



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Updates

June 4, 2001

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this update, I have just one announcement and seven items for your information posted at www.doe.mass.edu.

Biodiversity Days

On April 25, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Bob Durand, and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Education (DOE) for the Massachusetts Environmental Education Plan (MEEP) to: (1) develop a statewide environmental literacy program; (2) include environmental education in pre-K through 12th grade curriculum reform; (3) encourage pre-service and in-service teacher training; and (4) establish statewide support for environmental education. It is a sign of our commitment to work together with schools and districts to promote environmental education in the Commonwealth's public schools.

To actively engage students in learning more about their environment so they know more about the natural world and our relationship with it, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs is holding its annual "Biodiversity Days," on June 8, 9 and 10. Their website at www.state.ma.us/envir/biodiversity.htm lists numerous seasonal activities that have been developed by teachers to encourage students and teachers to get outdoors to discover the learning opportunities that exist in nature.

Here are seven items recently posted on our website at www.doe.mass.edu:

1. MCAS Update:
[[HTML](#)]
 - Preliminary Grade 3 Reading Test Results Will be Mailed to Schools the Week of June 11
 - Summer Opportunities to Participate in Standard-Setting Panels
[[HTML](#)]
 - Spring 2001 MCAS Test Questions to be Released the Week of June 11
2. Annual Reminder to Vote on School Choice Participation
[[HTML](#)]
3. The Draft State Plan for Professional Development
[[PDF](#)]
4. Recruitment Call for Membership on Statewide Education Advisory Councils
[[HTML](#)]
5. Recommended Standards for Instructional Technology, K-12
(Public Comment Period Ends August 15)
[[PDF](#)]
6. Memo Regarding Organizational Changes Within the Department of Education
[[HTML](#)]
7. Massachusetts Biodiversity Days, June 8, 9 and 10
[[PDF](#)]

As this school year nears its end, thank you for your leadership. I look forward to seeing many of you this summer.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MCAS Update

Memorandum

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

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: June 5, 2001

Release of 2001 Preliminary MCAS Grade 3 Reading Test Scores

Preliminary test item results for the 2001 Grade 3 Reading Test will be mailed to schools this month. I anticipate that you will receive your results during the week of June 11. We hope that you will find this preliminary information useful. A full report of the 2001 Grade 3 Reading Test results will be released next fall.

Standard Setting Panels - Grade 3 Reading, Grades 4 & 7 ELA, Grade 6 Mathematics

This summer we will conduct standard setting panels for each of the new MCAS tests and the grade 4 English Language Arts test. Please encourage your staff to apply for one of these panels: grade 3 Reading, grades 4 and 7 English Language Arts or grade 6 Mathematics. Participation provides an opportunity to be involved in setting the threshold scores for MCAS performance level results in these areas. Applications have been mailed to all schools and districts and are posted on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas.

Posting of Spring 2001 Test Items

MCAS test items for the spring 2001 tests will be posted on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas by June 11. Reviewing these items will enable you and your staff to see the kinds of questions that your students encountered on MCAS tests this spring.

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MCAS Standard-Setting Recruitment for Grade 3 Reading, Grades 4 and 7 English Language Arts, Grade 6 Mathematics

Memorandum

To: Superintendents, Principals, and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: May 31, 2001

This spring we administered new MCAS tests in grade 3 Reading, grade 7 English Language Arts, and grade 6 Mathematics. In order to report test results using the MCAS performance levels of *Advanced*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement* and *Warning*, we plan to conduct standard-setting sessions for each of the new tests to identify the minimum total test score associated with each performance level. In addition, we plan to review the standards for the grade 4 English Language Arts test originally established in 1998.

To assist with these tasks, the Department of Education invites classroom teachers, administrators, higher education faculty and community members to apply to serve on one of four standard setting panels in mid-August. The schedule for standard-setting follows:

Grade 3 Reading	Grades 4 & 7 ELA	Grade 6 Mathematics
Aug. 14 & 15 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. each day	Aug. 15 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. (orientation & dinner)	Aug. 15 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. (orientation & dinner)
	August 16&17 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. each day	Aug 16 & 17 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. each day

We will select a total of approximately 24 individuals for each standard-setting panel. All panelists will receive an orientation to MCAS and training in the standard-setting process. Panel members will receive Professional Development Points and be reimbursed for travel expenses. Overnight accommodations will be provided as necessary.

Please inform your staff of this professional development opportunity and encourage them to apply. Completed applications are due by Friday, **June 29**.

