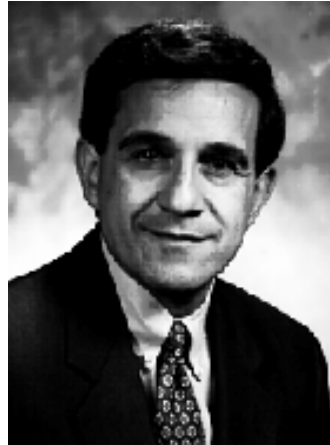




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Commissioner's Update

November 1, 1995

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

As you may have noticed, I made an effort to "lighten up" our coordinated mailings last month, and bypassed the October 16 mailing. In part, as a result, this first mailing of November is a little heavier than usual. Please distribute copies of the documents to your staff, and also refer to these and other items placed on our site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.doe.mass.edu>).

In addition to the information in this mailing, I want to let you know about three other matters:

- First, you will be receiving under separate cover around November 10 the ballots for elections for the Teachers Retirement Board. Please make sure your teachers receive these ballots.
- Second, I have extended the deadline for applications to join the statewide [Assessment Development Committees](#) which will be formed for each of the seven content areas defined in the curriculum frameworks. I am particularly looking for qualified teachers, school leaders, parents and community members to serve. The deadline is November 22, and the simple application form is on our Internet site or available on request by calling the Department at extension 327.
- Third, on October 24 I presented to the State Board of Education current revised drafts of [four content area frameworks](#) (Mathematics, Science and Technology, English Language Arts, and the Arts) and [the Common Chapters](#). These revised drafts are now up on our Internet site, pending final edits and printing in hard copy form. These replace prior drafts, and you should feel free to review and disseminate them.

Here are the items in this mailing:

1. [Welfare reform implementation process](#) summary memorandum
2. Comprehensive school-age parenting programs study request
[No Longer Available]

3. Technical assistance guide for selected areas of special education (please note that one section of the pamphlet focuses on services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing; a helpful directory of specialized resources provided by the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is posted on our Internet site)

[UPDATED 12/17/01]

4. [Amendments proposed to certification regulations](#)--instructional technology specialist and school social worker/adjustment counselor
5. [Schooner Ernestina](#)--Professional development opportunity for teachers, students
6. November 16: [Tobacco-Free Schools Day](#) in Massachusetts

I look forward to seeing many of you at the MASS conference in Hyannis next week, and discussing these and many others matters of mutual interest.

All the best, and
Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner of Education

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Welfare Reform

To: School Superintendents, School Principals

From: Robert Antonucci, Commissioner of Education Joseph Gallant,
Commissioner of Department of Transitional Assistance

Date: November 1, 1995

On June 15, 1995, a memorandum was distributed with preliminary information about the new welfare reform law -- Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995 -- and how it will affect local school districts. At this time, we would like to provide you with additional information about this initiative, including the welfare reform implementation date which is November 1, 1995.

You may recall that under Chapter 5, in order to receive benefits under the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) Program: 1) children under the age of 14 must meet specific school attendance requirements; and 2) teen parents must graduate from high school, or attend a program which will lead to a high school diploma or a GED.

Staff from the Department of Education and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) have worked to develop a system that will meet the requirements of welfare reform while imposing as few burdens as possible on schools. To this end, much of the process has now been automated. To summarize the process, DTA will notify schools on a regular basis of the children who are subject to this requirement. Schools will then notify DTA quarterly if any of these students have unsatisfactory attendance. The attendance of any student who has been identified as having an attendance problem will then be reported to DTA on a monthly basis.

The remainder of this memorandum will provide you with more specific information about this process, and its effect on local schools.

Thank you for helping to make this process effective and beneficial for the education of our students.

Attendance of Children under the Age of 14 (Learnfare)

Children Subject to the Requirement

This requirement pertains only to children between the ages of six (or in the first grade, whichever occurs later) and thirteen. (In other words, it does not pertain to children under six, children in kindergarten or pre-kindergarten programs, or children 14 and older. It also does not pertain to a child whose parent(s) is disabled; however, DTA will make this determination.)

