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Commissioner's Update

June 2, 1999

Dear Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

As we near the end of June, I am pleased to announce that the end-of-year statistical reports package has largely been converted to an electronic filing via the web. This assists both the Department, which has much less need to do a labor-intensive follow-up to gather data not submitted accurately or on time, and school districts, which now validate the data before it is sent to the Department. We will be able to collect and report this data more accurately and faster than in the past. Thank you for your cooperation.

I also want you to know that the Board and I are working on the policy and regulations which will govern the second cycle of recertification for educators. We intend to put forward draft regulations at the Board's June 29 meeting, and I will keep you informed along the way so that you can inform your staff.

I also want to remind you that applications are still being accepted for participation in the federal government's qualified zone academy bond program. This program provides interest-free loans for certain capital expenses. Six million dollars is available. For details, go to <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu>

I have enclosed these materials for your use and distribution:

1. [MCAS Update](#)
2. [End-of-year statistical reporting information](#)
3. End-of-year reporting workshops schedule
[No longer available]
4. Invitation to register for summer mentor training institutes
[No longer available]
5. [Public comment requested on recertification hardship regulation](#)
6. Lighthouse Technology Workshops June-August schedule
[No longer available]
7. Massachusetts Computers for Schools Program
[No longer available]
8. MassEd.Net Frequently Asked Questions guidebook
[No longer available]
9. [Board-in-Brief summary of May 25 State Board of Education meeting](#)
10. [Press release announcing appointment of two Deputy Commissioners](#)

Thank you for assisting me to get the word out about these materials.

With all best wishes, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MCAS Update - June 1, 1999

To: Superintendents of Schools, Principals, Charter School Leaders, Directors of Educational Collaboratives, Charter Schools, Chapter 766 Schools and Institutional Schools

From: David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

Date: June 1, 1999

Re: MCAS Update

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all your efforts in administering the 1999 MCAS tests. We are aware, from the many phone calls we received, that you took test administration seriously. We appreciate your support in implementing MCAS according to prescribed guidelines.

Looking ahead, the Board of Education has authorized a plan for distributing the test over more grade levels, and we have also confirmed test dates for the 2000 tests. Two schedules are attached. One provides dates for next year's test and the second provides the test schedule for the school year 2000 - 2001 and beyond.

Schedules:

[MCAS Testing and Question Tryout Schedule: Spring 2000](#)

[MCAS Testing Schedule: Winter/Spring 2001](#)

Changes in Testing Schedule for 2000 - 2001 and Beyond

At its meeting on May 25, the Board approved changes in the testing schedule beginning in the 2000 - 2001 school year and beyond. Key changes are summarized as follows:

- A new grade 6 math test will be administered.
- The English language arts test will be redesigned to include separate reading and writing tests.
- Writing tests will be administered in grades 4, 8 and 10.
- Reading tests will be given in grades 3, 4, 7, and 10.
- The science and technology and history and social science tests have been moved from grade 4 to grade 5.
- The grade 8 writing and math tests will be administered in the winter and the science and technology and history and social science tests will be given in the spring.

The grade 3 reading test (ITBS) will be replaced by an MCAS reading test, which will be pilot tested in spring 2000 and implemented the following year. An early administration of some tests (grade 3 reading, grade 7 reading, grade 8 writing and mathematics) will enable you to receive results before the end of the school year.

MCAS Test Schedule for Spring 2000

Dates are scheduled for the administration of next year's MCAS. **Please communicate these dates with teachers, administrators and parents before the end of the 1998-1999 school year.**

English Language Arts Composition - April 12; make-up session - May 11

All Other Content Areas - May 15 - 26

Next year the English language arts composition test will be administered on the same day across the state. Students who are absent on the scheduled day will be given a different writing prompt on Thursday May 11. In addition, test tryouts will be given in grade 3 reading; grade 4 writing; grade 5 science and technology; grade 5 history and social science; grade 6 math; grade 7 reading; and grade 8 and grade 10 writing.

