

Letters to the Editor

Blame education policy for teacher test failures

Acting Gov. A. Paul Cellucci believes that the "system" fails our commonwealth's students ("Cellucci: System failed students," July 8 Union-News). The educational policy of Cellucci and Board of Higher Education Chair James Carlin fails all teachers.

By extension it fails the students as well, and it ensures that our commonwealth's educational problems will only become more acute in the future.

Cellucci and Carlin have used the recent prospective teacher exam as a vehicle to attack every level and segment of teaching as unprofessional. Yet their exam for prospective teachers was administered without guidelines for the test-takers.

Test-takers were originally told that the exam would not count, and were told otherwise only days before the exam. For two weeks, while prospective teachers were waiting to hear whether they had passed the exam, Cellucci and Carlin used the overall results to bash teachers for selfish political gain.

They have yet to release more specific numbers that would give a clearer picture of the results of the exam to the public or to the colleges that educate future teachers.

So who's unprofessional? Who's failing? Would other future professionals tolerate such treatment on their medical board exams, law school exams or civil service exams? No, they would not. Such

treatment will discourage able students from pursuing teaching as a profession.

And what of other exams that certify future professionals? How does the failure rate of the (questionable) prospective teacher exam compare with failure rates on these other professional exams? Did Cellucci pass his law school exams on the first try? Would Cellucci pass the exam for prospective teachers or even the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment test?

In the atmosphere that Cellucci and Carlin have created, how many bright, able people will still want to become teachers in Massachusetts? Would college graduates still want to join the successful, dedicated and professional teachers, who make up the clear majority of our teachers, beginning at \$26,000 a year - \$11,000 a year less than the average starting salary for other new college graduates in our state? ("Senate chief proposes bonuses of \$20,000 to lure new teachers," July 8 Union-News.)

And what about state college and university faculty that teach future teachers? With a doctorate in mathematics and four years' experience in higher education, my current salary is exactly the same as the average beginning salary for a college graduate with a bachelor's degree in Massachusetts.

Yet Carlin's new Board of Higher Education three-year contract proposal to the state colleges offers no raises, while it would dismantle tenure and end the faculty's role in campuswide decision-making.

Our goal should be to ensure that every public teacher in Massachusetts, at every

level, be as professional, dedicated and competent as the majority of them now are. This will certainly not happen by denigrating the profession of teaching and treating prospective and current teachers with the unprofessionalism that have characterized the tenures of Cellucci and Carlin.

Cellucci and Carlin are failing all of us: teachers, students and taxpayers alike.

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