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## Commissioner's Update

December 27, 1999

Dear Superintendents and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

**This is the final bi-monthly, hard-copy mailing that I will be sending to you. Beginning in January and continuing around the fifth and twentieth of every month, all Department of Education documents and my bi-monthly messages will be posted on our [website](#), and will not be mailed.** During each month, I will post documents continuously, and my bi-monthly messages on the fifth and twentieth will summarize the documents that have been posted for that period. I urge you to visit our website routinely.

I have one update and 7 items for your information. In this mailing are information about the School Performance Rating Process and a sample school progress report. **Individual mid-cycle progress reports will be mailed to schools the week of January 10.** Further information and baseline data reports can be found at the following website: [www.doe.mass.edu/ata/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ata/).

I have enclosed the following items for you:

1. [Information on the School Performance Rating System](#)
2. Consolidated Grants Package for competitive and non-competitive opportunities  
[ No longer available ]
3. Proposed Routes to Educator Licensure - public comment invited  
[No longer available]
4. Request for Proposals for Summer Content Institutes  
[No longer available]
5. A booklet, "A Matter of Quality, a Strategy for Assuring the High Caliber of America's Teachers," by Lowell Milken, co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation  
[No longer available]
6. Call for Nominations for the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and Christa McAuliffe Fellowship programs  
[ No longer available ]
7. A booklet on "Early Childhood Classroom Observation," from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Please forward this document to your early childhood education coordinator.  
[No longer available]

Best wishes to you, your families and your staff for a happy holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Accountability and Targeted Assistance

### School Performance Rating Process Overview

The Department of Education will use the [MCAS results](#) to rate Massachusetts public schools. Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, schools will receive both performance and improvement ratings, in each content area and for overall performance. More specifically, the first cycle of the School Performance Rating Process will:

- Serve as a filter to identify schools that may be reviewed more extensively;
- Focus on moving student MCAS performance out of Failing and into Proficient/Advanced;
- Set specific improvement expectations, based on 1998 results, for each content area and for overall performance;
- Use the average of the 1999 and 2000 results to rate performance and improvement from the baseline (1998);
- Measure improvement using the average scaled score; and
- Include English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science & Technology.

### Performance Categories & Improvement Expectations

A school's 1998 MCAS results will place that school in a performance category for each content area and for overall performance. The baseline performance categories determine the improvement expectations.

School Performance Categories				Improvement Expectation
Category	Percentage of Students Scoring in			Increase average score by:
	Proficient/Advanced		Failing	
1	80% or more	And	5% or less	1-3 points
2	60% or more	And	10% or less	1-3 points
3	40% or more	And	20% or less	2-4 points
4	20% or more	And	40% or less	3-5 points
5	Less than 20%	Or	41% - 60%	4-6 points
6			More than 60%	5-7 points

### Performance & Improvement Ratings

At the end of the cycle, a school will receive performance ratings based on the average of the 1999 and 2000 results and improvement ratings based on the comparison of those results to the baseline results (1998).

Performance Category	Rating
1	Very High
2	High
3	Moderate
4	Low
5	Very Low
6	Critically Low

Improvement Made	Rating
More than Expectation	Exceeded
Within Expectation Range	Met
Within one point below Expectation	Approached
More than one point below Expectation	Failed to Meet

## Interpretation of Ratings

A school's overall performance and improvement ratings will place it into one box on a 4x6 matrix. The matrix on the back of this page details the state actions associated with each box for the first cycle.

Performance				
Very High				
High				
Moderate				
Low				
Very Low				
Critically Low				
	Failed to Meet	Approached	Met	Exceeded
	Improvement			

## Interpretation of Accountability Ratings - State Action Guide

OVERALL PERFORMANCE	OVERALL IMPROVEMENT			
	Failed to Meet	Approached	Met	Exceeded
Very High		RECOGNITION for very high performance	RECOGNITION for very high performance and for meeting improvement expectations	RECOGNITION for very high performance and for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program
High			RECOGNITION for high performance and for meeting improvement expectations	RECOGNITION for high performance and for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program

<b>Moderate</b>	WARNING that the school and district must strengthen improvement efforts		RECOGNITION for meeting improvement expectations	RECOGNITION for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program
<b>Low</b>	WARNING that the school and district must strengthen improvement efforts	WARNING that the school and district must strengthen improvement efforts	RECOGNITION for meeting improvement expectations	RECOGNITION for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program
<b>Very Low</b>	REFERRED FOR REVIEW to determine whether school should be declared under-performing. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance	REFERRED FOR REVIEW to determine whether school should be declared under-performing. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance	RECOGNITION for meeting improvement expectations. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance.	RECOGNITION for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance
<b>Critically Low</b>	REFERRED FOR REVIEW to determine whether school should be declared under-performing. Top priority for district support and targeted state assistance	REFERRED FOR REVIEW to determine whether school should be declared under-performing. Top priority for district support and targeted state assistance	RECOGNITION for meeting improvement expectations. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance	RECOGNITION for exceeding improvement expectations. Candidate for Exemplary Schools Program. High priority for district support and targeted state assistance

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