MCAS Scoring Institutes

Massachusetts educators have been invited to participate in MCAS Scoring Institutes. At this time a small number of spaces remain available at the Holyoke (July 19 - 23) and Lynnfield (July 26 - 30) Scoring Institutes at grades 8 and 10. These sessions will enable participants to evaluate a range of student writing and to become familiar with the Annotated Holistic Scoring Method. A brochure with registration information was mailed to all schools and districts last month.

MCAS Enrollment Verification

Twice during the summer the Department of Education and the test contractor, Advanced Systems, will mail superintendents a master list of students who were tested (and not tested) on MCAS and ask them to verify information on the list. In June superintendents will receive a master list of students who participated in the ELA composition and in July, a master list of students who participated in all other content areas. If you anticipate that your principals will be away from their buildings in late June through July, please obtain a copy of their MCAS student rosters so that you can provide this check on their behalf during this period.

Iowa Test Results

Student, school and district results on the Massachusetts Grade 3 Reading Test have been mailed to you. During the summer you will receive statewide results for the Grade 3 Reading Test.

Assessment Development Committees

Applications to serve on assessment development committees in English language arts, mathematics and science during 1999-2001 will be mailed to superintendents in June. This is a great opportunity for a member of your staff to become involved in the MCAS development process. Details will be provided with the application.

Standard Setting for History and Social Science

Applications to participate in a three-day meeting in August to set performance standards for the MCAS history and social science test will be mailed to superintendents in June. This is a wonderful professional development opportunity for history and social science teachers. Details will follow.

MCAS Testing and Question Tryout Schedule Spring 2000

	ELA		Math	Science & Tech	History & Social Science	Reading	Writing	Foreign Language
	Comp	Lang & Lit						
Grade 3						Y		
Grade 4	X	X	X	X			Y	
Grade 5				Y	Y			

Grade 6			Y					
Grade 7						Y		
Grade 8	X	X	X	X	X		Y	
Grade 9								
Grade 10	X	X	X	X	X		Y	

Legend: X = Test Y = Question Tryout

Test Dates: ELA long composition April 12 (make-up May 11). All other areas: May 15-26.

Tryout Dates: Grade 4, 8, 10 Writing; Grade 3 Reading; Grade 7 Reading: April 13-14. Grade 5 History and Social Science; Grade 5 Science and Technology; Grade 6 Mathematics: May 15-26 (one 45-60 minute session)

* Schedule for developing and field testing foreign language tests is under discussion.

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MCAS Testing Schedule Winter/Spring 2001						
	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science & Technology	History & Social Science	Foreign Languages
Grade 3	X*					
Grade 4	X	X	X			
Grade 5				X	X	
Grade 6			X			
Grade 7	X*					
Grade 8		X*	X*	X	X	
Grade 9						
Grade 10	X	X	X	X	X	
Grade 11	Retesting					

* These tests will be administered in time to report results before the end of the school year (grade 3 reading in April, grade 7 reading, grade 8 writing, and grade 8 mathematics in late January or early February).

** The schedule for testing of foreign languages is under discussion.

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1998-99 End of Year Statistical Reporting

Memorandum

To: Superintendents of Schools
Charter School Directors

From: David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

Date: June 1, 1999

This year, the End of Year Statistical Reporting will be substantially converted to web-based on-line forms, similar to those used for data collection since last May. The Information Management System project has successfully converted over ten paper data collection forms to on-line forms over the past year. The efforts of school district and Department of Education staff have resulted in a substantial improvement in the timeliness of the data collected. Further, the process of ensuring that the data submitted are accurate has been streamlined since data are validated at the source before submission to the Department of Education. The need for a labor-intensive follow up process has been considerably reduced.

The FY99 End of Year Statistical Reporting will consist of the following data collection forms:

1. Technology Plan Update
2. School Attending Children
3. Student Exclusions
4. Special Education Exit Data
5. Year End School Indicator Report [[PDF](#) | [MS Word](#)]
6. [Public School Programs for Young Children Survey](#)

Username and passwords required to access and submit the on-line forms will be the same as those used in last Fall's Statistical reporting.