Parent/School Notification of Attendance Requirement

DTA will notify each recipient subject to Learnfare of the requirement to provide her children's attendance records. A signed release will be obtained from the parent, authorizing the School Department to release attendance information to DTA. You may recall that the Board of Education voted at its June meeting to amend its Student Records Regulations to add "dates of attendance" to the list of information that may be released unless the parent or eligible student notifies the school that such information shall not be released. [See 603 CMR 27.07(4)(a)] Therefore, attendance information must be provided to DTA for any child for whom it is requested, unless the child's parent notifies the school that such information cannot be released. In the unlikely event that this happens, the school should notify DTA staff who will pursue this matter with the recipient. DTA will appoint one person in each of its local offices to act as a liaison to assist the school in resolving this and any other school attendance issues.

As of November 1, 1995, the date when welfare reform is implemented, DTA will begin applying the new rules to families who apply for assistance, and recipients who are called into local DTA offices for an eligibility review. It is estimated that the process of transitioning current AFDC recipients into the new TAFDC program will take six to twelve months. Therefore, the number of children subject to the school attendance reporting requirement will be small initially, and will gradually increase as current recipients come into DTA's local offices and are informed about their responsibilities under Learnfare.

Chapter 5 requires that school attendance information be reported on a quarterly basis. DOE and DTA have agreed that a quarter shall mean every 45 days that the school is in session. For ease of administration, since welfare reform was not being implemented until November 1, 1995, DTA is requesting that schools consider the first 45-day quarter to begin the first day the school is in session after January 1, 1996. By the end of December 1995, DTA will provide each school with the first report which identifies students at that school who are subject to the school attendance reporting requirement, so that the school will know which children will be subject to the school attendance requirements in January 1996. This report will include the names of children of new applicants and recipients whose cases were reviewed in the month of November. The report will include identifying information such as: the child's name; the child's date of birth; the parent's name, address, telephone number, and social security number; the name and address of the school; the DTA worker's identification number; and the name and address of the DTA office responsible.

Each month thereafter, the school will receive a report with identifying information on any child whose name should be added to the list of students subject to the school attendance reporting requirement, and similarly, the names of any children who should be deleted from the school's master list of students subject to the school attendance reporting requirement. The school may choose to make copies of these reports, and simply annotate them to report the child's attendance to DTA, as outlined below. In this way, all of the identifying information will be present on each attendance report. If the school prefers to use another system, including an automated report, it may do so as long as it attaches copies of the monthly reports provided by DTA to the school, so that identifying information such as the mother's name and SSN, and the worker's identifying number are included for each child whose attendance is being reported.

Quarterly Attendance Reports

Under the welfare reform law, a parent is placed in a probationary status if her child has more than eight unexcused absences during a school quarter. To simplify reporting requirements, DOE and DTA have agreed that schools will only report to DTA those children who have had more than eight unexcused absences during a quarter. Schools

may annotate the report forwarded by DTA (described above) to provide attendance information on children with more than eight unexcused absences. (Or, as noted above, the school may use an alternative method which provides the same information.) If DTA's report is used, it will contain a section for the school to identify the number of unexcused absences for that child, and the dates those absences occurred. The report will also contain a section to check off if the child is no longer enrolled at that school.

If a school has no students who have more than eight unexcused absences in a particular quarter, the school will provide this information to DTA in writing, in whatever format the school chooses, so that it is clear to DTA that school attendance information has been received for the quarter in question.

All attendance reports should be sent to the attention of the DTA liaison. A school may be reporting to more than one local DTA office in certain geographic areas such as Boston; however, the reports from DTA will inform the school as to where to send attendance reports pertaining to each child.

Due Dates for Quarterly School Attendance Reports

DOE and DTA agreed that a quarter shall mean every 45 days that the school is in session. Schools will provide attendance information to DTA within two weeks of the end of each quarter.

Again, for ease of administration, since welfare reform was not being implemented until November 1, 1995, DTA is requesting that schools consider the first 45-day quarter to begin the first day the school is in session after January 1, 1996. The first attendance reports would then be due to DTA within two weeks after the end of that 45-day quarter. The last attendance report will be due within two weeks of the end of the school year, regardless of whether 45 days has elapsed since the prior quarterly report was submitted to DTA.

Definition of Absences

The following types of absences shall be considered to be excused, and schools will not report a child as absent for these reasons:

- illness;
- hospitalization;
- disability of the child such that it precludes the child from attending school; (Please note: A child is not presumed to be disabled solely because he or she is entitled to special education services.)
- death of a family member;
- religious holidays; and
- crisis situations, including the need to appear in court.

