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## Commissioner's Update

August 17, 1998

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders and Directors of Collaboratives:

We have reached the end of August, far too swiftly. It is time for our annual back-to-school mailing which I hope does not land too heavily on your shoulders. All of the material is designed to be helpful to you or your staff. I know the package is extraordinarily large, but there is a multitude of opportunities in these documents including opportunities to support your teachers, to inform your community, to prepare yourself for the MCAS results, and to access major grants in the areas of early childhood. Some of the documents are provided for your information, in order for you to learn about what may be happening elsewhere of interest. In any event, I promise that this will be my largest coordinated mailing of the year.

In all of the material you will review, I want to highlight a couple of matters. First, the issue for schools and districts is accountability. As I said at the summer workshops for superintendents in Falmouth, secondary principals in Mashpee, and teachers in Williamstown, we are entering into Education Reform II now. The first phase was clearly focused on providing the support for strengthening school finances, governance, and curriculum. That phase continues, of course, but we are now embarking on the second phase in which we must demonstrate that these inputs accomplish real results in student achievement. That must be the focus of our efforts. That is the heart of the matter. I am convinced that school and district accountability and improving teacher quality are two cornerstones of improving student achievement. We have major initiatives underway in these two areas, and many of you are involved in advising us along the way. I will work closely with you as we develop the details of the state's accountability design, and as we roll out the elements of my proposals to strengthen our future teaching force through the ["12 to 62" plan](#).

I also want you to begin to look seriously at the remarkable opportunity and responsibility afforded by the new \$20 million statewide academic support services program funded by the legislature and signed by the Governor. This fund will provide sharply focused assistance to schools and districts to support the academic achievement of students who perform in the lowest levels of MCAS and other standardized tests. The state will fund after-school, summer school, extended year and other innovative and rigorous efforts to target remedial help to these children most in need of academic support. No matter what district you represent, you have students who need targeted assistance. Consider this support services opportunity and design a comprehensive plan that will achieve results for those students. This is a very large opportunity to help this group of students, and it is also a very important opportunity to demonstrate to parents, legislative leaders and others that the work in which we are all involved can and will make a measurable difference. Details on the academic support services program, and on the 12 to 62 teacher initiative, were provided at each of the summer workshops and are contained in the "Education Reform Factsheets" section of this mailing.

Before I list the contents of this mailing, there are a few other items I need to note. First, you will receive in September the annual Department of Education professional development calendar containing the schedule of DOE-sponsored activities offered at no cost to you and your staff.

Second, principals will receive in October a flyer for all students about the MassHealth and Children's Medical Security Plan program, in which every child is eligible for some form of health care regardless of family income. The program is expanding to include children in families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level

(\$32,900 per year for a family of four). Last year, nearly 70,000 previously uninsured Massachusetts children were enrolled in this program. Many of these children are now receiving regular health care as a direct result of your support and leadership for publicizing this program, and we will call on you again in October.

Third, at the September 15 Board of Education meeting, I will begin the policy discussion about the second round of recertification. There will be changes from the terms of the first cycle, and the Board and I will be looking at various options. I will keep you informed.

Finally, our Department website contains an extraordinary array of useful information. I encourage you to consult it whenever you have the opportunity. It is easily searchable. Everything I mail to schools is posted there, and you can review it electronically often well before it arrives in hard copy. With 20,000 Massachusetts educators now receiving Internet accounts through the very successful Mass Ed.Net program, more and more of our teachers are using our site as a resource and to keep up with educational developments. For you, the [school finance section](#) may be especially valuable. For example, the site contains new postings for applying for the FY 99 foundation reserve ("pothole") program and the FY 99 special education loan program.

In this mailing, you will find the following 25 items. Nearly all will be sent directly to school principals as well. Most are already on our website and all will be on our website within the next ten days.

#### **MCAS Testing Issues**

1. Memorandum and flyer on the 1999 MCAS testing schedule  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
2. Invitation to workshops on MCAS for district teams  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
3. Invitation to workshops on MCAS for school teams  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)

#### **Early Childhood Issues**

4. RFP for early childhood programs  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
5. Guide to Community Partnership for Children programs  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)

#### **Education Reform Updates**

6. Education Reform Factsheets set  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)

#### **Charter School Issues**

7. Application for new public school charters  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
8. Application for renewal of existing public school charters  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
9. Advisory on Horace Mann schools  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)

#### **Legal Advisories**

10. [Advisory on student learning time issues](#)
11. [Advisory on anti-hazing issues](#)
12. [Advisory on new "move-in" rules](#)

Please note: Although it is not included here, the Department issued an advisory on the Parental Notification Law last year. The law requires each school committee to adopt a policy and distribute it to each principal each year; it is my advice that superintendents should see that this policy ensuring notice to parents about "curriculum which primarily involves human sexuality education or human sexuality issues" and notice of parental rights to exempt children from any portion of such curriculum is provided to the principals at the start of the school year.

#### **Finance Issues**

13. [School choice end-of-year tuition figures](#)
14. School nutrition fiscal information packet  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)

#### **Teacher Quality and Professional Development Opportunities**

15. [Attracting Excellence to Teaching applications for loan forgiveness](#)
16. [Teacher fellowship program invitations and flyers](#)
17. Teacher "externships" informational flyer  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
18. Christa McAuliffe fellowship professional development invitation  
[\[No Longer Available\]](#)
19. [Fulbright Scholarship program opportunity for educators](#)

#### **Opportunities and Resources for Students**

20. [US Senate Scholarship Program opportunity for high school students](#)

21. Higher Education Information Center poster and book mark

[No Longer Available]

22. [Spread the Word K-3 book collection program flyers](#)

23. [Mock election program invitation from Governor Cellucci](#)

**District and Community Data**

24. [Youth Risk Behavior report, executive summary](#)

25. School District Profiles, 1997-1998 (2 volume set). Individual school building profiles will be sent to you shortly, and at the request of the Governor we will ask you to provide copies directly to parents

[No Longer Available]

Thank you for your leadership. The end of summer and beginning of the new school year are times for being creative, seeing the positive, and renewing our commitment to serving students. I wish you much success and offer my continuing support to you.

With all best wishes, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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**TO:** School Committee Chairpersons, Superintendents, Principals and Charter School Leaders  
**FROM:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education (Interim)  
**DATE:** August 13, 1998

In April 1998 the Board of Education amended the [Student Learning Time regulations](#) to clarify two definitions. The stated purpose of the regulations is "to ensure that every public school in the Commonwealth provides its students with the structured learning time needed to enable the student to achieve competency in 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.'" Those key terms are now defined as follows:

"Core subjects" shall mean: the core academic subjects specified in G.L. c.69, section 1D (mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages and the arts), and the subjects covered in courses which are part of an approved vocational-technical education program under G.L. c. 74.

"Other subjects" shall mean: subjects other than core academic subjects that are required to be taught pursuant to G.L. c. 71, sections 1 and 3, and other subjects approved by the school committee as part of the district's program of studies.