This year's End of Year Statistical Reporting will differ from previous years in two ways:

1. No paper versions of the web data collection forms will be distributed to school or districts. District staff can print a copy of the on-line form from the browser and, for some forms, a [PDF version](#) will be available for download.
2. The schedule for when each web form will be available will be posted on the Department's web site. The targeted date for the first two web forms is the week of May 28th. The last two web forms are targeted for the week of June 11th. The paper Year End School Indicator Report will be mailed to principals the week of June 1.

Specific information about each form and the due date for submission are provided in the attached chart. If you have any questions about the End of Year Statistical Reporting, please call the Ed Tech Call Center at (781) 338-DATA.

Data Collection Form	Reporting Level	Format	Due Date

<p>Tech Plan Update</p> <p>The Technology Plan Update Forms consist of the District's Technology Plan and the District and School Technology Profiles. These forms are required as part of the Technology Grant Application for FY2000.</p>	School and District	web	June 30, 1999
<p>Milken Exchange Survey</p> <p>Districts are required to complete a survey for the Milken Exchange on Education Technology. The Tech Plan application will have a link to complete this form on-line; alternatively, a copy of the survey has been distributed to the technology directors. This form should be submitted directly to the Milken Exchange.</p>	District	web or paper	June 30, 1999
<p>School Attending Children</p> <p>A PDF version of the form will be available to download for use as a worksheet.</p>	District	web	August 1, 1999
<p>Student Exclusions Final Report</p> <p>For the past several years, schools have submitted a paper form for each individual incident where a student is excluded for more than 10 days. When the student exclusion web form goes on line, all student exclusion forms must be submitted using the web forms. Paper forms already submitted to the Department of Education will be displayed in the on-line application and will need to be validated and completed by school staff. No additional paper forms will be accepted. Paper versions of this form were distributed last September.</p>	School and District	web	August 1, 1999
<p>Special Education Exit Data</p> <p>A PDF version of the form will be available to download for use as a worksheet.</p>	District	web	August 1, 1999
<p>Year End School Indicator Report</p> <p>This form will be distributed to Superintendents and Principals on June 1.</p>	School	paper	August 1, 1999
<p>Public School Programs for Young Children Survey</p> <p>This survey will collect a list of early care programs administered by your district.</p>	District	paper	July 15, 1999

- Districts should check the Department's web site for specific instructions and availability information for each form.
- All school forms web and paper, must be submitted by the Superintendent as a package. Web forms are not officially submitted to the Department of Education until they are submitted using the Superintendent's Signature username and password.

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Year-End School Indicator Report for 1998-99

Memorandum

To: Principals, Charter School Directors
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Date: June 1, 1999

Enclosed is a copy of the *Year-End School Indicator Report for 1998-99* [[PDF](#) | [MS Word](#)]. This report is mandated by [Chapter 69, Section 1I](#), of the General Laws, and is designed to gather important information about education in Massachusetts.

It is recommended that you read through the report carefully as five questions have been added (2E, 2F, 7B, 8B and 9B). The questions address cumulative absences, students receiving multiple in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and dropouts participating in alternative programs.

For the past several years, schools have submitted a paper form for each individual incident where a student is excluded for more than 10 school days. Student exclusion forms must now be submitted on-line. The information that has already been submitted to the Department using the paper forms has been incorporated into the on-line application. The district user ID and password are required to access the on line forms. Your superintendent can provide you with this information. Every school must log on to the *Student Exclusion* application either to validate the forms, correct and amend data as indicated, or to create new exclusion forms. Schools that have **no exclusions** for the 1998-99 school year must also log on to the *Student Exclusion* application and submit the "no exclusions" form.

Please complete the *Year-End School Indicator Report*, make copies for your records and return the originals to your Superintendent/Charter School directors. He/she has been requested to submit reports from all schools in your district to the Department of Education by **August 1, 1999**.

It is very important that the reports are completed in a timely and accurate fashion. The data will be used as part of the state accountability system under Education Reform. If you need additional assistance please call the Ed Tech Call Center at 1-877-K12-TECH (512-8324).

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FY99 Technology Plan Update

Memorandum

To: Technology Plan Contacts
From: Gregory Nadeau
Date: May 26, 1999

This year, once again, districts are required to complete and submit updated local technology plans and district and school profiles to the Department of Education in order to be eligible for technology grants and to provide final FY99 data for the report, "Educational Technology in Massachusetts Schools."

