



**David P. Driscoll**  
Commissioner of Education

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## Commissioner's Updates

January 19, 2001

Dear Superintendents and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this update, I have five announcements and four documents posted on our [website](#).

### School Ratings Report

The school ratings report I released last week has generated a great deal of interest. Educators, parents and the general public are reviewing their schools' results and the reasons behind them. We have a long way to go, but I am encouraged by the results so far, particularly in the cities where the challenges and the need to improve are greatest.

I have heard concerns from some school officials, particularly in the suburban districts, that the improvement term, "Failed to Meet" is not a fair reflection of schools that typically are high performers. I want to point out first and foremost that schools should be recognized for their high performance and for other indicators such as college admission and related activities. Should we have assigned the improvement rating of "Failed to Meet" to schools with high scores that did not meet their improvement expectations? Probably not. Consequently, before I release the Mid-Cycle school ratings next winter, I will review and refine the rating policy along with the terms used to label each improvement category.

However, Education Reform, which is defined as higher educational achievement for all students, is critical for all schools, not just for some. Along with schools in the neediest areas of the state, there are schools in the best towns that need to improve, as well.

### Professional Development Points (PDPs) for Trainers, Presenters, and Instructors

Many of you have asked for clarification regarding our current guidelines for Professional Development Points (PDPs) for trainers, presenters, and instructors. Educators who develop and present professional development sessions or courses that are given at the graduate level, which focus on strengthening content knowledge and skills are eligible to receive PDPs. Registered professional development providers, school districts and collaboratives, and institutions of higher education may grant trainers, presenters and instructors twice the number of PDPs granted to participants. An educator may apply these points only one time, the first time, he or she provides the training in a five-year recertification cycle.

### Notice of Regional Meetings on History/Social Science Curriculum Framework

A panel of history and social science educators has been appointed to review the 1997 history and social science curriculum framework. In February and March this panel will hold a series of regional meetings to discuss options for revisions. You are invited to join members of the history and social science review panel and Department of Education staff in these discussions. All meetings will be held from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., at schools in the following districts: Plymouth, Worcester, Topsfield, Medway, Lenox, and Boston. Specific locations, dates, and directions will be posted by January 22 on the Department of Education website. For further information, please check "News" or "Curriculum Frameworks" at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu).

## Youth Leadership Awards and Scholarships

A list of two dozen student leadership awards and scholarships is available at [www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/Student/resources/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/Student/resources/). Next month a Youth Leadership Awards and Scholarships poster and handout will be sent to high school guidance departments. For additional information, please call 781-338-3099.

## U.S. Savings Bonds National Student Poster Contest

Enter your students in the 2001 U.S. Savings Bonds National Student Poster Contest for 4th, 5th and 6th graders. To enter students need to design a poster promoting the contest theme "Reach for the Stars - Buy U.S. Savings Bonds." It is a fun and educational project and a great way for 4th, 5th and 6th graders to use their talents while learning the benefit of saving. Participants can win prizes such as \$200 to \$5,000 U. S. Savings Bonds and a trip to Washington, D.C. To see the winning posters from previous years and for information on this year's contest rules and prizes go to [www.savingsbonds.gov/mar/marposte.htm](http://www.savingsbonds.gov/mar/marposte.htm).

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Listed below are four items recently posted at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu).

1. School Building Assistance Policy Advisory (01-2)  
[ [PDF](#) ]
2. Per Pupil Expenditures FY99  
[ [HTML](#) ]
3. Teacher Career Advancement Program (T-CAP)  
[ [PDF](#) ]
4. "Project Citizen" Teachers' Workshop  
[ [PDF](#) ]

All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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"We help children learn."

Massachusetts Department of

Education

# School Building Assistance Program Policy Advisory 01-2

January 19, 2001

This is the second in a series of advisories issued by the Department of Education to provide additional information on the School Building Assistance (SBA) program's new policies and procedures. All statutes, regulations, policy advisories, and other pertinent information regarding the SBA program are posted on the Department's [school finance website](#).

## Cost factors

The cost factors used to establish the reimbursable cost limits are adjusted annually by the Board of Education based on changes in the ENR January building cost index for Boston. This index has increased by 1.7% from January 2000 to January 2001. At its February meeting the Board is expected to issue the following new cost factors for public comment:

Elementary School	\$151 per square foot
Middle School/Junior High School	\$161 per square foot
High School	\$173 per square foot
Vocational School	\$185 per square foot
Furnishings and Equipment	\$15 per square foot

If adopted by the Board after the public comment period, the new cost factors will apply to projects for which the general contract work begins on or after June 1, 2001.