The amended regulations affirm that both "core subjects" and "other subjects" are to be included in the calculation of structured learning time for students in the public schools. In other words, both categories of subjects "count" toward the minimum 900/990 hours of structured learning time for students.

The *core subjects* are mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages, the arts and the subjects covered in courses which are part of an approved vocational- technical education program under G.L. c. 74. The *other subjects* are those required by state law or approved by the school committee as part of the district's program of studies. For example, both health education and physical education are subjects required by state law. G.L. c. 71, section 3 specifies that "physical education shall be taught as a required subject in all grades for all students in the public schools." G.L. c. 71, section 1 states that the public schools "shall give instruction and training in orthography, reading, writing, the English language and grammar, geography, arithmetic, drawing, music, the history and constitution of the United States, the duties of citizenship, health education, physical education and good behavior." G.L. c. 71, section 1 goes on to specify components of health education instruction.

The amended regulations also affirm that, within the context of the applicable statutes and regulations and the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, school committees are responsible for deciding on specific courses to be offered and the grade levels at which they are to be offered. This has been and continues to be the responsibility of the school committee.

If you need additional information about the Student Learning Time regulations, please contact [Deb Walker](#) at (781) 338-3000.

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## State Law Prohibiting the Practice of Hazing

**TO:** Superintendents of Schools, Principals of Public and Non-Public Secondary Schools, and Charter School Leaders

**FROM:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education (Interim)

**DATE:** August 13, 1998

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General Laws Chapter 269, Sections 17-19 requires all secondary schools, both public and private, to distribute copies of the anti-hazing law to student groups, student teams and student organizations, and to all students. (A copy of [Sections 17-19 is attached](#) to this memo.) A middle school or junior high school is considered a "secondary school" for purposes of the anti-hazing law if it has been designated as a secondary school by the school committee. On or before October 1 of each year, every secondary school principal or headmaster must report to the Department of Education certifying the school's compliance with the anti-hazing law.

The law also imposes criminal penalties on any person who is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, and on any person who knows of an incident of hazing and was at the scene of such crime and does not report the crime.

To assist school officials in implementing the anti-hazing law, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Every secondary school is required to include a copy of the anti-hazing law in the student handbook that is distributed to all students. The handbook should also include the school's or school district's disciplinary policy with respect to the organizers of and participants in hazing. The school should require every student, whether enrolled full-time or part-time, to sign and return to the principal or headmaster a form acknowledging receipt of the student handbook.
2. Every secondary school is required to distribute a copy of the anti-hazing law to every student group, team or organization that is part of the school, is recognized by the school, or is permitted by the school to use its name or facilities or is known by the school to exist as an unaffiliated student group, team or organization. *If the school can document that all members of student groups, teams and organizations have received the anti-hazing law by having received the student handbook (see #1, above), it will have satisfied this requirement.*
3. Every secondary school student group, team or organization, through a designated officer, is required to deliver annually to the school an attested acknowledgement that: the group, team or organization has received a copy of the anti-hazing law; each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants has received a copy of the law; and the group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the law. *If the designated officer of the student group, team or organization attests to the school that each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants has received the anti-hazing law by having received the student handbook (see #1, above), and that the group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the law, then this requirement is satisfied.*

The purpose of these recommendations is to ensure that all secondary school students are informed of this important law and that secondary schools meet their legal obligation to notify all students, with a minimum of administrative burden. By ensuring that the student handbook includes the anti-hazing law and the disciplinary policy on hazing, and that every student has received the handbook annually, the school will be relieved of the additional burden of copying the anti-hazing law and distributing it to every member of every school group, team and organization. However, the school may continue to do so.

The anti-hazing report form is attached for your convenience. If you need additional information about the anti-hazing law, please contact the Legal Office of the Department of Education, at (781) 338-3000.

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## **Massachusetts General Laws -- Chapter 269**

### **C. 269, S.17. Crime of Hazing: Definition: Penalty**

Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or any other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage or drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action. Added by St.1985, c.536; amended by St.1987, c.665.

### **C. 269, S.18. Duty to Report Hazing**

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine or not more than one thousand dollars. Added by St.1985, c.536; amended by St.1987, c.665.

### **C. 269, S.19. Hazing Statutes To Be Provided; Statement of Compliance and Discipline Policy Required**

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the regents of higher education and in the case of secondary schools, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams, or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the

student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of regents and, in the case of secondary institution, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report. Added by St.1985, c.536; amended by St.1987, c.665.

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## Amendment to the Move-In Law

**TO:** Superintendents and Special Education Directors

**FROM:** David Driscoll, Commissioner of Education (Interim)

**DATE:** August 10, 1998

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Section 130 of the fiscal year 1999 budget amended G. L. c.71B, §5, the so-called move-in law. The move-in law applies to students with special needs who are in a day or residential placement at a Chapter 766 approved private school or a pediatric nursing home who move (or whose parent or guardian moves) to a different school district during the fiscal year. This amendment clarifies ambiguities in the move-in law, as amended by the fiscal year 1998 budget and is effective July 1, 1997 (the effective date of the fiscal year 1998 budget).

Prior to its amendment, the move-in law provided that whenever a child in a day or residential placement (or such child's parent or guardian) moved to a different school district on or after July 1, the school committee of the former community of residence was required to pay the approved budgeted costs, including necessary transportation costs, of such placement until the end of the fiscal year.

The move-in law, as amended, contains an additional provision addressing moves that occur between April 1 and June 30. Pursuant to this provision, if a student in a day or residential placement (or such child's parent or guardian) moves between April 1 and June 30, the former community of residence is required to pay the costs of such placement for the balance of the fiscal year and for the subsequent fiscal year as well.

Thus, if a student moves on or after July 1 of any fiscal year, the former community of residence continues to be financially responsible for the costs of such student's day or residential placement for the balance of the fiscal year in which the move occurred. However, if the student moves between April 1 and June 30, the former community of residence continues to be responsible for the costs of such student's day or residential placement for the balance of the fiscal year in which the move occurred and for the following fiscal year.

The text of the move-in law is attached for your convenience.

I hope this information is of assistance.

G. L. c.71B, §5, as amended by section 130 of the fiscal year 1999 budget.

*Notwithstanding the provisions of section 27C of chapter 29 or any other general or special law to the contrary, if a child with a disability for whom a school committee currently provides or arranges for the provision of special education in an approved private day or residential school placement, including placement in a pediatric nursing home pursuant to the provisions of section 3, or his parent or guardian moves to a different school district on or after July 1 of any fiscal year, such school committee of the former community of residence shall pay the approved budgeted costs, including necessary transportation costs, of such day or residential placement, including placement in a pediatric nursing home, of such child for the balance of such fiscal year; provided, however, that if such move occurs between April 1 and June 30, such school committee of the former community of residence shall pay such costs for the balance of the fiscal year in which the move occurred as well as for the subsequent fiscal year.*

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## FY98 School Choice and Charter School Pupils and Tuition

**FROM:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education (Interim)

**DATE:** August 12, 1998

We have prepared a number of reports concerning final FY98 School Choice and Charter School pupil and tuition amounts. The information is intended to help you to identify the children that attended choice districts or charter schools, to assist you in completing related fields of the FY98 End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Report, and to provide general information about these programs.

