



David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Commissioner's Update

September 8, 2005

Dear Superintendents, Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

As we begin another school year I'd like to thank you all for your efforts this summer. Many of you spent the past few months hard at work analyzing data, attending professional development programs and reworking your curricula in order to offer your students an even better educational program this school year. I'm confident that your efforts will pay off, and our students will inevitably benefit.

I am also grateful to the countless educators who have come forward looking for ways to help the unfortunate victims of Hurricane Katrina. While it is still unclear how many evacuees will be coming to Massachusetts, many of you have already been notified that some will be moving into your districts. Please do what you can to ease the transition for these students, who have been through an unspeakable trauma. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Frank Shea at the Department at 617-727-0498.

I look forward to working with you all as the school year gets underway.

I have 1 announcement and 4 items for your review in this update.

### Public Comment for High School Science and Technology/Engineering Standards Extended

The deadline for submission of comments for the revised high school science and technology/engineering standards has been extended until **Tuesday, September 20, 2005**.

The Department of Education will be holding a meeting to gather feedback on the revisions of the high school science and technology/engineering standards. The meeting will be held at the Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center in Shrewsbury on Monday, September 19, 2005. Two sessions (Chemistry and Technology/Engineering) will be held from 9:00-11:30 am and three sessions (Biology, Earth and Space Science, and Introductory Physics) will be held from 1:30-4:00 pm.

Please register online no later than Wednesday, September 14, 2005 at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=134>. We strongly encourage teachers and higher education faculty teaching in these fields to attend the meeting.

All interested parties are encouraged to submit comments on the high school science and technology/engineering standards. The revised standards and related documents can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/updates.html>. Please submit your comments online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/survey/>.

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Newly posted items at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu):

1. Enrollment of Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina



2. Charter School Technical Advisory 05-1: Approval of Loans Beyond Charter Terms



3. Announcing MassONE



4. MCAS Assessment Development Committee (ADC) Recruitment



Thank you for your support, and best of luck as the new school year begins.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

September 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1

## NEWS SEARCH

Keyword:

Target:

Dates:

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:

**For Immediate Release****Friday, September 02, 2005****Contact: Heidi B. Perlman 781-338-3106**

## Enrollment of Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina

**MALDEN** - Commissioner of Education David P. Driscoll notified superintendents and principals today about enrolling students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Commissioner Driscoll said, "As educators, we want to do everything we can to ease the difficulties for these students and their families."

Following is the message sent by Commissioner Driscoll to superintendents and principals:

As a result of the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, some residents of those states are seeking refuge with family members and friends in other states, including Massachusetts. Parents may come to Massachusetts with their children or they may send their children here to live temporarily with other responsible adults. For the benefit of the students who have been forced by this disaster to leave their homes and schools, and for assistance to school officials in Massachusetts, we offer the following information:

- These students qualify as homeless students under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, which requires the school district in which they are temporarily living to enroll them in its schools. The students are entitled to the same services as any other student who is a resident of the district, including transportation and special education. As homeless students, they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and for Title I services.
- Admission of these students to school should not be delayed for lack of academic and immunization records. Transmittal of those records is likely to be slow or, in some cases, impossible. The students should be enrolled immediately. School personnel should use their educational judgment and the best information available to decide questions about grade level and other placement matters.
- The Louisiana Department of Education has informed us that thanks to its extensive student information system, it will be able shortly to provide some data on these students to school districts that are receiving them. As soon as we receive additional information from the Louisiana Department of Education, we will notify you.
- For more information about the McKinney-Vento Act and the responsibilities of school districts to educate homeless children, please see the advisories posted on our website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/haa/>.

