



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

September 7, 2004

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

I hope that you are having smooth and safe openings for the new school year, and that your students and teachers are prepared and energized for the exciting learning challenges lying ahead.

In this Update are 5 announcements and 4 items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu.

A Call for Higher Standards

With each passing month, the need becomes imperative for all students to demonstrate the academic skills and knowledge at least equivalent to the proficient level on the MCAS tests. In this global economy, the changes in our workforce are occurring faster than ever. Therefore, despite the daunting educational challenges that we face in our schools every day, I call for all of us to continue our great efforts toward raising standards and expectations for all students. I look forward to a safe, challenging and successful year for you, your faculties and your students and their families.

Health Care Coverage for Students and Families

Health Care For All, a non-profit consumer advocacy organization, is promoting the annual *Covering Kids & Families* "Back to School" Campaign, to notify low-income families in Massachusetts of the importance and availability of low cost and free health coverage through MassHealth and the Children's Medical Security Plan.

During the week of September 13, superintendents will be receiving "Back to School" kits with posters and outreach materials to display in schools where parents can see them. Healthy children are more likely to be successful in school, and I want to thank you in advance for helping to alert students and families to the health care programs in your area. For more information, contact Health Care For All at 617-275-2937. *Covering Kids and Families* is a national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.


<http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=2058>

Jobs For Youth: JFYNet MCAS Prep Program for High Schools: Availability of RFP

In the FY 05 state budget line item for academic support services, funding was earmarked for JFYNetWorks, Jobs for Youth, a Boston-based non-profit, for a matching grant to make available instructional computer software to enhance student performance on the MCAS exams. The Department of Education is working in cooperation with JFYNetWorks to notify high schools and districts of this opportunity to apply for the JFYNet MCAS prep program at a substantially reduced price. Over the past four years, JFYNet has been introduced in 18 high schools in the Commonwealth. JFYNetWorks has found that when the program is implemented according to recommended standards, it has produced significant comparative advantages in passing rates: students who are assigned to the program have consistently passed the MCAS at higher rates than other students in the same schools who are not assigned to the program.

The grant is primarily targeted to schools that have not made AYP in two or more subgroups or in the aggregate on the 2004 end-of-year AYP determinations. All interested schools are encouraged to apply for [JFYNet](#). RFP packages will be mailed soon.

Superintendent Checklist

In my August Back to School Update I provided you with an [administrative checklist](#)  that has been revised to reflect activities in the 2005 school year. I am providing it once again to emphasize the importance of following through with many of these safeguards.

Library of Congress: Center for the Book

The Massachusetts Center for the Book, affiliated with the national Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, is preparing for its fifth year of a national reading and writing promotion program, *Letters About Literature*. This is a literary program that encourages students in grades 4 through 12 to write letters to authors whose work has made a difference in their lives. This is a great opportunity for teachers and students to enhance reading and writing activities, and I encourage your participation. Information about this year's program will be mailed to superintendents, principals, curriculum coordinators and school librarians in the near future. In the meantime, for more information you can contact the Massachusetts Center for the Book at www.massbook.org and the national program in the Library of Congress at www.loc.gov/letters/.

Here are 4 items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu:

1. Proposed Amendments to School Finance Regulations



2. Foundation Reserve Application Forms



3. Announcement of Fall 2004 MCAS Workshops - MEPA Administration and MCAS Reporting



4. 2004 Fall MEPA and MCAS Workshops Registration Form and Instructions



All the best for a great school year.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education



Proposed Amendments to School Finance Regulations

603 CMR 10.00

Released for Public Comment by the Board of Education: August 24, 2004

Deadline for Submission of Public Comment: October 1, 2004

Board of Education final action anticipated: October 26, 2004

10.07: Special Education Payments and Reimbursements

(9) **Reimbursement for Individual Districts.** Instructional costs eligible for reimbursement under this program shall be reported by a school district to the Department in a form and manner as prescribed by the Department. The Department may require such reports to include state-assigned student identification numbers (SASIDs) and such other personal identifying information as is needed. The Department shall review reports provided by individual districts and shall approve reported costs that are eligible for reimbursement pursuant to 603 CMR 10.07 within 30 days of the submission by the district, subject to the following requirements:

(a) **Annual Calculation.** Calculation of costs for individual students shall be based on the ~~anticipated annual~~ actual costs of the student's program. Services included in the calculation shall be supported by documentation of the student's IEP and associated student records which shall be kept on-site at the district and made available to the Department or the Department's authorized representative upon request.