All superintendents and charter school leaders will receive the following statewide reports:

### ATTACHMENT 1 (YELLOW COVER SHEET)

- [Final FY98 School Choice Tuition Payments and Assessments, for all sending and receiving districts](#)
- [Final FY98 Charter School Payments, for all sending districts and charter schools](#)
- [a list of FY99 school choice receiving districts](#), and
- a map showing the geographical distribution of choice activity throughout the state

All superintendents will receive the following report for their own district(s):

### ATTACHMENT 2 (BLUE COVER SHEET)

FY98 School Choice and Charter School Activity. This report was distributed at workshops earlier this summer as part of each districts' End of Year Pupil and Financial Report package. Its primary purpose is to assist school officials in completing that report.

Charter school leaders and superintendents in sending or receiving districts will receive whichever of the following reports include any of their pupils:

### ATTACHMENT 3 (GREEN COVER SHEET)

- Final FY98 School Choice Rosters, containing pupil information such as address, birth date, program, and enrollment dates, as well as the tuition amount for each child
- Final FY98 Charter School Rosters, containing similar information for charter pupils
- School Choice Rate calculations for receiving districts, and
- Charter School Rate calculations, for sending districts

If you have any questions about this information, please contact [Phyllis Rogers](#) of the School Finance Office, at (781) 338-3000.

In FY98 the school choice program served 7,486 students, and another 6,870 attended charter schools. Thank you for your assistance in making these programs successful options for the students and parents who choose them.



[Educator Services](#) > [Becoming an Educator](#) > [Educator Incentives](#) >

## Attracting Excellence to Teaching (Loan Forgiveness Program)

The Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, (Loan Forgiveness Program) was created by the Education Reform Act of 1993 to attract and retain outstanding teachers in Massachusetts's public schools. The program provides annual reimbursement payments directly to qualified teachers to help defray costs from previously incurred student loans for undergraduate and/or graduate studies.

Selected teacher participants can be reimbursed **up to \$1,800** per year based upon the amount of loan payments they made the previous calendar year, and pending state funding for the program. Applicants can remain in the program for four years as long as they **reapply every year**, and continue to meet eligibility requirements.

**Due to budget constraints, we are unable to accept New applicants.**

The Department of Education will post the online application and the program's guidelines on **January 9, 2003**.

### [Continuing Applicants Log on to Reapply](#)

[Who is eligible?](#)

[How can I apply/reapply?](#)

[What are the required documents?](#)

[What if my name or address has changed?](#)

[Who do I mail my documents to?](#)

[How are applications reviewed?](#)

[When are decisions made?](#)

[I can't remember my password...?](#)

[What if I still have questions?](#)

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### Who is eligible?

1. You must be currently **teaching full-time** in a classroom position in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve
2. You must have begun a teaching career **after** July 1, 1994
3. You must have graduated in the top 15 percent or with honors designation from an undergraduate or graduate program
4. You must be **actively** repaying your student loans

### How can I apply/reapply?

**Complete online application and submit required documentation.**

Complete the online application

- Enter the required information in the spaces provided.
- After each section, hit the save button. When the page reloads, scroll down to click on the "next" button.
- When you have completed the required online information, you will receive a "SUBMITTED" message.

1. Download and print all required documents from the last page of the online application.

- Contact DOE if an error occurs in the downloading process.
- Be sure to fill out each printed document legibly in black ink

2. Submit **all** required documentation **before** the stated deadline.

## What are the required documents?

A complete checklist of all required documents is also found on the last page of the online application. *After* you have submitted the application you will be able to download any necessary forms from that location.

- **Employment Verification** - This letter must be printed on official school or district letterhead with an original signature of the school principal or district superintendent. It must provide the following information :

1. Employment status {must be full-time}
2. Start Date of Employment
3. Grade level
4. Subject area

**Note: A copy of the employment contract is not acceptable.**

- **Documentation of Eligible Loan Payments** - All eligible loan payments must be consecutive and comply with repayment terms specified by the lender in the signed promissory note for the qualified loan. The amount of your reimbursement will be based on the payment history you provide to DOE. Delinquent payments, as defined by the lender, are not eligible for reimbursement.

Documentation must provide:

1. Loan Status
2. Payment History for the previous calendar year (January through December)  
**Example: If you are filling out an application for 2003, documentation of 2002(January- December) payments must be submitted before the March 2003 deadline in order to be considered for reimbursement.**

Copies of bank statements, or statements from your lender that document each of your monthly loan payments are acceptable.

- **Academic Eligibility - Only new applicants are required to submit this form.** Applicants are eligible for this program based on their undergraduate or graduate academic records, verifying that they graduated in the top 15 percent or with honors designation. The downloaded academic credential form must be completed by the appropriate institution. The institutions official seal must be affixed to the form in order for it to be acceptable.

Note: This form must be mailed on time with all other documents.

- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Request for Verification of Taxation Reporting Information Form (W-9)** - Please note that this award is considered taxable income. Submit the form bearing an original signature; copies of this form will **not** be accepted.
- **Commonwealth Terms and Conditions Form(T&C)** - Submit the form bearing an original signature; copies of this form will **not** be accepted.

## What if my name or address has changed?

### **All Applicants (New AND Continuing):**

If your **mailing address** has changed since the last time you completed the online application, you must complete and submit the following:

1. A signed letter stating both your former and current address
2. A new W-9 form
3. A new Terms and Conditions form (T&C)

If you have changed your **name** since the last time you completed the online application, you must complete and submit the following:

1. A copy of your social security card with your new name appearing on the card
2. A signed letter stating the name change
3. A new W-9 form
4. A new Terms and Conditions form (T&C)

### **Who do I mail my documents to?**

- Massachusetts Department Of Education  
Attention: Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program / Simone James  
350 Main Street  
Malden, MA 02148

### **How are applications reviewed?**

- Applications are reviewed with respect to the eligibility requirements.
- Preference will be given to continuing applicants and/or applicants who teach in districts where 20 percent or more of the students are eligible for the federal free or reduced price lunch program.

### **When are decisions made?**

- Decisions are made after the program's deadline

### **I can't remember my password...?**

- Contact the program's coordinator.

### **What if I still have questions?**

If, after reading this page, you need further help, contact:

- Simone James  
Program Coordinator  
(781) 338-3243 or [sjames@doe.mass.edu](mailto:sjames@doe.mass.edu)

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## Education Reform Teacher Fellowship Program

Dear Friends,

The Massachusetts Department of Education is excited to offer the opportunity for you to join teams of educators from across the state in an intensive professional development program. The educators who participate in the Education Reform Teacher Fellowship Program will be leaders in helping their local schools to use curriculum frameworks effectively; assisting districts with Education Reform efforts; and supporting district-wide professional development to help teachers keep current in their academic areas and skills. This year we are offering regional professional development taking place on Friday nights and Saturdays so as not to conflict with classroom responsibilities.

