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Commissioner's Update

February 3, 1999

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

In this early February coordinated mailing, I am pleased to provide seven items, including two very important documents with respect to MCAS.

1. MCAS Spring Schedule
Please review this closely. We have taken steps to reduce testing time, given the constraint of adding the History/Social Science test at grade 4. I have also enclosed a sample daily schedule for you to consider.
[\[No longer available\]](#)
2. MCAS Spring Workshops-What Does Proficient Work Look Like?
There are six workshops scheduled for the spring, to help teachers understand the criteria underlying the MCAS performance standards. These sessions will be very useful in helping educators translate MCAS performance expectations into classroom practice. This is the kind of professional development which will make a difference in student achievement.
[\[No longer available\]](#)
3. [Mass Ed.Net superintendent's checklist](#)
Please note that registration requests need to be sent to the Department of Education in Malden, not to the former address in Hopkinton
4. Schedule of Lighthouse Technology workshops
[\[No longer available\]](#)
5. [Emergency Immigrant Assistance Program information](#)
6. [Blue Ribbon Schools application information](#)
7. [Board-in-Brief summary of January 25-26 state Board of Education meetings](#)

I also want to let you know that this month should see the completion of the Board's search to select a permanent Commissioner.

Thank you as always for your leadership and hard work on behalf of the students we serve.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

[Commissioner's Update Archive](#)

Superintendent's Checklist for Adding Additional Subscribers to MassEd.Net

How do we determine eligibility?

To be eligible, educators must be actively employed by a *public* K-12 school district and have an instructional role, or serve as business officer or nutrition director, or be an elected or appointed member of the school committee. The basic test is: (a) Are they a fulltime, paid employee or serve on the School Committee? (b) Do they have an instructional role? If the answer is yes to both they qualify.

Retirees, volunteers, part-time staff, members of school councils, and students are *not eligible* to receive the state-subsidized MassEd.Net accounts.

How educators get an account?

If they meet the eligibility criteria and contribute to the Massachusetts or Boston Teachers' Retirement System (not the local, the state or county retirement system), they should have already been assigned a unique registration code needed to activate a MassEd.Net account. To find out if they have been assigned a registration code, ask the District Technology Director to call the DOE call center.

Educators who meet the eligibility requirements for MassEd.Net, but do not contribute to the Massachusetts or Boston Teachers' Retirement System, must request their Superintendent to submit a letter on their behalf.

Letters must meet all of the following criteria to be accepted:

1. Letters must be on official School Department letterhead.
2. Letters must be signed by the Superintendent.
3. Letters must contain all of the following information for each educator's name which is submitted:
 - first name
 - last name
 - home mailing address
 - home city, state and zip code
 - home phone number
 - social security number
 - position held in school department and
 - school building in which they work
4. Letters adding School Committee members must denote whether they are elected or appointed.
5. Letters adding School Committee members must give the date that each member's term expires.

Where do Superintendents send letters?

MassEd.Net
c/o Department of Education

350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

Because of the expected volume, letters *must* be mailed; faxes, phone calls and email cannot be accepted.

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Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Program: Request for Information

Memorandum

To: Superintendents of Schools

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

Date: February 5, 1999

The Massachusetts Department of Education was notified recently by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs of the U.S. Department of Education that new awards will be available under the Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Program for the 1999-2000 school year. During the current school year, the Department has disbursed \$3,250,000 to approximately 80 school districts in Massachusetts under this grant program.

These funds are supporting enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youth to ensure they achieve the learning standards of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

In order for a school district to qualify for a subgrant under this Act, the sum of the number of immigrant children, including refugees, must be equal to:

- (1) at least 500, or
- (2) at least three percent of the total number of students enrolled in public schools under the jurisdiction of the local educational agency and non-public schools within the district served by the local education agency.

In order for the Department to verify your eligibility and to estimate your allocation under the Act, we need to have the following information by **March 5, 1999**.

The total count of immigrant children and youth enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools under your jurisdiction and enrolled in elementary and secondary non-public schools within your district through February 1, 1999. The count should be taken in the month of February.

