



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

April 4, 2006

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this update I have 6 announcements and 4 items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu:

Massachusetts Financial Literacy Initiative

Last spring, the Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs & Business Regulation in partnership with the Department of Education, launched the Massachusetts Financial Literacy Initiative (HiFi) <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=2791>. HiFi is a voluntary, free high school financial literacy program that provides fee materials from the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE). The Office of Consumer Affairs is offering free training seminars for educators at various locations across the state this spring, and teachers can earn 10 PDP's towards recertification for completion of the training. Educators are reporting great interest in this program. I encourage your participation in this unique initiative.

Biodiversity Days 2006

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Executive Office for Environmental Affairs, is pleased to announce *Biodiversity Days 2006*. MACC has planned a week of biodiversity explorations for citizens and school children across the state from June 3 through June 11.

Teachers may incorporate Biodiversity Days in the school day and offer take-home activities for students to do with their families on the weekend. School-wide participation has been very popular in the past. Educators may want to consider involving multiple classrooms, the entire school and/or the district.

A new addition for this year is the 2006 Wild Things School Contest. The contest is open to all school groups, classrooms, and youth organizations. MACC is specifically looking for projects that help students educate their classmates/youth organization, school, or the wider community about local biodiversity. Deadline for project submissions is May.

To register or if you have questions, please contact Cindy Cormier, MACC Program Coordinator (cindy.cormier@maccweb.org, 617-489-3883). For more information on Biodiversity Days or the Wild Things School Contest, visit their website (http://www.maccweb.org/biodiversity_days.html).

National Endowment for the Humanities Grade 11 Essay Contest

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announces a nationwide essay contest for high school juniors as part of *We the People*, a national civics and American history education initiative sponsored by NEH and announced by President Bush.

This year's essay question asks students to examine the historical debate over the benefits and disadvantages of adopting the First Amendment. Essay finalists will go to Washington, D.C. for an awards ceremony, and the winner and top finalists will receive monetary prizes. The deadline for the 1,500-word essay is April 19. For contest details, please go to www.humanities.gov.

Legacies of Justice

The United States Congress established the Days of Remembrance as our nation's annual commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust. Congress also created the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a

permanent living memorial to those victims.

This year, the Days of Remembrance fall between Sunday, April 23, and Sunday, April 30, with Holocaust Remembrance Day observed on Tuesday, April 25. The theme for this year's commemoration is "Legacies of Justice," in honor of the courage of and the precedents set by those who testified during the trials of Nazi war criminals. The theme also pays tribute to those who work for the cause of justice. Numerous events and programs related to the Days of Remembrance are scheduled between April 23 and 30. For more information, please go to <http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/>.

Student Advisory Council Elections

Recently, high school principals, charter school leaders and advisors received information to assist in conducting the annual election of secondary school students to the Student Advisory Council. MGL C.15, S.1E provides for voting student representation on the Board of Education. Massachusetts is one of a handful of states with full voting rights for a student on the Board and the only state in which the student member is elected by his or her peers. Over the years, I have had the personal pleasure of working with the Student Advisory Council and I value the perspective that students bring. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to support student involvement on the Council and elections in your schools. Additional information may be found on the Department website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sac/>.

Schools to Receive Technology Funds as a Result of Microsoft Settlement





As a result of an anti-trust settlement with Microsoft Corporation, eligible Massachusetts schools in low-income communities will receive \$16 million in vouchers, allowing them to purchase a broad range of hardware, software, and technology services. The school funding will come from unclaimed consumer vouchers from a class-action suit, settled in 2004 with Microsoft. Eligible districts are those with schools in which at least 50% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

In 2005, the Microsoft Settlement Administrator sent application forms to superintendents in eligible districts asking them to verify the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Early this year, the Settlement Administrator sent vouchers to eligible districts that had completed the application. These vouchers allow schools to purchase technology products and services and receive reimbursement from Microsoft through February 21, 2009. The voucher correspondence provides detailed information on qualifying products and services, as well as instructions for redeeming the vouchers. Use of the vouchers is not limited to Microsoft products.

The Massachusetts Department of Education encourages schools to use this funding in accordance with the districts' long-range technology plans. If you need help with long-range planning, please refer to the Local Technology Plan Guidelines posted on the Department web site http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/tplanguide04_07.html.

If you have questions about this program, please see the Massachusetts Microsoft Products Settlement web site: <https://www.microsoftproductssettlement.com/massachusetts/> or call the Microsoft Settlement Administrator at 1-888-230-0363.

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

1. Submitting Spring 2006 MELA-O Scores for LEP Students in Grades K-2

2. 2006 MCAS-Alt Summer Scoring Institute: Scorer Application

3. Public Forums on a New Educator Preparation and Licensure System

4. IDEA 2004 OSEP Guidance on Parentally Placed Private School Students


All the best, and

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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EVENTS CALENDAR

April 2006						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	1
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

NEWS SEARCH

Keyword:

Dates:

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:



Submitting Spring 2006 MELA-O Scores for LEP Students in Grades K-2

To: Elementary School Principals and Directors of Charter Schools

Copy: Superintendents
District-level Directory Administrators
English Language Learner (ELL) Directors

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 3, 2006

This memorandum provides instructions for submitting MELA-O scores for students in grades K-2 from the spring 2006 administration of the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O).

