



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

September 21, 2004

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this Update are 5 announcements and 3 items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu.

Schools in Need of Improvement: a Recap of Last Week's Events

Last week, I announced the names of Massachusetts' public schools and districts that have been identified as in need of improvement, and I want to thank you for your cooperation. The timing of the release of this data was earlier than I had wanted but it was necessitated by the federal No Child Left Behind law requiring states to provide parents with this information prior to the beginning of the school year so they can exercise options for their children.

A number of our schools and districts face significant challenges but I am encouraged that the great majority of schools and districts are meeting improvement expectations.

I wanted to make one point about the AYP (adequate yearly progress) process. Many of us may consider it unfair that schools are placed on the improvement list if even one of their subgroups does not meet its improvement expectations. This drawback has also been a benefit, because by focusing attention on the identified subgroups, many of our schools and districts have developed improvement plans and have seen improvement, leading to many having been taken off the list in 2004.

All in all, we are releasing remarkable results for students, schools and districts this fall, and I am confident that we are on the path toward proficiency and beyond for all students.

U.S. Department of Justice

The Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice has contacted me regarding an increase in the number of incidents of violence directed at Arab, Muslim, South Asian, and Sikh American students, since the September 11, 2001, attacks on this country. Since that time, the Justice Department has investigated nearly 600 incidents of violence against these groups of students. I want to remind all school officials in Massachusetts that acts of hatred and violence toward any group are inconsistent with federal law and have no place in our schools. I urge you to take active measures to address issues of discrimination and prejudice when and where they occur. Prevention and early intervention can avert a tragedy.

Registration for November MCAS Retest & for Fall MCAS and MEPA Workshops

MCAS Retest

Please remind your high school principals to register eligible students for the November retest. (The *Fall 2004 MCAS Retest Survey* must be completed online between **September 20 and September 24**.) Participation in the MCAS Retest is optional but students who have not met

the standard in English or mathematics should be encouraged to take the tests. Those eligible to take the tests are members of the Classes of 2003 and 2004 who have left your school and did not participate in the July 2004 Retest.

Fall Workshops

Registration for the MCAS reporting workshops and MEPA (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment) administration workshops has been extended to September 22. Please register at mcas@harcourt.com for these important workshops.

Administrator and educator training sessions for the MCAS Alternate Assessment will take place at regional locations during October. Registration information is available on our MCAS website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/.

Expanded Race & Ethnicity Codes for October 2005 SIMS Data Collection

Last spring, we announced that expanded race and ethnicity codes would be included in the October 2005 student data collection, to comply with federal requirements. We are planning on implementing the expanded race/ethnicity codes for the October 2005 SIMS data collection.

These revised standards require agencies, including school districts, to offer individuals the opportunity to select one or more races when reporting race in federal data collections. Race and Hispanic origin are to be considered as two separate and distinct concepts. Therefore, we will have a designation for ethnicity (Hispanic or Latino, or Not Hispanic or Latino) and allow for multiple designations for race (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White). This will bring a total of 62 possible combinations that will be assigned a 2-digit code in SIMS.





Districts need to decide how best to communicate to parents about the new reporting categories and inform them how they may update the race or ethnicity data already on file for their children if they wish to do so. For further information, please review the FAQ on our web site http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/guides/race_faq.html.

This fall, we are providing data collection training for your technology directors and SIMS coordinators, and all new data collections will be covered. Openings are still available for some of the sessions. Register at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/>

Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The National Association of Secondary School Principals and Prudential Financial announce that nominations are being accepted for the 2005 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honoring young people in grades 5 through 12 for outstanding community service. The deadline to apply is October 29. For details go to www.principals.org/awards/prudential.cfm or call 1-888-450-9961.