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## Massachusetts Charter Schools

### Charter School Technical Advisory 05-1: *Approval of Loans Beyond Charter Terms*

To: Chairpersons, Boards of Trustees of Charter Schools Charter School Leaders Business Managers at Charter Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 22, 2005

Under the charter school statute, G.L. c. 71, § 89(j)(6), the Board of Education must approve the term of repayment of any charter school's debt if it exceeds the duration of the school's charter. This includes instances in which a charter school may guarantee a loan with a repayment term that exceeds the duration of the school's charter. This Technical Advisory outlines the timeline and process required in order to submit such a request for consideration by the Commissioner and possible placement on the agenda for a meeting of the Board of Education.

The Board of Education considers approving such loan requests, upon at recommendation of the Commissioner, at one of its regularly scheduled meetings. The schedule for Board of Education meetings can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/boedate.html>.

In order for the Commissioner to consider recommending to the Board of Education that they approve a school's request, the school must submit a number of documents to the Charter School Office. The Charter School Office must receive the documents at least 20 days before the Board of Education meeting at which the school would like the Board to consider its request. These documents, submitted under penalties of perjury, include:

- A letter from the school's Board of Trustees requesting approval of the term of repayment of the charter school debt, addressed to the Commissioner and the Board of Education, with a copy to the Charter School Office. This letter must
  - provide a description of the proposed loan; including its purpose and term length, a description of the financing arrangements, and a statement about how the loan will benefit the school;
  - include a statement that the school's Board of Trustees "voted to request approval of the term of repayment of this financing on [DATE] at a meeting held in compliance with the Open Meeting Law;" and
  - include a statement that the Board of Trustees has authorized the person signing the letter to make the request on their behalf.
- A five-year operating budget for the school that includes repayment of the proposed loan(s).
- Loan agreement(s) or commitment letter(s), if available. The loan agreement(s) or commitment letter(s) must contain the following language:

The parties to the loan(s) acknowledge and agree that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including but not limited to the Board and the Department of Education, provides no representations or guarantees with respect to these loans and has no liability for any portion of the loans. Furthermore, specifically and without limitation, the Board's approval of the loan has no impact on any action that the Massachusetts Board of Education may choose to take in the future with respect to probation, revocation, or renewal of the School's charter.

- If the loan agreement(s) or commitment letter(s) is not yet available or the language quoted above is not contained therein, a letter from the school's proposed lender(s) outlining the anticipated terms of the loan and the lender's understanding that
  - the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including but not limited to the Board and the Department of Education, provides no representations or guarantees with respect to these loans and that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including but not limited to the Board and the Department of Education, has no liability for any portion of the loans;
  - the approval by the Board of Education of the term of repayment of loan(s) has no impact on any action that the Massachusetts Board of Education may choose to take in the future with respect to probation, revocation, or renewal of the School's charter; and
  - any approval of the term of repayment by the Board of Education would be explicitly conditioned upon the inclusion of this language in the loan agreement(s).

Please note that the submission of these documents is required before the Commissioner will consider recommending that the Board of Education approve the term of repayment of any charter school debt that exceeds the duration of a school's charter. The suggested timelines are subject to the complexity of the issues involved and the schedules of the Commissioner and the Board of Education. Charter schools are strongly encouraged to plan ahead regarding requests for approval of a term of repayment that exceeds the duration of the school's charter.

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## Virtual Education Space

### Announcing MassONE!

I am pleased to announce the launch of Massachusetts Online Network for Education. MassONE is the state's online learning system, which enables communication, collaboration, and sharing among educators, students, and DOE staff--creating ONE statewide community.

MassONE represents a major redesign of VES, with new tools and an updated interface that will streamline its use. Recently added tools include a lesson planning tool, a survey/quiz creator, and expanded teaching and learning resources. MassONE will continue to offer tools that were popular in VES, such as discussion forums and the virtual hard drive. Like VES, MassONE is a secure system. You can choose to keep your information private or share it with educators and students across the state. Even though the name of the system has changed to MassONE, VES users will still be able to access their accounts, along with any information they may have posted on VES. User name and passwords will not change.