Since the state's allocation will be based on the March 5, 1999 information received from districts, only those districts that provide this information by the due date will receive funding under this Act. Attached to this memo is a "Child/Youth Count Report" form. Please complete and return the original and one copy to:

**Massachusetts Department of Education
Instruction and Curriculum Services
350 Main Street
Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023**

Attn: Russell Fleming

Should you have any questions regarding the program, please contact Russell Fleming at (781) 338-3000.

Once the state plan and application have been approved, and the grant award notification is received from the U.S. Department of Education, you will be sent the necessary application materials.

Thank you for your participation in this program.

CHILD/YOUTH COUNT REPORT

LEA NAME _____

LEA CODE _____

Fill in the following table reporting the number of immigrant children enrolled, during the current school year, in public and non-public elementary and secondary schools, for your school district. If the total number of immigrants in public and non-public schools is either 500 or 3% of the LEA population you qualify for funding under this program.

1	2	3	4	5
Immigrants in Public Schools	Immigrants in Non-Public Schools	Total Number of Immigrants	Total LEA Population (Public and Private)	Immigrant Percentage of Total - Col 3/Col 4

Example: LEA below does qualify with 5.29%.

1	2	3	4	5
Immigrants in Public Schools	Immigrants in Non-Public Schools	Total Number of Immigrants	Total LEA Population (Public and Private)	Immigrant Percentage of Total - Col 3/Col 4
256	75	331	6254	.0529 (5.29%)

Instructions

- You **are not required** to submit data on each immigrant child and youth counted. Instead, you are only required to submit a list of the countries of origin and accompanying totals for immigrant students as defined below. Please use the attached **Country of Origin Form** to report this data. Also, please note that the countries of origin list must be in alphabetical order and that the superintendent's signature must be included. Individual demographic information supporting this aggregate data should be kept on file at the LEA.
- Please refer to the enclosed list of commonly accepted designations for ['Independent States \(Countries\) in the World as of August 1, 1998.'](#) The list of countries is based on U.S. State Department information.
- Districts are reminded that Puerto Rico, as well as other dual sovereignty territories listed below, should not be recorded on the enclosed forms. Also, do not use the nation abbreviations listed or capital cities.
- Other incorrect country of origin designations, such as the use of 'Africa' in lieu of specific African country names, will not be accepted by the SEA for compilation.

[Commissioner's Update Archive](#)

U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools 1999-2000 Middle and Secondary Schools Recognition Program

Memorandum

To: Principals of Secondary and Middle Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: January 15, 1999

The Massachusetts Department of Education is pleased to announce information about the application for the U. S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools 1999-2000 Middle and Secondary Schools Recognition Program. While the Federal application requires considerable coordination, the results can be rewarding for schools.

The purpose of the Blue Ribbon Secondary Schools Recognition program is to identify and give public recognition to outstanding middle and secondary schools across the United States. Schools are identified on the basis of their effectiveness in meeting the local, state, and the National Education Goals, and other standards of quality applicable to middle and secondary schools generally. The secondary components of PreK-12 schools are eligible for consideration. Middle and junior high schools may only participate in the secondary year. The nominations requirements can be accessed on the Internet. The address of the Blue Ribbon Schools home page is: www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/BlueRibbonSchools/. Schools can also access the home page by going to the Department's home page at www.ed.gov/. Click on "Topics A-Z." Click on "B" for Blue Ribbon Schools.

This year Massachusetts has the opportunity to recommend 9 schools to the U. S. Department of Education. There will be a technical assistance session for possible applicants on Thursday, February 11, 1999.

If you wish to receive more information, please detach and send the form below (by mail or fax) to: Lurline Munoz-Bennett, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Instruction and Curriculum Services, Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5023/fax# 781-338-3770. If you have any questions, please call Lurline Munoz-Bennett or Ann Silver at 781-338-3000.

Purpose

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program (BRSP) was established by the Secretary of Education in 1982. Its purpose is threefold: (1) to identify and give public recognition to outstanding public and private schools across the United States; (2) to make available a comprehensive framework of key criteria for school effectiveness that can serve as a basis for participatory self-assessment and planning in schools; and (3) to facilitate communication and sharing of best practices within and among schools based on a common understanding of criteria related to success. The program has developed into a national school improvement strategy and many states now have related programs.