The Board has authority to waive the cost limits for projects, and has adopted the following policy:

The Commissioner may recommend to the Board that this requirement be waived in exceptional circumstances. If the project cost estimate exceeds the approved cost limit and the applicant believes a waiver is warranted, the applicant must submit a waiver request before soliciting construction bids. Waiver requests submitted after the general contract has been awarded should be limited to extraordinary situations which arise during construction and which could not have been reasonably anticipated during the design process. [[603 CMR 38.06\(3\)](#)]

"Market conditions" (i.e., bids are higher than expected) do not qualify for cost waivers under this policy. In general, districts are responsible for all costs above the reimbursable cost limit. This should be kept in mind during the design phase, by providing for adequate contingencies in the project budget.

# Incentive points for capital construction projects

Most projects which will be approved this year will be grandfathered under the old reimbursement rates, and so no incentive points will be awarded. The SBA program advisory committee is studying the incentive categories and expects to make detailed recommendations to be implemented in FY2002. For those capital construction projects eligible for incentive points in FY2001, the following interim policies have been adopted:

- Maintenance – districts with one approved major repair project on the old, unfunded major repair list (FY88-00) will receive two points; districts with two or more projects on the list will receive four points.
- Energy efficiency – no points will be awarded this year.
- Renovation/reuse – five points will be awarded to renovations of existing school buildings. If a project combines renovation of an existing school building with new construction, the points will be pro-rated based on the square footage in the two components. So, for example, if a project includes the renovation and re-use of a 60,000 s.f. building, and the construction of a new 40,000 s.f. addition, the project would receive three incentive points.
- Project manager – two incentive points will be awarded if the district engages a professional project or construction manager to supervise, at a minimum, the bidding and construction phases. Individuals or firms engaged as a project manager or construction manager must be independent of the project designer and must be selected in accordance with the Commonwealth's designer selection process.
- Innovative community use and non-State fundraising – no interim policies have been adopted in these two categories, but creative proposals are invited and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Proposals should result in quantifiable savings to the SBA program or to the Commonwealth as a whole.

## New reimbursement rates

For regional districts, the "district poverty factor" is based on the low-income enrollment in the regional district itself. It is not an average of the poverty factors for the member towns. As previously noted, the "community income factor" and "community property wealth factor" will be a weighted average of the factors for each of the member towns, with the weighting based on the allocation of capital costs under the regional agreement.

The FY2001 Reimbursement Rate chart on the website lists the income and property wealth factors for all towns and the poverty factor for all districts, including regional districts.

## Grandfathered rates

Districts which had a favorable vote for a project, for design or construction, prior to December 31, 2000, are eligible to receive the reimbursement rates under the old SBA statute. If you are eligible for this grandfathering and have not yet sent in a certified copy of the qualifying vote, please do so immediately. To qualify for this grandfathering you must also submit your completed application by June 30, 2001, and have it approved by the Board of Education no later than August 30, 2001. Because of our limited staff resources and the large number of expected applications this year, we cannot guarantee that all

grandfathered applications submitted by June 30 will be reviewed in time for the August 30 deadline. We strongly urge you to submit your completed application by June 1, or earlier, so that we will have a better chance to review it in a timely manner.

A separate grandfathering provision provides 90% reimbursement for projects in districts with one or more racially imbalanced schools and which received a favorable vote for design or construction by July 1, 2000. There is no fixed application deadline for projects in this category. To preserve your grandfathering rights under this provision, please submit a certified copy of the qualifying vote immediately, if you have not already done so.

## **Re-use of existing buildings**

One of the most important objectives of the new SBA program is to facilitate the re-use of existing school buildings. The Board of Education's policy is clear:

Projects calling for new school construction shall be approved and funded only where the feasibility and cost of renovating an existing school building, or of acquiring an existing building or buildings which are structurally sound, available within the community, and adaptable for school purposes, has been studied and the applicant demonstrates that the proposed new construction is the best available alternative to meet the projected need based upon the educational program to be housed, total cost effectiveness, and the public interest. [[603 CMR 38.03\(10\)](#)]

The Department will be reviewing all proposals for new school buildings for compliance with this policy. Applicants who have not fully studied re-use options or who have not clearly documented the reasons why re-use is not feasible may be asked to undertake additional studies.

## **Modular construction**

The cost of leasing modular classrooms is now an allowable expense under certain circumstances.

If modulares are being leased to provide swing space during a capital construction project, the lease cost is an eligible reimbursable expense. The lease cost must be included within the overall project cost limit. No cost waivers will be provided for this purpose.