Schools must count as unexcused any and all absences which do not fall into one of the above categories, including, but not limited to: suspensions, and expulsions. It will be the responsibility of DTA to contact the parent and offer her an opportunity to provide documentation that any or all of the absences were, in fact, excused absences.

Monthly Reporting for Those in Probationary Status

DTA will make the final determination as to whether such absences are excused or unexcused, and will inform the school when it has been determined that a child's parent

has been placed on probation. DTA will provide each school with a monthly report which identifies those students whose parents are in a probationary status. Once a parent is placed on probation, her cash assistance may be reduced if her child has more than three unexcused absences within a calendar month. While in a probationary status, the child's attendance must be provided by the school to DTA on a monthly basis. Schools must provide such attendance information to DTA within two weeks of the end of each calendar month.

Schools may use the same process described in the section above entitled **Quarterly Attendance Reports** to report each child's attendance to DTA on a monthly basis, including the dates of each absence. If a student had no unexcused absences in a particular month, the school should provide this information to DTA in writing, so that it is clear to DTA that school attendance information has been received for that child for the month in question. Also, the school should notify DTA if the child is no longer enrolled at that school. The DTA report will contain a section to check off in such cases.

All attendance reports should be sent to the attention of the DTA liaison.

DTA will inform the school when/if it is determined that the parent is no longer on probation, so that the school will know attendance information no longer needs to be provided on a monthly basis. (For your information, a parent may be taken off probation when she has been in a probationary status for six months or until such time as her child has less than ten days of unexcused absences in the six preceding school months, whichever is later. This determination will be made by DTA.)

DTA will notify the school and the Department of Social Services if a child has been sanctioned under Learnfare (removed from the parent's grant) for three consecutive months. In such cases, it is anticipated that the appropriate parties will work together to address problems associated with the child's inadequate school attendance.

When a School May Cease Attendance Reporting on a Child

Children 14 years of age and older are not subject to the Learnfare requirement. Therefore, a school may cease to report attendance information on a child once that child reaches the age of 14. DTA will inform the school when a child is no longer subject to Learnfare because of his age.

If a child is no longer enrolled in the school which received the initial notification to provide attendance information to DTA, that school will inform DTA as outlined in the sections above entitled **Quarterly Attendance Reports** and **Monthly Reporting for Those in Probationary Status**, and will cease to provide attendance information to DTA on that child.

The school will also cease to report attendance information whenever DTA informs the school in writing that such information is no longer necessary. (This will occur, for example, if the family ceases to receive TAFDC benefits.)

For Your Information

DTA has provided DOE with a list of all of its local offices, their addresses, phone numbers, and the geographic area they serve. Schools will also be provided with the names and phone numbers of the Learnfare liaison in each DTA office.

Teen Parents' School Attendance

Under welfare reform, TAFDC benefits will not be provided to a family headed by a parent under the age of 20 unless such parent has graduated from, or is attending a program for a high school diploma or a GED.

DTA will require teen parents to provide written documentation of their school attendance on a monthly basis. In order to do so, teen parents will request school staff to sign a DTA form, verifying their school attendance. The DTA liaison will work with school staff to facilitate this process.

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Massachusetts Association of Approved Private School

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 - [The Boston Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children \(BCDC\) at Children's Hospital Boston](#)
 - [Clarke School for the Deaf/Center for Oral](#)
 - [The Horace Mann School](#)
 - [Willie Ross School for the Deaf](#)
- **[National Guidelines for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)**
 - The intention of this guidelines document for programs serving students with hearing loss is to provide assistance to education agencies, & through them, to educators, service providers, & parents. This is a link to the NASDSE publications site from which a copy of the guidelines can be purchased for \$30.95.

National State And Local Organizations/Resources

- [The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(MCDHH\)](#) is a commission, under the Executive Office of Human Services, which serves as the principal agency in the state on behalf of deaf, late deafened, and hard of hearing people.
- [The Captioned Media Program/National Association of the Deaf](#) is a FREE video lending library funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and administered by the National Association of the Deaf.
- [The National Information Center on Deafness \(NICD\)](#) is a centralized source of

accurate, up-to-date, objective information on topics dealing with deafness and hearing loss.