Blue Ribbon Schools model excellence and equity. They exhibit a strong commitment to educational excellence of all students. The school's success in furthering the intellectual, social, moral, and physical growth of all its students, including students with disabilities and limited English proficient students, is a basic consideration underlying the recognition criteria. In seeking successful schools, the program welcomes both schools that have demonstrated

sustained success in achieving these values and schools that have demonstrated significant improvement by overcoming serious obstacles.

The quality of each school will be judged in the context of how effectively it has defined and is meeting its own goals and how well it serves students, their families, and the local community. Additionally, for a school to be judged worthy of national recognition, it must show significant progress in meeting State and/or national education goals. Blue Ribbon schools offer instructional programs that meet the highest academic standards, have supportive and learning-centered school environments, and demonstrate student outcome results that are significantly above the average for comparable schools.

Who is Eligible

Elementary and secondary schools are eligible to participate in alternate annual years. *Middle and junior high schools may only participate in the secondary year.* Schools must also meet several other eligibility requirements as stated in the "Eligibility Criteria." Once a school's eligibility to participate has been determined, information provided by a school in response to the program criteria will guide the National Review Panel's analysis regarding the school's possible designation as a Blue Ribbon School.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) must not have issued a letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or that there is a district-wide violation that may affect the nominated school. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation(s).

Each year the Department of Education selects areas of high national priority for special emphasis. Response to these areas of special emphasis is optional. In 1999-2000, special emphasis is being given to unusually effective programs in (1) family involvement and (2) character education. A further special emphasis section is the application for designation as a New American High School.

The 1999-2000 Blue Ribbon Schools Program middle school, junior high school and high school nomination requirements may be accessed at: [http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/Blue Ribbon Schools/](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/Blue_Ribbon_Schools/) Schools can also access the home page by going to the Department's home page at www.ed.gov/ Click on "Topics A-Z." Click on "B" for Blue Ribbon Schools.

Selection

In October 1999 a state-wide reading team consisting of principals, teachers, and other appropriate team members will review applications. The reading team will review the application guided by the 1999-2000 National Review Panel Secondary Scoring Guidelines. The criteria are comprehensive, interrelated and non-prescriptive. The reading team will rank order the applications and forward them to the Massachusetts Department of Education. Applications will be processed for review by the Commissioner of Education.

Nomination

The Commissioner may nominate up to 9 secondary schools for consideration at the national level. A national panel will review all applications and propose site visits to schools being considered for recognition. The names of recommended schools will be submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Education and the announcement of schools selected for recognition will be made in May 2000.

Benefits

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program has proven to be effective in numerous ways:

Recognition itself is a powerful energizer for further improvement in recognized schools as well as a stimulus for continued efforts by schools striving for national recognition.

Public confidence in recognized schools increases, often resulting in higher local funding for schools, greater parent and community involvement in education, and success in the search for outside fund and other resources.

The public spotlight shines on recognized schools; they are frequently the subject of articles in national, state, and local publications. They are sometimes designated as the universe from which schools, teachers, or students are selected for special awards from business and industry.

Funding

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program is a non-funded special recognition program.

Contact Person

If you have any questions about the Blue Ribbon Schools 1999-2000 Secondary Program please call:

Lurline Munoz-Bennett
Massachusetts Department of Education
(781) 338-3000

Timelines

Schools intending to submit application:
notify the Department of Education by fax (781) 338-3395 or by mail by:

Friday, January 29, 1999

Technical Assistance Work shop:

Thursday, February 11, 1999

Completed application due to the Department of Education:

Friday, October 8, 1999 by 5:00 pm

MA Review Process:

October 11, 1999 - November 12, 1999

Although the application which is provided by the U.S. Department of Education requests 8 copies, (original and 7 photocopies), **PLEASE SUBMIT THE ORIGINAL APPLICATION AND NINE (9) COPIES AND A DISK** as instructed on page xi to:

Lurline Munoz-Bennett
Blue Ribbon Schools Secondary Program
Instruction and Curriculum Services
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

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- › [BOE Home](#)
- › [Board Meeting Schedule](#)
- › [Board in Brief](#)
- › [Board Meeting Minutes](#)
- › [BOE Members](#)
- › [BOE Advisory Councils](#)
- › [Chairman's Statements](#)

[District/School Administration](#) › [Administration](#) ›

Board in Brief

Wednesday, January 27, 1999

This is Board in Brief, issued at the request of David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, to bring you up to date on Massachusetts Board of Education matters. This is a summary of the meetings held on Monday, January 25th and Tuesday, January 26th in Malden.