I hope you will consider joining us.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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*The Massachusetts Department of Education invites you to apply to participate in:*

### **The Education Reform Teacher Fellowship Program**

**This is a multi-year program that emphasizes the central role of teachers in advancing local Education Reform efforts.**

*The goals of the Teacher Fellowship Program are to:*

- Bring teachers (regular education, special education, bilingual, Title I, vocational technical instructors, physical education, art and music) together to support change in classroom practice
- Assist Teacher Fellow Teams in building their skills and strategies which will be helpful to them in using state curriculum frameworks
- Use models of exemplary practices in teaching, assessment, leadership and the use of innovative technologies

*Eligibility:*

- All public school districts and other publicly-funded programs covered by the Education Reform Act

(adult basic education, pre-schools, and private day and residential schools that provide publicly-funded special education)

*Application Due:* October 1, 1998

*In the 1998-1999 school year, Teacher Fellows will:*

- Participate in regional professional development, sponsored by the Department of Education (a Saturday in November, a Friday evening/Saturday in February, a Friday evening/Saturday in April)
- Meet regularly as a district team
- Gain knowledge in content, practice, systemic change and leadership
- Create team portfolios to be submitted at the end of the year documenting accomplishments
- Link to other Education Reform efforts in the district
- Receive stipends for participation in the Program

## **THE APPLICATION**

*The Superintendent should submit the application by October 1, 1998 to:*

Moira K. Smith, Professional Development Coordination,  
Massachusetts Department of Education,  
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148  
FAX: 781-338-3770; Tel: 781-338-3000

Districts may sponsor Fellowship Teams of up to ten teachers. Teams should include teachers from various grade levels and reflect diverse content perspectives and expertise. The Massachusetts Department of Education will select no more than 30 teams for the 1998-1999 school year. Interested districts should submit an application that consists of:

- I. A cover letter of support from the superintendent
- II. A one-page District Plan
- A one-page statement from each fellowship candidate

### **II. The District Plan:**

In your one-page plan, please describe:

- How the Teacher Fellowship Team works with other relevant district teams that promote Education Reform at the classroom, school and/or district level. *For example, describe:*
  - Interaction with study groups, curriculum committees, school councils, technology planning teams, and assessment planning teams
  - Participation in district-wide Education Reform efforts
  - Opportunities to work with colleagues to support change in classroom practice
- How the district provides support and resources for the goals of the Teacher Fellowship Team *For example, describe:*
  - Amount of time provided to meet together as a district team
  - Amount of time provided to meet and mentor their colleagues through peer coaching, team teaching and demonstration lessons
  - Amount of local district professional development resources designated for stipends

### **III. Candidate Statements**

Each Teacher Fellowship candidate should attach a one-page statement addressing:

- The teacher's current role, areas of expertise and grade span;
- Interest in taking on a leadership role in curriculum framework implementation; and
- Familiarity with the frameworks

Each candidate should include an address to which correspondence and/or materials can be sent.

**Teams will be selected based on the following criteria:**

- Diverse representation of content perspectives and expertise
- Quality of the district plan
- Strong district support of Fellows

If you have any questions, contact: Moira K. Smith, [msmith@doe.mass.edu](mailto:msmith@doe.mass.edu), 781-338-3000

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*Massachusetts Department of Education*

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## Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program

Sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency, the Fulbright Teacher Exchange arranges direct one-to-one exchanges. In most cases, both teachers secure a leave of absence with pay from their home institutions and then trade classrooms for the school year. The program is open to educators from K-12 schools, two-year colleges, and teacher training institutions.

General eligibility requirements are:

- U.S. citizenship
- Fluency in English
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Be in at least third year of full-time teaching
- A current full-time position

In addition to the general eligibility requirements, the applicant must also meet country specific subject and level requirements detailed in the application. There is no age limit. Educators with families are encouraged to apply and bring their families along on the exchange.

Most exchanges occur for an academic year. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Morocco offer short-term exchanges. Denmark offers a one-way assignment for which there is no exchange partner. The U.S. teacher secures a leave of absence without pay and receives a maintenance allowance from the Danish American Fulbright Commission. In addition to the teacher exchanges, there are short-term administrative exchange opportunities in Canada, Colombia, and the United Kingdom. The program also offers an eight-week seminar in Italy for teachers of Latin, Greek or the Classics.

The application deadline is October 15, 1998. The Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program strives to reflect the ethnic diversity of the U.S. teaching population. All country programs are tentative, subject to the availability of funds.

### PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Argentina\* ¥ Benin\* ¥ Brazil ¥ Canada ¥ Chile\* ¥ Colombia\* ¥ Czech Republic ¥ Denmark ¥  
Finland ¥ France\* ¥ Germany\* ¥ Hungary ¥ Italy ¥ Latvia ¥ Mexico\* ¥ Morocco\* ¥  
Netherlands ¥ Norway ¥ Poland ¥ Romania ¥ Senegal\* ¥ Slovakia ¥ South Africa ¥ Spain\* ¥  
Turkey ¥ United Kingdom

\* Language proficiency required.

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## U.S. Senate Youth Scholarship Program

**TO:** Public and Private School Principals and Administrators  
**FROM:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education (Interim)  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
**DATE:** August 29, 1998  
**RE:** U.S. Senate Youth Scholarship Program

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 1998**

**ELIGIBILITY: JUNIOR OR SENIOR ELECTED OFFICERS  
(SCHOOL YEAR 1998-1999)**

One form is provided to each school.  
Please photocopy it for distribution to eligible applicants as soon as possible.

In 1962, the United States Senate voted unanimously to endorse a nationwide U.S. Senate youth program that would bring high school students to Washington, D.C. for an onsite introduction to the functions of the federal government and, in particular, the United States Senate.

The William Randolph Hearst Foundation provides the necessary funding each year for two high school juniors and/or seniors from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, to participate in this unique experience.

The delegates are awarded an all expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. for a week, where they meet legislative and government officials. Visits to the Senate and House of Representatives, the Supreme Court and the Pentagon are interspersed with visits to the Smithsonian Museum and other sites of interest. Delegates will be greeted personally by senators, cabinet members, and officials of the Departments of State and Defense. The delegates often hear major policy addresses by government speakers and greetings from the President or Vice President.

Each delegate selected receives a two thousand dollar (\$2,000) certificate representing a scholarship that will be presented during the visit to Washington. Often these awards are presented personally to the students by their senators.

### The Selection Process

This program is open to any public or private high school junior or senior student who is a Class/School Officer and meets all of the qualifications indicated on the attached [Fact Sheet](#). *Students who have previously been delegates are ineligible.* Any Massachusetts high school junior or senior who is currently serving in an elected student government position, irrespective of nationality, race, color, creed, first language, sex, sexual orientation or financial aid is eligible for this program.