(b) **Temporary Absences.** Districts may claim reimbursement for students experiencing temporary changes in the delivery of an IEP program due to illness or temporary absence, provided that such absence does not exceed 20 consecutive school days.

(c) **State Reimbursement.** Subject to appropriation, for each student the state's share shall equal 75% of the prior year's approved instructional costs in excess of four times the full amount of the prior year's state average per pupil foundation budget as defined in M.G.L. c.70 and as set by the Department. For students who have no father, mother, or guardian living in the commonwealth, and for any school age child placed in a school district other than a home town by, or under the auspices of, the department of transitional assistance or the department of social services, the state's share shall equal 100% of the prior year's approved instructional costs in excess of said four times the full amount of the prior year's state average per pupil foundation budget. In the event that appropriations are insufficient to fully fund all reimbursements due under 603 CMR 10.07, the total due to each district shall be prorated by an equal percentage.

(d) **Local Budget Planning.** In preparing a budget recommendation for the subsequent fiscal year for consideration by the local appropriating authority, a school district shall ~~project special education costs and enrollments, including per pupil instructional costs eligible for reimbursement under this program. The school committee's budget recommendation should exclude all per pupil instructional costs eligible for the estimated reimbursement expected to be received~~ under this program.

1. Upon receipt of reimbursements paid under this program, such amounts shall be recorded as additional appropriations to the school committee and may be spent by the school committee without further action on the part of the local appropriating authority.

2. Reimbursements shall be made by the Department to the school district in four quarterly payments. Reimbursements ~~for the first three quarters~~ shall coincide with the distribution of funds made available pursuant to M.G.L. c.70. ~~The Department shall provide the district with 50% of its estimated reimbursement by the end of the first quarter; 65% by the end of the second quarter; and 80% by the end of the third quarter, except to the extent that direct payments are made as provided in 603 CMR 10.07(10). The fourth quarter reimbursement shall be made by July 31 of the following fiscal year, provided that the reimbursement claim is submitted by the district no later than June 30. The fourth quarter reimbursement shall be based on actual reported costs and shall include any required adjustments that have not already been included in prior quarters. The fourth quarter reimbursement may be accrued by the district for the fiscal year just ended, in accordance with Department of Revenue year end closing instructions. Each payment shall equal 25% of the estimated annual reimbursement, provided that payments may be adjusted to reflect audit determinations for prior year claims.~~

(10) **Direct Payment to Approved Private Residential Schools.** Residential schools and residential programs that have sought and received program approval using the procedures of 603 CMR 28.09 shall be eligible to receive direct payment of all sums authorized by 603 CMR 10.07 for specific students. Such direct payment shall only be made available upon the request of the district and the private school and upon receipt of required forms and notices by to the Department ~~sent by the responsible school district with subsequent receipt of required forms from the approved private residential school or program.~~ Such payments shall be made in the fiscal year following the year in which services are provided. Direct payment from the Department shall not be available for approved day schools, unapproved schools, programs approved for individual students that are not otherwise approved private residential programs, or summer programs.



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School Finance: Chapter 70 Program

FY05 Foundation Reserve Program

Application Instructions

The Legislature has appropriated \$6,870,000 for the FY05 foundation reserve ("pothole") program [St. 2004, c.149, s.2, item 7061-0011]. This program is intended to provide supplemental financial assistance to cities, towns, and regional school districts to address urgent and unanticipated educational needs. Municipalities and districts may apply for these funds in accordance with these instructions.

- Foundation reserve funds will be awarded in nine different categories, as described in the application forms in the accompanying Word document [[WORD](#) | [PDF](#)]. Applicants should submit the appropriate form for each category for which they are eligible.
- Categories one, five, and six are for municipal relief. Applications in these categories must be submitted on behalf of a city or town by the mayor, town manager, or board of selectmen. Awards in these categories will be treated as unrestricted state aid and may be appropriated by the municipality for any purpose.
- Categories two, three, four, seven, eight and nine are for supplemental educational funding. Applications in these categories must be submitted on behalf of a local or regional school district by the superintendent of schools. Awards in these categories will be treated as grants and may be expended by the school committee without further appropriation. Please note that charter schools are not eligible for foundation reserve awards.
- Applications must be submitted by mail to the address below, and must be received no later than close of business on September 17, 2004:

Massachusetts Department of Education
Attn: Jeff Wulfson
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148-5023

Fax and email submissions cannot be accepted.