Special Meeting

Commissioner Driscoll and Juliane Dow, Director of Accountability and Targeted Assistance, presented their proposal for a school performance rating process, which is one component of the proposed system for school and school district accountability. Dr. Susan Sclafani, Chief of Staff of Educational Services for the Houston (Texas) Independent School District, gave the Board an overview of the accountability system that has been used in the Houston schools for several years. Houston has demonstrated significant improvement in student performance since the accountability system was instituted. Board members had a wide-ranging discussion on various approaches to school and district accountability, and agreed to continue the discussion at a future meeting.

Regular Meeting

Presentation on Teacher Quality Bill by Rep. Harold M. Lane, Jr. Board Chairman John Silber opened the regular meeting by introducing State Rep. Harold M. Lane, Jr., House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, who presented an overview of the omnibus bill he has filed to improve teacher quality in the Commonwealth. Chairman Lane focused on several highlights of his bill, including professional development for administrators on how to evaluate teacher performance, expansion of mentoring for new teachers, creation of an independent Educator Dismissal Review Board, and school-based management. Board members discussed various components of the bill, which Chairman Lane noted is "a work in progress." Chairman Silber concluded the discussion by stating that although several aspects of the bill may need revision, it is a "highly commendable effort."

Commissioner Search

Chairman Silber updated the Board on the Commissioner search process. He reported that "the search process is on track" and reasserted that the process is and will remain public and open. The search committee has narrowed a field of 77 candidates to six finalists. The Board will interview the finalists in a public session, and also will observe public interviews of the finalists by a panel including a superintendent, school committee member, principal, teacher, parent, business representative, higher education representative, and other education constituents selected by the Chairman. The interview sessions will take place in February if dates can be arranged with all Board members.

Chairman Silber added that there has been no delay in the progress of education reform under the leadership of an Interim Commissioner. He said, "What we have accomplished in terms of implementing tests for prospective teachers, implementing the MCAS and explaining it to the public, distributing the results to the public and schools and parents -- all these things are evidence that the pace of education reform has been accelerated quite substantially in the past year."

Comments from the Interim Commissioner

Commissioner Driscoll summarized for the Board the Governor's education recommendations for the FY 2000 budget. He also stressed the need to move ahead with the legislative debate on proposed changes to the Chapter 70 school aid formula for FY 2001 and beyond.

The Commissioner reported that the Department received 930 applications for the 1998-99 Attracting Excellence to Teaching loan forgiveness program for teachers who were tops in their undergraduate or graduate academic programs. Last year the Department received only 346 applications. The Commissioner attributed the dramatic increase to the extensive publicity that flowed from the Governor's August 28 press conference. The Commissioner noted that this year's appropriation of about \$850,000 will fund only half of the \$1.7 million that applicants have requested, but that additional funds would be requested from the Legislature.

On recertification, the Commissioner expressed his concern that some current teachers may not renew their certificates by the June 18, 1999 deadline, which means they will not be legally employable as teachers in the fall. The Department has recertified over 10,000 educators. With 50,000 more applications anticipated between now and June, the Commissioner noted that the Department is working to identify funds within the budget to allow the purchase of scanners and a second shift of reviewers in order to accommodate the high volume of recertification applications. Both the Commissioner and the Chairman stressed that it is essential for educators to meet their professional responsibility under the recertification law.

The Commissioner reported that the New Teacher Signing Bonus Program is generating much interest both within Massachusetts and nationally. The Department is receiving more than 50 inquiries per day from students and professionals who are interested in the program, and several information sessions will be held at local college campuses, beginning this week at Boston University and Boston College.

