

**Commissioner's Update Archive**

## Commissioner's Update

May 19, 2000

### Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

I have just two matters for you and five items posted on our website.

### Class-Size Reduction

The US Department of Education has new Class-Size Reduction guidelines for districts on the purpose and implementation procedures of the Class-Size Reduction program. The guidelines also address how districts can use Class-Size Reduction program funds to improve student achievement by recruiting, hiring, and training fully qualified classroom teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. The federal Class-Size Reduction website is [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/guidance.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/guidance.html). Districts may apply for funds by completing the Class-Size Reduction grant application. The application is available in the April 2000 consolidated grant package or on the Department's website. The deadline for Class-Size Reduction applications has been extended to June 26.

### Elder Affairs

Lillian Glickman, Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, announces that "Wellness Day 2000," for grandparents and the grandchildren they are raising will be held on Saturday, June 10th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., rain or shine, at Worcester State College. There will be informational sessions for grandparents and activities for grandchildren ages five and up. For more information, call 617-727-7750.

### Documents Recently Posted on our Website:

1. Memo on recertification  
[ No Longer Available ]
2. [Announcement of a period of public comment on the Proposed Regulations for Teacher Licensure and Educator Preparation Program Approval](#) [PDF]
3. [Report of 1999 Massachusetts and Local School District MCAS Results by Race/Ethnicity](#)
4. [1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)
5. [Announcement of a Bidders' Conference for parties interested in learning more about the Gifted and Talented grant application for 2001.](#) [PDF]

All the best, and  
Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Memorandum

### 603 CMR 7.00 Draft Regulations Released for Public Comment

**To:** School Superintendents, School Principals, Education Deans and Contact Persons, Education Professional Associations, and Other Interested Parties

**From:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

**Date:** May 17, 2000

I am pleased to release the [draft regulations 603 CMR 7.00](#), Proposed Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval for public comment in accordance with the vote of the Board of Education at its April 25 meeting. We will accept public comment through August 1, 2000. With guidance from public comment, we anticipate bringing revised regulations to the Board of Education for a vote on September 26, 2000, with an effective date of September 2001.

The draft regulations will replace the existing Regulations for the Certification of Educational Personnel in Massachusetts. Historically, the principal goal of state educator certification/licensure has been to safeguard students by ensuring that educators have met essential qualifications in preparation. The proposed regulations are based on a consistent body of educational research over several decades showing that the factor most strongly associated with improved student learning is teacher knowledge of subject matter. The systematic revision of the existing regulations is intended to accomplish several major objectives:

1. Strengthen the subject matter knowledge required for each license to make sure that teachers are prepared to teach to the student learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks;
2. Strengthen the subject matter knowledge requirements for the teaching of reading for all teacher licenses;
3. Clarify alternate ways in which prospective teachers and administrators can be prepared for a career in education;
4. Strengthen safeguards for students and parents by requiring three years of employment for teachers and two years of employment for administrators before they can obtain a professional license;
5. Improve the performance and reduce the attrition of beginning teachers and administrators by requiring strong induction programs;
6. Strengthen accountability for providers of preparation programs by linking state approval to the performance of their candidates on state licensing tests and assessments.

In constructing these revisions to the 1994 regulations, the Department of Education has

been mindful of the impending teacher and administrator shortage predicted for Massachusetts and across the country, as well as the need for an increased teacher workforce to address federal incentives to reduce class size.

Attached please find a [questionnaire](#) addressing significant components of the Proposed Regulations on which we are seeking input. If you would prefer, you may submit written comments in the form of a letter as well. Please send written comments to us as follows:

**Mail:**

Certification Regulations Comments  
Massachusetts Department of Education  
350 Main Street  
Malden, MA 02148

**Fax:**

Certification Regulations Comments  
(781) 338-3317

**E-mail:**

certregs@doe.mass.edu

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

**Viewing the following files requires Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer**  
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**[Proposed Regulations](#)**  
**[Questionnaire](#)**



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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Darrell S. Pressley, 781-338-3126  
Thursday, May 18, 2000

### Commissioner Releases 1999 MCAS State and District Results by Race And Ethnicity

**Malden** - A report of the [1999 MCAS results by race and ethnicity](#) was released today by the Department of Education.

