



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Updates

November 5, 2001

Dear Superintendents, and Charter School Leaders and Collaboratives:

In this letter, I have five announcements and seven items recently posted on our website at www.doe.mass.edu.

MCAS District and School Results

Last week I released the school and district [MCAS scores](#). Thank you for your support in coordinating this massive process in such a smooth, open and responsive manner.

Moreso, I want to acknowledge you and your teachers, parents and school communities for the incredibly hard work done to move literally thousands of students out of Failing/ Warning or Needs Improvement into higher levels. This is especially a great credit to educators whose determination and caring are making the difference, and I am confident that given the continued focus on teaching and learning, many more students in the Class of 2003 who came to within just four points of passing English and math last spring will achieve 220 by the spring of 2003.

MCAS Appeals Process

We are inviting the public to comment on proposed regulations that would establish an MCAS appeals process for score appeals and performance appeals. The MCAS appeals process is important to the fairness of the testing program and to the integrity of the competency determination for high school graduation. I encourage superintendents and high school principals, in particular, to review the proposed regulations and let us know your suggestions. I want to emphasize that students will need to have good attendance and participate in remedial work in order to be eligible for the MCAS appeal. To review the proposed regulations and an accompanying memo on the public comment period, please go to www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/.

Guidelines for Approving and Endorsing Professional Development Plans

As you know, Massachusetts educator recertification regulations require that licensed educators need to obtain initial approval and final endorsement of their professional development plans from their supervisor. As a service to help superintendents, principals and other supervisors as they review, approve and endorse individual plans, we have made available on our website the *Guidelines for Approving and Endorsing Individual Professional Development Plans* [[HTML](#) | [PDF](#)]. I hope you find this information useful.

Special Education Data Collection Training Sessions Notification

This year, we discontinued the October 1 report of special education student data, and will use the October 1 SIMS (Student Information Management System) data to help in the December 1 Federal Child Count. The December 1 collection will change from an online form to the exchange of electronic student data files between the Department of Education and school districts. To assist special education directors and SIMS staff, we will hold regional training sessions the week of November 12th. A notice on training dates and locations will be mailed to key district staff. For more information, you can go to

www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/ for SIMS and www.doe.mass.edu/sped/#new for Special Education.

Green Schools Pilot Project

On November 7, I plan to release a request for responses for the Green Schools Pilot Project, a joint partnership of the Department of Education and Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust. This Trust will provide extra funding and technical assistance to help districts design and build school buildings that are energy efficient and environmentally friendly. Links to the RFR will be posted on our School Finance webpage at <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu>.

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

1. Request for Proposals: Content Institutes for 2002



2. New Grant Opportunity for Technology Professional Development



3. SBA Program Advisory - (contains important information on new policies and procedures for FY02 SBA applications)

[No longer available]

4. Dual Enrollment Memo and Forms



5. Memo and a Correction on the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery



6. Planning for FY2003 Budget

[No longer available]

7. "Board in Brief," Summary of the November Meeting of the Board of Education.



All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Request for Proposals: Content Institutes for 2002

Memorandum

To: Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 5, 2001

Since the enactment of the Education Reform Act of 1993, the Massachusetts Department of Education has published curriculum frameworks in the arts, English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.

To support implementation of these frameworks, we annually provide opportunities for Massachusetts educators to strengthen their knowledge of discipline-specific content. In 2001, more than 800 teachers and administrators attended forty-six content institutes held across the state. The ultimate purpose of these institutes is to give educators specific content knowledge to improve student achievement.

The Department is now seeking proposals for content institutes that will take place in the spring and summer of 2002. In English language arts, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering, priority will be given to proposals that address identified gaps in student performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Proposals may be submitted by partnerships of 1) a Massachusetts public school district, collaborative, or charter school working in collaboration with 2) a Massachusetts college, university, cultural institution, or professional educational organization.

The school district, collaborative, or charter school must apply for the funds on behalf of the partnership. The Department of Education will advertise these institutes statewide and assist in recruiting participants.

The enclosed materials provide guidance in preparing an application to this Request for Proposals (RFP) [[PDF](#)]. For further program information, please contact Judy Sohn-White at the Massachusetts Department of Education (781) 338-6254, or jsohn-white@doe.mass.edu.