Application Form for Educators [[PDF](#) || [MS WORD](#)]

Application Form for Non-Educators [[PDF](#) || [MS WORD](#)]



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School Choice

The school choice program allows parents to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. Tuition is paid by the sending district to the receiving district. Districts may elect not to enroll school choice students if no space is available.

School Choice District Listing and General Information

- [Low Income School Choice/Charter Transportation Program FY'03](#)
- [Proposed Change in Calculation of Special Education Tuition Rates for the School Choice Program \(7/2/2002\)](#)
(approved by Board of Education 11/26/02)
- [List of school choice receiving districts in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003](#)
- [Financial Administration of the School Choice Program \(1/18/1999, advisory memo\)](#)

School Choice Tuition

02/12/2002	Preliminary FY2003 School Choice Tuition as of February, 2003
12/17/2002	Preliminary FY2003 School Choice Tuition as of December, 2002
06/21/2002	Final FY2002 School Choice Tuition
06/19/2001	Final FY2001 School Choice Tuition
06/19/2001	Final FY2001 School Choice Tuition Rate
12/18/2000	Final FY2000 School Choice Tuition
02/07/2000	Final FY99 School Choice Pupils and Tuition: individual district OR all districts
02/16/2000	Final FY98 Choice Pupils and Tuition, Sending and Receiving

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State Plan for Professional Development

Memorandum

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Date: May 15, 2001

I am pleased to present you with this draft of the Massachusetts State Plan for Professional Development for your review and discussion. The Education Reform Act, at G.L. c. 71, s. 38Q, states,

The commissioner of education for the commonwealth shall prepare each year a plan for providing statewide assistance in the preparation and implementation of professional development plans. The commissioner shall consult with the board of higher education in developing said plan. The plan shall evaluate the feasibility of obtaining assistance from the institutions of higher education and private service providers. The plan shall be submitted to the board of education for approval.

The proposed State Plan encourages professional development providers, including schools, districts, higher education institutions, and associations to provide comprehensive professional development to improve educator performance at all grade levels. Specifically, the Plan encourages districts to improve their teachers' understanding of the strengths and limitations of a range of appropriate instructional programs and pedagogical practices. It is expected that more informed professional judgment will increase student achievement of the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The priorities of the Plan are to:

- expand teachers' knowledge of the subject matter of the school curriculum;
- extend teachers' familiarity and use of the Massachusetts learning standards in planning classroom curricula;
- help teachers understand the strengths and limitations of a range of commonly used instructional programs and pedagogical practices in their subject areas; and,
- raise educator, parent, and community expectations for student achievement.

Following discussion of this draft, and with your agreement, we will work with the statewide associations (MTA, MFT. MASS, MESPA, MSSAA, and MASC) and the Board of Higher Education to seek additional comment. We expect to submit the final draft to the Board of Education for a vote at the June meeting.

I look forward to discussing the Massachusetts State Plan for Professional Development with you.

[Draft of the Massachusetts State Plan for Professional Development](#) [PDF]

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Recruitment for Board of Education Advisory Councils

Memorandum

To: Educators, Parents, and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: June 5, 2001

The Massachusetts Department of Education is seeking candidates to serve on the Board of Education Advisory Councils. These councils were established by the Education Reform Act of 1993 to advise the Commissioner and the Board on matters relevant to their areas of focus in the implementation of education reform in Massachusetts. Members of these councils serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred. Each council meets 4-6 times per year at times and locations determined by its members. All appointments will be for a three-year term and regular attendance is required.

The Board and I are committed to establishing advisory councils that will work actively to help improve public education programs and advance student achievement. The advisory councils have the benefit of continuing members, to which we will add some new members through this recruitment initiative. We encourage applications from educators, parents, students and other community members who have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to education reform, as well as interest and experience in the subject matter of the particular advisory council.

Through diverse membership on each advisory council, we seek to draw on the perspectives and experience of a wide range of constituents in order to strengthen public education. After reviewing applications, I plan to make recommendations to the Board for appointment at the October Board meeting.

Interested parties should submit a letter of intent along with a resume to: Karen DeCoster, Commissioner's Office, Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5023, no later than September 11, 2001. For more information, please contact Karen directly at kdecoster@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3115.

Listed below are those councils with two or more vacancies. In cases where these vacancies call for specific representation, it is noted.