For students to qualify, they must demonstrate outstanding ability and qualities of leadership as currently elected high school student body officers for the 1998-99 school year.

All interested eligible student leaders must take a qualifying exam. The exam will be given simultaneously at six sites on **Wednesday, October 14, 1998 at 2:30-5:30 P.M.** (See Test Site Location). The test is comprised of questions relating to government and its processes, current national events, and related areas. The top ten (10) scoring students will be invited to the Massachusetts Department of Education for an interview and to complete an essay. Two students will be chosen as delegates to represent the Commonwealth.

## FACT SHEET

- TITLE:** U.S. Senate Youth Scholarship Program 1998-1999
- PURPOSE:** The U.S. Senate Youth Program, a nationwide college scholarship program, was designed to promote student leaders' awareness, participation and interest in government. Administered by the individual states, it is funded by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation.
- ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:**
1. Any high school junior or senior student (irrespective of nationality, race, color, creed, first language, sex, sexual orientation or financial need) is eligible for the program provided s/he has not previously been a delegate and is currently serving in an **ELECTED** capacity in any one of the following student government, civic or educational organizations such as:
    - Class Officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer)
    - Student Council (Representatives)
    - Student Advisory Committee (Representative to the School Committee)
    - Student Advisory Council (Local, Regional or State Level)
    - School Council (Student Representatives)
  2. Student must be a **PERMANENT RESIDENT** of the United States, currently a junior or senior enrolled in a public or private secondary school located in the state in which either one or both of his/her parents or guardian legally resides. A student attending a school which is located in a state other than the state of legal residence of either one of such student's parents or guardians is not eligible.
  3. Other attributes:
    - Leadership ability.
    - High scholastic standing. Demonstrated ability to achieve.
    - Clear speech and logical thought processes.
    - Community involvement. Participation in a wide selection of activities on and off campus -- music, sports, arts, politics.
- SCHOLARSHIP:** Two \$2,000 college scholarships will be awarded. Each winner will also be provided with an all expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., where they will meet with the Massachusetts Senate delegation and other government leaders.
- CONTACT PERSON:** Karolyne U. White, Massachusetts Department of Education, Learning Support Services Cluster, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148. The telephone number is (781) 338-3000.
- APPLICATION:** Application forms will be available at schools as of September 1, 1998. The deadline for filing the application is Wednesday, September 30, 1998 at 5:00 P.M. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- EXAM:** The Exam will be given October 14, 1998. Final interviews/essay will take place on October 28, 1998.

Registration Deadline: Wednesday, September 30, 1998

## ELIGIBILITY AND RULES

**ONLY CURRENTLY ELECTED HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR AND SENIOR STUDENTS WHO ARE STUDENT GOVERNMENT OFFICERS OF THE 1998-1999 SCHOOL YEAR ARE ELIGIBLE.**

All **approved secondary schools in Massachusetts (Public or Private)** are eligible to participate. There is no limit on the number of students **applying** from any one school as long as each student is **currently serving as an elected government officer of the school**.

Only students in the following positions may participate:

- Class Officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer)
- Student Council (Representatives)
- Student Advisory Committee (Representative to the School Committee)
- Student Advisory Council (Local, Regional or State Level)
- School Improvement Council (Student Representative)

Each student must be a permanent resident of Massachusetts and currently enrolled in a **public or private school in Massachusetts**. In addition, either one or both of the student's parents **must** be a legal resident of the Commonwealth.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Each student must pre-register for the exam by completing and submitting the pre-registration form by **Wednesday, September 30, 1998 at 5:00 P.M.** **One copy** of this form is provided to each school. Please photocopy this form for distribution to the eligible applicants as soon as possible.
2. Each student must take the statewide exam **Wednesday, October 14, 1998**. The student must indicate on his/her application at which test site s/he wishes to take the examination.
3. Applicants should bring pens or pencil to the examination session.
4. Only the top ten will be notified. Test scores of all students will be available  
  
November 12, 1998.
5. The TOP TEN scoring students will be invited to the Department of Education in Malden for an interview, and will be asked to compose an essay on **Thursday, October 28, 1998**. No alternate date will be possible.
6. If additional information is required or questions arise, please contact Karolyne White at (781) 338-3000.

## U.S. SENATE YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM CALENDAR

EXAM REGISTRATION:

September. 1 - 30, 1998

EXAM APPLICATION  
DEADLINE:

Wednesday, September 30, 1998,  
5:00PM (No exceptions)

**EXAMINATION DATE:** Wednesday, October 14, 1998  
2:30PM - 5:30 PM

**FINALISTS NOTIFIED:** October 22, 1998

**FINAL INTERVIEWS:** October 28, 1998  
8:00AM - 3:30PM

**DELEGATES ANNOUNCED  
BY SENATORS:** After December 10, 1998

## TEST SITES

The exam will be given simultaneously at all six sites on  
October 14, 1998.

No additional dates will be given.

**Central Mass. Area:** Marlborough High School  
431 Bolton Street  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
(508) 460-3513

**Greater Boston Area:** Arlington High School  
Old Hall, A-Building  
869 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02174  
(781) 646-1000 x3000

**Southeastern Mass. Area:** Brockton High School  
Fine Arts Building, Choral Room  
700 Belmont Street  
Brockton, MA 02401  
(508) 580-7633

**Northeastern Mass. Area:** Greater Lawrence Reg. Voc./Tech. H.S.  
57 River Road  
Andover, MA 01810  
(978) 686-0194

**Western Mass. Area:** Amherst-Pelham Regional High School  
Triangle Street  
Amherst, MA 01002  
(413) 549-3690

Pittsfield High School  
300 East Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
(413) 499-9537

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Karolyne White, (781) 338-3000.

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## Spread the Word

*"We know that children who own books and read them at home are more likely to become proficient readers. The Spread the Word Program helps, and I am pleased that it makes a difference."*

David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

### What is "SPREAD THE WORD"

In 1995 then Lieutenant Governor Paul Cellucci, and his wife Jan initiated the "Spread the Word Program" to collect books from children and families who have extra books at home, and distribute them to children who have few books at home.

Many children in Massachusetts do not own books for entertainment, enlightenment, or for the expansion of their hopes, dreams, and futures. On the other hand, many Massachusetts families have bookshelves that are literally overflowing with extra books purchased for children who have now moved on to the upper grades.

### Many communities already have a public library. Why is "Spread the Word" important?

Public libraries are essential centers of learning. But access to books at the library is not enough. The ownership of books is a critical factor in every child's intellectual development. Young children who own books will read them over and over again, memorizing the stories and learning to follow and identify the words on each page.

"Spread the Word" puts the books into the homes of youngsters, giving them the opportunity to develop their reading and writing skills at home, while knowing that these books are theirs to keep and to treasure.



## **What age groups will participate in Spread the Word?**

The focus of this initiative is on providing reading books to elementary school children. Donors can be anyone at all. Books are collected in public schools, and by Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other groups statewide. Textbooks are not needed.

