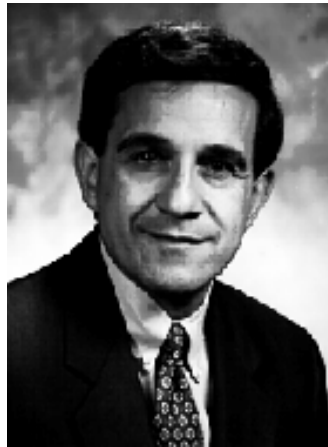


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## Commissioner's Update

July 11, 1997

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

As you know, the state budget for this fiscal year has been signed into law. The budget is the best we have seen for public education in Massachusetts in many years. The foundation budget is fully funded for the fifth straight year, funding for early childhood programs is substantially increased, and we have the funds we requested that we will need for the assessment program this year. We all should be very appreciative of the fact that the state budget continues to provide the funding opportunities to enhance teaching and learning in all of our public schools. Of course, the support we continue to receive at the state level depends increasingly on the results we demonstrate on the local level.

In this mailing, I have enclosed the following items for your use. Please copy and distribute to your staff any of the documents which they would also find useful:

1. Announcement of two new significant grant opportunities for early childhood programs  
[ No longer available ]
2. [Announcement of changes in fees for teacher certification, and upcoming availability of recertification applications](#)
3. [Memorandum on changes in state School-to-Work office](#)
4. Opinion from the US Department of Education on the Supreme Court's June 23 decision on Title I service delivery by public teachers in private schools  
[ No longer available ]
5. [Board-in-Brief summary of June 16, 1997 Board meeting](#)

Also, I expect to send you next week the application for [the newly approved funds for foundation reserve aid and a special education loan program](#).

I hope these materials are helpful, and look forward to seeing many superintendents, principals and teachers at the major statewide conferences occurring over the next several weeks.

All the best, and

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci  
Commissioner of Education

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## Announcement: New Fees for Certification of Educators in Massachusetts

- **Recertification Applications for Massachusetts Educators will soon be available**

Dear Educator:

I would like to take this opportunity to bring several matters to your attention with respect to teacher certification and recertification. These involve the fees for certification and recertification. I look forward to continuing to work closely with you as we strengthen and make more efficient the processes by which the state implements these provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1993 and its amendments.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci  
Commissioner of Education

### FEES

Beginning August 1, the fees for teacher certification will change. The cost for an initial certificate will be \$100. Each additional certificate will cost \$25. These fees will not apply to certification applications postmarked prior to August 1, regardless of when the certificates are granted. As you know, the fees had been \$25 for the initial and \$15 each for additional certificates. The increases taking effect August 1 were mandated by the Education Reform Act of 1993, but their implementation was deferred for four years.

The fees for recertification will be the same as the fees for certification. The initial recertification will cost \$100, and each additional area of recertification costs \$25.

#### *Examples of calculating the fees for certification and recertification*

An individual applying for three certificates or certificate renewals will pay \$150.00--that is, \$100 for the first certificate and \$25 for each of the two additional certificates. Similarly, a teacher who wishes to be certified to teach at two different levels (e.g., elementary and secondary) will pay \$100 plus \$25, for a total of \$125. Additional certificates may be for different teaching areas, grade levels, roles, or stages (Provisional, Provisional with Advanced Standing, or Standard) of certification. Therefore, no one will be assessed the \$100.00 fee more than once for certification or more than once every five years for recertification.

### RECERTIFICATION TIMELINE

The Department of Education is preparing to initiate the process of recertification, by which all educators who hold Massachusetts certificates are required to be recertified every five years. We will be distributing recertification applications and a helpful guidebook in August. We are making the maximum effort to reach all currently employed teachers through the Teachers Retirement Board mailing list and through superintendents, principals and

the educational associations. Also, we are trying to ensure that people holding certificates who are not currently employed or who may not be aware of the recertification standards hear about the process and the availability of applications through libraries, community organizations and the media.

### **CERTIFICATION UPDATE**

In recent months, we have made progress in streamlining the certification process, which is now often completed within 48 hours after a completed application and supporting documents are filed. The system has been enhanced by an individual counseling service to guide prospective applicants through the process and to familiarize them with requirements, as well as by an alternative route to certification for individuals with nontraditional but equivalent qualifications. In addition, we are now accepting MasterCard and Visa to make payments more convenient.

I hope this explanation has been helpful. I would very much welcome and appreciate your own efforts to disseminate this information widely. Thank you for your continuing support and for your assistance as we move forward in this process.