Here are 3 items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu:

1. Fall 2004 Statistical Reports: SIMS Data Elements; District and School Staffing Report; School Safety and Discipline Report and Individual Non-Public School and Non-Public School Staff Reports
 Principals |  Non-Public Principals |  Superintendents
2. Department of Education Seeks Practitioners for Fall/Winter School Panel Reviews

3. E-Rate and Technology Planning Workshop



All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Statistical Reports

Fall 2004 Statistical Reports

To: Principals
 From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
 Date: September 17, 2004

The following school reports are required this fall:

Report	Level	Format	Due Date
1. SIMS Data elements	Student	Data file via web	Oct. 28
2. District and School Staffing Report	District and School	Electronic web form	Nov. 1
3. School Safety and Discipline Report	School	Electronic web form	July 30, 2005

Student Information Management System (SIMS)

This fall we will continue to collect the SIMS 52 data elements. In order to increase the accuracy and timeliness of the data, we are providing a documentation titled *SIMS Reporting Schedule for 2004-2005*. This document outlines the procedure to be followed by the Department and your district during each of the four SIMS collections this year. It is located on the Department website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/schedule.html>.

District and School Staffing Report

This will be the second year the Department will be collecting staff information at the school and district level. This report contains the Highly Qualified staff information that is a requirement under NCLB. This information will be used to populate the School Report Card application in 2005.

School Safety and Discipline Report

This electronic form was introduced in February 2004. It is replacing the Student Exclusion Report, Gun Free Schools Act Report, the Safe and Drug Free Schools Report and the Special Education Discipline Report. The electronic web form will be available throughout the year so that district staff can enter the information as the incidents occur.

Copies of the three reports listed above can be found at the following site under the 'Sample Forms' column at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/schedule.html>. Instructions and additional documentation can also be found at this link under the 'Technical Assistance' column. If you have any questions about the Fall Reports, please call 781-338-DATA (3282).

Thank you for your cooperation.



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Statistical Reports

Fall Statistical Reports

To: Principals of Non-Public Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: September 17, 2004

Enclosed please find a copy of the Fall 2004 Individual Non-Public School Report and the Non-Public School Staff Report. This is the first year that we have requested the staff information from the Non-Public Schools. In order for the Department to implement the federal legislation under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), we must have accurate information for all students and staff in non-public schools. The information you provide is used for a range of important purposes both at the state and national levels, including federal grant allocations. I greatly appreciate your cooperation in this data collection effort.

Please complete the report and send two copies to the Superintendent of Public Schools for the city/town in which your school is located by **October 15, 2004**. The Superintendent has been requested to submit the reports to the Department of Education by November 1, 2004.

If you need any assistance, please call Data Collection at 781-338-DATA (3282).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Cc: Superintendents

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Statistical Reports

Fall 2004 Statistical Reports

To: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
 From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
 Date: September 17, 2004

The following reports are required this fall:

Report	Level	Format	Due Date
1. SIMS Data elements	Student	Data file via web	Oct. 28
2. District and School Staffing Report	District and School	Electronic web form	Nov. 1
3. School Safety and Discipline Report	School	Electronic web form	July 30, 2005
4. Individual Non-Public School Report*	Non-Public School	Paper	Nov. 1

* Not applicable for charter schools.

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School Safety and Discipline Report

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Individual Non-Public School Report

This report has traditionally gathered student enrollment data from the non-public schools in your district. In order to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), this year we added a single page requesting staff information from these schools. Paper copies of the reports will be mailed directly to the schools. Principals have been instructed to complete these reports and return them to your office by **October 15**, allowing you time to review them and forward to us by **November 1, 2004**.

Copies of the four reports listed above can be found at the following site under the 'Sample Forms' column at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/schedule.html>. Instructions and additional documentation can also be found at this link under the 'Technical Assistance' column.

Directory Administration Functions Listing

Enclosed please find a Directory Administration Functions Listing for your district. This form lists the functions maintained at the Department and the contact information that is currently on file. Please note that we have added the MCAS Coordinator to the list of functions. In order for Department staff to be able to communicate effectively with school district staff it is important that this information is up to date. Please review the report and update the information in Directory Administration throughout the year as changes occur. Any district staff member who is a Directory Administrator can make the changes. In addition, if you have changes to grade levels or need to close or open a school, please contact Joann Brady at jbrady@doe.mass.edu.

