



**David P. Driscoll**  
Commissioner of Education

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## Commissioner's Update

March 20, 2003

Dear Superintendents, and Directors of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this update are 7 announcements and 4 items posted at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu).

### School Business Assistance

At [http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/sbuilding/info\\_03.html](http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/sbuilding/info_03.html) we have posted an important update regarding the SBA project moratorium.

### MCAS Performance Appeals


Decisions on the third round of MCAS performance appeals have been made and I am notifying superintendents of the results this week. We received 414 appeals during the winter period, raising the total number of submissions to more than 1,000 since last fall. In line with previous results, I am granting about 50% of appeals. The next review session will take place in mid-April so we will need to receive your appeals by April 1. I encourage you to submit appeals by April so that we can act on them before the spring MCAS tests and the end of this school year. For the final appeals review session for this school year, appeals will need to be submitted by May 1 for a mid-May review.

### Certificate of Attainment

In November 2002, the Board of Education approved the state endorsed Certificate of Attainment for students who have completed all of their coursework but have not passed the MCAS yet. Details on this certificate can be reviewed at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/news/112602coa.html>.

### Pathways Toward Success After High School

I recently sent you packets of information about opportunities that will be available for students who still need to meet the mathematics and English standard. These materials are posted at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=1433>. I hope that you will distribute the information widely to guidance counselors, teachers, students and parents so that every student who wants to succeed has the information he or she needs to take advantage of the help that is available.

To assist you, I wanted to provide you with a pamphlet produced by the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Plan for Excellence. It contains information and resources for Boston public school students who will need additional assistance after high school. The flyer is impressive and might be of use for you in planning for students in your districts. Here is a copy of the [flyer](#) 

Additionally, I wanted to recognize the good work being done in a pilot program supported by the Commonwealth Corporation. "Another Route to College," (ARC) at Holyoke and Northern Essex Community Colleges, offers help to seniors in the Class of 2003 who have failed the MCAS so they can pass the tests, earn a full high school diploma and begin the pathway to college and career. I am heartened that these and other programs located throughout the Commonwealth will do much to ensure opportunity and success for many more youths.

## Spring 2003 MCAS ELA Composition Make-Up Enrollment Survey

On April 3-4, principals will receive letters containing information on how to complete and submit enrollment surveys for the English Language Arts Composition Make-Up Tests. These enrollment surveys must be submitted between 8:00 a.m. on April 8 and 5:00 p.m. on April 9 to ensure the delivery of an adequate quantity of make-up test materials to schools.

## NCLB Information Session on School Report Cards

The Department of Education, the Massachusetts School Elementary School Principals Association and the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association, are pleased to sponsor an information session on School Report Cards as required by No Child Left Behind. The workshop will cover report card requirements, the definition of and data reporting on "highly qualified" teachers, report card templates and application, and timelines for dissemination. All principals, assistant principals, charter school leaders and teacher representatives are welcome to attend the 2-hour session on Monday, March 31, from 10:00 a.m. to noon, at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School. Please register at [www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/reportcard/registration.asp](http://www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/reportcard/registration.asp).

## Technology News

### National Forum on Education Statistics

Recently in the mail you should have received an informational brochure from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The brochure outlines the focus of the National Forum on Education Statistics that was established by NCES. The Forum provides support for states, local schools and districts to collect, maintain and use elementary and secondary education data. I encourage you to review the brochure and visit their web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/> that contains a number of practical publications that can be downloaded free of charge. Many of these publications may be of assistance as your district develops policies and procedures to comply with No Child Left Behind. If you have questions regarding the Forum please contact our state representative, Helene Bettencourt ([hbettencourt@doe.mass.edu](mailto:hbettencourt@doe.mass.edu)), or our local representative, Roger Young ([ryoung@haverhill-ma.com](mailto:ryoung@haverhill-ma.com)).

### SIMS 2.0 Spring Workshops

Between April 10 and 17, eight regional SIMS training sessions will be offered throughout the state to review changes that will be implemented in the 2003-2004 school year. Chapter 70 funding and state and federal grant awards depend on the most accurate data information submitted to us. Subsequently, it is strongly advised that you allow staff who work with and may be working with SIMS data next year to attend these sessions. Register at this site, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/registration.asp>.



### Prayer in Public Schools

If you have not yet done so, please complete the below statement of assurance regarding prayer in school and email it to [grants@doe.mass.edu](mailto:grants@doe.mass.edu).