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## Massachusetts School-to-Work Office

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education and co-chair,

School to Work Executive Committee--Representing the Department of Education  
William J. Spring, co-chair, School to Work Executive Committee and Vice President,  
Federal Reserve Bank--Representing MassJobs Council

**DATE:** July 9, 1997

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There are three significant changes relating to the Massachusetts School-to-Work Office that we would like to report to you.

First, as of July 15, the Office staff will be relocated to the Department of Education headquarters at 350 Main Street in Malden. They will be in space on the 5th floor adjacent to the Office of the Commissioner.

Second, the current executive director, John Niles, has submitted his letter of resignation effective August 31. We will be posting that position in the near future. We are grateful for John's service in the preparation of our state grant proposal and in overseeing the first half of the implementation of the Massachusetts School-to-Work initiative. His strong vision and commitment to school-to-work is something we can all build upon.

Finally, Francis Kane, former Superintendent and Principal in Marlboro, will oversee the program for these next several months of transition.

As co-chairs of the Executive Board, we agree that this is a very important juncture for the initiative, and we will be providing further information on a regular basis in the next several months. We look forward to your continued support for this initiative.

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## Board in Brief

### Wednesday, June 18, 1997

This is "[Board in Brief](#)," issued at the request of Commissioner Bob Antonucci, to bring you up to date on [Massachusetts Board of Education](#) matters. The following is a report on the meeting held Monday, June 16, 1997 at the Massachusetts Department of Education in Malden.

#### History and Social Science Curriculum Framework Adopted

After over an hour of public comment and considerable discussion among Board members, the Board voted 6 to 3 to adopt the history/social science curriculum framework as revised by a committee of Board members and teachers appointed in April, with additional revisions accepted by the Board on June 16.

Board member Edwin Delattre stated that this framework is "flexible, yet rigorous," and is designed to leave decisions about grade-by-grade coverage and specific course sequences to school districts. In particular, he noted, the framework gives school districts the choice of whether to include the study of US history in the ninth and tenth grade. Board member Bill Irwin, who joined Vice-Chair Patricia Crutchfield, Dr. Delattre and teachers Wendell Bourne of the Weston Middle School, Susan Szachowicz of Brockton High School and Gail Webb of the Emerson Elementary School in Bolton in drafting the latest version, thanked all of the teachers and former committees for their work developing a history/social science curriculum framework. Mr. Irwin said, "While this framework is not perfect, it is a workable, living document that will be revised as needed, based on the experience of teachers using it over the years."

Board member Abigail Thernstom expressed concern about several aspects of the framework, commenting that in contrast to the April draft, it reflects a "bad news about America" theme. She and Board member Roberta Schaefer urged that the framework include a "more balanced perspective on US history." Together with Board members Jim Peyser and Alexis Vagianos, they voted to incorporate in the framework two aspects included in the April draft: the strand on economics and a requirement to study US history in grades 9 and 10. Both votes failed to carry a majority of the Board.

In voting to adopt the history/social science curriculum framework as presented on June 16 with additional revisions accepted by the Board, the Board also voted that:

1. the Commissioner, in consultation with the Chairman of the Board, will engage a consultant to edit the framework to ensure that it is clearly organized, and then the Board will approve the distribution of the better of the two editions;
2. the Commissioner will recommend a mechanism for revising and modifying all of the curriculum frameworks; and
3. the Commissioner will assume responsibility for distribution, communication and statewide professional development related to the frameworks.

The history/social science framework, as adopted by the Board, will shortly be available on the Internet. Copies will be distributed to all schools and other interested parties after the final edits are completed, which is expected to occur in August.

#### Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and School Districts Adopted

The Board voted unanimously to adopt Regulations on Under-performing Schools and School Districts, which set out the indicators and procedures for a declaration of "under-performance" and "chronic under-performance," as

authorized by the [Education Reform Act](#). The proposed regulations were [initially reviewed by the Board in March](#), and they were revised based on suggestions received during the period of public comment.

The regulations include the following indicators of under-performance:

- A. student performance results on assessments required by the state or district;
- B. student dropout rates (three-year average);
- C. student attendance rates (three-year average);
- D. NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation status, for high schools only; and
- E. facility, program or operational deficiencies identified by the Department of Education.

Three additional indicators for school districts include:

- 1. failure to remedy non-compliance with state and federal laws;
- 2. non compliance with school appropriation and spending requirements; and
- 3. misreporting, misspending, or mismanagement of school district funds. The regulations call for the Board to adopt, on a bi-annual basis after opportunity for public comment, numerical standards to determine under-performance based on student assessment results, attendance rates and dropout rates. The Commissioner said he expects to present the proposed standards to the Board for discussion at the August Board meeting.