- [The Deaf Resource Library](#) is an online collection of reference material and links intended to educate and inform people about Deaf culture.
- [The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. \(RID\)](#), provides international, national, regional, state, and local forums and an organizational structure for the continued growth and development of the professions of interpretation and transliteration of American Sign Language and English.
- [The Massachusetts Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(MassRID\)](#) conducts interpreter screenings. Approved MCDHH interpreters are considered entry-level practitioners and are referred to in settings appropriate to their skill level. Interpreters are encouraged to continue to upgrade their skills in order to become certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc..
- [The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#) provides information and resources about communication disorders for students, parents, professionals and others.
- [The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(AGBell\)](#) is a membership organization and information center focusing specifically on childhood hearing loss, with an emphasis on the auditory approach. Informational materials address questions that parents typically raise, basic information on pediatric hearing loss, and general information on how to best service students with hearing loss in the classroom.
- [The American Sign Language Teachers Association \(ASLTA\)](#) is an individual membership organization of more than 1,000 ASL and Deaf Studies educators from elementary through graduate education as well as agencies.
- [Cochlear Implant Club International \(CICI\)](#) is a non-profit organization for cochlear implant recipients, their families, professionals, and other individuals interested in cochlear implants. CICI provides support and information to anyone who has a cochlear implant, has a child with an implant, or is interested in information about implants. CICI also advocates for rights and services for people with hearing loss.
- [Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Communicative Diseases \(DCDD\)](#) is dedicated to improving the education of children with communicative disabilities or who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The mission of [Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc. \(SHHH\)](#) is to make the mainstream society more accessible to people who are hard of hearing. SHHH also works to improve the quality of life for people who are hard of hearing through advocacy, education, and self help.
- [Clerc Educational Center at Gallaudet University](#) has been mandated by congress to develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative curricula, instructional techniques and strategies, and materials. The aim of the Clerc Center is to improve the quality of education for deaf and hard of hearing children and youth from birth through age 21.
- [The Center for the Study of Communication and the Deaf](#) is devoted to both applied and theoretical research to benefit the Deaf and their families.
- [American Society of Deaf Children \(ASDC\)](#) is a national organization of families and professionals committed to education, empowering, and supporting parents and families to create opportunities for their children who are deaf and hard of hearing in gaining meaningful and full communication access, particularly through the competent use of sign language, in their homes, schools, and communities.
- The goal of the [National Center on Low-Incidence Disabilities \(NCLID\)](#) is to increase the nation's capacity to provide educational and support services to infants, children, and youths with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities by developing a comprehensive, integrated, online system that prepares teachers, supports families and assists schools.

Educational Programs

- [Massachusetts School Districts](#)
- [Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools \(MAAPS\)](#) This school directory lists the name and address of schools, contact information and includes rates and types of disability and needs served.
 - [Beverly School for the Deaf](#)
6 Echo Avenue
Beverly, Massachusetts 02134
978-927-7070
info@bevsvd.org
 - [Clarke School for the Deaf/Center for Oral](#) is a world leader in educating hearing-impaired children. For more than 130 years the pioneering auditory/oral programs have taught deaf and hard of hearing children to listen and talk. They have trained hundreds of teachers for placement in schools around the world. In addition, Clarke offers comprehensive services and programs to help individuals of all ages who experience hearing loss.
 - [The Horace Mann School](#) for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing educates all students by creating diverse learning environments that develop their full academic, social, technical and vocational potentials so that they can be life long learners, responsible citizens and active participants in both their deaf and hearing communities.
 - [The Learning Center for Deaf Children \(TLC\)](#) a challenging program of academic excellence for Deaf students from infancy through high school. The Learning Center's curriculum fosters knowledge and respect for both American Sign Language (ASL) and English, and for American Deaf and hearing cultures.
 - [Willie Ross School for the Deaf](#) offers a full array of educational programs from the Early Childhood level through the Secondary level. Students are eligible for admission to Willie Ross at age two-years, nine months. Students may remain enrolled at the School until the age of twenty-two or upon their graduation.
- [Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives \(MOEC\)](#) is the Commonwealth's primary advocate for and facilitator of in-district collaboration in education and related services.
- Out of State Programs
 - [American School for the Deaf](#)
 - [Austine School for the Deaf](#) - 60 Austine St., Brattleboro, VT 05301, (802) 258-5000 (V/TTY)
 - [Rhode Island School for the Deaf](#)
 - [Gallaudet University](#)