## **How are these books distributed to school children?**

Donated books are collected, sorted and reviewed for condition. The books are transported to schools in the recipient districts and given to the elementary school children, who each receive five books to take home and keep for their own.

Recipient school districts are those whose state test scores demonstrate an urgent need for improvement in reading: Boston, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester.

## **How can I help?**

### **For more information on Spread the Word:**

call Lynn Boston at the Massachusetts Department of Education: 781-338-3120  
email Lynn Boston: [lboston@doe.mass.edu](mailto:lboston@doe.mass.edu) Your help is important.

**Thank you for participating in this important program!**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Governor Mitt Romney

Coordinated by the Department of Education  
David P. Driscoll, Commissioner

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## National Student/Parent Mock Election

July 1998

Dear Superintendent/Principal:

Educators are the gatekeepers of democracy. In the last Presidential election over half of the nation's voters did not vote. In the last Congressional election year over 60 percent of the voters did not vote. Our democracy is endangered by our apathy - especially by the apathy of 18-25 year olds. Only 80 percent of those recently out of school do not vote!

This letter comes to ask for your help in turning apathy into active participation in democracy. The National Student/Parent Mock Election, the nation's largest voter education project, invites every American student, grades K-12, their teachers and their parents to participate in a National Mock Election on October 29, 1998 at no cost. Six million students and parents did so in 1996, twenty million viewers watched as their votes were tallied at "National Election Headquarters" that year at the CNN studios in Atlanta. Votes were cast in all 50 states, Washington, DC and 14 countries and territories around the world where Americans are based.

In the 1998 Mock Election schools that wish to cast their votes may do so on the Internet and download free curriculum materials, including an extensive "Guide to the Electoral Process" with student handouts developed to help teachers meet the new "Standards for Civics and Government."

The University of California's most recent poll of 225,000 college freshmen showed a record low 27 percent believe that "keeping up with political affairs" is an important life goal, compared with 58 percent in 1966.

The University of Colorado found that students participating in the National Student/Parent Mock Election showed INCREASES in:

- political decision making ability
- informed involvement on current issues
- the belief that voting is important
- the belief that Social Studies classes are relevant
- the discussion of political and election topics with parents

and a DECREASE in the sense of powerlessness.

The American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Student Councils all give awards for the best Mock Election projects.

In the classrooms of today are the voters, the congressmen, the senators, and the presidents of tomorrow. You can help by filling out the enclosed form and mailing it in today. If you prefer you may e-mail your reply to [nspme@azstarnet.com](mailto:nspme@azstarnet.com).

Sincerely,

Argeo Paul Cellucci

**Downloadable Attachments:**

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## 1997 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

August 1998

August, 1998

Dear Parents, Students, and Colleagues:

We are pleased to present the results of the Department of Education's 1997 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS). This anonymous and voluntary survey was conducted between March and June 1997 in 58 randomly selected public high schools across the state. Because of high student and school participation rates, the results of the survey give an accurate estimate of the prevalence of risk behaviors among adolescents in the Commonwealth.

The MYRBS provides important information about behaviors that may compromise adolescents' health and safety. These behaviors include tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use, weapon carrying and physical violence, suicide attempts, drinking and driving, lack of seat belt and helmet use, sexual activity, unhealthy dietary behaviors and lack of physical activity.

Compared to 1993, public high school students in 1997 reported lower levels of physical fighting, smokeless tobacco use, and sexual activity. Additionally, many risk behaviors that had risen sharply during the first half of the nineties have leveled off or begun to decline since 1995. The MYRBS continues to report a positive relationship between AIDS/HIV prevention education and lower rates of sexual activity. All of these results attest to the success of multiple efforts on the part of schools, families, and communities. Even so, we are troubled that so many young people in the state continue to engage in behaviors that threaten their health and safety, and we are particularly concerned about continued increases in experimentation with marijuana and in the availability of illegal drugs on school property.

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 school health programs. The positive 1997 MYRBS results are beginning to show the impact of those programs. These effects are most noticeable among 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, the group most likely to have had strong school health education since elementary school. As increasing numbers of students benefit from school and community prevention efforts, we are optimistic that subsequent MYRBS reports will reflect continued decreases in the prevalence of harmful behaviors among our youth.

Thank you for your own commitment to improving the lives and health of all Massachusetts students.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education (Interim)

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### 1997 MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY RESULTS : EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY METHODS

The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) is conducted every two years by the Massachusetts Department of Education HIV/AIDS Prevention Program with funding from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The survey monitors behaviors of high school students that are related to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults in the United States. These include: (1) Tobacco use, (2) Alcohol and illegal drug use, (3) Sexual behaviors that can lead to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) infection, including HIV, (4) Behaviors leading to intentional and unintentional injuries (including lack of seat belt use, drinking and driving, physical fighting, and suicide attempts), (5) Unhealthy dietary behaviors (including unhealthy food choices and behaviors related to eating disorders), and (6) Lack of physical activity.

The 1997 MYRBS was conducted in the Spring of 1997 in 58 randomly selected public high schools across the Commonwealth. In total, 3982 students in grades 9 through 12 participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. Because of the high student and school response rates, the results of this survey can be generalized to apply to public high schools across Massachusetts.