- Adult Basic Education - adult educators, business/union, and civic minded representatives, particularly from central and western Massachusetts
- Arts Education - candidates from all areas and levels of arts education as well as parents, practicing artists, and representatives from community arts organizations, particularly from western Massachusetts
- Bilingual Education - educators, parents, and community representatives with expertise in bilingual education
- Braille Literacy-educators, parents, and community representatives with expertise or developed interest in the teaching of the blind and visually impaired, particularly in the area of Braille literacy
- Community Service Learning - educators, parents, students, and community representatives with expertise in community service learning

- Early Childhood Education - candidates from business and labor; teachers and administrators in public school as well as private preschool programs; representation from AEYC affiliates (National Association for the Education of Young Children); representation from organizations for young children with disabilities; and school committee representatives
- Educational Personnel - representatives from higher education, district and school administration, school committees, special education, guidance, and preK to12 classroom education
- Gifted and Talented Education - school administrators, representatives from higher education, and parents, teachers, and community members with expertise or developed interest in gifted education
- Global Education - teachers, parents, and community representatives with expertise or developed interest in global issues (e.g., economics, world cultures, and environmental science)
- Interdisciplinary Health Education and Human Services - health professionals who are knowledgeable about the progress of comprehensive health education and human services in the public schools under Education Reform, with particular need for representatives from higher education who are part of certification and licensure programs for health educators, school counselors and school nurses; also those with public health/clinical background
- Life Management Skills and Home Economics - parents, students, business/civic representatives, school committee members, superintendents and educators
- Mathematics and Science Education - mathematics and science educators as well as parent and community representatives with expertise and or a developed interest in these disciplines
- Parent and Community Education and Involvement - parents of children in grades preK - to12 from all regions of the state
- Racial Imbalance - parents of children in grades preK-12 from all regions of the state, civic leaders, community group representatives, persons with knowledge and understanding of the Racial Imbalance Law, educators, choice program directors
- Special Education - additional parent representation, a transition representative, and a person from the state juvenile and adult corrections agencies, with special consideration to candidates from central and western Massachusetts
- Technology*/Engineering Education - technology education directors, educators and engineering professionals, as well as parent and community representatives with expertise and or a developed interest in this discipline (**note: the focus is on applied technologies(e.g., engineering design, construction, transportation) and not instructional technology (e.g., computer applications)*)

For more information about the Board of Education Advisory Councils visit our web site at www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac.

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Public Comment on Draft of *PreK-12 Instructional Technology Recommended Standards*

Memorandum

To: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: June 5, 2001

I am pleased to share with you the [draft of PreK-12 Instructional Technology Recommended Standards](#) [PDF]. The Board of Education had an initial discussion on the draft at its May Board meeting. We are posting this document on our Web site for public comment. I will bring the final document back to the Board this fall for its endorsement.

