



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

January 8, 2003

Dear Superintendents and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

I hope you have taken some time to relax during the holiday season. In this update, I have two announcements and one item posted at www.doe.mass.edu/.

Fiscal Year 2003 State Reimbursement for Residential School Tuition (50/50 Program)

Most of you have already seen the memo I posted last week regarding funding for the "50/50" residential school tuition program (http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/seduction/FY03_info_3.html). A number of you have expressed a concern that local districts might need to absorb the additional fourth-quarter costs without receiving the benefit of the special one-time reimbursements. I am very much aware of this issue, and our staff is working with the Department of Revenue to address it. Please be assured that it is our intent to provide the special reimbursement in such a way as to minimize the impact on district budgets. We will provide more information on our school finance web site as soon as possible.

Secondary School Reading Grant Opportunity

I am pleased to announce a new planning grant opportunity intended to support middle and high schools and vocational schools needing to develop comprehensive and school-wide approaches to improving student reading achievement. Details are posted at <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/grants/>. Proposals are due by 5 p.m. on Monday, February 3. Contact Dot Earle, Office of Reading, at 781-338-6265 or dearle@doe.mass.edu for more information.

Here is one item that has been posted at www.doe.mass.edu/:

1. MCAS Spring 2003: "*Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities.*"



All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS Spring 2003 Update

January 2003

Dear Colleagues:

In preparation for the spring 2003 MCAS tests, I am pleased to provide an updated version of the publication, [Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS](#) . This publication presents guidelines to educators and parents in making appropriate MCAS participation decisions for students with disabilities and describes commonly-used test accommodations.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind IEP Teams to identify **accommodations** for each student carefully, and to select only those that are believed to be essential in providing him or her access to MCAS tests. As a reminder, test accommodations may only be identified by the IEP Team, rather than by any individual, and may be administered only after the parent signs the IEP. Accommodations that *are* identified for each student must be those that are generally consistent with those used during routine instruction and assessment in that content area. I am particularly concerned that *non-standard accommodations*, such as reading aloud the ELA Language and Literature tests to a student, be used only when absolutely necessary and only when a student already receives this accommodation during his or her instruction.

I applaud your efforts to provide students with disabilities an educational program based on the Massachusetts [Curriculum Frameworks](#), and commend you for the work you do to educate all students in the Commonwealth.

If you need additional information, please contact my staff in the Student Assessment Services unit by phone at (781) 338-3625 or by email at mcas@doe.mass.edu.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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