### **Regulation on Certificate Revocation Amended**

The Board voted unanimously to amend the section of the Certification Regulations dealing with grounds for revocation of an educator's certificate. The proposed amendment was initially reviewed by the Board in March, and it was revised based on suggestions received during the period of public comment. The initial proposal would have stated that "other good cause" for revocation could include action or inaction that led to a public school's loss of accreditation, or other action in violation of law. As a result of the public comment, the Commissioner revised the recommendation and the Board voted to amend the existing regulation on "other good cause" for revocation so that it will read, "Such good cause may include, but is not limited to, gross misconduct or negligence in the conduct of the certificate holder's professional duties and obligations, commitment of an offense against any law of the Commonwealth related to the certificate holder's professional duties and obligations, or willful action or inaction in violation of Board regulations or Department orders."

### **First Step Taken to Declare Lawrence Public Schools Chronically Under Performing**

Commissioner Antonucci addressed the Board on the situation in the Lawrence Public Schools. He stated: "The information we now have from multiple sources indicates that the Lawrence School District has consistently failed to take appropriate action and properly use available resources to improve the performance of students attending schools in the district. Therefore, I am recommending that the Board today take the first step in the process to declare the Lawrence School District chronically under-performing."

The Commissioner [summarized the information on which he based his recommendation](#), including the June 12, 1997 report by the State Auditor, the coordinated program review conducted in Lawrence by the Department of Education in April, the information from the NEASC accreditation report on Lawrence High School, and other data, including student test scores, participation in state tests, student attendance and dropout rates. He said that all of these sources of information "indicate a failure of educational leadership, for which the students of Lawrence and the taxpayers of the Commonwealth are paying the price." Board member Bill Irwin commented, "It is disgraceful that the Lawrence Public Schools have failed to serve the children and the parents of that city."

The Board then voted unanimously to determine that the Lawrence Public Schools have consistently failed to take appropriate action and properly use available resources to improve the performance of students attending schools in the district, and that this failure is evidence of chronic under-performance by the school district.

Consistent with the Board's vote, the Commissioner stated he will:

- 1. appoint a fact-finding team to assess and report on the reasons for the under-performance in Lawrence and the prospects for improvement. The team's report is expected within 30 days of their appointment.
- 2. refer to the Attorney General, for appropriate investigation and enforcement action, any findings in the State Auditor's report on Lawrence that indicate possible violations of law.
- 3. report to the Board, no later than the August 15, 1997 Board meeting, as to whether he recommends that

the Board declare the Lawrence Public Schools chronically under performing and intervene pursuant to the Board's authority under G.L. c. 69, § 1K. Starting today, the Board and the Commissioner will be soliciting recommendations for the name of a receiver, pending a possible decision by the Board of Education authorizing this step.

4. assign a Department of Education staff member to the Lawrence schools to monitor the operations of the school department, including reviewing the expenditures contained in the weekly warrants. The Department will closely review any application for state or federal funds made by the Lawrence Public Schools. The Department will request the Lawrence School Committee not to enter into contracts for the next school year without prior review by the Department.

### **Student Board Member**

This was the last Board meeting for 1996-97 student Board member Alexis Vagianos of Melrose High School. She was presented a gift and a citation signed by the members of the Board and Commissioner Antonucci. The citation, read by the Chairman, said in part:

"In your role, you have represented your peers with great distinction. The views you have expressed on curriculum, assessment, time and learning, the state regulations for physical education, and other matters which have come before the Board, have always been informed, thoughtful, responsible and articulate. Throughout your tenure, you never hesitated to address controversial issues which would affect public education, and your remarks were delivered in a professional and respectful manner. Your belief in students' need to succeed through hard work is an inspiration to all who know you, and your leadership and commitment are outstanding examples of the promise for our future."

Ms. Vagianos thanked Commissioner Antonucci, Chairman John Silber and Board members for an exciting and productive year, stating, "You have all treated me like a colleague, not a student, and I thank you for that. I have tried to serve the students in Massachusetts to the best of my ability, and hope I have done some good." Ms. Vagianos will attend Dartmouth College in the fall.

The new student member of the Board is Micah Silver of the New Salem/Mahar Regional School District.

### **Other Matters**

The Board voted to adopt Regulations on Dispute Resolution under the Parental Notification Law, pending clarification of one definition. The regulations will take effect in September. The Board also voted annual approval of non-operating school districts, semi-annual School Building Assistance grants and reimbursements, and authorization to the Commissioner, in consultation with the Board Chairman, to approve grants and other matters that may require action between June 16 and the next regular meeting.

The next regularly-scheduled Board of Education meeting will be held on Friday, August 15, 1997, at 9:00 a.m. at the Department of Education in Malden.

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