MELA-O scores for LEP students in grades K-2 must be submitted via the Department's Security Portal between April 3 and 28, 2006. MELA-O scores for LEP students in grades 3-12 are recorded on their MEPA-R/W answer booklets.

Principals or their designees are responsible for submitting the MELA-O scores for students in grades K-2 using an online form that can be accessed via the Department's Security Portal. Please see the [detailed instructions](#) on how to report scores.

If you have any questions about reporting MELA-O scores, please contact Student Assessment Services at (781) 338-3625. District-level directory administrators may contact the Data Collection Help Line at 781-338-3282 (DATA) for assistance.

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Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

2006 MCAS-Alt Summer Scoring Institute: Scorer Application

To: Interested Massachusetts Educators

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 3, 2006

I invite you to apply to work with the Department of Education this summer to score MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) student portfolios. A three-week Summer Scoring Institute is planned for the following dates at The Conference Center at Marlborough:

- Week 1:** June 30, July 5-7
- Week 2:** July 10-14
- Week 3:** July 17-21

Prospective scorers may apply for either one, two, or three weeks of scoring and must be available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each workday. Training will be provided. You must complete and submit the enclosed application or apply online at www.mcasservicecenter.com, no later than **April 28, 2006**.

Prospective scorers must be licensed Massachusetts educators or related service providers in Massachusetts. We seek those with some experience developing MCAS-Alt portfolios for students with significant disabilities, although consideration will also be given to content specialists in ELA, Math, and Science with or without portfolio experience. Applicants must be familiar with the *2006 Educators Manual for MCAS-Alt* and the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. Prior experience scoring MCAS-Alt portfolios is helpful, but not necessary.

Each Institute participant will receive a stipend of \$120.00 for each day of actual portfolio scoring, and \$75.00 for each day of training needed to qualify as a scorer, plus PDPs. Applications will be reviewed upon receipt, and your participation will be confirmed by mail no later than May 12. For additional information contact the MCAS Service Center at (800) 737-5103. Please share this form with other interested educators. Additional copies of the application form can be downloaded from the Department's Web page at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/.

This is a great professional development opportunity and I encourage educators to participate.

Enclosure.   Scorer Application Form (two pages)

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Educator Services

Public Forums on a New Educator Preparation and Licensure System

To: School Superintendents and Charter School Leaders; Education Deans, Program Directors, and Certification Officers; Education Collaborative Directors; Education Professional Associations; and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 3, 2006

I am pleased to announce that the Department of Education has scheduled a series of public forums across the Commonwealth to discuss ideas for improving our educator preparation and licensing system. We invite educators, licensure candidates, parents, and citizens to join us and provide feedback and suggestions. Information from the forums will be used to develop options for the Board of Education's consideration, possibly leading to changes in the *Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval*.

Public Forums on Educator Preparation & Licensure

All are scheduled from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Monday, May 8 Taunton High School Auditorium, Taunton

Monday, May 15 MA Department of Education, Malden

Wednesday, May 17 Assabet Valley Regional Vocational-Technical High School Auditorium, Marlborough

Tuesday, May 23 Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center, Springfield

To help us in planning, please register on line for the forum you wish to attend by contacting the Department at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=193> no later than two business days before the forum you select. We welcome your participation.

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Special Education

IDEA 2004 OSEP Guidance on Parentally Placed Private School Students

To: Superintendents, Special Education Administrators, and other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 3, 2006

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education has recently issued a guidance document on IDEA 2004 that changes our understanding of school districts' responsibilities for private school students from other states attending school in Massachusetts and supercedes guidance related to out-of-state residents provided in the Administrative Advisory SPED 2006-3. The OSEP guidance, entitled *Questions and Answers On Serving Children With Disabilities Placed by Their Parents at Private Schools*, is available through a link at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html>. The OSEP guidance document makes clear that districts must include consideration of the needs of out-of-state students when planning the expenditure of federal special education funds.

The OSEP guidance states that all districts are required to:

1. **Include out-of-state students in child** find activities that districts must conduct in all private schools in the district.
2. **Evaluate any out-of-state student** attending school in the district who is referred for evaluation if evaluation is deemed necessary to determine if the student is eligible for special education or services. The school district may accept the evaluation information available from the other state and may proceed directly to a determination of services, if necessary.
3. **Calculate the federal "proportionate share,"** which is the amount of federal funds that should be spent on special education for students enrolled by their parents in private schools. It is determined by finding the ratio of students with disabilities enrolled by their parents in private schools to the total number of public and private students with disabilities for whom the district is responsible, and applying that ratio to the Part B federal grant.
4. **Consult with the private schools** on the provision of services to parentally placed private school students. This requirement is similar to the consultation requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for private school students.
5. **Expend the proportionate share of federal funds on services to private school students** and document the expenditure.

Please note: Private school students found eligible for special education services who are not residents of Massachusetts are not required to have an IEP. Out-of-state residents eligible for services in Massachusetts receive services from the proportionate share of federal funds according to a services plan.

The Department will provide additional information on this topic in the near future. Until additional information is provided if a district receives a referral for an out-of-state resident attending private school in the district, evaluation procedures should be implemented immediately. If evaluation is deemed unnecessary because the district accepts the resident district finding of eligibility, the district must immediately calculate the proportionate share of federal funds to determine if funding is available to serve additional private school students at this time.