



400 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, MA 02110 • tel 617-737-3122 fax 617-737-3126 • www.mbae.org

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, March 22, 2011  
Discussion of Task Force on Educator Evaluation  
Remarks of Donald F. Baldini, Esq., Member of the Board of Directors, MBAE  
Assistant Vice President and Senior Legislative Counsel  
Liberty Mutual Insurance Company**

I am here this morning representing the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education to urge you to take action that goes beyond the recommendations for "Building A Breakthrough Framework for Educator Evaluation in the Commonwealth" that the report from the Task Force On Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators suggest. An effective evaluation system alone is not enough to address all of our human capital needs, but it is the critical lever of our dysfunctional human resource system that we have the opportunity and ability to fix at this point in time. MBAE, and the business leaders we represent, believe that this opportunity is too important to squander by taking tentative, vaguely defined steps to tinker with a system that the diverse Task Force membership agrees is broken (p. 5). We are calling on this Board to act decisively not only to meet the requirements of Race to the Top but more importantly to meet the needs of our children.

The Task Force report states that, "(t)he use of multiple measures of student learning, growth and achievement as a significant factor in all educator evaluations is a core feature of the framework." (p.5) However, this is not borne out in the report so therefore we urge the Board to meet this objective by including the following features in the new evaluation framework:

- Make multiple measures of student performance at least 50% of an educator's evaluation. While acknowledging that student achievement is required to be a "significant factor" in evaluation, (p.14) the Task Force's failure to define this in any meaningful way leaves that task to this Board. Let me be very clear that MBAE is calling for multiple measures, not the exclusive use of standardized test scores. Yet, where MCAS scores are used, student achievement should be measured against a consistent standard, not against "comparable schools" or "appropriate school-level demographics" (p.6) which perpetuate the myth that demography is destiny. The state's new growth model and new assessments being developed are among the tools that can be used to gauge whether students are making measurable progress against high standards. This is the only way to know if we are meeting the primary goal of our education system - student learning and achievement.

Since the Board charge to the Task Force indicates your desire to link evaluation to decisions about tenure, career advancement and other personnel decisions (p.7), our concerns about the relative "weight" of improving student achievement are, if anything, more acute. A teacher who cannot improve student performance should not be considered exemplary even if s/he meets that standard on all of the non-student performance criteria. Improving student performance is what teachers are hired to do.

- Reject any component of the system that elevates the process of practice over the value of results. We were stunned that the Task Force put "standards of practice" ahead of multiple measures of student performance as the key factor in evaluation (p. 16, 22), and

we are certain that every citizen whose job is dependent on the results of their labor, not their effort, would be as well. The public understands that strong outcomes require expert practice, but that practice alone is not sufficient for a positive evaluation.

- Teacher evaluation should be administered as a statewide system, not a district-by-district system. The only way that a fair, valid and successful evaluation system can be implemented, yield data that can generate future improvements, and achieve our goal of equitable distribution of effective educators is to do it statewide. If this requires statutory and regulatory adjustments, we encourage the BESE to undertake the work necessary to make these changes – even if it means taking on the controversial issues of local control and collective bargaining.

I have focused on our three main concerns with this report, but these are not our only ones. We also worry about the lack of detail regarding implementation, and how failure to execute the necessary changes in culture, expectations, training, use of technology and accountability that are necessary to make an effective system work will simply defeat the purpose of the best design. We also question whether any evaluation system can be meaningful without connecting the ratings to opportunities and consequences in a much more direct way than proposed. For example, while the four-level rating scale is an improvement over the widely used binary system, it makes inadequate distinction between categories, particularly “proficient” and “exemplary”. Any evaluation system that does not recognize and reward excellence will not support the high quality workforce that we need to educate our children.

As you well know, assignment to a high-quality teacher throughout elementary school can substantially offset *or even eliminate* the disadvantage of low socio-economic background for students (*Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2002*). The ample and growing evidence validating the impact of teacher quality alone in closing achievement gaps makes increasing the number of highly effective teachers in our classrooms more urgent than ever. MBAE’s members know that the most important factor in any organization’s success is attracting, developing and rewarding talented professionals. The challenge for this Board is to create a system that provides continuous and constructive feedback; helps good teachers and administrators become great ones; rewards excellence; and does not tolerate mediocrity. We at MBAE are committed to continuing to work with you to attract, develop and retain the very best educators for every child in the Commonwealth.

For more information, please contact:

Tricia Lederer, Director of Communications and Development  
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education  
617-737-3122  
[lnoonan@mbae.org](mailto:lnoonan@mbae.org)