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Governor Deval L. Patrick

Education Reform Day Three

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As Delivered

Assembled in this room today is the Commonwealth's education leadership - the keepers of a flame lit 228 years ago when John Adams enshrined the notion of education as a public good in the Massachusetts constitution. "Wisdom, and knowledge," Adams wrote, "as well as virtue" are essential to the people in "the preservation of their rights and liberties," and these "depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people."

This declaration set Massachusetts on a course of unparalleled enlightenment, advancement and productivity.

We stand on the shoulders of Adams and his vision, and as our four boards of education gather together here in one place for the first time ever. Your presence together marks a departure from the silos that have characterized our education system. Today, interdependence replaces independence.

In that same spirit of collaboration, this room is filled with leaders from every facet of the education system - teachers and parents, administrators and union representatives, business executives and local officials, nonprofit advocates and concerned citizens. The ideas, wisdom and energy we need to deliver bold reform in Massachusetts schools is all right here in this place, making room for each other's views, sharing a vision for tomorrow. Today is a new day.

We also stand on the shoulders of the visionaries who launched the 1993 Education Reform initiatives. Many are in this room. Thanks to your foresight, we have a system of standards and accountability in place that is proven and respected. Our students consistently rank first on important national measures. Our kids' SAT scores are better than most. Our NAEP scores are higher than most. And our successes have lifted us to a place where we can see an even brighter horizon beyond.

Today is a new day. Today is the day to challenge the fundamental assumptions of public

education - from the age at which children begin learning to the length of time they need for learning. Today is the day to confront the fact that despite our best efforts - despite unprecedented financial investment - poor students do not yet consistently achieve at high enough levels. Today is the day to ask ourselves just what we are prepared to do to bring a system designed for the 19th century into the 21st. Why? Because today is a new day.

Last June, we launched the Commonwealth Readiness Project. Thoughtful individuals with a wide range of perspectives and experience came together to consider what it means to be an educated person in this new century. We asked them, for the sake of coming generations, to rethink and reinvent.

I would like to recognize the members of the Project's leadership council and its subcommittees and especially to thank its three chairs: Jackie Jenkins-Scott, Tom Payzant and Joe Tucci. Each of them has given their time and talents to ensure a brighter future for Massachusetts - our students, our educators, and our economy. Those of you who are here, please stand and accept our collective thanks.

This is also an auspicious setting to talk about our goals and ideas for educating children and to think ahead for coming decades. President Kennedy understood the power of big dreams, and of thinking ahead to achieve them. His big dream was American exploration of space - an ambitious effort to push the boundaries of human experience.

"For we meet in an hour of change and challenge," he said, "in a decade of hope and fear, in an age of both knowledge and ignorance The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds." (Rice University, September of 1962.)

My grandmother was more blunt: when we didn't know the answer to one of her questions, she would say, "What you don't know would fill a whole new world."

Creating an education system for the 21st century - a time of more rapid change than ever in history - requires us to do some exploration of our own. The Readiness Project has started the process. Its members have articulated what we all know to be true: that our children are stuck today in a system that was built for another time.

But today is a new day. While our economy and our society have become ever more "global" in nature, American student achievement has not kept pace with our international peers. We now rank 25th in math and 21st in science - down from 18th and 14th respectively. There was a time, not so long ago, when we led the world in the number of students with college degrees. Today, we rank 10th.

Meanwhile, competitor nations like China and India are roaring into the 21st century, building educational foundations for growth industries and graduating new engineers, for example, at ten times the rate of American Colleges and Universities.

For Massachusetts, with an economy increasingly dependent on innovation and technology, on knowledge itself, these new realities present a significant challenge. Employers struggle to find workers with the academic content and skills needed for jobs in high-growth sectors. Many report that our graduates lack certain basic competencies, that they are entering the job market without the kinds of communication and collaboration skills the workplace demands today.

Last week I was proud to be at the BIO Conference in San Diego with a \$1 billion life sciences bill in hand. Let's think about that. Over the next decade, we will invest in an industry that promises to make Massachusetts the epicenter on the planet for care and comfort for millions. Right now, Nobel Prize winning work is taking place at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, while UMass-Lowell is widely regarded as one of the leading nanotech centers in the world. Every one of these new phenomena means new and good jobs.

In clean energy, Massachusetts is poised for rapid expansion, with new developments in solar and wind energy. Once again, higher ed is leading the way, for example with the development at UMass- Amherst of the Q-microbe, some of you know this is one of my favorites, bacteria that convert cellulose to ethanol in a single step - a transformational breakthrough in next generation biofuels. Just think: We in Massachusetts can meet what may be the defining challenge of the coming generation and make the whole world our customer as we do so. Here again, thousands of new jobs. Our High Tech sector is the enabler for every other innovation industry that thrives right here. It represents some \$26 billion and employs more than 170,000 individuals across the state already, and is poised for further growth as those other growth industries grow.

Massachusetts is leading the way in robotics research and development. These technologies are not only changing the face of industrial automation, but also revolutionizing the defense sector, particularly through robots that detect and remove roadside bombs, saving numerous lives throughout the world.