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Grants and Other Financial Assistance Programs

Memorandum

To: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Date: November 5, 2001
Subject: [New Grant Opportunity for Technology Professional Development](#)

We are pleased to announce an opportunity for you to participate in the federally funded technology professional development program, Project MEET (Massachusetts Empowering Educators with Technology). Through the Technology Literacy Challenge Grant: Project MEET School Sites (Fund Code: 613B), selected districts will send school-based teams to participate in a 14-month technology professional development program. They will become leaders in technology integration. They will learn to use effective models of teaching with technology. They will learn how to use online technology to support the content of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

I hope you will take advantage of this grant opportunity to advance education reform. Enclosed is a grant application packet with information. The deadline for submission is December 17, 2001. Please submit the application to Joan Ciampa, Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden MA 02148. If you have any questions please contact Joan Ciampa at 781-338-6826 or email her at jciampa@doe.mass.edu.

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Dual Enrollment Application Period

Memorandum

To: Guidance Counselors

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 5, 2001

This is a reminder that the spring 2002 Dual Enrollment application period is the month of November.

The Department of Education materials that you will need are posted on the Dual Enrollment web-site (www.doe.mass.edu/dual). Last spring, the Department implemented a number of major changes in the Dual Enrollment program. Consequently, it is important to note that:

- The Statement of Assurances form has replaced the Application for Funding form.
- The policy of "first come, first served" has been discontinued.
- The student files an application with the public college and university where he/she plans to take a course (or courses).

A detailed description of the changes in the Dual Enrollment Program and the new responsibilities for guidance counselors are posted on the Dual Enrollment web-site in memoranda under the titles [Revisions in Dual Enrollment Program](#) and [Changes in Dual Enrollment Program](#), respectively.

In addition, if students in your school are eligible for the [Certificate of Mastery](#), please note that they may list college courses completed as part of the Dual Enrollment program on their applications. For information about the Certificate of Mastery, please contact John Chiang Keh at (781) 338-6266 or by e-mail at: jkeh@doe.mass.edu.

If you have any questions regarding the Dual Enrollment program, please contact Richard Salus at (781) 338-6252 or by e-mail at: rsalus@doe.mass.edu.

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Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery

Memorandum

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

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 5, 2001

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with a source of information about the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery and to correct a related item from my September 20, 2001 memorandum regarding MCAS retest policies.

Correction

As stated in my September 20 memorandum, eleventh graders who scored 220 or higher on the grade 10 ELA and/or Mathematics test(s) *may* participate in the **spring 2002** tests. They may do this for any number of reasons, including qualifying for a Certificate of Mastery. However, at this time, twelfth graders who scored 220 or higher on a grade 10 MCAS exam *may not* retake that particular test, due to constraints related to funding and the timing of score reports. We are sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery

Information regarding the Stanley Z. Koplik 2002 Certificate of Mastery will be sent to guidance departments this fall. Details regarding 2001 Award recipients will be sent to superintendents and high schools as well. For more information, please visit www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/Student/mastery/ or contact John Chiang Keh via 781-338-3099 or OSL@doe.mass.edu.

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Board in Brief

Tuesday, October 23, 2001

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 meeting on Tuesday, October 23, 2001 at the Department of Education in Malden.

Chairman James Peyser opened the meeting by commenting on the 2001 MCAS statewide results, which were released on October 15th. For the second consecutive year, Massachusetts made progress toward meeting the two-fold goal of moving students out of the *Warning/Failing* categories, and advancing students into the *Proficient* and *Advanced* categories. In grade 10 across the state, 82% of all 10th graders passed the English language arts exam, up from 66% last year. In math, 75% passed, up from just 55% last year. Chairman Peyser said, "We need to keep in mind, when looking at these results, that MCAS is a tool to let us know if education reform is working. These results are an indicator that standards-based reform is, in fact, working. Other indicators, such as the NAEP and the SAT, also show that we're making steady progress. Although much work remains to be done, our faith in our students and teachers is paying off. Now is the time for all of us to ensure that every student has the opportunity for success."

Chairman Peyser also reported that Governor Swift has signed Executive Order #434, establishing the Joint Committee on Educational Policy. The Joint Committee's mission is to recommend ways to improve communication and align policies in order to create a seamless public education system from pre-school through higher education. The committee will consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of both the Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education, the Commissioner of Education, and the Chancellor of Higher Education.

Commissioner Driscoll reported that he presented the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award to three Massachusetts educators this month: June Eressy, a 17-year English teacher at the University Park Campus School in Worcester; Catherine Latham, a 23-year math teacher at Lynn English High School; and Edward Noonan, a 15-year business teacher at Dorchester High School in Boston.