According to our records, you were listed as the contact person on the most recently submitted version of the FY99 School and District Technology Profiles. If you are not currently the person who will be completing the Technology Plan update, we would appreciate it if you would forward this memo to the appropriate person. A information copy of this memo is being sent to your Superintendent.

All FY2000 Technology Grant applications require the following:

1. Update and Submit the Local Technology Plan (last updated in June 98 for FY99 grant application)
2. Update and submit Final FY99 District and School Technology Profiles (Many were updated for the Fall FY99 Profile)
3. Complete the Milken Exchange Technology Survey (A link to this survey will be provided on the menu bar at the top of each page.) A paper copy of the Mliken Survey has been sent to the Superintendent.

The District and School Technology Profiles require additional information that was not included in the Fall FY99 Profile Update. All districts and schools must update and submit the profiles.

Finally, please find enclosed a copy of the May 1999, MassEd.Net Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) guide. The complete text of the guide may also be found online at <http://www.massed.net/support/faq/>. Please disregard any previous versions you may have as many topics have been updated.

If you have any questions about the FY99 Technology Plan Update or MassEd.Net, please call the Ed Tech Call Center at (781) 338-DATA.

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Year-End School Indicator Report Reporting Guidelines

Attendance:

A student must be at school, or at a school related activity (e.g. field trip) for at least half the school day to be counted as present.

For state data collection purposes, student absences are not differentiated as either excused or unexcused. All absences are counted together.

Enrollment:

A student is enrolled in a school if they are attending the school or are receiving services from the school on a full-time basis.

Dropout:

A dropout is defined as a student in grade six through twelve who leaves school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school.

Investigating and Recording Extended Absences

A school may not remove a non-attending student from the enrollment without **evidence** that the student does not intend to return to school. Each district/school must have a procedure for investigating extended absences and must document reasonable efforts to locate the student and determine the reason for not attending. The procedure should include attempts to contact the parents/guardian by phone, through certified mail, and by a home visit. The investigation should result in one of four conclusions: 1) the student is absent for a legitimate reason (e.g. verified medical reason), 2) the student is truant, 3) the student has transferred to another school, or 4) the student has dropped out of school (applies only to students age 16 or older).

A student's transfer to another school may be demonstrated through a transcript request from the receiving school or documentation of notice of transfer to another school from the parent or guardian, or student if he/she is 16 years old or older.

Q & A

1. **How should students with extended absences be reported on the YESIR for attendance and dropout purposes?**

Students 16 Years Old or Older

If the student is 16 years old or older, and if the student expresses his/her intention to not return to school, or the investigation of the extended absence does not successfully locate the student, then the student should be withdrawn from the school's enrollment and reported as a dropout. If it is determined that the student has moved to another district, state, or country, but it is not known if the student has enrolled in school in the new location, then the student should be reported as a dropout. If the evidence available to the school does not support a reasonable belief that the student does not intend to return to school, the student must be maintained in the school's enrollment and recorded as absent.

Students Under the Age of 16

By state law, school attendance is mandatory until age 16. If a student under the age of 16 is absent for an extended period of time, the school or district should follow the procedure discussed above (*Investigating and Reporting Extended Absences*). If such procedure does not successfully locate the student or cause him/her to return to school, the case should be referred to the district's truant officer for legal action to compel the student's return to school. The student may not be withdrawn from the school's enrollment unless it is determined that the student has enrolled in another public or private school.

2. **If a student is absent for an extended period of time and it is anticipated that he/she will return to school, how should he/she be reported?**

If a student is temporarily not attending school (e.g., has gone to visit family in another country), and the school does not have any evidence that the student is attending school elsewhere, the student should be counted as absent for the days not in attendance. The student should not be withdrawn and re-enrolled.

3. Do we report a student as a dropout if he/she transfers to a home school program?

No. If a student transfers to and enrolls in another public or private school (in or out-of-state) or a home school program approved by the district he/she should be recorded as a transfer and not reported as a dropout.