These are the sectors that have kept our economy moving, over the years, and in face of recent national economic unease. This is where the opportunities lie. Evergreen Solar in Devens; Vertex in Cambridge and Shire Pharmaceuticals in Lexington; EMD Serono in Billerica; EMC in Hopkinton; MassMutual and Bay State in Springfield; Google in Cambridge.

These and like companies are betting on the intellectual capability and creativity of our people. Over the next decade, we must provide our young people with the skills they need to take

advantage of a technology-based global economy, why, because today is a new day.

The education system we re-create together will focus on the individual learning needs of each student. Gone are the days of a one-size-fits-all diploma. Students will learn what they need to succeed, but they will do it at a pace that suits their learning styles and abilities.

For most, that will mean starting their formal education in preschool and continuing with full-day kindergarten. Extra learning time may help a student thrive in the primary years. Summer programs may give them a boost in high school. They could finish their primary and secondary education in 12 years. Or perhaps 10. At least two years of community college or training in a trade will be the new baseline for a complete education. Or they may head directly to the state's college and university system, which will consistently offer a world-class higher education experience. Adult learners we have to pay attention to their needs as well and create similar opportunities.

Throughout this process, students will meet high standards to be sure, but those standards will rise in turn to meet the changing intellectual and professional demands of a 21st century world and economy. This is real education in real time. And while we're holding students responsible, let's not forget that our educators and our policymakers will be on the hook for performance, too. We are all accountable for results.

The system we create together will embrace the innovation and technology that now defines our lives and our economy. That means enhanced teacher preparation and access to affordable computers for all families. That means taking advantage of the Internet as a conveyer of information and a convener of diverse people. All students deserve the chance to participate as equals in the stunning advances of their time. Even as we honor our past, we will chase our future.

And the education system we create will include every child. All means all. For all its successes, 1990s education reform failed adequately to address the impact of poverty on achievement. We can raise standards. We can create systems of assessment and accountability. But unless we offer poor kids the support they need, unless we help them overcome obstacles at home as well as at school, unless we give them reason to believe that education can transform their circumstances, like education transformed my own, then they will never be able to take advantage of the opportunities we are building everywhere in this commonwealth.

For educators, these new realities mean transforming your professional culture to accept and indeed to lead rapid change in what and how you teach, so that it is always current and relevant and powerful. Teachers will be the cornerstone of the success of this vision, not through reforms

imposed on them by the way, but through reforms they invent and implement.

For education policymakers, this means supporting teachers and administrators with the tools they need to adapt quickly and effectively. It means engaging in bold transformational thinking outside the zone of isolated interests and silos. It means working through the new Secretary of Education as your point of contact and collaborating intensely for the sake of kids, not systems.

Readiness schools offer an instructive example. I believe very, very strongly in the principles of teacher ownership, autonomy, choice, innovation and responsiveness. Our proposal for Readiness Schools applies those principles to all schools, breaking the standstill on charter schools and insuring that more students see the benefits of these proven practices in the classroom.

The Readiness Project Action Agenda is broad and ambitious on purpose. Our goal is to reinvent and re-engineer an entire system and all of its components. We are not tinkering. And ambition this bold often attracts naysayers, it may be fair to say it always attracts naysayers - people insisting it can't be done. But the richness of the agenda's action items ought to inspire the enthusiasm and energies of those who truly care about doing better by our children. The realities of the 21st century ought to be enough to underscore how new today really is.

At the same time, these recommendations are not a manifesto, carved in stone and delivered from a mountaintop. It is the product of an extensive grassroots process of information gathering, questioning, discussing and brainstorming. It represents a new way of thinking about teaching and learning in the 21st century. And it is just the beginning.

We won't all agree on every strategy. That's okay. Let's work together through the details together. I'm not asking you to abandon your particular concerns, but I am asking you to bring more to the table than your single interest. Bring your paramount commitment to the success of all children. What's not okay is for us to retreat to our respective silos.

As a kid, my old neighborhood as many of you know, was poor and broken in many ways. But we had a community. Every child was under the supervision of every single adult on the block. If you messed up down the street in front of Mrs. Jones, she would go upside your head as if you were hers. And then call home so you get it two times.

I might not have seen it so clearly then, but Mrs. Jones took responsibility. When she saw me act out, she knew it wasn't just my problem; it was her problem. Her obligation as an adult and a part of a community, she believed, was to show me how to see my stake in another's dreams and struggles, as well as my own.

You here this morning must accept that same responsibility for the all of the children of Massachusetts. Hundreds here, representing thousands more, must accept the challenge that every child is your responsibility even when he or she is not your child; an achievement gap matters even when it's not your community; an opportunity gap matters even when it's not your chance; a skills gap matters even when your own kids are all grown up and fully employed. We all have a stake in a better future. Public education is the way to get to that future. I know that and so do you.

A year ago, we launched the Readiness Project together so that we could measure ourselves against that vision and build a plan to get us closer to it, for every student, in every community.

Today is that new day. Let us join hands and write the next chapter in the story of our Commonwealth community together. Thank you all for being here.