As part of the Commonwealth's efforts to assist students in meeting the competency determination, Commissioner Driscoll reported that the Princeton Review's "Homeroom" program has been selected to provide statewide online tutorial support for students in the class of 2003 who have not yet passed the grade 10 English language arts or math MCAS test. The online tutorial began on October 22nd and runs through December 10th. It is aligned with the grade 10 MCAS standards, and is designed to help students learn English and math knowledge and skills they will need to prepare for the MCAS retest in December.

Commissioner Driscoll also updated the Board on a report from Achieve, Inc., released on October 17th, entitled *Measuring Up: A Report on Education Standards and Assessments for Massachusetts*. Achieve, a nonpartisan group of Governors and business leaders, had previously reviewed the Massachusetts English language arts standards, judging them to be among the strongest in the U.S. In the report published this month, Achieve evaluated the Massachusetts math framework and the alignment and rigor of our 2001 grade 10 MCAS tests in mathematics and English language arts. The report stated, "Massachusetts' standards and high school tests are each of high quality and are aligned.... The grade 10 tests are rigorous and generally well aligned with the standards, ensuring that students are required to demonstrate important knowledge and skills before graduating from high school." Commissioner Driscoll noted that the report ranked the Massachusetts standards and assessments as the best in the country, describing them as "challenging, but attainable."

MCAS: Report on 2001 MCAS Test Results and Proposed Appeals Process

Commissioner Driscoll presented an overview of the 2001 MCAS results. In total, over two-thirds (68%) of the class of 2003 earned the competency determination they will need to graduate - on their first try. Of those students who have not yet met the 220 competency determination standard on the grade 10 English language arts or math test, the majority scored within 4 scaled score points of 220, which means many are likely to pass on a retest. Commissioner Driscoll said, "These numbers are proof of the work that has been done to meet the Commonwealth's high standards, and for that, our teachers, administrators, students and parents should be congratulated." Local school and district results will be sent to districts this week for verification, and will be released statewide next week.

The Board voted unanimously to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to the regulations on the MCAS and the Competency Determination (603 CMR 30.00), establishing an MCAS appeals process for "score appeals" and "performance appeals."

The "score appeal" will address claims about mis-scoring of a student's response to one or more MCAS grade 10 English language arts or mathematics test items, or miscalculation of a grade 10 student's total raw score and/or scaled score. The "performance appeal" applies to a student who asserts that his or her performance on the grade 10 MCAS in English language arts, mathematics, or both subjects, does not accurately reflect the student's knowledge and skill in relation to the relevant standards in the Massachusetts curriculum framework in that subject area. Neither of these types of appeals exempts students from meeting the grade 10 standards in English language arts and mathematics, and neither one changes the 220 minimum standard for the competency determination. After the public comment period and any necessary revisions, the Commissioner will bring back the proposed regulation to the Board in January 2002 for a vote.

FY 2003 Budget Proposal

Chairman Peyser reported on the recent meeting of the Board's budget committee, and presented the committee's budget proposal, which takes into account the spending targets the Board and Department of Education have been given by the Administration. Although the Legislature has not yet acted on the FY 2002 state budget, the Board's education budget proposal for FY 2003 needs to be finalized. The Board will vote on its FY 2003 budget proposal at the November meeting.

Recommended Standards for Instructional Technology

The Board voted to approve the Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards. State law authorizes the Board of Education to include in the academic standards it adopts "...a fundamental knowledge of technology education and computer science and keyboarding skills." The Commissioner will post the Standards on the Department's website and will disseminate them to all school district technology coordinators throughout the Commonwealth.

State Action for Educational Leadership Grant

The Board received an update on the Commonwealth School Leadership Project, launched by the Department in partnership with Governor Swift and Senator Robert Antonioni. The project is designed to address the acute and growing shortage of school superintendents, principals, and administrative staff. Massachusetts has received a \$50,000 award from the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation through the *State Action for Educational Leadership Project* (SAELP) coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers, and is now applying for a \$250,000 implementation grant.

State and Federal Grants

The Board approved \$1,476,414 in federal and state grants for the following programs: Specialized Training - Physical Restraint/Trainer of Trainers; Distance Learning Pilot Projects; Charter School Dissemination Program; School Breakfast Start-up; and Refugee Children School Impact Grant.

NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, November 27, 2001, at a location to be announced.