their statutory powers to improve program quality. With its authority to set certification standards for teacher preparation programs and students at both public and independent institutions, the Department of Education has the power to mandate change swiftly, decisively, and statewide. Under the direction of the Board of Education, the Department has already made great progress in implementing the Education Reform Act. Now it must focus attention on upgrading standards for teacher preparation and enforcing institutional accountability.

The Board of Higher Education must exercise leadership and hold the public colleges and University accountable for achieving high standards.

Institutions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for the public and independent colleges and universities engaged in teacher preparation, but all campuses must be held accountable for program and student performance. The results of the Teacher Test indicate that aggressive action must be taken immediately. A commitment to improve the academic program of prospective teachers must become an institution-wide priority beginning with the president and campus board of trustees. The proof of their success will be in the performance of their students.

Requirements, Relevancy and Rigor

Massachusetts will not again ignore the wake-up call for teacher education.

Every student in the Commonwealth deserves to have teachers who meet the new certification **requirements**: teachers who can demonstrate that they are firmly grounded in the arts and sciences and have achieved the highest standards of knowledge and skill in communication, literacy, pedagogy, and the content area to be taught.

Every teacher education student deserves an academic program that is **relevant** and of the highest quality.

Every institution that claims to educate teachers should be willing to demonstrate that it has met the demands for **rigor** and deserves approval by the state to endorse candidates for certification.

And every resident deserves assurance that the Commonwealth has a mechanism in place for continuous improvement in teacher preparation.

A STATEWIDE PLAN FOR ACTION AND RESULTS

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1 *Improving Quality and Performance*

Goal I: Hold all campuses--public and independent--accountable for program and student performance.

The Commonwealth should be a leader in educating future teachers. To ensure quality in teacher preparation programs, while preserving the value and integrity of public and private college and university missions, program outcomes must be demonstrated. Clear incentives and sanctions must be in place to guarantee that institutions are meeting their responsibility by providing rigorous teacher preparation programs of the highest quality.

Recommended Actions

1. **Require immediate external review of teacher education programs:**
Immediately require institutions with 1998 Teacher Test pass rates (combined Literacy and Subject Tests on the April and July 1998 test administrations) below the state average (54.9%) to conduct an objective, independent, external assessment of the teacher education program. Institutions must submit the external report and action plan for improvement to the Joint Board of Education/Board of Higher Education Commission (see Goal 6) by June 30, 1999. Guidelines for the review will be developed and review panels will be approved by the Commission.
2. **Eliminate certification authority for underperforming programs:**
Withdraw state approval to endorse candidates for certification from institutions and/or program (subject) areas that fail to meet minimum standards in two successive years.
 - a) Place "under review" institutions that fail to meet the minimum standard of an 80% pass rate on the communication and literacy test by August 1, 2000 and 90% by August 1, 2001.*
 - b) Place "under review" Board of Education approved programs within an institution that fail to meet the minimum standard of an 80% pass rate on a subject matter test by August 1, 2000 and 90% by August 1, 2001.*
 - c) Withdraw state approval to endorse candidates for certification for institutions and/or program (subject) areas "under review" that fail to meet minimum performance standards within two years.

**The Department of Education will develop guidelines for defining test-taking cohorts and calculating pass rates for these cohorts.*

3. **Strengthen program accountability measures:** Call on the Board of Education to use its regulatory power to strengthen program accountability measures.
 - a) Strengthen institutional and program standards and approval processes to include teacher certification test results and other demonstrable performance assessments.
 - b) Permit institutions that attain a pass rate of 90% or higher over a three-year period to develop alternative literacy and subject matter assessments that are demonstrably more demanding than the current Teacher Test.

Goal 2: Commit institutions to high standards and continuous improvement in quality and performance.

Colleges and universities must go beyond heightened admissions requirements and improved curricula to demonstrate program quality through the assessment of prospective teachers' competency in content areas and the documentation of program outcomes.