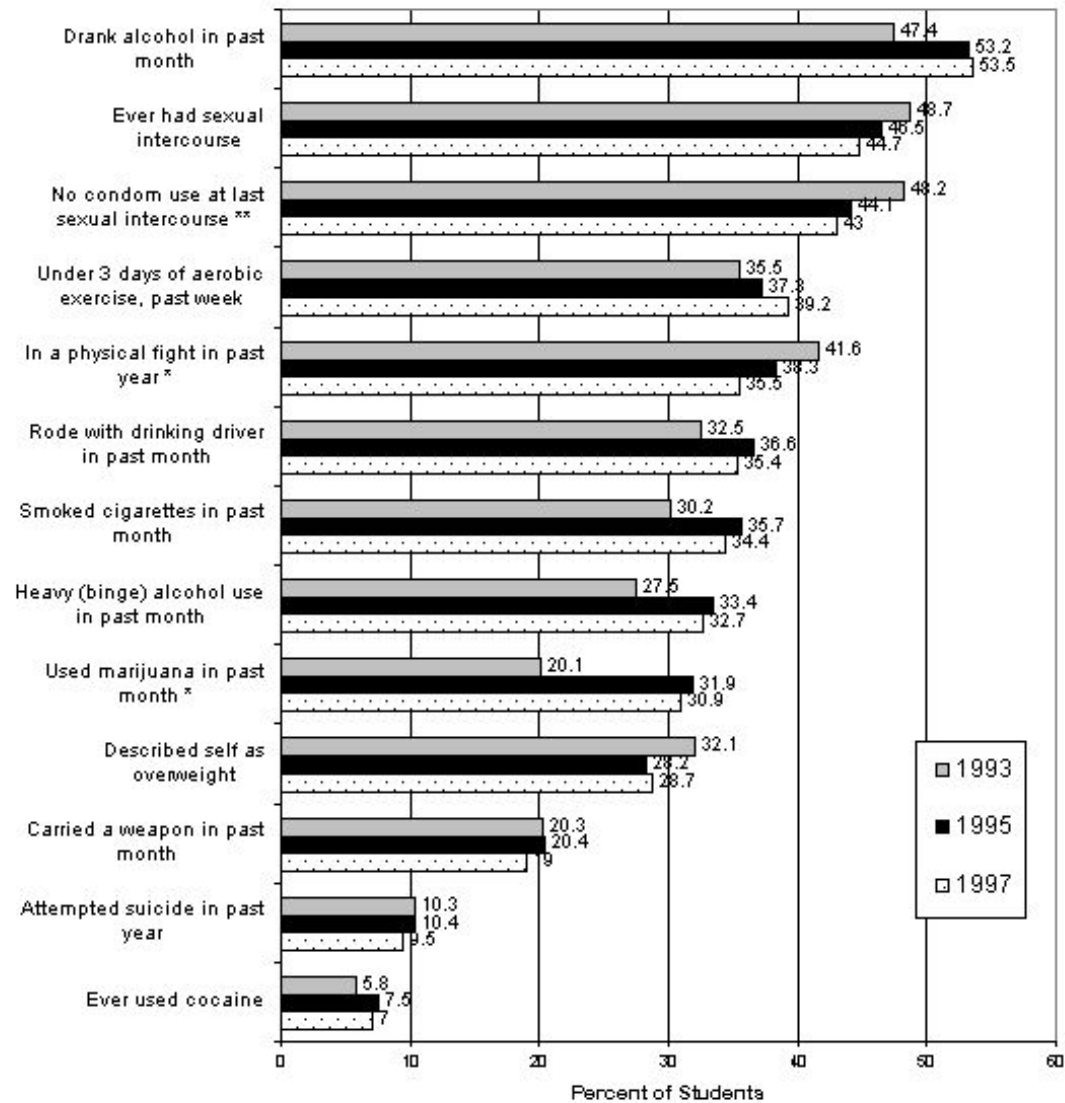
#### **TOBACCO USE**

- Most (69%) of Massachusetts high school students have tried smoking cigarettes at least once (lifetime cigarette use). In the month prior to the survey, one third (34%) smoked cigarettes at least once (recent smoking), and 15% smoked cigarettes every day (daily smoking).
- After rising substantially from 1993 to 1995, rates of lifetime cigarette smoking, recent smoking, and daily smoking have leveled off, and have begun to drop among some groups.
- Smokeless tobacco use has declined steadily since 1993; in 1997 6% of students reported using smokeless tobacco in the previous month.
- Among students who were recent smokers, the percentage of those who usually got their cigarettes by buying them in a store dropped from 47% in 1995 to 34% in 1997.
- Recent cigarette smokers were more likely than non-smoking peers to report recent alcohol and marijuana use and experimentation with cocaine.

#### **ALCOHOL USE**

- Recent alcohol use (past 30 days) and heavy alcohol use (5 or more drinks in a row in the past month), which had risen from 1993 to 1995, have leveled off since then.
- Most high school students (79%) have had an alcoholic drink in their lives.
- Over half of all adolescents (54%) reported having an alcoholic drink in the previous month. One third (33%) engaged in at least one episode of heavy (binge) drinking during that time.
- Recent and heavy alcohol use were more common among male than female students, and among White students than youth of other races.
- Alcohol use was associated with illegal drug use, fighting, suicide attempts, and dating violence.

**Figure A: Health Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts High School Students, 1993 to 1997 (On or Off School Property)**



\* statistically significant change from 1993 to 1997,  $p < .05$

\*\* among students who had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey

### ILLEGAL DRUG USE

- Forty-five percent (45%) of high school students have never used an illegal drug.
- Lifetime marijuana use, which rose sharply from 1993 (34%) to 1995 (48%), continued to edge upward in 1997 (51%).
- About three in ten students (31%) reported using marijuana in the month before the survey.
- Seven percent (7%) of students have used cocaine in their lifetimes; 17% have used inhalants; 18% have used hallucinogens; and

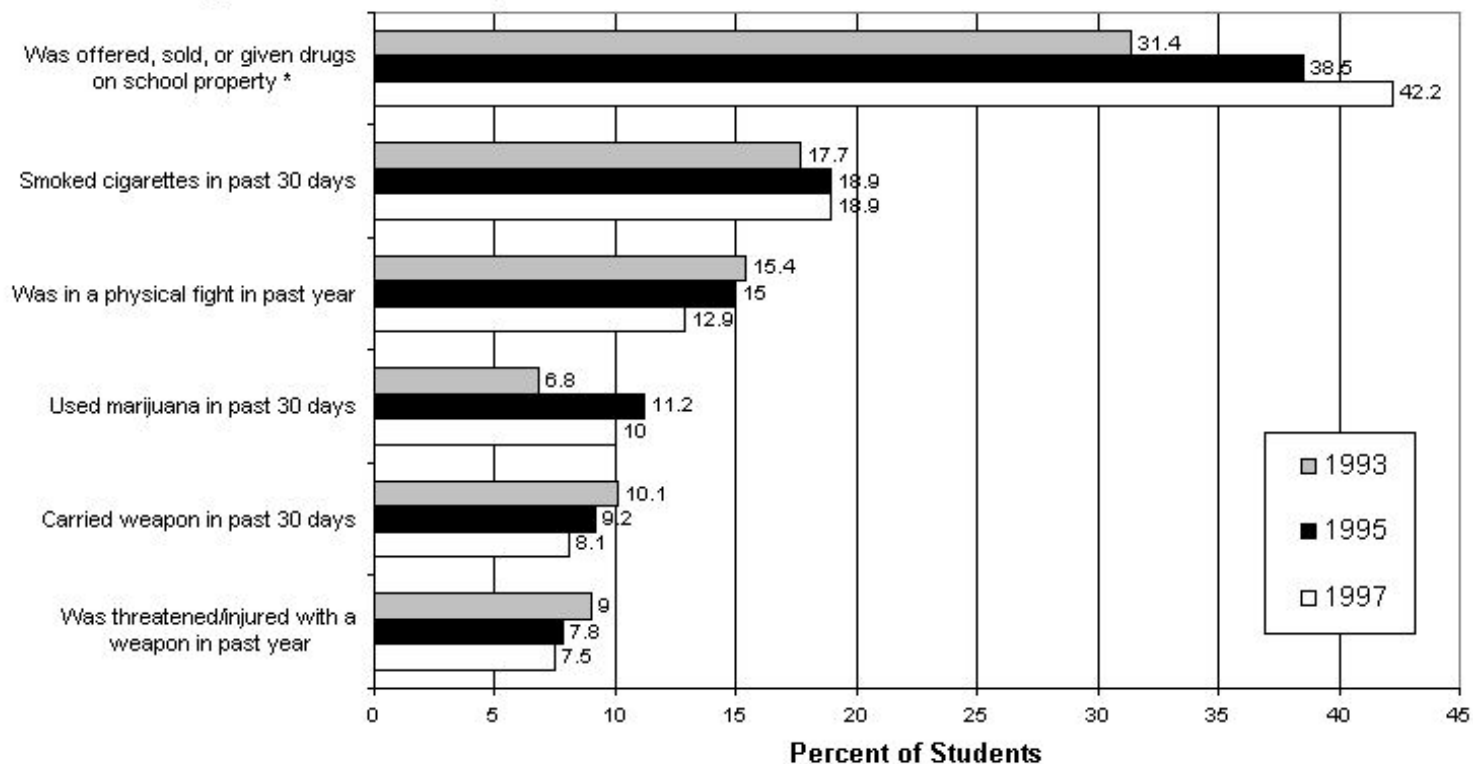
12% have used other illegal drugs.

