“Education reform began in Massachusetts in 1982 with the elimination of lifetime teacher certification. However, the Education Reform Act of 1993 initiated changes in every aspect of K–12 public education in the Bay State, with a special focus on upgrading teachers’ academic knowledge and skills. Reforms related to teacher quality gained momentum after Sandra Stotsky’s appointment as a senior commissioner in 1999. I worked with her as she eagerly plunged into her first major assignments—to revise the regulations and tests for licensing teachers and to strengthen the state’s preparation programs for prospective teachers and administrators. During my twenty-seven years with the department, I worked with thirty colleges and universities to help them prepare for the state’s review of their licensure programs. Under Dr. Stotsky’s leadership, we were able to put into practice many of the long-needed changes in teacher preparation and licensing that she discusses in ‘What Accounts for the Massachusetts ‘Education Miracle’?’ These little ‘miracles’ all contributed to the larger one—the remarkable and sustained increase in student achievement among all demographic groups in the Bay State since 2005.” —Margaret L. Cassidy, formerly with the Office of Educator Preparation and Quality, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

“She Stotsky has done a great service to this country as well as Massachusetts in leading the effort to strengthen teacher training and assessment in order to address the provisions of the Education Reform Act. Our students’ success in Massachusetts was due in large part to the work of classroom teachers. Assuring that those teachers have proper content knowledge and strong academic backgrounds to teach their subject, as her book details, proved invaluable.” —David Driscoll, Former Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

“Although it is difficult to find a lucid discussion of the design, development, and implementation of teacher licensing tests in available sources, Sandra Stotsky has done a wonderful job of articulating the thinking that occurred at each phase of the development or revision of the subject area tests she was responsible for in Massachusetts. She explains the various professional views of the educators and policy makers with whom she engaged in her efforts to ensure that prospective teachers brought a strong academic background to their first teaching experiences in Massachusetts. Stotsky’s book is a must read for anyone interested in understanding how the licensure regulations and teacher testing program in Massachusetts she developed contributed to the ‘Massachusetts education miracle.’ Her book should also be read by those seeking to create a high quality state education system because it clarifies an important component—teacher licensing tests—that is often overlooked in education reform strategies.” —William Phillip Gorth, PhD, cofounder and former president of National Evaluation Systems, Inc.

This country has tolerated a weak licensing system for prospective teachers for decades. This weak system has been accompanied by an increasingly emptier curriculum for most students, depriving them of the knowledge and skills needed for self-government. An Empty Curriculum: The Need to Reform Teacher Licensing Regulations and Tests makes the case that the complete revision of the licensing system for prospective and veteran teachers in Massachusetts in 2000 and the construction of new or more demanding teacher licensing tests contributed significantly to the Massachusetts “education miracle.” That “miracle” consisted of enduring gains in achievement for students in all demographic groups and in all regional vocational/technical high schools since 2005—gains confirmed by tests independent of Massachusetts policy makers.

Sandra Stotsky is professor of education Emerita, University of Arkansas, and was Senior Associate Commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from 1999-2003. She is the author of several books on curriculum and standards for K-12, and has published many reports and articles on teacher training and teacher licensing tests.