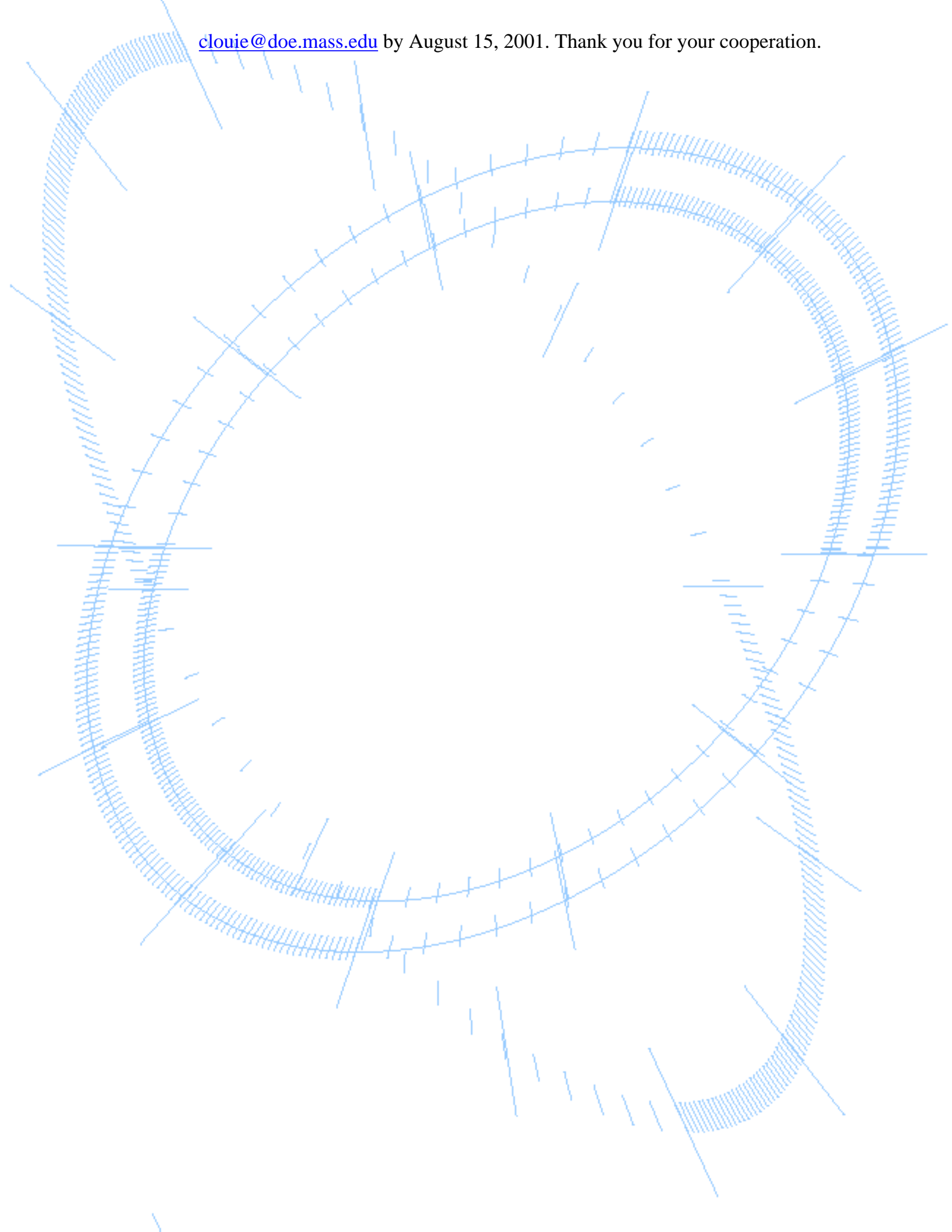
State law (G.L. c. 69, § 1D) authorizes the Board to include in the academic standards it publishes "...a fundamental knowledge of technology education and computer science and keyboarding skills."

Massachusetts students need to acquire essential technology skills if they are going to function effectively in their adult lives. When graduates of our public school system enter the workforce or college, they will be expected to use computers and the Internet. As teachers focus their efforts on teaching the curriculum frameworks, they also need to provide students with learning opportunities that build technology competence. When students leave high school they should know how to use applications such as spreadsheet, database, wordprocessing, and presentation software. They should have a level of proficiency that enables them to select the right technology tool to perform a task most efficiently.

To develop these standards, we have drawn on the expertise of instructional technology specialists, library teachers, business teachers, and subject-area teachers throughout the state. Department of Education staff and experts in the field have reviewed this draft.

Please share this document with your staff and your community. Enclosed is a [comment form](#) [MS WORD] for your input. Please email the form to Connie Louie at

clouie@doe.mass.edu by August 15, 2001. Thank you for your cooperation.



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Update on Department Mission and Organization

Memorandum

To: Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner
Date: June 5, 2001
Subject: Update on Department Mission and Organization

Several developments have prompted me to review the organization of the Department of Education, our current work and our long term mission and goals.

1. A New Phase of the Implementation of Education Reform

We are entering a third phase of Education Reform. Starting in 1993, the first phase saw the Board of Education, the Department of the field focusing on implementing the requirements of the Education Reform Act. It was time when school councils were established in every school, the foundation formula was laid out, the so-called general track was eliminated, time and learning regulations were put into place, and the common core of learning and curriculum frameworks were established. There was a sense of working together in these first few years.

The second phase began with the concern of the Governor and others about the slow pace of Education Reform. The Board of Education was downsized and a new chair was appointed. An era of top-down establishment of standards and accountability was instituted. This led to the revamping of our curriculum frameworks; certification/recertification regulations; teacher testing; and an updated professional development plan. This phase of setting high standards is near completion.

We are now about to embark on a third phase that focuses on how the Board and we can effectively work in partnership with schools and districts to implement these strong standards. We need to take a leadership role in helping schools use data, improve planning and coordinate initiatives geared toward improving student achievement. We have lots of do to create this partnership. We must refocus our efforts to serve schools, districts, and other constituents and to do so more efficiently within the resources available.

2. Department Organizational Changes

I am announcing a number of organizational changes and actions to begin the transformation to the third phase of Education Reform.