Additional Resources

- [Everything you wanted to know about ASL:](#) Madonna University Library sign language and deaf resources.
- [TRIPOD](#) is a private, non-profit educational research organization committed to helping families raise their deaf and hard-of-hearing children in a supportive environment. makes going to the movies a more enjoyable experience for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals by arranging to have the latest movies open-captioned and shown in theaters throughout the US and Canada through Open Captioned Films.
- [International Sports Organization of the Deaf \(CISS\)](#) International Committee

of Sports for the Deaf.

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Proposed Amendments to the Regulations for the Certification of Educational Personnel (603 CMR 7.00)

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Principals, and Other Interested Parties

From: Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 1, 1995

I am pleased to announce that in September the Board of Education voted to seek public comment on the attached Proposed Amendments to the Regulations for the Certification of Educational Personnel (603 CMR 7.00). These amendments will add two new certificates: Instructional Technology Specialist and School Social Worker/School Adjustment Counselor. Please share them with adjustment counselors, social workers, and various staff who work in the area of instructional technology including computers.

The Instructional Technology Specialist certificate is being developed at the request of educators who perform in this role under a variety of certificates, none of which are specifically designed for that purpose. With the new recertification requirement established under Education Reform, educators have indicated they would prefer to maintain and renew a certificate that reflects their actual work responsibilities.

The request to create a School Social Worker/School Adjustment Counselor certificate came from the Department of Youth Services, as well as individuals working in these fields. Under current law, school social workers and school adjustment counselors are approved jointly by the Department of Youth Services and the Department of Education. A proposed statutory amendment will place the certification responsibility solely in the Department of Education. Moving ahead with the proposed regulations changes will enable us to be ready to issue certificates upon enactment of the revised statute.

Two working groups of educators representing relevant professional associations, including the Department of Youth Services, developed recommendations for these certificates. If you have comments on these proposed amendments to the regulations, please send them no later than December 11, 1995 to:

Charlotte Fitzgerald
Certification and Professional Development Coordination
Massachusetts Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

Thank you.

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Schooner Ernestina

Professional Development Vessel and Student Learning Laboratory

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders and Principals
From: Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education
Date: November 1, 1995

I am pleased to draw your attention to a high quality professional development activity for your teachers and outstanding learning opportunity for your students.

The Massachusetts Schooner Ernestina, a restored National Landmark, is looking to establish alliances with a greater number of school districts to expand its on-board learning activities that better meet classroom needs and help districts move education reform efforts forward.

During the past season, the Ernestina hosted dozens of dockside and underway programs giving more than 2,000 students a firsthand glimpse at the oceanic world. The initial delivery of this curriculum was developed in consultation with teachers from the [Partnerships Advancing Learning of Mathematics and Science \(PALMS\)](#) cooperative initiative of the Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and others. In addition, the Ernestina was frequently engaged as a high-impact workshop site which welcomed educators and their community partners, and offered professional development points for educators in the process.

The Ernestina, with great potential as a moveable laboratory for mathematics and science, is also a floating museum of living history which reflects changing technologies, economics, immigration, and politics. The ship provides an excellent venue for team-building and promotes an environment which amplifies the core concepts of the [Curriculum Frameworks](#) in Mathematics and in Science and Technology.

To learn more about the Schooner Ernestina, I encourage you to review the attached literature, see how it might fit into your district's plans, and then contact the Schooner Ernestina Commission directly.

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Massachusetts Tobacco Free Schools Day

To: Superintendents

From: Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 1, 1995

November 16, 1995 has been declared Massachusetts Tobacco Free Schools Day. This day, chosen to coincide with the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, is an excellent opportunity to rededicate your school district to the reality of tobacco free schools. Your Health Coordinator has been sent a packet of materials to support Tobacco Free Schools Day.

The goals of the day are to help schools realize the goal of becoming truly tobacco free and to improve and expand available tobacco education and support activities for youth and adults in our schools.

We hope these materials will be useful to you. Thanks very much for your continued energy and commitment to healthier Massachusetts schools.

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