

**Public Comment on Proposed Amendment to 603 CMR 30.00  
Re: History and Social Science Competency Determination Requirements**

The Department received three (3) emailed responses regarding the proposed amendment to the History and Social Science Competency Determination regulations.

All three are in opposition. Two of the three specifically oppose the absence of a date for re-implementation of the History CD. Complete texts of the comments are reprinted following the summary table.

**Summary of Comments**

Sender	Specific comments	General comments
Richard Houston, Humanities Chair Norwich High School	“Is it possible to put in 2015 or 2016 as a placeholder date [for re-implementation] that could be modified again if needs be?”	“I fear that not setting a goal year for implementation makes it too easy . . . for local leaders to cut materials, books, courses and staffing . . .”
Catherine Van Arnam Melrose, MA	Concerns expressed that the variety of human experience—the positive and the negative—will be lost on students if they are not instructed in history.	“Please require a passing grade in History for the students of Massachusetts public schools to graduate High School.”
Edward Wiest	“[N]o temporary postponement of the MCAS History testing program should be enacted without a firm timetable for implementation . . .”	While factors beyond ESE’s control may have precipitated this proposal, “an open-ended extension is inappropriate.”

**Text of Comments [email and street addresses omitted]**

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**From:** Houston, Richard  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 13, 2011 3:23 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** proposed amendment

Greetings, I would like to go on record for opposing the language change to the History MCAS requirement. I would like a date to be included as a message to the Commonwealth that this key subject area is not being pushed aside. I support the idea of having two years of pilot testing before the high stakes kicks in, but I fear that not setting a goal year for implementation makes it too easy in these difficult budgetary times for local leaders to cut materials, books, courses and staffing dedicated to the key task of preparing citizens for the 21st century. Is it possible to put in 2015 or 2016 as a placeholder date that could be modified again if needs be? Thanks for taking comment. Sincerely, Richard Houston, Humanities Department Chair, Harwich High School.

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**From:** Catherine VanArnam  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 03, 2011 9:19 AM  
**To:**  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** IN OPPOSITION to Proposed Amendment to 603 CMR 30.00

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in opposition to the above-named Amendment.

What tremendous disrespect to the glorious span of world and American history it would be if the proposed Amendment to 603 CMR 30.00 passes! How could the adults of tomorrow know how to evaluate our Constitutional Republic, the political process, foreign entanglements - appreciate the good and recognize the bad in current events, without a proven understanding of this subject. What a horrible disservice you would do to the families and future of our Commonwealth if you remove the strength of that knowledge.

History is the story of man. It guides us as we create our own experience. It predicts the outcomes of our choices, and the effect of our culture. You remove history, you remove a beacon that shines above the rocks of disastrous outcomes. Many generations of humanity have floundered, lacking only the knowledge of the past on which they could build a more enlightened life. History is also a beacon that illuminates and makes brighter our joyous moments, such as bin Laden's elimination, the Royal Wedding, a visit to the USS Constitution.

Please require a passing grade in History for the students of Massachusetts public schools to graduate High School.

Sincerely,  
Catherine Van Arnam  
Melrose, MA 02176

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**From:** Edward Wiest  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 03, 2011 11:01 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Proposed changes in MCAS history requirements.

I understand that the delay in implementing the MCAS history testing requirement may have been attributable in the first instance to factors beyond DoE's direct control. However, the teaching of history—and evaluating student achievement in learning history—is mandated both by Massachusetts law and Federal guidelines for grant awards under the No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top program. I join in the views expressed by the Pioneer Institute and others that an open-ended extension is inappropriate. At the very least, no temporary postponement of the MCAS History testing requirement should be enacted without a firm timetable for implementation—and indeed, the proposal should not be considered until the General Court has been given the opportunity to put the necessary funding in place.

**Edward Wiest**