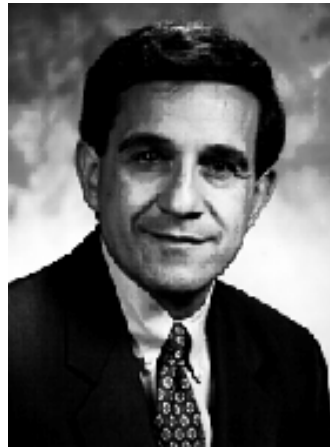


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## Commissioner's Update

June 14, 1996

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

In this package, I have a number of important financial documents and several other items which I hope you will find useful.

1. Federal allocation information for FY 97  
[ No longer available ]

This includes all your federal allocations for FY 97, except Title I, which is not yet available from the federal government. However, as I have mentioned previously, we expect the Title I allocation for *most* districts to be level with the amount for FY 96, for those districts which are eligible for Title I funds in FY 97.

2. Indirect cost rate for federal grants and contracts for FY 97  
[ No longer available ]
3. Education Reform Study Group allocation amount for FY 97  
[ No longer available ]
4. Chapter 74 nonresidential tuition rates for FY 97  
[ No longer available ]
5. [New competitive grant opportunity -- Early Literacy Intervention](#)
6. [Waiver request form for implementing federal nutrition guidelines](#)
7. [Executive Summary--1995 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)
8. Invitation to join school district alliances for FY 97  
[ No longer available ]
9. [Request for nominations for state advisory councils](#)

I hope these next few weeks are productive for you as we move toward the close of this school year. As always, I would very much appreciate if you could please copy and distribute items of particular interest to your staff, or direct their attention to the items which are posted on our Internet site (<http://www.doe.mass.edu>).

All the best, and

Sincerely,

**Robert V. Antonucci**  
Commissioner of Education

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## New-Comprehensive Early Literacy Program Grants

### Memorandum

**To:** Superintendents and Charter School Leaders  
**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education  
**Date:** June 1996

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Attached you will find a new competitive grant application for the Early Literacy Program - (fund code 575). This grant program is an addendum to the [Unified Request for Proposal II: FY 97 State and Federal Competitive Grant Funds](#), which was mailed to you in the [May superintendents' mailing](#).

This grant opportunity represents prospective new funds in the FY 97 state budget. The funds have been included in both the House and Senate budgets, but there are several more steps before the final FY 97 state budget is enacted.

If the district chooses to apply for these funds, the grant application should be integrated into the district's FY 97 competitive application, to be submitted to the Department of Education by July 15, 1996. The fund code (575) and budget should be included in the district's integrated competitive budget.

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**Name of Grant Program:** Massachusetts Early Literacy Intervention Program  
**Fund Code:** 575

**Purpose:** To establish early intervention individual tutorial literacy programs designed as pre-special education referral, short-term intervention for children who are at risk of failing to read in first grade.

**Priorities:** Early literacy learning is a key predictor to later academic success. Research demonstrates that the vast majority of students can learn how to read and write through effective classroom instruction. However, some students may require short term individualized early intervention. Districts should propose early intervention individual tutorial literacy programs in one or more district schools that establish or support early intervention individual tutorial literacy programs, to provide short term intervention for students who are at risk of failing to learn to read by the end of the first grade. These programs should include the following:

- A process for identifying students in need of additional literacy support by mid

first grade;

- Literacy intervention that is provided before referral for special education;
- Program teachers who receive ongoing professional development and support in early literacy intervention;
- Be research-based with proven long term results; and
- Include ongoing documentation and evaluation of results, including subsequent referral to special education, retention, or other reading intervention.

An essential goal of this program is to document the effectiveness of this type of intervention in improving student achievement of long-term literacy goals, and in reducing grade retentions and special education referrals for reading difficulties.

**Eligibility:** All school districts are eligible to apply. School districts with high percentages of low-income students will receive priority for funding.

**Funding:** A total of \$500,000 in competitive funds is available, pending state appropriation. Districts may apply for the following amounts:

<b>District Enrollment</b>	<b>Amount</b>
0-10,000	\$20,000
10,000-20,000	\$25,000
20,000-30,000	\$35,000
over 30,000	\$50,000

**Fund Use:** Funds must be used for professional development which increases the skills of teachers to provide early intervention individual tutorial literacy programs, including stipends, substitutes, consultants, course fees, supplies, materials.

**Project Duration:** Upon approval through 6/30/97

**Contact:** Laurie Slobody

**Phone Number:** (781) 338-3000

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### **Part III - Required Program Information**

In no more than four pages, please provide the following:

1. **Need:** Explain why this program is needed in your school district.
2. **Goals And Activities:** Describe the goals and activities of the district's proposed early literacy intervention tutorial program, including the following:
  - The target schools to be served;
  - The number of teachers and students in the first grade to be involved in the intervention program;
  - How students will be identified for the program by mid first grade;
  - How the program will be part of a system of pre-referral for special education;
  - A description of the design and delivery of the program;
  - How program teachers will be provided ongoing training and support; and
  - How the intervention model is based on research that demonstrates

positive long term results.

- 3. Expected Outcomes:** Describe the expected outcomes of this program, and how the effectiveness of the program will be assessed. Describe how data will be collected to document the early literacy intervention program's impact on student achievements, grade retentions, and special education referrals.

