June 14, 2010

Mike Cohen, President
Achieve, Inc.
1775 Eye Street NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Thank you for coordinating and leading the work of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). We are very pleased to be a part of this important work and appreciate your support, as well as that of the PARCC member states.

We are submitting this letter to accompany the attached Memorandum of Understanding in order to clarify Massachusetts’ position in two important areas. First, we want to emphasize that Massachusetts will not adopt any set of standards that are not at least as comprehensive and rigorous as, if not more than, our current standards. We have been participating in the Common Core Standards development effort and have set out a timeline for considering them, but we cannot commit to adoption until we are satisfied that they maintain or exceed the high standards that have been developed in Massachusetts over the past 17 years.

Second, it is our intention to use the assessment system that is developed by the PARCC to the extent it serves the best interests of students and teachers. Similar to our above-stated position with respect to standards, we cannot commit to adopting any new system of assessments until it is developed and we can ensure it is as comprehensive and rigorous as, if not more than, our current system. We are excited about the opportunity for Massachusetts to play a key role in the development of the assessment system, both as a governing state in the consortium and through the work of Commissioner Chester, who will serve as chair of the consortium for its first year. Once the new system is developed and we are able to make the determination that the new assessment system is at least as comprehensive and rigorous as our current system in Massachusetts, we will then work to implement it.

With that said, we are committed to working in partnership with the Consortium, leveraging the expertise and experience of other states in this area, and to sharing our own expertise and experience. We are eager to participate in all aspects of this vital work and strongly believe the Consortium's efforts offer tremendous promise for students and families.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Paul Reville
Secretary of Education

Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education