*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | December 7, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Proposed Student Achievement Award Program |

I am presenting to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) this month a recommendation to approve a proposed student achievement award program that would recognize high needs students who demonstrated high achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts or Mathematics tests. The program would start this year based on the spring 2021 MCAS administration.

**Background and Context**

[Massachusetts General Laws chapter 69, section 1B](https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexii/chapter69/section1b), which lists powers and duties of the Board, states, “The board shall establish the standards for the recognition of high achievement by students and school districts.” To date, the state-supported award programs to recognize high achievement among public school students are the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery (Koplik) Award, the John and Abigail Adams (Adams) Scholarships, and the US Presidential Scholarship Award, all of which are for high school students. The Board set the standards for the Koplik Award in regulation. The Board of Higher Education sets the standards for the Adams scholarship.

In “Our Way Forward,” I noted the need for innovation in partnerships to support improved student learning. The newly developed student achievement award program would recognize high needs students in public schools across the state who demonstrated high achievement on the spring 2021 MCAS tests. The award program seeks to highlight student achievement and support the trajectory of high achieving students from traditionally underrepresented populations.

**Eligibility Criteria and Standards**

Students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students would be eligible for the student achievement award if they scored in the Exceeding Expectations achievement level (a scaled score of 530 or higher) on the 2021 English Language Arts or Mathematics MCAS tests in any tested grade level.

**Award Description**

The student achievement award will include:

* A certificate of achievement from my office
* A letter of recognition from the district superintendent, charter school leader, or director of the education collaborative or approved special education school, as applicable
* A twenty-five-dollar gift card
* Resources for parents/guardians/caregivers to support continued high achievement

In addition, award recipients will send thank-you letters to teachers who supported them during the school year.

I recommend that the Board vote to approve this proposed award program at the December 17 meeting. A motion is enclosed for your consideration. Regina Robinson, Deputy Commissioner, and Shay Edmond, Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives, will be present at the meeting to discuss the proposed award program and answer questions.