### Invitation to the MassONE Launch

To introduce this powerful new resource, the Department will host an event in Worcester on October 31. The event will feature highlights of MassONE's new features and tools, panel discussions featuring MassONE users, and examples of how the Department will use MassONE to work with districts across the Commonwealth.

The MassONE sessions will be followed by a one-hour workshop on district technology planning and the E-Rate program. Our staff will offer technical assistance on completing the online tech plan forms and provide updates on the application procedures for E-rate. Participants will also have an opportunity to discuss how they can incorporate MassONE into their technology planning.

All Massachusetts educators are invited to this event. For more information, including online registration, go to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=132>.

### MassONE Logo Design Contest

I am also pleased to announce our MassONE logo design contest. The contest is open to all Massachusetts students from kindergarten to grade 12. In order to be considered, all entries must be received by October 7, 2005. We will announce the winner at the MassONE Launch on October 31. The winning logo design will appear on the MassONE web site and accompanying materials. This is a terrific opportunity for a talented young artist to receive recognition. Complete details and instructions for submitting designs are available at <http://ves.doe.mass.edu/contest.html>. Please spread the word about this contest.



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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### MCAS Assessment Development Committee (ADC) Recruitment

To: Superintendents and Educational Leaders

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: September 7, 2005

The Department of Education is seeking educators to serve as members of the English Language Arts (ELA), Reading, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and History and Social Science Assessment Development Committees at various grade levels. Members of these committees are directly involved in assisting the Department with the process of developing MCAS test items. We are looking for members with content expertise, familiarity with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and teaching experience. This is a rewarding professional development opportunity for educators who are interested in learning about large-scale, standards-based assessment. Please inform your faculty and colleagues of this opportunity.

#### *Committee Members' Responsibilities*

Assessment Development Committee members assist the Department of Education in the review of MCAS reading passages (ELA and Reading only), test items, and scoring rubrics. Responsibilities include reviewing MCAS items for:

- alignment with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* and MCAS performance standards
- clarity and precision of language
- content accuracy
- developmental appropriateness
- instructional worthiness.

Committee members are charged with reviewing all questions prior to field-testing and making suggestions for refinements. After items have been field-tested, committee members review the items again along with item performance data. ELA committee members also review writing prompts and make recommendations regarding their selection for use on MCAS tests.

#### *Membership Structure and Meeting Schedule*

Each ADC consists of approximately 12 educators. The membership term runs from January 2006 through December 2006. Committee members are required to attend all scheduled meetings during the school year and the summer. There are approximately 8-10 full days (9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) of meetings throughout the year, including summer meetings. Members may reapply for additional terms.

Upon selection, successful applicants will be sent a calendar of meetings and will be asked to confirm their availability for these meetings. The first meetings of the new committees will be in late winter at a site yet to be determined.

#### *Reimbursement of Expenses*

The Department will reimburse districts for actual substitute teacher costs up to \$100 per day. Committee members are reimbursed for mileage, and lodging is provided to members who live 70 or more miles away from the meeting site. In addition, committee members receive professional development points for their service. For summer meetings only, committee members are awarded a small honorarium, and are not required to live more than 70 miles from the meeting site to be provided with lodging.

### *Application Procedure*

Complete applications must include the following three components:

1. **Current résumé** (including current course syllabi if available)
2. **Statement of interest\***  
Brief statement (1 - 2 pages) that describes why the applicant wishes to serve and what particular training and experience will enable the applicant to make a positive contribution as an MCAS ADC member. ***\*Please note: Current committee members who wish to reapply are not required to submit a new statement of interest.***
3. **Completed Application Form with Superintendent's signed recommendation.**

The deadline for receipt of applications is **Friday, October 7, 2005**. Notification will be sent by the second week of November, 2005. Please see the attached **application**   for further instructions.

If you have any questions, please call Phil Robakiewicz, Administrator for Test Development, at (781) 338-3625.

Thank you for your interest.

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