If modulares are being leased to provide space for temporary enrollment increases, as an alternative to construction, the applicant must demonstrate that the use of modulares is less costly than a capital construction project. Such projects will receive only the four incentive points for alternatives to construction. The grant pay-out period will be based on the length of the lease term. Once the modulares have been installed, the district may not apply for additional funds for capital construction to accommodate the same planned enrollment.

## **Major repairs**

SBA funding is available for major repair projects commenced on or after July 1, 2000, subject to the following requirements:

The following categories of projects are eligible:

- . a project to eliminate a structural or environmental safety hazard;

- b. a project to make a building accessible to persons with physical disabilities;
- c. a roof replacement or reconstruction project;
- d. the replacement or improvement of a heating system;
- e. a project to make a building more energy efficient.

Each individual project must have a cost greater than \$100,000. (Smaller repair projects can be funded from the municipality's or district's annual operating budget.)

The project must be in a building expected to remain in service as a school building for at least seven years.

Department approval must be obtained prior to the start of repairs.

Major repair projects will receive only the four incentive points for major reconstruction. Application forms are available from the Department; a web version will be available later this year.



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## School Finance: Statistical Comparisons

### FY99 Per Pupil Expenditures

January 20, 2001

Dear Superintendents, Leaders of Charter Schools, and Interested Parties:

Enclosed is the annual "[Per Pupil Expenditures](#)" booklet, which includes the final FY99 Per Pupil Expenditure by Program tabulations and additional tables that provide various perspectives concerning spending that occurred during the 1998-1999 school year. The report includes the following measures:

- Integrated Operating Cost Per Pupil
- Summary of All Day Programs
- Regular Day Expenditures Per Pupil, by Grade Level
- Special Education Expenditures Per Pupil, by Prototype
- Bilingual Program Expenditures Per Pupil, by Grade Level
- Functional Costs Per Pupil, Selected Instructional and Non-Instructional Areas

This information is based upon numbers submitted on the FY99 End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Report in the fall of 1999 as well as any final amendments that districts filed as a result of our review of the information, up through the amendment deadline of June 30, 2000.

The entire booklet can be obtained in electronic format on our school [finance website](#). If you have questions or comments, I encourage you to contact Phyllis Rogers in our School Finance office at 781-338-6534 ( [progers@doe.mass.edu](mailto:progers@doe.mass.edu) ).

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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# Teacher Career Advancement Program (T-CAP)

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders and Principals  
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education  
Re: T-CAP, Teacher Career Advancement Program  
Date: January 19, 2001

The Teacher Career Advancement Program (T-CAP) is an opportunity for your district or school to reshape teacher career paths and boost teacher salaries. This grant, now in its second year, helps both schools and districts create a high-paying career track for master teachers, by increasing the opportunities for mid-career professionals, parents, business people and volunteers to share teaching responsibilities. With T-CAP, schools/districts can develop innovative creative professional career ladders for teachers as an incentive to stay in the classroom.

The T-CAP program provides \$100,000 to fund up to 10 planning grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 each. Demonstration sites will design plans to redefine teaching career paths through financial incentives, flexible teaching contracts, and professional advancement. While there is a great deal of flexibility in developing demonstration site plans, we expect that schools/districts will tackle such issues as salary incentives and teacher roles and responsibilities.

I have attached the [RFR](#), which is due February 9, 2001. I hope you will take advantage of this exciting opportunity. If you have any questions or recommendations, please contact Holly Grzeskowiak or email her at [hgrzeskowiak@doe.mass.edu](mailto:hgrzeskowiak@doe.mass.edu).

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# Office of Student Leadership (OSL)

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## Project Citizen Teachers' Workshop

On January 31, 2001, from 9:00AM-3:00PM at the U.S. Courthouse in Boston, the Center for Civic Education's We The People will sponsor a workshop for teachers of grades 6-9. This workshop will introduce participants to the concepts and procedures in Project Citizen and will explain how teachers can be involved in the competition. Participants will receive free materials and lunch. We the People will also pay the cost of substitutes for teachers who attend.

Project Citizen is a portfolio-based civic education project, involving an entire class in a series of structured, cooperative learning activities guided by their teachers and adult volunteers. It focuses on the role of state and local governments in the American federal system. If you would like more information, please contact Diane Palmer, State Coordinator, We the People programs, 69 Waverley St. Belmont, MA 02478, 617-489-3660, [dnpalmer@msn.com](mailto:dnpalmer@msn.com).