4. What if a student does not show up for school at the beginning of the school year?

If a student's enrollment in the school is anticipated (e.g. a member of the *system* the previous year and not transferred), but the student does not come to school at the beginning of the school year, the student should be counted as absent starting with the first day of school. The student should be counted as absent until he/she comes to school, or the school has investigated the extended absence as discussed above. This investigation should take place before the October 1 enrollment count. Students who have not attended school or received instructional services from the school by October 1 should not be counted in the school's October 1 Individual School Report to the DOE.

5. How do we report students who are participating in an alternative education program?

For the purposes of reporting enrollment and attendance data to the state, a student's participation in the alternative program qualifies as enrollment in the school if the student is enrolled full-time and is working toward meeting the requirements of high school graduation, or school completion in accordance with an Individualized Education Plan.

6. How do we report the attendance of students enrolled full-time in an alternative education program?

The district should determine whether the alternative program is an extension of an existing school or if the alternative program is in fact a separate school. If it is an extension of an existing school, the student's attendance should be recorded and reported by that school, even if the program is provided in another location. If the alternative program is a separate school, the student's enrollment should be transferred to the alternative school. The alternative school then records and reports the student's attendance.

7. If a student leaves school to pursue a GED, should he/she be considered a dropout?

Yes. Even if the district provides the GED, the student should be reported as a dropout.

8. Should a student be reported as a dropout if he/she leaves school and it is not known if he/she is continuing his/her education?

Yes. If a student does not graduate and if the school does not have evidence of a transfer the student is reported as a dropout.

9. If a student is known to have moved but the district/school has no evidence that s/he has enrolled in school in the new residence, should the school report the student as a dropout?

Yes. A student may only be considered a transfer if the district/school has evidence that the student is continuing his or her education in a different school.

10. How should we report a student who is suspended from school and does not return to school after the suspension period has expired?

If the student fails to return to school after the suspension period has ended, the school should record the student as absent and follow the procedure discussed previously for investigating and recording extended absences.

11. **Should a student who is permanently excluded from school and does not enroll in another school be reported as a dropout?**

Yes. Unless it is known that the student is continuing their education elsewhere the student must be reported as a dropout.

12. **How do we report students who participate in summer school?**

Student participation in summer school programs **should not** be considered when reporting attendance and dropout data on the Year-End School Indicator Report.

13. **How do we report a student who leaves school after completing a special education program with alternative graduation requirements?**

When a student with an individual education plan (I.E.P.) completes the alternative graduation requirements formally recognized by school authorities the student should **not** be reported as a dropout.

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Public School Programs for Young Children

Memorandum

To: Superintendents, Charter School Directors, and Collaborative Directors
From: Elisabeth Schaefer, Administrator of Early Learning Services
Date: May 24, 1999

Jump to the survey: [[PDF](#) | [HTML](#)]

More complete data are critical to understanding the early education and care system in Massachusetts. A vital part of this data is information on programs administered by the public schools. A survey requesting information about early care and education programs run by your school district will be sent to you in the fall of 1999. Data to be collected through the survey will include current enrollments, staff:child ratios, number of classrooms, etc.

To administer this survey most efficiently, we need a list of any early education and care programs for infants and toddlers, preschool children and school-age children administered by the school district and the contact person who would be filling out the survey in the fall. You do not need to include programs licensed by the Office of Child Care Services who may be using/renting space in a public school building. The following chart provides examples to guide you in filling out the survey.

PROGRAM TYPE check all that apply	PROGRAM NAME	PROGRAM CONTACT	CONTACT'S MAILING ADDRESS	CONTACT'S PHONE NUMBER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infants and Toddlers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> School-Age Children	The Magic Dragon Children's Center	Nancy Ceccarelli	Duxbury PS Magic Dragon 130 St. George St Duxbury, 02332	781-934-7671
<input type="checkbox"/> Infants and Toddlers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> School-Age Children	Dennis-Yarmouth Inclusive Preschool	Shirley Smith	Dennis-Yarmouth RSD 296 Station Avenue So. Yarmouth, 02644	508-398-7664
<input type="checkbox"/> Infants and Toddlers <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School-Age Children	Acton-Boxborough Community Education Extended Day Program	Teresa Gorman	Acton-Boxborough RSD Conant Elementary Taylor Road Acton, 01720	978-266-2525

Please provide this information on the back of this memo. If you need additional space, please attach an additional page. If you have any questions, please contact Donna Carvelli at 781-338-3000. We appreciate your assistance and cooperation in this effort.