Recommended Actions

1. **Require institutions to demonstrate a commitment to improve the quality of teacher education programs and program certification areas.**
Boards of trustees, presidents, and faculty in the arts and sciences and in education must take responsibility for improving the academic program of prospective teachers and must make this an institution-wide priority.
2. **Establish partnerships with K-12 teachers and administrators.**
Partnerships must be established to ensure shared responsibility for the preparation of new teachers. Comprehensive assessments of the performance of new teachers and the review of teacher education programs require the involvement of K-12 teachers and administrators.
3. **Review regularly and refine academic programs that prepare students to be K-12 teachers.**
 - a) Strengthen the foundation that is provided to prospective teachers in the arts and sciences and limit the number of methods courses to those required for certification. Require a minimum of 30 credits in the major, at least 15 of which are at advanced levels.
 - b) Ensure that mentors/cooperating teachers for beginning teachers are outstanding educators and reward them accordingly.
 - c) Facilitate the involvement and investment of faculty from the arts and sciences in teacher preparation.
 - d) Provide evidence that program and teaching effectiveness is evaluated regularly using multiple outcome measures. Use the results of these evaluations to improve program and teaching quality.

Goal 3: Ensure that students from approved programs will have the knowledge and skills that are needed to pass the Massachusetts Teacher Test.

The purpose of the Teacher Test is to ensure that those being certified to teach have met college-level standards of general communication and literacy and have obtained in-depth knowledge in a content area.

Recommended Actions

1. **Raise admission requirements for all teacher education programs.**
 - a) Institutions should require all students to complete successfully an assessment of college level reading and writing skills prior to admission into teacher education programs using either a passing score on the communication and literacy portion of the Teacher Test or an alternative assessment.
 - b) Institutions should require all students to complete successfully an assessment of content in their discipline prior to student teaching using either a passing score on the content area of the Teacher Test or an alternative assessment.
2. **Test results should be used in the review of general education, teacher education programs, and program certification areas.** Faculty across disciplines should use results of the test as a guide to review and improve teacher preparation program curricula and requirements, general education coursework, and the academic major.

Improving Recruitment and Retention

Goal 4: Attract academically well-prepared students from diverse backgrounds to the teaching profession.

A quality system of elementary and secondary education is paramount to the Commonwealth's economic future and to the quality of life enjoyed by all residents. A substantial financial commitment must, therefore, be made to enable those who have the commitment and ability to teach to pursue the education and professional development needed to become outstanding teachers. Opportunities should also be provided to individuals in other career fields who believe that they might benefit from and contribute to the teaching profession.

Recommended Actions

1. **Direct financial incentives to high-achieving high school students willing to teach in the public schools of the Commonwealth.**

- a) **Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarships:** This new program, introduced by Governor Cellucci and supported by the Legislature with a \$3 million appropriation, sends a strong message to all high school students. If they achieve high grades in high school and are committed to becoming teachers, there is a very good chance they will receive a scholarship for free tuition and fees for four years at a state college or at the University of Massachusetts. Priority will be given to students committing to teach in areas of greatest need. The payback is a commitment to teach four years at a public school in Massachusetts. After initial implementation, it is recommended that the program be expanded to include students attending independent institutions of higher education.

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- 1 An appropriation of \$27 million over the next four years would guarantee that up to 3,200 outstanding high school students (or 800 students per year) could participate. If fully implemented, the ultimate result would be that 50% of teacher education program graduates of Massachusetts public institutions will have graduated in the top 25% of their high school class and will have maintained a minimum cumulative college GPA of 3.2. The real beneficiaries will be the public school children of the Commonwealth.

- b) **Incentive Program for Aspiring Teachers:** A student enrolled in an undergraduate arts and sciences program who decides to become a teacher should also be eligible for financial assistance. A tuition waiver

program proposed by the Board of Higher Education should be established and awarded on a competitive basis. Five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) per year would provide two years of tuition support to approximately 150 new students each year who meet GPA requirements at a state college or at the University of Massachusetts.

2. **Fast-track alternative certification for second-career professionals.**

Streamline the process for alternative certification but do not compromise academic standards.

- a) Develop a *Pathways to Teaching Program* to expedite alternative certification for qualified professionals interested in changing careers.
- b) Create a *College-to-School* certification track for individuals with college teaching experience who want to teach elementary or secondary education.

3. **Launch a campaign to promote teaching as a profession.**

- a) Publicize the Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program by launching a promotional campaign to attract high-achieving high school students, especially those from underrepresented populations.
- b) Publicize new or existing programs that target prospective teachers from diverse groups. Award incentives to institutions able to demonstrate success in recruiting into teaching: undergraduate liberal arts and science students, graduate students completing master's level work in academic subject areas, and students from diverse backgrounds. Provide incentives for institutional strategies that promote early awareness programs (e.g., Future Teachers of America) and partnerships with community colleges to develop programs for paraprofessionals interested in seeking certification.