- We are actively recruiting for the position of Deputy Commissioner who will serve as Chief Operating Officer (COO). This person will report to me and will manage the day to day activities of the Department, coordinate the plans and policies of all clusters and make sure that we are all working toward the same goals. The General Counsel/Senior Associate Commissioner, Rhoda Schneider, will continue to report to the Commissioner and all other senior staff will report to the COO.
- We have re-defined the function of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and due to the unique nature of this agency, have divided finance into an external and an internal position. Jeff

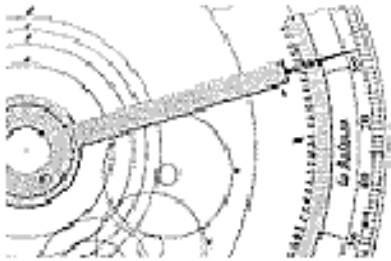
Wulfson will be the Associate Commissioner for School Finance, responsible for external school finance issues, including Chapter 70, school building assistance and grants management. Tony DeLorenzo is being named Chief Financial Officer, and is responsible for all internal finance, budget and procurement operations.

- We are posting the job of Chief Information Officer (CIO) to run our internal infrastructure and, more importantly, to manage the Department's critical data collection, processing and analysis systems. Having current and accurate data on student, school and district performance is vital to the success of our work. We are actively seeking an information services professional to manage this effort.
- To provide greater focus on the important policy work of the Department, I am changing the titles and job descriptions of the current Deputy Commissioners. Alan Safran will be the Senior Associate Commissioner for Student Achievement. He will have the responsibility of reaching across the agency to recommend policy and/or programmatic changes to improve student achievement in general, with an initial focus on the Class of 2003. He will coordinate the resources of the agency to promote high standards, and he will work with the Administration, legislative leaders, business and community leaders and local educators to strengthen and build new partnerships that increase the use of external resources.

Sandra Stotsky will assume the title of Senior Associate Commissioner for Standards, Academic Review and Research. She will continue to be responsible for the review and quality control of all academic materials issued by the Department. Additionally, in concert with the Board, the Education Reform Review Commission and our priorities, she will monitor research projects, and align our studies with emerging national research.

The past eight years have been exciting and demanding for everyone involved in public education in Massachusetts. The Commonwealth has established high standards for schools and districts, educators and students, and has provided new tools and resources to expand educational opportunities and expectations for all students. While we have accomplished a great deal since 1993, much more remains to be done to realize the promise of education reform. I am confident that the organizational changes I have instituted at the Department of Education will enable us to work more effectively with local educators to accomplish our common goals. I look forward to continuing collaboration with you as we take on these historic challenges. Thank you for your hard work and support.

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Biodiversity Days Spring Activities

May 20, 2001

Dear Educator,

I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have been using the seasonal biodiversity activities in your curriculum that the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has provided schools over the last year. As you may know, by getting students involved in their environment, they will become educated citizens on the natural world and will increase their knowledge in multiple disciplines of study. The [seasonal activities](#) are also good preparation for the students to participate in this year's Biodiversity Days.

On April 25, Commissioner David Driscoll and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the EOEA and the Department of Education (DOE) for the Massachusetts Environmental Education Plan (MEEP). The MEEP is a framework to: (1) develop a statewide environmental literacy program; (2) include environmental education in pre-K through 12th grade curriculum reform; (3) encourage pre-service and in-service teacher training; and (4) establish statewide support for environmental education. It is a sign of DOE's and EOEA's commitment to work together on integrating the environment into the Commonwealth's public schools.

EOEA's Biodiversity Days are quickly approaching on June 8, 9 and 10, and we look forward to your participation. Again, to help you prepare your class for this event, I have included in this letter, hands-on, interactive spring and summer biodiversity activities to add to the other seasonal activities that have already been sent out and that are posted on our website. The activities were formulated by educators across the state to get your class outdoors to discover the learning opportunities that exist in nature. Observing, recording, analyzing, and comparing the variety of life forms is a great way of using the environment as an integrating context and to increase the student's learning by participation. We hope you find these activities to be helpful tools in incorporating biodiversity into the state's Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Frameworks, and that they are helpful in preparing your class to participate in Biodiversity Days.

I look forward to hearing about your upcoming Biodiversity Days activities. If

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you have any questions or comments on the provided materials, or would like information on other biodiversity resources or the MEEP, please call my Director of Environmental Education, Melissa Griffiths, at 617-626-1114.

[Biodiversity Days 2001 Spring Activities](#)

Very truly yours,

Bob Durand
Secretary, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

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