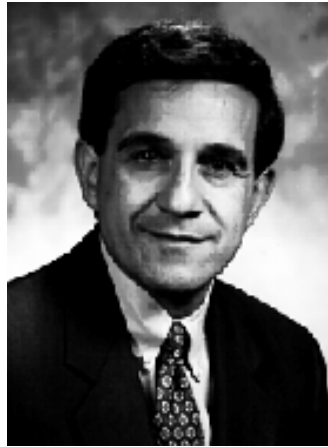


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## Commissioner's Update

January 10, 1997

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

I have a few items of interest for you in this first coordinated mailing of the new year. I hope you find them useful, and will distribute copies to your staff.

In this packet, and on our Internet site, you will find the following:

1. Educational Technology -- update on Information Management System, and request for data. In last month's mailing, we included information about the January technology conferences. At those conferences, information will be announced about the federal technology literacy challenge grant opportunity.  
[ No longer available ]
2. [Memorandum clarifying current status of time and learning issues](#)
3. [Tuition figures for school choice](#) (only for those districts sending or receiving students)
4. [Tuition figures for charter schools](#) (only for those districts sending students to charter schools, and for the charter schools)
5. Notice about the 1997-1998 Teacher of the Year nomination program  
[ No longer available ]

Thank you for your hard work. I look forward to seeing many of you at the MASS mid-winter meeting later this month.

All the best, and  
Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci  
Commissioner of Education

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## Time and Learning

**To:** Superintendents and Charter School Leaders  
**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education  
**Date:** January 10, 1997

At the Board of Education meeting of December 11, 1996, the Board discussed the Student Learning Time regulations adopted in 1994, and voted as follows:

to reaffirm that the Student Learning Time regulations as adopted by the previous Board of Education will be the regulations that will direct Time and Learning for the 1997-1998 school year. Secondly, the Board strongly recommends that school committees and superintendents begin addressing the issue of extended days and alternative schedules as they collectively bargain their contracts.

This vote followed discussions at several recent meetings of the Board about the definition of "core subjects" in the Student Learning Time regulations. As used in the regulations, "core subjects" means the core academic subjects specified in General Laws c. 69, § 1D (mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages and the arts), the subjects covered in courses which are part of an approved vocational-technical education program under G.L. c. 74, and subjects focused on helping students acquire the knowledge and skills described in the Common Core of Learning. At its December 1996 meeting, the Board concluded that while the term "core subjects" should be used according to its meaning in G.L. c. 69, § 1D, it would be disruptive to change the regulations now, while school districts are working to implement the requirements that take effect in September 1997.

The Board's vote affirms the current Student Learning Time regulations, which establish the following standard **effective September 1997**:

All public schools shall ensure that every student is scheduled to receive a minimum of 900 hours per year (elementary) or 990 hours per year (secondary) of structured learning time. Time which a student spends at lunch, passing between classes, in homeroom, at recess, in non-directed study periods, receiving school services, and participating in optional school programs shall not count toward meeting the minimum structured learning time requirement for that student. [603 CMR 27.04]

Under the regulations, "structured learning time" continues to be defined as:

time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the core subjects [as defined in the regulations]. In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments. [603 CMR 27.02]

As school districts plan their schedules, some questions have arisen about the Board's November 1996 vote to repeal the Physical Education regulations. The repeal eliminates the requirement to provide at least 60 hours of physical education instruction annually to students in grades 1-10, and at least 30 hours annually to students in kindergarten. It takes effect on July 1, 1997, which means the regulations continue in effect for the 1996-97 school year. Even after repeal of the regulations, the state statute on physical education, G.L. c. 71, § 3, will remain. It states, "Physical education shall be taught as a required subject in all grades for all students in the public schools for the purpose of promoting the physical well-being of students." In other words, public schools are required to provide physical education to all students in all grades, but local school officials may determine the hours of instruction for this subject as

for other subjects of instruction.

In its December 1996 discussion on Time and Learning, the Board urged school officials to seek creative ways to expand learning time for students without undue cost. For example, the Board encourages school districts and teacher associations to consider implementing staggered schedules for teachers, which can extend the school day for students without requiring teachers to work additional hours. Similarly, if schedules for buses or other ancillary services are a barrier to extending the school day for students, the Board encourages school officials to make appropriate adjustments. In this context, the Board voted to recommend strongly that school officials begin addressing the issue of extended days and alternative schedules as they collectively bargain contracts with teachers and other staff.

The Board indicated that it will revisit the issue of Student Learning Time during 1997. The Department of Education plans to collect information from school districts about actions taken to implement the Student Learning Time standards and, in particular, the amount of time students in public schools are spending on the core academic subjects. You should expect to receive the survey form in April or May.

For more detailed information on Time and Learning, please refer to the Student Learning Time regulations (603 CMR 27.00), the Student Learning Time Guide published by the Department of Education in May 1995, and the Student Learning Time flyer published by the Department in April 1996. Copies of these publications are available by calling (781) 338-3000. The Department also continues to provide technical assistance and information to school districts about implementing the Student Learning Time regulations. If you need assistance or further information, please call Deborah Walker at (781) 338-3000.