- In the year prior to the survey, 42% of high school students were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property, a continued increase over the 1993 (31%) and 1995 (39%) rates.
- Drug use was somewhat less common in urban than in rural and suburban districts, but illegal use of drugs occurred in all kinds of communities.

#### VIOLENCE-RELATED BEHAVIOR

- Rates of physical fighting have declined. In 1997, 36% of students reported being in a fight in the past year, a significant decrease from the 1993 rate of 42%.
- In the 30 days prior to the survey, 19% of adolescents had carried a weapon, 8% had carried a weapon on school property, and 5% did not go to school at least once because of feeling unsafe. These rates are level with or slightly below 1993 rates.
- Eight percent (8%) of students reported being involved with a gang.
- One in seven students (14%) had experienced some form of dating violence.

**Figure B: Risk Behaviors Occurring On School Property Among Massachusetts High School Students, 1993 to 1997**



\* statistically significant change from 1993 to 1997,  $p < .05$

#### SEXUAL BEHAVIORS and AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION

- Rates of sexual risk behavior have declined. Fewer students in 1997 than in 1993 reported lifetime or recent sexual intercourse, four or more lifetime partners, sexual initiation before age 13 or alcohol/drug use before most recent sexual intercourse.
- Fewer than half of Massachusetts high school students (45%) have ever had sexual intercourse. One third (31%) had intercourse within the three months prior to the survey.
- Among sexually active adolescents, condom use increased from 1993 (52%) to 1997 (57%).
- One in twenty-five students (4%) define themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and/or have had same-sex sexual contact.
- One in nine students (12%) has had sexual contact against his/her will.
- Most students (93%) have been taught about AIDS/HIV in school. Slightly less than half (48%) have received a presentation by a person with HIV/AIDS, and slightly more than half (53%) have been taught in school how to use a condom.
- Students who have received AIDS prevention education in school have lower rates than their peers of any lifetime sexual intercourse, multiple partners, and being/getting someone pregnant. If sexually active, they are more likely than peers who have not received AIDS education to have used a condom at last sexual intercourse.

#### SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

- One in four students (24%) seriously considered suicide in the year before the survey, and one in ten (10%) made an actual suicide attempt.
- Changes in suicidal thinking and behavior from 1993 to 1997 have been minor.
- Attempted suicide was higher among female adolescents than males.

#### VEHICLE-RELATED RISK BEHAVIOR

- Seat belt use has increased in the past four years. In 1997, 29% of students reported rarely or never wearing a seat belt, compared to 41% in 1993.
- Most students (86%) who rode a bicycle in the previous year reported never or rarely wearing a helmet.
- In the month prior to the survey, 35% of adolescents rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, and 14% had driven after drinking alcohol themselves.

#### DIETARY BEHAVIOR and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Nearly three in ten (29%) of students described themselves as overweight, and an even greater percentage (43%) were trying to lose weight at the time of the survey.
- Although exercise and diet were adolescents' primary methods of weight control, a minority reported the potentially dangerous strategies of using diet pills (6%) or vomiting/taking laxatives (7%).
- Females were significantly more likely than males to describe themselves as overweight and to have used different methods of weight control/weight loss.
- Six in ten adolescents (61%) had engaged in vigorous physical activity at least three times in the week prior to the survey.
- Rates of physical activity decreased from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### KEY FINDINGS

**Many adolescent risk behaviors have decreased within the past few years.** Physical fighting, smokeless tobacco use, and failure to use a seat belt declined significantly from 1993 to 1997. Smaller decreases have occurred in that time in fighting and weapons at school, lifetime and recent sexual intercourse, and multiple sexual partners. More youth in 1997 than in 1993 used condoms if they were sexually active and wore helmets if they rode motorcycles or bicycles.

**Risk behaviors that had increased up to 1995 have leveled off or begun to edge downward.** Recent cigarette smoking, recent and heavy alcohol use, driving after drinking alcohol, inhalant use, and suicidal thinking have all pulled back from 1995 rates.

**The largest decreases in risk behavior have occurred among 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, the group most likely to have had strong school health education since elementary school.** School health education programs, financially supported since 1993 by the Massachusetts Health Protection Fund, began reaching these students in early 6<sup>th</sup> grade, before many of them had initiated risk behaviors or developed health-compromising habits. These findings suggest that prevention education may be most effective when begun in the earlier grades and repeated and reinforced throughout high school.

**AIDS education is working.** Students who had received HIV/AIDS prevention education in school had lower levels of every sexual risk behavior than those who had not. Compared to students in previous years, Massachusetts adolescents in 1997 were less likely to have ever had sexual intercourse. Among students who were already sexually active, more were using condoms.

**The majority of high school students engage in some risk behaviors that pose serious threats to their health and safety.** Frequent alcohol use, cigarette smoking, and fighting are common among youth in the Commonwealth. A smaller number of adolescents drive after drinking, plan or attempt suicide, use a variety of illegal drugs, and/or engage in drastic and dangerous weight-loss strategies. Many adolescents are failing to develop the physical exercise and nutritional habits that will lead to a healthy adult life.

**Risk behaviors tend to cluster together.** Students who engage in one high-risk or health-compromising behavior are often likely to engage in other risk behaviors as well.

**Increases in two risk areas are of special concern.** In contrast to the many areas in which risk behavior has declined, the percentage of students reporting that they had experimented with marijuana (lifetime use) and that they had been offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property rose significantly from 1993 to 1995. Both have continued to increase since then. These results indicate the importance of both strong, effective drug prevention education in schools and school collaboration with families and communities to reverse these trends in adolescent drug use.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The 1997 MYRBS results indicate substantial improvement in several adolescent risk behaviors since 1993, when the Health Protection Fund went into effect. Nevertheless, existing levels of risk behaviors among Massachusetts youth demand serious concern. Comprehensive school health education and human services programs, especially those that help students develop the skills and attitudes needed for making sound decisions about health and safety, can be a major positive influence on adolescent behavior.

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