



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

October 22, 2003

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

I have two items in this update and two announcements:

Reminder: Public Comment for Grade-Level Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics due November 25, 2003

The curriculum frameworks for English language arts (2001) and mathematics (2000) contain standards written for two-year grade spans, such as 3-4 and 5-6. We currently have MCAS tests for English language arts at grades 3, 4, 7, and 10 and for mathematics at grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 based on these standards. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, however, requires annual testing at each grade from grades 3 through 8 in both reading and mathematics beginning in 2005-2006. Therefore our staff, working with committees of teachers, have drafted standards for grades 3, 5, and 7 in these subjects. The existing standards will remain the same with no changes.

Educators in all public schools and in institutions of higher education have a crucial role to play in judging the clarity and usefulness of these draft standards and suggesting ways in which they may be strengthened. I encourage you to review and respond to the draft grade-level standards in English and mathematics by November 25. Please use the online form at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/updates.html>. A final draft of the grade 3, 5, and 7 standards will be revised upon feedback and will be presented to the Board of Education at its January 2004 regular meeting.

MCAS Performance Appeals

For the period September - October, nearly 150 MCAS performance appeals were submitted for students in the Classes of 2003 and 2004, and I am pleased to report that nearly 80% were granted. You are receiving decisions this week.

When submitting appeals for students in the Class of 2004, please include their final sophomore and junior course grades. I will continue to accept appeals for students in the Class of 2003 who have yet to meet the Competency Determination standard. However, since these young people are now in different locations, I urge you to call our office to discuss submitting appeals on their behalf. Please continue encouraging them to participate in MCAS study programs and future retests. With your proactive involvement more students in the Class of 2003 will eventually meet the standard.

The deadline for filing MCAS performance appeals for the November review is November 13. The deadline for filing portfolio appeals is November 7.

Here are two items posted at www.doe.mass.edu:

1. [!\[\]\(50ba758255c5d7cec2761495a31c7c80_img.jpg\) Reporting Data on Licensed Teachers](#)

2. [!\[\]\(529949c2c3dadbaa4e538e8c643454bc_img.jpg\) 2003-2004 Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery Award](#)

All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Reporting Data on Licensed Teachers

To: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Date: October 20, 2003

When completing the District and School Staffing Report (due 12/15/03), districts must report data on licensed staff and highly-qualified staff as of October 1, 2003. In completing the report, districts should **not** count as licensed those staff who have applied for a license but have not received the license at the time of report completion. However, due to the backlog of applications at the Department and the delay of notification of licensure, we will accept amendments to the data after the report has been submitted. Notification will be sent in January advising you as to when the form will be available for amendments. All public reporting of the data will include the amendments.

Please contact the Data Collection help line at 781-338-DATA (3282) if you have any questions.

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Awards & Scholarships

The 2003-2004 Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery Award

To: Superintendents, Curriculum Coordinators, High School Principals, Charter School Directors, Collaborative Directors, Directors of Approved Private Special Education Schools, and Guidance Counselors

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: October 20, 2003

I am pleased to invite eligible students in your district to apply for the 2003-2004 Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery Award. Eligible students are those who took the grade 10 MCAS English language arts and mathematics tests in May 2003 and scored in the *Advanced* category on one test and *Proficient* or *Advanced* on the other. These students, their teachers, and their parents are to be commended for their academic achievement, and I encourage you to help students in the next steps of applying for the award.

The Certificate of Mastery program provides recognition by the Massachusetts Board of Education of high school juniors and seniors for outstanding academic achievement. Between the years 2000 to 2003, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education offered recipients of the Koplik Award a tuition waiver to Massachusetts public colleges and universities. That Board has not established funding for the tuition waiver for the 2003-2004 program year.

In September 2003, the Board of Higher Education created a Committee on Tuition, Fees, and Waivers. This Committee was directed to review:

- the appropriateness of tuition waivers as an instrument of public policy, including the identification of alternatives;
- the fiscal impact of tuition waivers in view of the current budget difficulties;
- the effect of tuition waivers on a high tuition/high financial aid funding model;
- the linkage of changes in waiver policy to the current policy of tuition setting and changes in financial aid policy;
- the impact of changes in waiver policy on the recipients of tuition waivers;
- the impact of tuition waivers on a policy of tuition retention by the campuses; and
- the feasibility and advisability of abolition of waivers.

I anticipate that the Committee will provide its recommendations in December. Information on the Committee's work may be found on the Board of Higher Education's website at <http://www.mass.edu/new/home.asp>. I will notify you after the Board of Higher Education has adopted its new policy on waivers.

The 2003-2004 Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery application cycle will begin on November 1, 2003 and end on May 3, 2004. Student requirements for receiving the award remain the same as in previous years but the Department of Education has modified some of the application procedures. A separate mailing including a list of eligible students, the 2003-2004 application form, instructions, and a sample letter to parents will be sent to each high school Guidance Department by November 1. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery Program at (781) 338-3099 or certificateofmastery@doe.mass.edu

Thank you for your interest in the Stanley Z. Koplik Award, and your continuing efforts to help students

attain higher and higher levels of academic achievement.

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