- We expect to announce most of the awards by October 15. For those categories where FY05 enrollment is a criterion, awards will be announced in November, following submission of districts' October 1 enrollment data.
- Award amounts will be determined by the Commissioner of Education and will depend in part on the number of applications received, the size of the municipality or district, and the financial need for which the award is made.

Please note that foundation reserve awards are one-time awards that are not included in base aid calculations for chapter 70 aid in future years.

Questions regarding the foundation reserve program should be directed to associate commissioner Jeff Wulfson at 781-338-6500 or by email at jwulfson@doe.mass.edu.



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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Announcement of Fall 2004 MCAS Workshops MEPA Administration and MCAS Reporting

To: Principals, Superintendents and Directors of Charter Schools, Educational Collaboratives, Approved Special Education Private Schools, and Institutional Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: September 7, 2004

I invite you and members of your staff to attend one of the fall 2004 MCAS Workshops. The purpose of these workshops is: (1) to provide information on the October 2004 administration of the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA); and (2) to review MCAS results and AYP determinations and reports.

Workshop Topics

The workshops will focus on the following topics:

- *Morning session (MEPA)*: background and purpose; requirement that all LEP students in grades 3-12 participate in the fall 2004 MEPA administration; test administration schedule and procedures; MELA-O and MEPA reporting; and accountability
- *Afternoon session (MCAS)*: review of spring 2004 MCAS results; interpreting and using MCAS results for improving curriculum and instruction; preview of 2005 tests; MCAS performance appeals; and, understanding AYP reports

As in the past, Department staff conducting the workshops will provide handouts and set aside time to answer your questions.

Who Should Attend?

- For the *morning sessions (MEPA)*, we will do our best to accommodate a team of two staff members per school: the principal or designee and the test coordinator for the English proficiency assessment should plan to attend.
- For the *afternoon sessions (MCAS)*, we will do our best to accommodate a team of three staff members per district: the superintendent or designee and two other central office or school staff members should plan to attend.

Workshop Locations, Registration, Directions

Below is a list of locations, dates, and times for the workshops. Note that there will be only a single afternoon session in Pittsfield, which will cover both the MEPA administration and MCAS reporting topics.

Since space is limited, please [register](#) no later than **September 22**.

Location	Date	MEPA Administration		MCAS Reporting	
		Registration	Session	Registration	Session

Pittsfield Crowne Plaza	September 29	(Single afternoon session)		12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Springfield Sheraton	September 30	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Worcester Centrum	October 1	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Andover Wyndham	October 4	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Braintree Sheraton	October 5	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Braintree Sheraton	October 6	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Hyannis Sheraton	October 7	8:00 a.m.	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Should you have questions, please contact the MCAS Service Center at (800) 737-5103.

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Instructions for Completing the Fall 2004 MEPA and MCAS Workshops Registration Form

Instructions:

- All forms must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m., September 22, 2004 via email to mcas@harcourt.com.
- Download the [Fall 2004 MEPA and MCAS Workshops Registration Form](#)  to **your computer. Save the file, and rename the file** as your district and/or school code followed by "FallWorkshopRegistration." For example, Abington will send a message with a subject of "0001 FallWorkshopRegistration." Please also use this name as the subject of your email message.
- Complete the requested school/district information at the top of the worksheet. Complete one line of the worksheet for each registrant, providing all information as requested.
- Click in the "Site-First Choice" and "Site-Second Choice" cells for a drop-down menu of the workshop locations for MEPA (morning) and/or MCAS (afternoon) sessions.

Notes:

- Note that there will be only a single afternoon session in Pittsfield, which will cover both the MEPA administration and MCAS reporting topics.
- You will receive confirmation of registration and driving directions via email.
- If you have any questions about registration, please contact the MCAS Service Center at (800) 737-5103.

 [Registration Form](#)