Commissioner Driscoll announced that Massachusetts was recently awarded a \$10 million federal grant for its Project MEET (Massachusetts Empowering Educators with Technology) program to provide professional development for educators to improve the use of educational technology in schools. He also announced that Bruce Penniman of the Amherst Regional School District, the 1999 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, is one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year award.

Commissioner Driscoll introduced Judith Reardon, the new assistant to the Commissioner. The Commissioner and Board also expressed their appreciation to Scott Hamilton, who is leaving his position as Associate Commissioner for Charter Schools at the end of this month to become Managing Director of the Donald and Doris Fisher Family Foundation in San Francisco.

Bilingual Education - Assessment of English Language Learners

The Board unanimously voted to adopt Commissioner Driscoll's proposal requiring all limited English proficient students who entered school in the United States in grade 1 or earlier to participate in the Grade 3 Iowa Reading Test, regardless of whether they are being recommended for regular education. Limited English proficient (LEP) students currently are required to participate in the grade 3 test if they are being recommended for regular education in the following school year, regardless of the grade in which they entered school in the U.S. The change will be implemented this spring, in order to provide schools and districts with data to help them diagnose the strengths and instructional needs of individual LEP students. The overall school and district results will include only the scores of LEP students who were recommended for regular education, so that the data can be compared to previous years. The Board added that if and when a Grade 2 Iowa Reading Test is implemented, LEP students who entered school in the U.S. in kindergarten will also be tested.

Commissioner Driscoll also proposed developing an English proficiency assessment for all LEP students. The Board endorsed the concept, and suggested that the Department begin by researching what tests other states use to assess English proficiency.

Charter Schools

Upon recommendation by Associate Commissioner Scott Hamilton, and based on an extensive review process, the Board voted to grant six charters. The new charters - 5 Commonwealth and 1 Horace Mann - were awarded to Frederick Douglass Charter School in Boston (grades 5-12); Media & Technology Charter High School in Boston (grades 9-12); Lowell Community Charter School in Lowell (grades K-8); River Valley Charter School in Newburyport (grades 1-8); Robert M. Hughes Charter School in Springfield (grades K-8); and Springfield Horace Mann Charter School of Essential Studies in Springfield (grades 9-12). Three of the schools are scheduled to open in 1999, and three in 2000. The Springfield Horace Mann Charter School received approval conditioned on further review in 2000 to determine its readiness to open. Mr. Hamilton also noted that the charter renewal process is moving forward for existing charter schools.

Curriculum Frameworks

The Board voted to adopt a Guide on Curricular Materials on Genocide and Human Rights Issues, subject to minor editorial revisions to be made by the Commissioner. Massachusetts law (Chapter 276 of the Acts of 1998) requires the Board to formulate and publish "recommendations on curricular materials on genocide and human rights issues, and guidelines for the teaching of such material." The Guide is intended to be used by teachers and curriculum coordinators in conjunction with the curriculum frameworks for History and Social Science and English Language Arts. The Board is required to file a copy of the Guide with the Legislature by March 1, and will distribute it to schools this spring.

Also, the Science & Technology curriculum framework revision committee, chaired by Dr. Pendred Noyce, presented a progress report to the Board. Among other things, the committee recommends decreasing the breadth and increasing the depth of subject matter that students are expected to cover each year, and allowing more choice of disciplines in the grade 10 Science & Technology MCAS test starting in 2000. The committee expects that the revised framework will be ready for Board review in May 1999.

Regulations on Teacher Quality Enhancement Program (603 CMR 6.00)

At its November meeting the Board voted to solicit public comment on proposed Regulations for Teacher Quality Enhancement. With public comment on the regulations taken into consideration, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the regulations, which govern the New Teacher Signing Bonus Program and the Master Teacher Corps Program. The Department is actively recruiting teacher candidates for these new state-funded programs. The Board and Commissioner agreed to review the regulations and the results of the first round of recruitment in July 1999.

Approval of Grants

The Board unanimously voted to approve state-funded grants under the School-Linked Services program (\$212,500 to 17 applicants) and federally-funded grants under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (\$70,000 to 1 applicant) and the Goals 2000 program (\$1.1 million to 70 applicants).

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, February 23, 1999, at the Department of Education in Malden.

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