District Name: _____ District Code: _____

PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS, PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Does your school district offer any early education and care programs for infant and toddler, preschool or school-age children?

Not Yes. Please complete the table below.

Checked No. Please return the survey to the address at the bottom. Thank you for your cooperation!

Checked

	PROGRAM TYPE* *Check one for each program	PROGRAM NAME	AGES SERVED	PROGRAM CONTACT	CONTACT'S MAILING ADDRESS**	CONTACT'S PHONE NUMBER
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked	Infants and Toddlers Preschool School-Age Children				
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked	Infants and Toddlers Preschool School-Age Children				
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked	Infants and Toddlers Preschool School-Age Children				
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked	Infants and Toddlers Preschool School-Age Children				
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checked	Infants and Toddlers Preschool School-Age Children				

*Program Definitions: Infants and Toddlers = 0-2.9 years. Preschool = 2.9-5 years. School-Age Children = 5-12

**Please include building name, street address or post office box, city /town and zip code

Please Return by July 15, 1999 to Donna Carvelli, Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main St., Malden, MA 02148

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Notice of Public Comment: 603 CMR 44.00 (Recertification) on Hardship Waivers

Memorandum

TO: Superintendents of Schools and Other Interested Parties
FROM: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
DATE: May 11, 1999
RE: Notice of Public Comment - Amendment to 603 CMR 44.00 (Recertification) on Hardship Waivers -- Adoption of Emergency Regulation as Permanent

Pursuant to its authority under G.L. c. 69, §1B and G.L. c. 71, §38G, the Massachusetts Board of Education is soliciting public comment on a permanent amendment to 603 CMR 44.00, Recertification Regulations.

The proposed permanent amendment was adopted by the Board of Education on April 27, 1999 as an Emergency Regulation. Adoption of the regulation was needed on an emergency basis to ensure that the regulation was in effect prior to the June 18, 1999 statutory deadline for recertification. The Emergency Regulation responds to the small number of compelling waiver requests received by the Department in which the educator asserts that a serious illness or other catastrophic event has prevented completion of the requisite number of professional development points. The Emergency Regulation is effective for three months, at which time the notice and public comment requirements of G.L. c. 30A, § 3 must be satisfied for the Emergency Regulation to become permanent.

The Emergency Regulation that the Board of Education proposes to be a permanent amendment adds the following section to 603 CMR 44.00, Recertification Regulations:

44.08 Hardship Waiver or Modification

1. Upon a showing of extreme hardship, the Commissioner may waive or modify the requirement of completion of the requisite number of professional development points as set forth in 603 CMR 44.03(6) and 603 CMR 44.03(7). A showing of extreme hardship may include serious illness or other catastrophic circumstances that are beyond the control of the educator. No modification or waiver will be granted without satisfactory evidence that the educator has made a good faith effort to obtain the required number of professional development points but that extreme hardship has prevented the educator from doing so.
2. The Commissioner, in his discretion, may impose reasonable conditions upon any modification or waiver granted.
3. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final.

Written comments on the proposed permanent amendment may be submitted by mail to the Legal Office, Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148; by fax to 781-338-3390; or by e-mail at legal@doe.mass.edu. The deadline for submission of public comment is **Friday, June 18, 1999**.

The Board is expected to vote on the proposed permanent amendment at its regular monthly meeting on June 29, 1999.



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Board in Brief

Thursday, May 27, 1999

This is [Board in Brief](#). This is Board in Brief, issued at the request of Commissioner David Driscoll to bring you up to date on Board of Education matters. This is a report on the regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 25, at Falmouth High School in Falmouth.