*Statement of Assurance: (type in Superintendent's name), Superintendent of the (type in name of district) certify that the (type in name of district) has no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary schools and secondary schools, as detailed in the guidance provided by the U. S. Secretary of Education.*

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There are 4 items in this letter:

1. U.S. Department of Education Resources to Help Schools Plan for Emergencies  

2. Smallpox Preparedness and Response  

3. Spring 2003 MCAS Test Administration



#### 4. Professional Teacher Status



All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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*Massachusetts Department of Education*

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## Health, Safety and Student Support Services

### Announcement from U.S. Departments of Education and Homeland Security

To: Superintendents, and Charter School Leaders, and Collaboratives

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: March 12, 2003

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### Secretaries Paige and Ridge Unveil New Web Resource to Help Schools Plan for Emergencies

In an effort to provide school leaders with more information about emergency preparedness, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge on March 7, unveiled a new section on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site - [www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/](http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/) -- designed to be a one-stop-shop to help school officials plan for any emergency, including natural disasters, violent incidents and terrorist acts. Secretaries Paige and Ridge unveiled the tools at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, MD.

"As a former superintendent of the nation's seventh largest school district, I know the importance of emergency planning," Secretary Paige said. "The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved -- from top to bottom -- should know the drill and know each other."

"The tide of events since September 11, 2001, demands that schools be better prepared. We're here to help -- to provide more information and resources and to highlight programs we know work. This new Web resource will help our schools strengthen and improve their emergency plans."

In addition to the Web site, Paige also announced that \$30 million is available in FY 2003 to help school districts improve and strengthen emergency response and crisis management plans. Funds could be used to train school personnel, parents and students in crisis response; coordinate with local emergency responders including fire and police; purchase equipment; and coordinate with groups and organizations responsible for recovery issues, such as health and mental-health agencies. An additional \$30 million is included in the proposed FY 2004 budget. Applications for this program will be available in early spring 2003. Funding decisions will be made in the summer. Paige added that under the No Child Left Behind Act, local school districts must provide assurances that they have plans that outline how they are working to keep their schools safe and drug free.

Paige unveiled the new resource on the heels of Homeland Security Secretary Ridge's introduction of the multi-year, multi-media Ready Campaign, which includes a new Web site [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), to "build a more prepared nation, one individual, one family, one neighborhood, one community at a time." "Recently the Department launched a readiness campaign where I asked Americans to do a few simple things to help protect their families in the event of a terrorist attack against their community. These steps are critically important whether at home, work or school," said Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. "I commend Secretary Paige and the Department Education for taking the initiative to prepare our schools for any emergency, from natural disasters to terrorism. Through initiatives like this, we are achieving our goal of building a more prepared nation, one individual, one family, one neighborhood, one community at a time."

The U.S. Department of Education has been working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies on school preparedness. In addition, the Department has been working with experts from around the country to develop a model emergency response and crisis management plan. That plan will be released later this month. Proposed plan content is excerpted below.

### Emergency Plans

If you don't have a school crisis plan in partnership with public safety agencies, including law enforcement and fire, health, mental health and local emergency preparedness agencies, develop one.

Ensure that it addresses traditional crises and emergencies such as fires, school shootings and accidents, as well as biological, radiological, chemical and other terrorist activities.

If you do have a crisis plan, review it. Ensure that it addresses issues related to terrorism, such as biological, radiological and chemical attacks.

Train, practice and drill. Documents on a shelf don't work in a crisis.

Ensure that your school district crisis plan addresses the unique circumstances and needs of individual schools. Districts are encouraged to develop a separate plan for each school building. Each school crisis plan should address four major areas-prevention/mitigation; preparedness; response and recovery.

**Actions that schools should take under each of these areas include:**

**Prevention/mitigation:**

- Conduct an assessment of each school building. Identify those factors that put the building, students and staff at greater risk, such as proximity to rail tracks that regularly transport hazardous materials or facilities that produce highly toxic material or propane gas tanks, and develop a plan for reducing the risk. This can include plans to evacuate students away from these areas in times of crisis and to reposition propane tanks or other hazardous materials away from school buildings.
- Work with businesses and factories in close proximity to the school to ensure that the school's crisis plan is coordinated with their crisis plans.
- Ensure a process is in place for controlling access and egress to the school. Require all persons who do not have authority to be in the school to sign in.
- Review traffic patterns, and where possible, keep cars, buses, and trucks away from school buildings.
- Review landscaping, and ensure buildings are not obscured by overgrowth of bushes or shrubs where contraband can be placed or persons can hide.