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## Estimated FY97 School Choice Tuition Memo

### Memorandum

**To:** School Superintendents of Districts Participating in School Choice  
**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education  
**Date:** January 10, 1997  
**Re:** Estimated FY97 School Choice Tuition

Last fall, school choice receiving districts submitted claim forms with this Department that listed the school choice students enrolled in their schools as of October 1, 1996. Information from this report was used to estimate annual tuition amounts for FY97. On December 31, 1996 the State Treasurer's office assessed one-third of this estimated annual tuition charge, and paid one-third of the estimated annual tuition receipts, as part of each district's quarterly local aid distribution.

The [enclosed five-page listing shows the change in school choice tuition between FY96 and FY97](#), for all affected school districts in the state.

#### Calculation of FY97 School Choice Rates

School choice rates are equal to 75 percent of a receiving district's FY96 cost per pupil for the specific program area in which a pupil participates. A rate cannot exceed \$5,000 except for special education, in which case it is set at the receiving district's rate for a child's particular prototype. For receiving districts whose FY96 End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Reports had been finalized when tuition was calculated in mid-December, a printout is enclosed showing the detailed calculations of rates in each program area (see column G--Allowed Cost). If a district's report was not available, the tuition was estimated at \$5,000 and will be adjusted with actual rates this spring.

#### Student Enrollment Information

This package includes listings of the pupil information submitted on claim forms, compiled separately for receiving and sending districts. Later this spring, final enrollment data as of April 1, 1997 will be requested. At that time, tuition rates and pupil data will be finalized by this Department. Adjustments to the enclosed estimates will be calculated in time for the June 30, 1997 local aid distribution.

#### Tuition Reimbursements

Sending districts whose FY97 Chapter 70 net school spending was less than their foundation budgets are already receiving aid for their estimated tuition payments, through the Chapter 70 formula. There is no above-foundation school choice reimbursement funded for FY97.

If you have questions about this information, please contact Phyllis Rogers of School Finance Services, at 781-338-3000.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

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## Estimated FY97 Charter School Tuition and Reimbursement Memo

### Memorandum

**To:** School Superintendents of Districts Sending Pupils to Charter Schools, Charter School Leaders  
**From:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education  
**Date:** January 10, 1997  
**Re:** Estimated FY97 Charter School Tuition and Reimbursement

Last fall, charter schools filed claim forms with this Department that listed students enrolled in their schools as of October 1, 1996. Information from this report was used to estimate [annual charter school tuition amounts for FY97](#). The State Treasurer's office assessed one-third of this estimated tuition on December 31, 1996 as part of each sending school district's quarterly local aid distribution.

#### Calculation of Charter School Tuition Rates

Sending districts' estimated FY97 tuition rates were derived from Schedule 19 of the FY96 Pupil and Financial Report, which was submitted in the fall. October 1, 1995 enrollment was used to approximate each district's adjusted October 1, 1996 enrollment, which will be finalized this winter. If the charter school provides transportation, a separate transportation rate, also derived from Schedule 19, was included in the calculation of each child's tuition.

If your district's Schedule 19 was finalized at the time of these calculations, a printout of the FY97 estimated rates has been enclosed (see lines 25 and 27.) If the Schedule 19 was not available, your district's rates were set at the amounts estimated by the Department last summer. Please note that for students residing in above-foundation districts, charter school legislation requires that the rate is either the one in the district where the charter school is located, or the above-foundation district's rate, whichever is lower.

The enclosed five-page printout entitled "Estimated FY97 Charter School Assessments" compares pupils and rates as estimated this past summer, to those actually reported this fall. It also shows estimated tuition and reimbursements for FY97.

#### Student Enrollment Information

Also enclosed is a listing of information for each pupil who was included in the calculation of charter school tuition. Next month, this Department will ask charter schools to submit final FY97 enrollments as of February 15, 1997.

#### Tuition Reimbursements

Sending districts whose FY97 Chapter 70 net school spending was less than their foundation budgets are already receiving aid for their estimated charter school tuition payments, through the Chapter 70 formula. Those whose spending was above the foundation receive a reimbursement in accordance with Chapter 267 of the Acts of 1995. The reimbursement is either fifty or forty percent of tuition, depending upon whether the charter schools were in their first or second year of operation.

Superintendents should be aware that the FY97 state appropriation of \$1,921,965 for above foundation reimbursements is insufficient to meet the estimated \$2,642,306 needed to provide eligible districts with their fifty or forty-percent reimbursements for the year. If final tuition liabilities end up being as high as the estimates, and there is no supplemental appropriation for this account, districts should expect to see smaller reimbursements in the June distribution.

If you have questions concerning this information, please contact Phyllis Rogers of School Finance Services, at 781-338-3000.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

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