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## School Meals Initiative Waiver Request

### Memorandum

**To:** School Superintendents and Agency Administrators of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education

**Date:** June 17, 1996

The federal Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-448), requires school meals to comply with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (Dietary Guidelines) by School Year 1996/1997. Known as the School Meals Initiative, the law also allows State agencies to temporarily waive implementation of this requirement until July 1, 1998. Some school districts and agencies may need this additional time to make the transition to the Dietary Guidelines, while others already have been able to implement the Dietary Guidelines and thereby strengthen the nutritional value of the meals they serve.

We recognize that because schools cannot control individual choices by students, meals chosen by students may not initially meet the requirements of the Dietary Guidelines. The federal regulations reflect the fact that compliance with the new standards may be an incremental process achieved through trial and error over a period of time. We also wish to emphasize that there are no fiscal sanctions if a school is unable to meet the nutrition standards. Rather, there is a system of cooperative corrective action to promote progress toward compliance.

Each state is allowed to establish its own process and procedures to grant waivers. Our Massachusetts criteria are outlined on the School Meals Initiative Waiver Request attached. I need to let you know that given the fact that there may be more planning time and training needed or new equipment procurements or contracts to negotiate, I anticipate that all waiver requests will be approved.

- If your district or agency would like to waive implementation of the initiative, please complete [Sections A, B and C](#).
- If your district or agency does not want the waiver, complete [Sections A and C](#) only.

The federal rules require that we have written copies of the waiver on file this summer. Please return all copies of the request by July 19, 1996 to: Massachusetts Department of Education, Nutrition Programs and Services, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148 or by fax to (781)338-3399.

Program regulations and a summary of the School Meals Initiative were mailed to all sponsors of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in the

summer of 1995. Additional information on menu planning options was provided at the December, 1995, **Making Connections Conference** and at the May 28, 1996 meeting, **A Look Ahead...School Meals Initiative**

If you have any questions or wish assistance, please call Nutrition Programs and Services, (781) 338-3000.

Thank you for your work to implement this school meals initiative.

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## 1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

May 1996

Dear Parents, Students, and Colleagues:

We are pleased to present the results of the Department of Education's 1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS). This anonymous and voluntary survey was conducted between March and June, 1995 in 59 randomly selected public high schools across the state. The results of this survey can be used to accurately estimate the prevalence of risk behaviors among adolescents across the state because of high student and school participation rates that were achieved with the help of participating schools and students.

This research provides important information with respect to the behaviors students engage in which may compromise their health and safety. These behaviors include tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use, weapon carrying and physical violence, suicidal behaviors, drinking and driving, lack of seat belt and helmet use, sexual activity, unhealthy dietary behaviors, and lack of physical activity.

This report presents some findings which are encouraging, and others which cause serious concern. In comparison with 1990 data, tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use have increased significantly. However, there have been no increases in many other risk-related behaviors such as physical violence, weapon carrying, and sexual activity. The MYRBS continues to report a positive relationship between AIDS/HIV prevention education and lower rates of sexual activity. Seat belt use has increased dramatically among Massachusetts youth in this decade.

Since 1993, an excise tax on tobacco products has generated the Health Protection Fund, which has enabled the Department of Education to distribute millions of dollars to school districts across the state to implement comprehensive health education. The 1995 MYRBS results do not show a widespread increase in healthy behaviors among students since the Health Protection Fund was initiated. Certainly, we had hoped for better results in the short term, but we all must recognize that behavior change occurs slowly. Most high school students who participated in the 1995 MYRBS have not had the opportunity to benefit from the newly implemented prevention efforts targeted at the elementary and middle school years. As students begin to enter high school with more health education behind them, we are hopeful that the results of subsequent MYRBS research efforts will reflect decreases in the prevalence of harmful behaviors.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci  
Commissioner of Education

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*\*The tables and graphs for this report are currently unavailable.*

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### **References and Notes**

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### **Appendix B**

#### **1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questionnaire**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Shari M. Kessel, AIDS/HIV Research Coordinator for the Department of Education, was the principal investigator of the 1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

The Massachusetts Department of Education AIDS/HIV Program extends its thanks to the 4,159 public high school students who participated in the 1995 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and to the teachers, principals, and superintendents of the 59 high schools these students represented. We would also like to thank the Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which provided funding for this important research, the staff of Westat, Inc. who provided valuable technical assistance through all phases of this project, and the Massachusetts Commissioner of Public Health, David Mulligan, for his continuing support of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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## Advisory Councils

### Memorandum

**To:** Superintendents, Principals, and Other Interested Parties

**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education

**Date:** June 11, 1996

The [Education Reform Act of 1993](#) established fifteen Advisory Councils, to advise the Commissioner of Education on matters pertinent to the development of education reform in the Commonwealth. Councils meet approximately six times a year to:

- assess statewide trends and needs;
- seek public and professional advice;
- disseminate information;
  
- advise and make recommendations regarding legislation, regulations, and program guidelines;
- and provide other programmatic recommendations as deemed necessary to fulfill the goals established by the [Board of Education](#).

Members of the Councils are appointed by the Commissioner of Education each Fall for one three-year term, with the option of re-appointment for a second three-year term. The Department of Education anticipates that vacancies will exist on each of the following Councils this Fall:

Adult Basic Education  
Bilingual Education  
Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Health Education  
Early Childhood Education  
Educational Personnel  
Fine Arts Education  
Gifted and Talented Education  
Global Education  
Life Management Skills and Home Economics  
Math and Science Education  
Parent and Community Education and Involvement  
Racial Imbalance  
Special Education  
Technology Education  
Vocational Education

If you are interested in serving on a Council, or would like to nominate someone, please

send a resume, and brief letter of support to: **Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, Attention: Advisory Councils.**

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