**Preparedness:**

- Have site plans for each school facility readily available and ensure they are shared with first responders and agencies responsible for emergency preparedness.
- Ensure there are multiple evacuation routes and rallying points. Your first or second evacuation site options may be blocked or unavailable at the time of the crisis.
- Practice responding to crisis on a regular basis.
- Ensure a process is established for communicating during a crisis.
- Inspect equipment to ensure it operates during crisis situations.
- Have a plan for discharging students. Remember that during a crisis many parents and guardians may not be able to get to the school to pick up their child. Make sure every student has a secondary contact person and contact information readily available.
- Have a plan for communicating information to parents and for quelling rumors. Cultivate relationships with the media ahead of time, and identify a public information officer to communicate with the media and the community during a crisis.
- Work with law enforcement officials and emergency preparedness agencies on a strategy for sharing key parts of the school crisis plans.

**Response:**

- Develop a command structure for responding to a crisis. The roles and responsibilities for educators, law enforcement and fire officials, and other first responders in responding to different types of crisis need to be developed, reviewed and approved.

**Recovery:**

- Return to the business of teaching and learning as soon as possible.
- Identify and approve a team of credentialed mental health workers to provide mental health services to faculty and students after a crisis. Understand that recovery takes place over time and that the services of this team may be needed over an extended time period.

- Ensure the team is adequately trained.
- The plan needs to include notification of parents on actions that the school intends to take to help students recover from the crisis.

**There are many other organizations that have prepared information to help all Americans plan for emergencies, including:**

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security -- <http://www.dhs.gov/>
- Ready Campaign- [www.ready.gov/](http://www.ready.gov/)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency - <http://www.fema.gov/>
  
- The American Red Cross - [www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/)
- Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools - <http://mcps.k12.md.us/info/emergency/preparedness/index.cfm>
- Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools - [www.fcps.edu/](http://www.fcps.edu/)
  
- North Carolina Public Schools - [www.ncpublicschools.org/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/)

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## Health, Safety and Student Support Services

### Smallpox Preparedness and Response

To: Superintendents of Schools

From: John Bynoe, Associate Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Education

Alfred DeMaria, MD, Assistant Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Date: March 14, 2003

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is implementing the Commonwealth's smallpox pre-event preparedness program. The program includes training and vaccinating volunteers in hospital and community settings to respond safely and appropriately in the event of an intentional release of smallpox virus. School nurses, along with their colleagues in public health and emergency response, have an important role in this process.

MDPH has sent information on the disease, smallpox vaccination, and available resources to every school nurse in the Commonwealth. The goal is to ensure that school nurses are prepared to respond to questions about smallpox and facilitate recognition and timely reporting of adverse reactions in persons receiving the vaccine, or their contacts. They have also received information to help them evaluate children with febrile rash illness.

In addition, school nurses have expressed a willingness to volunteer to be trained and vaccinated against smallpox, preparing them to be part of the response should a smallpox event occur. This response would include rapid implementation of mass vaccination clinics across the Commonwealth. School nurses will play an essential role in these activities and the support of school superintendents and principals is critical to their involvement in emergency preparedness and response.

Thank you for your support in this important biodefense initiative. If you have further questions, please call Donna Lazarik, MS, RN, at MDPH at 617-983-6800.

C: School Nurse Leaders

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Spring 2003 MCAS Administration Information and Materials

[2003-2004 MCAS Test Administration Schedule](#)

[Spring 2003 MCAS Tests in Science and Technology/Engineering](#)

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## NEWS SEARCH

**Keyword:****Target:****Dates:**

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:



Thursday, March 20, 2003

## Professional Teacher Status

To: Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: March 20, 2003

Some newly hired teachers are asserting that they have lost several months toward earning professional teacher status. This problem is due to a delay in the processing of their application for licensure. Therefore, I am advising you that we may need to count the applicable period of time of uncertified service due to delays in the licensure application process toward the professional teacher status of such new teachers.

Please provide the Office of Academic Affairs and Educator Licensure with the names and social security numbers of any new teachers who may have lost time toward professional status due to a delay in the licensure application process. In turn, we will provide you with a letter informing you of the date of the submission of the initial licensure application as well as the date of issue of the credential.

If you have questions regarding this information, please contact Susan Wheltle, Director of Educator Licensure, at 781-338-6239.

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