Report by the Chairman

Board Chairman James Peyser opened the meeting with a brief report on the forum on school and district accountability that the Board sponsored on May 18th. Information presented at that forum by Dr. Paul Hill of the University of Washington and others will be considered by the Board in establishing the Massachusetts system for school and district accountability. The Chairman also reported on the ongoing work of the Joint Board of Education-Board of Higher Education Commission on Educator Preparation. In concluding his opening remarks, Chairman Peyser stated that the Board plans to move forward in June to amend the Special Education Regulations, after giving careful consideration to comments the Board has received from the public and from the Joint Committee on Education. The Chairman said the regulatory reform effort is intended to improve educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.

Report by the Commissioner

Commissioner David Driscoll reported on several matters. Results from the April administration of the Massachusetts Educator Certification Tests show that a record 5,144 candidates took the tests to become certified, and 57% passed all three sections of the test (reading, writing and subject matter knowledge), up from 41% in April 1998, the first time the test was given. He said this improvement is encouraging, although performance on the writing section dropped in April compared to the results in January 1999.

Commissioner Driscoll reported that 63 outstanding individuals, out of 800 applicants, have been named as the first recipients of the \$20,000 Signing Bonus for New Teachers. 41 percent of the bonus recipients are mid-career professionals who are entering teaching for the first time. All of the recipients will be engaged in an intensive preparation program this summer. Beginning this fall, they will each be teaching in one of thirteen Massachusetts school districts, as part of a four-year commitment under the Teacher Quality initiative. The Commissioner also reported that the Department is working with the Governor's Office and others on a design team to develop a plan for regional professional development centers and on-line professional development tools for educators.

School and District Accountability System and Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and Districts

The Board discussed several components of the School and District Accountability System proposed by the Commissioner. Upon considering several options for a school performance rating system, the Board voted (4-2, with 1 abstention) to adopt a rating system based on MCAS results, using scaled scores to measure both performance and improvement over time. Attendance and dropout data would also be examined when a school is under review to determine whether it should be declared under-performing. The Board considered options for administering the district performance evaluation and school inspection processes, and asked Commissioner Driscoll to present at the June meeting a revised proposal outlining the administrative structure and projected budget for the School and District Accountability office. Finally, the Board unanimously voted to seek public comment on the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and Districts presented by the Commissioner. After the period of public comment, the Board will take final action on the regulations.

MCAS Testing Schedule for FY 2001 and Beyond

Commissioner Driscoll presented his recommendations to change the MCAS testing schedule as of the 2000-2001 school year. The changes are intended to reduce the number of tests in any one grade level by including more grades in the testing, and to provide more timely, frequent and useful information on student and school performance in reading and mathematics. The Board voted to add a 6th grade mathematics test, and to move the science and technology test and the history/social science tests to the 5th grade instead of the 4th grade. Further, the Board voted to redesign the English language arts tests by separating it into reading tests and writing tests, so that reading and writing can be reported out separately. The reading test will be administered in grades 3,4,7, and 10. The writing test will be administered in grades 4, 8 and 10. The Board also voted (5-2) to develop an MCAS reading test at grade 3, in place of the Iowa test. The grade 3 reading test will be aligned with the Massachusetts learning standards in the English language arts curriculum framework, and will help identify students who need early assistance to meet the state learning standards. A question try-out for the new grade 3 MCAS reading test will be administered in the spring of 2000, instead of the Iowa test.

Health Education Curriculum Framework

The Board discussed the revised draft Health Education curriculum framework, which was presented in February and has since been modified based on public comment. Chairman Peyser said the framework is much improved, but he expressed concern that the learning standards need to be clarified further. Member Abigail Thernstrom agreed with the Chairman that several sections seemed to be overly ideological. The Board voted unanimously, on a motion by member Edwin Delattre, to postpone a vote on the framework. Chairman Peyser requested that members send specific written comments to the Commissioner, so that they may be incorporated into a final version that will be presented at a future meeting.

Certification Program Approval

Commissioner Driscoll reported that the Joint Commission on Educator Preparation, established by the Boards of Education and Higher Education, is focusing on criteria for approving programs for the preparation of teachers and other educators. The Board of Education plans to consider amendments to the Regulations for Certification of Educational Personnel after the Joint Commission submits its recommendations. To allow time for that process, the Board unanimously endorsed the Commissioner's recommendation to extend the current approvals of educator preparation programs through December 31, 2000.

