

DRAFT - 12/02/96

I am delighted that we at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston are co-hosting this morning's briefing with State Street Bank.

Today we have a Special State Leaders in Education discussion of this question: "Massachusetts Education Reform: Will New Standards and Tests Raise Achievement?"

The fact that this morning's meeting is oversubscribed demonstrates Boston's strong interest in questions of public school reform. For us in this city there are no more important education experts than our distinguished panelists:

John Silber, the Chairman of the State Board of Education,  
Robert Antonucci, the State Commissioner of Education, and,  
Thomas Payzant, Boston's Superintendent of Schools.

I am not an expert on Education. However, I am proud to be part of a business community that has worked these many long long years for school improvement. Working with Bill Boyan of John Hancock and the Superintendent on the Boston Compact's Measurement Committee, and attempting to find fair and effective measures of academic and workplace progress as part of the School-to-Career Executive Committee I have gained some appreciation of the complexity of the measurement task.

There is no question that we need much higher levels of achievement by our students. The Stanford 9 test taken by students in Boston last spring documents that all too many of our 11th graders lack a grasp of either math or language skills.

Frank Levy and Dick Murnane have identified the "new basic skills" including both an ability to solve problems using math and the ability to work in teams. Changes in technology and the organization of work require a response now from the public schools, as they have required a response from private firms.

Standards and measurement are essential for the quality of learning, we all agree. The 1993 Education Reform law calls both for the establishment of curriculum standards and for passing a stiff examination to earn a high school diploma. How are we coming on setting standards and establishing that test? Is the quality of learning in public schools improving? Will standards and measurement in Massachusetts lead us the better quality we need? How can we help those young people we have already identified as knowing too little?

Not only the prosperity of Massachusetts' people and its firms, but even the quality of our democratic life depends upon the answers.

All of us look forward to this morning's briefing and discussion.