Goal 5: Retain highly competent teachers.

The status of the teaching profession must be improved, and incentives are needed to attract and retain well-prepared individuals. Over 30% of all new teachers leave the profession after three years.¹ Therefore, any plan to encourage highly competent people to consider teaching would be myopic if it did not also include strategies to retain new teachers and to support and reward excellent teachers who currently make up the teacher workforce.

We endorse rather than repeat the recommendations from the Massachusetts Education Reform Review Commission in the critical areas of induction and mentoring of new teachers and the supervision and evaluation of all teachers.

Recommended Actions

1. **Reward outstanding teachers who make a commitment to teach in Massachusetts public schools.**
 - a) The creation of a *Career Advancement Program* (CAP) would reward new teachers with up to five free graduate courses, one for each of their first five years of teaching. A commitment of \$250,000 will provide tuition waivers at a Massachusetts public state college or UMass for up to 500 new teachers.
 - b) *Collaborative Teachers Tuition Waivers* would provide tuition waivers for Massachusetts public school teachers who mentor a full-time student-teacher. A collaborative teacher could receive a waiver for up to six credits for each student teacher mentored with a maximum of one student teacher mentored per semester. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) will provide waivers at a public state college or UMass for up to 500 collaborating teachers.

¹ The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (New York, 1996): 34.

Ensuring Continuous Improvement

Goal 6: Promote ongoing systemic change.

The September 3, 1998 report of the Massachusetts Education Reform Commission concludes that although practices have been instituted to improve teacher quality at the district level, at the Board of Education, and in institutions of higher education, "implementation has been piecemeal. It is time for these efforts to become deeper and more systemic."

Education reform will ultimately be successful only when higher education is an active partner with shared responsibility and accountability. Substantive, ongoing systemic improvement mandates the need for structural connections between higher education institutions and education reform efforts. The extensive investment in recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers must result in measurable improvement in the Commonwealth's public schools now and in the future.

Recommended Actions

1. **Appoint a Joint Board of Education/Board of Higher Education Commission.** A ten-member Commission made up of six representatives from the two Boards and two at-large members selected by each Board should be appointed immediately. The Commission should be charged with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this plan and making recommendations to the respective boards on issues related to teacher education. The Chair of the Commission should rotate every year between the two Boards, beginning with the Board of Higher Education. Members should be appointed for three-year staggered terms. The Commission should submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature on the condition of teacher preparation and institutional performance.

The following items should be high on the Commission's agenda:

- Approve action plans submitted by institutions with 1998 Teacher Test pass rates below the state average.
- Review the Massachusetts Education Reform Commission report and, when appropriate, prepare recommendations on changes that are needed to strengthen current regulations for certification and program approval.

- Recommend program approval standards that include more rigorous outcome measures and other evidence of program quality and effectiveness and certification requirements that align curriculum frameworks and principles of effective teaching.
 - Clarify the relationship between provisional, provisional with advanced standing, and standard certification.
 - Specify appropriate liberal arts and sciences majors for K-8 certification.
 - Monitor Department of Education efforts to refine the Teacher Test administration procedures and provide Teacher Test validation information and background test materials to faculty and students.
2. **Establish a permanent statewide database on teaching.** Given the current level of resources committed to education reform efforts, the absence of a mechanism for collecting and reporting teacher-related data is unacceptable. Comprehensive data are needed on teacher education programs, program graduates, areas of study, and state workforce needs. The Joint Commission must have access to these data. The Department of Education shall be responsible for maintaining the database.

Conclusion

We need to create an environment that encourages skilled, capable, committed individuals to respond to the teaching profession's true calling. This plan, when implemented with focused determination, can create that environment and achieve excellence in teacher preparation. In 2003, all candidates for certification will be able to prove they are highly competent and skilled in pedagogy, communication and literacy, and thoroughly knowledgeable in the subject areas they will teach.

Five years from now, programs that cannot make the transition to excellence will be eliminated. Those that remain will meet the highest standards of quality and performance. The winners will be the children and the taxpayers. And counted among the winners will be the teachers who know they are members of a profession whose importance is recognized and valued.