If you have any questions about the fall reports, please call 781-338-DATA (3282).

Thank you for your cooperation.

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School and District Accountability

Department Seeks Practitioners for Fall/Winter School Panel Reviews Recruitment Letter to Superintendents

September 20, 2004

Dear Superintendents:

As part of the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System, the Department of Education will continue to conduct on-site reviews during the school year, both to identify schools that are under-performing and schools that are exemplars of improvement. The Department is actively recruiting qualified school and district based practitioners to participate in these reviews. Principals and teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels as well as assistant superintendents, curriculum and other program directors are encouraged to apply. Please share this information with central office staff and principals in your district. We encourage professionals who have served as panelists in the past to continue to serve as panelists again this year. We also are always interested in recruiting new panelists for whom this experience would be beneficial and would inform their work in their own districts.

Panelists will serve on five- member teams composed of Department staff, educational consultants, and active practitioners. Selected schools are reviewed over a two-day period using a detailed protocol. Panelists must commit to four hours training, some preparatory reading, and a two-day on-site visit, and will require the approval of the Superintendent for their release. Participants will receive a \$100 honorarium and 30 professional development points for their service.

On-site visits are guided by a detailed protocol for interviewing and observation, and culminate in a meeting by the panel to come to consensus on the answers to the two key questions which frame the evaluation process. A report on the team's findings is submitted to the Commissioner, who considers it either in the determination of under-performance, or in the final selection of improving schools to serve as Compass Schools.

Participation in the Panel Review process enables panelists to observe the organizational structure, curricular programs, and instructional practice in a variety of schools. Panelists analyze information on: the process of developing and implementing school improvement plans, the use of student performance data to drive the planning process, what school level assessments are used to track student progress and measure the success of improvement efforts, and the focus of professional development plans and activities.

In addition to contributing to the effort to improve student performance in all the schools in the Commonwealth, panelists on School Review Panels have the opportunity to work with peers from outside their own schools and community. Panelists describe the experience of evaluating other schools in an objective, systematic way as a valuable form of professional development, which they can bring to bear in the operation of their own schools and districts.

For more information on the process, or to apply to serve as a panelist, please contact Erin Furey

by phone at 781-338-3565 or by email at efurey@doe.mass.edu. A detailed overview of the School Review Panels and application forms are available on our web site at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/>.

Thank you for your interest in the School Evaluation process. Your support for this important work lends credibility to our efforts and reflects well on the future of public education in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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E-Rate and Technology Planning Workshop

We would like to invite district technology leaders to attend a workshop on E-Rate and Technology Planning on Wednesday, October 13 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Holiday Inn in Worcester. Please complete the form below to register for the conference.

One component of the workshop will be on the E-rate program. It will include updates and new developments for the Funding Year 2005 application cycle, audits, program compliance, and other topics of general interest to districts who are interested in applying for funding. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) has unanimously approved the Fifth Report and Order on the E-rate program. The Order establishes new guidelines and regulations for the program. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and share experiences on the application of this program.

Another component of the workshop will be on technology planning. In order to be eligible to apply for E-Rate and technology grants, school districts must receive a letter of approval for their technology plan from the Department of Education. To receive approval, districts must report annually on their progress in implementing their technology plans. The online technology plan report forms will be open on Tuesday, October 12. At this workshop we will provide guidance on how to complete the updated electronic forms. Participants will also have an opportunity to discuss their technology plans with their colleagues from other districts.

First Name:

Last Name:

Job Function:

Email:

Phone:

District:

Session:

Contact ncirino@doe.mass.edu should you have any questions regarding this conference.

Please provide a **valid email address** so that we may send instructions regarding your session.