Commissioner of Education David P. Driscoll said, "Our ultimate goal is to improve student achievement across the board. This report is useful in identifying how students of various racial and ethnic groups are doing in achieving academic success. By compiling these results, we will be better able to focus the work of policymakers and school leaders on closing the achievement gap."

"The MCAS is a tool we can all use to determine the strengths and weaknesses of all students, identify those who need help and in what subject areas, and target resources and programs to help them improve."

"What we can tell initially from these results is that fourth grade students are making significant improvement, both in moving into the Advanced and Proficient categories and moving out of the Failing category, which is our primary goal," Driscoll said. "What is also clear is that the 1999 failure rates among African-American and Latino students in upper grades are troubling. The key now is to focus on these kids."

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Thomas Payzant said, "Boston Public Schools have made closing the achievement gap by the school year 2002-2003 a top priority for the district. For the past two years, all Boston principals and headmasters have set explicit, measurable goals for their schools for closing the gap."

Using MCAS data to analyze districtwide trends and school-by-school progress, Boston is implementing an action plan for closing the achievement gap that includes:

- a new, intensive summer school program in literacy and math. The program began last summer and expanded this summer, and is required for students in most grades who have failed reading and math. The five-week summer program provides very small class sizes and two-hour blocks of reading and math instruction daily. Last summer, approximately 4,000 students participated in the program. Approximately 13,000 students are expected to participate in this summer's expanded program.
- a 12-month "transitional" year (summer school, plus a "transitional" academic year, plus summer school) with extra support in literary and math for academically at-risk students in grades three, six and nine. The \$20 million program provides a literary or math specialist in every reading or math class who specializes in helping hard-to-reach students. Double blocks of daily reading and math for at-risk students, and up to four hours of literary and math instruction per week outside of the school day for at-risk students will also be provided.

Worcester Public School Superintendent James Caradonio said, "We are encouraged by some of the initial positive trends we have seen in the MCAS achievement among our minority students. We will continue to provide our students with effective instructional programs and services - during the school day, after school, and in the summer."

Beginning with this year's 2000 report of MCAS results, the Department will be able to include the race data with the overall state data in the fall of each year.

In 1999, 220,000 students in grades, four, eight, and ten took the MCAS tests in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology. Additionally, grade eight students were tested in History and Social Science.

In 1999, at the fourth grade level, more African-American fourth graders moved into the Proficient and Advanced categories. In Mathematics, the number of students in the Proficient category improved from seven percent in 1998 to nine percent in 1999. In Science and Technology, the numbers moved from 15 percent in 1998 to 20 percent last year.

More African-American students in the fourth grade moved out of the Failing categories: from 33 percent in 1998 to 29 percent in 1999 in English; from 50 percent to 44 percent in Mathematics; and from 32 percent in 1998 to 22 percent in 1999 in Science and Technology.

In 1999, more Hispanic/Latino students moved out of the Failing category in grade four. Scores in the Failing category moved from 39 percent in 1998 to 36 percent last year in English, from 50 percent in 1998 to 47 percent in 1999 in Mathematics, and 32 percent to 29 percent in Science and Technology.

For more information, visit the [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System website](#).

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

July 2003						
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## NEWS SEARCH

Keyword:

Target:

Dates:

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:

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For Immediate Release

Thursday, May 18, 2000

Contact: Jonathan Palumbo, 781-338-3105

## Violence, Tobacco Use, and Substance Abuse Rates Decline Among Massachusetts High School Students

**Malden** - The results of the [1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#) were released by Commissioner of Education David P. Driscoll today, showing a decline in violence, tobacco use, and substance abuse among high school students.