Recertification: Second Cycle Options

Under the certification statute, all professional educator certificates granted by the Board of Education must be renewed every five years, and any certificate granted prior to October 1, 1994 must be renewed by June 18, 1999. The first cycle of recertification, governed by regulations that the Board adopted in 1994, will end this June. Commissioner Driscoll presented a set of revised recommendations for the second cycle of recertification, which are intended to strengthen the quality of professional development and the accountability for it. The proposed changes would increase to 150 (from 120) the professional development points that educators must earn over five years to renew a certificate; provide alternative options including a content-specific test and a performance assessment; require educators to get a supervisor's sign-off on their professional development plans, to confirm that they address school and district improvement goals; and establish a consumer information data base of evaluations of professional development programs, which will be current and accessible to all educators and the public. Board members asked the Commissioner to explore additional ways to address the quality of professional development for educators. Chairman Peyser indicated that at the June meeting, the Board intends to adopt emergency regulations that will define the standards for the second cycle of recertification.

Other Matters

Traditionally, the Board of Education holds its May meeting at the high school of the student Board member. This meeting took place at Falmouth High School, where Rebecca Urbach, outgoing student member of the Board of Education, is a senior. Commissioner Driscoll and Chairman Peyser recognized her contributions, thanked her for her work, and presented her with a citation and a gift from the Board of Education. Ms. Urbach will attend Barnard College.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held at the Department of Education in Malden, on Tuesday, June 29, 1999.



EVENTS CALENDAR

April 2003						
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For Immediate Release
 Thursday, May 27, 1999
 Contact: Jan O'Keefe Feldman

Stotsky and Safran Named Massachusetts Deputy Commissioners of Education

Malden - Education Commissioner David P. Driscoll announced today that he has appointed two people, Sandra Stotsky of Brookline and Alan Safran of Newton, to positions as Deputy Commissioners for the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Dr. Stotsky will be the Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Planning. From 1991-1997, she was the editor of Research in the Teaching of English, the research journal published by the National Council of Teachers of English. She has been directing summer institutes on civic education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, including a "We the People" institute for civics and government teachers sponsored by the Center for Civic Education. She received her doctorate in reading from Harvard in 1976. She is the author of many scholarly articles and a recent book, Losing our Language, published by The Free Press. She served the Department and Board of Education by co-chairing the committee that produced the Massachusetts English language arts curriculum framework which was approved in January 1997, and has been an active member of the assessment development committee for the student testing program, MCAS, in the subject of English language arts. She has taught or given demonstration lessons at every grade level, from kindergarten to graduate school. She began her career in education teaching third grade in South Easton, Massachusetts. A mother of five, she served on numerous committees for the Brookline Public Schools.

Mr. Safran will be the Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Policy. Since August 1993, he has been a manager at the state Department of Education. He served as Administrator for Public Affairs until October 1994, and then until April 1998, he was Executive Director of the Office of the Commissioner. Since April 1998, he has been the Chief of Staff. Prior to working at the Department of Education, he was an Assistant District Attorney in New York City where he successfully conducted numerous felony jury trials and presented hundreds of cases before Queens County grand juries; he was executive director of a political organization in Massachusetts and a Washington lobbyist; and he served as Spokesman for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, where he co-authored the 1983 report on "Human Rights Issues in United States Relations with Romania and Czechoslovakia." Son of two public school teachers and a father of two, he and his wife, Dr. Dana Gelb Safran, are expecting their third child in August.

"I am pleased to have two talented and complementary Deputies as I begin my responsibilities as permanent Commissioner of Education," said Dr. Driscoll, who was appointed Massachusetts' 22nd Commissioner of Education by the State Board on March 10. "In Sandra, we have a Deputy with a depth of experience in academic matters of great importance, including English language arts and history/social sciences. In Alan, we have a very bright, energetic manager who exemplifies the nimble, non-bureaucratic approach to school reform that I value. Most importantly, both are committed to children and to public education."

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