According to the results of the 1999 survey, public high school students reported lower levels of physical fighting, weapon carrying, suicidal thinking, use of inhalants and smokeless tobacco, and failure to use seatbelts and bicycle helmets, as compared to previous years.

Among the results, 30 percent reported smoking cigarettes in the past month compared to 34 percent in 1997, and almost 36 percent in 1995. Also, the percent of students who reported carrying a weapon in the month prior to the survey dropped from 19 percent in 1997 to 15 percent in 1999. The results also show that the percentage of students who were offered or sold illegal drugs on school grounds decreased as well. From 1997 to 1999, the number of students who reported being offered or sold illegal drugs on school grounds in the month prior to the survey decreased from 42 percent to 36 percent.

Commissioner Driscoll said, "In a number of important areas, adolescent risk behavior has declined. 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 students in the state continue to engage in behaviors that threaten their health and safety."

Also, the survey found that receipt of AIDS/HIV education is associated with significantly lower levels of sexual activity among high school students, and higher levels of communication by students with parents and other families, and lower levels of risky behavior by students who are sexually active. "Effective age-appropriate school-based AIDS/HIV education, which the state supports, is very important to the lives of our students," Driscoll added.

The survey, which is conducted every two years, provides important information about behaviors that may compromise adolescents' health and safety. The 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.

The survey is anonymous and voluntary and was conducted between February and June 1999, in 64 randomly selected public high schools across the state. There are no data broken out for individual schools though; results are reported as statewide numbers only.

Results in two areas of the 1999 survey were troubling. In 1997, seven percent of students reported that they had ever used cocaine. In 1999, the number of students reporting ever using cocaine increased to almost 10 percent. Also, the percent of students describing themselves as overweight increased from 29 percent to 33 percent. Also troubling were the results of sexual minority students, (that is adolescents who consider themselves gay, lesbian, or bisexual, or have had same-sex sexual contact). Compared to other students, sexual minority students report higher levels of being threatened with a weapon at school, (24 percent to 8 percent), higher levels of considering suicide, (49 percent to 20 percent), and higher levels of attempting suicide, (29 percent to 7 percent).

For more information on the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey or to view the results of the 1999 YRBS, visit [www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/yrbs99/letter.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/yrbs99/letter.html).

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## Bidders Conference for Competitive Grant Program

Gifted and Talented Program: Start-Up or Program Improvement **Fund Code: 580**

June 1, 2000 3 - 5 p.m.  
Worcester, Massachusetts

**Purpose:** A Bidders Conference is being planned by the Department of Education for school districts interested in seeking funds under the competitive grant program in the area of Gifted and Talented Education. The Department of Education will update districts on the new components of the competitive grant RFP FY2000-2001, review the priorities of this program, and answer questions.

**Location:** Quinsigamond Elementary School  
832 Millbury Street  
Worcester, MA  
508 - 799 - 3502  
Light Refreshments will be provided.

**Directions:** From 290 West: Take Exit 11 - Southbridge Street - College Sq. - Bear left off ramp to College Street., Worcester - GO .4 mile thru lights and under overpass. Take 1st right, Riverside Street. - at STOP sign, go right on McKeon Rd. - GO .9 mile to end, take right on Millbury St., go one block - see school on right.

From 290 East: Take Exit 11 - College Sq., Worcester, GO .2 miles thru lights and under overpass. Take 1st right on Riverside St. At STOP sign, go right on McKeon Rd. GO .9 mile to end, take right on Millbury St., - go one block, - see school on right.

From MASS PIKE (90): Take Exit 10A - at the end of the ramp take a left - Auburn Rte 20 West - Go to first set of lights - take a right on Greenwood St. GO approximately 2 miles ( Greenwood St. turns into Millbury St.) See school on the left.

**Contact:** Linda DeLorenzo, Content Specialist in Gifted Education

**E - Mail:** [ldelorenzo@doe.mass.edu](mailto:ldelorenzo@doe.mass.edu)

**Phone:** 781-338-3389