



David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Commissioner's Update

August 21, 2006

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

As we gear up for another school year, I am pleased to see that educators across the state are continuing to find new ways to improve student achievement. While I hope everyone took at least a few days off to relax, I know of countless teachers and administrators who spent their summer working on lesson plans, participating in professional development opportunities and thinking about what's best for children.

Each one of you deserves great credit for the excellent work that you do for the children of the Commonwealth, and I look forward to yet another successful school year.

As always, I am sending you the Department's annual "Back to School" update containing information I hope will be useful to you as you prepare for the new school year. In this letter I have nine announcements and eight items recently posted on our website.

### Update

### Superintendents' Checklist

The final version of the 2006-2007 Superintendents' Checklist is now posted on the DOE Website. The checklist provides Superintendents and Charter School leaders with a list of items that must be reported to the Department of Education, as well as details on other requirements. The checklist is set up in chronological order so that it can be easily followed throughout the school year. This year's checklist can be viewed at:

MS Word File: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/supt\\_checklist.doc](http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/supt_checklist.doc)

and PDF File: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/supt\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/supt_checklist.pdf).

### Addition of Dropout Prevention Liaison to Directory Administration

Please note that beginning with the upcoming school year, all districts are required to identify a person at the district level to serve as the Dropout Prevention Liaison. This person will be responsible for communicating with the Department on issues regarding dropout prevention and recovery. All public school districts - regardless of the district dropout rate and grade levels served - must identify a person in Directory Administration for this role. The Dropout Prevention Liaison should be familiar with district-wide efforts related to dropout prevention and recovery. If an individual is not identified for this role, the responsibilities will default to the district superintendent.

### MCAS Performance Appeals

The Board of Education is seeking comment until late September on proposed amendments to Regulations on Performance Appeals for the Competency Determination, 603 CMR 30.05. The proposed amendments will: (1) allow a student or parent to request that the Commissioner review a superintendent's decision not to file a performance appeal in limited circumstances; (2)

allow superintendents to file appeals for students who do not meet the 216 minimum test score requirement; (3) add additional detail regarding the grounds upon which the Commissioner can waive the eligibility requirements of attendance and participation in remediation programs; and (4) in cases when a performance appeal is denied, require the superintendent to notify the student and/or parent of the grounds for the denial by the Commissioner.

The Board will vote on the proposed amendments in October, and subsequent guidance will be posted at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/>. Please continue to submit requests to waive the 216 minimum for non-disabled students until notified otherwise. Copies of the proposed amendments are available on the Department of Education's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/>.

I also want to remind you that portfolio appeals should be submitted for students who generally participate in smaller class sizes that may result in cohorts of less than 6 students. Performance appeal filing guidelines are at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/>. Please call 781-338-3333 or email [mcasappeals@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcasappeals@doe.mass.edu) for more assistance. For portfolio appeals call 781-338-3625.

## High Schools of the Future II : Lessons from Reforming Schools

The High Schools of the Future II conference will be held on October 12 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Marlborough, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The conference is intended to assist school and district leaders develop ideas/plans for high school redesign and to help improve the state's graduation and college and career readiness rates. It is a follow-up event to our highly successful **High Schools of the Future** conference held in January 2006. Keynote speakers for this full-day conference include Pedro Noguera, Professor at the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University, and Olivia Ifill-Lynch, Director of Professional Learning for the School Redesign Network at Stanford University. The day will also include several morning and afternoon breakout sessions presented by high school practitioners.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, the Center for Collaborative Education and the Massachusetts Department of Education. For more information, please go to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/hsreform/conference/hsfutureII.html>.


## After School and Out-of-School Time Programs

The Department is pleased to announce that the Commonwealth allocated \$1,000,000 in the Department's FY 2007 budget for after school and out-of-school time programs. Public and non-public schools, community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education are eligible for the funding. In accordance with the FY07 budget language, funding priority will be given to proposals developed collaboratively by public and non-public schools and private community-based programs. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released the week of August 21st. Please visit our Grants Management website to access this competitive RFP.

## Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics STEM SUMMIT III "Securing the Future: Closing the STEM Achievement Gap"

I'm pleased to inform you that U.S. Education Secretary, Margaret Spellings, will give the keynote address at the STEM Summit III on Wednesday, October 25th, in Sturbridge. Please review the attached [announcement](#) and forward the message to your science, technology, engineering and math faculty members and department heads.

## Fire Reporting Law

A new law passed in early May (Chapter 80 of the Acts of 2006) requires schools to report fires to local fire authorities on a [form](#)  designed by the Department of Fire Services. This law will take effect at the start of the 2006-2007 school year. Fire and law enforcement authorities have long sought this law so they can better protect their communities. For more information on this look online: <http://www.mass.gov/dfs/index.shtm>.

## DPH Fact Sheet



A [fact sheet](#) has been released from the Department of Public Health regarding regulations pertaining to the distribution of information about the meningococcal disease and vaccine. Secondary schools are required to provide information regarding the risk of meningococcal disease and the availability, effectiveness and risks of meningococcal vaccine to a parent or guardian at the time of initial enrollment. Questions regarding this requirement can be directed to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at (617) 983-6800.


## Wellness Policy Requirements

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires all local educational agencies to have a wellness policy in place for this school year. Several resources are available to assist in the implementation of your plans. Resources are available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/resources.html>. This website will be updated with additional resources on an ongoing basis.



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Postings at [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu):

1. Legal Holidays; Accommodation for Religious Observances  

2. Legislative Action on Behalf of students with Disabilities, Summer 2006  

3. Important MCAS Notice: Change in November 2006 Retest Schedule  

4. Reporting Discrepancies in Spring 2006 MCAS Results  

5. 2007-2008 MCAS and MEPA Test Administration Schedule  

6. MCAS High School Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Competency Determination: Test Participation and Administration Requirements  

7. 2007 Davidson Fellow Scholarships  

8. Constitution Day and Citizenship Day: September 17  


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

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education



## EVENTS CALENDAR

September 2006

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	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

## Legal Holidays; Accommodation for Religious Observances

To: Superintendents of Schools, Charter School Leaders

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 17, 2006

With this memo I am enclosing a list of Massachusetts legal holidays and major religious holidays for the 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. School officials have said these documents are useful in planning the school calendar, accommodating students and staff who observe religious holidays, and determining possible days of low attendance. For information on other religious holidays observed by members of religions represented in your school community, I encourage you to contact local clergy.

State and federal law require schools to make reasonable accommodation to the religious needs of students and employees in observance of holy days. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151B, section 4 (1)(A) addresses this issue with respect to employees. With respect to students, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151C, section 2B reads in relevant part as follows:

Any student in an educational or vocational training institution...who is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with any opportunity to make up such examination, study or work requirement which he may have missed because of such absence on any particular day; provided, however, that such makeup examination or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of his availing himself of the provisions of this section.

Schools may meet their obligation to accommodate students by excusing individual absences for religious observance, or by adjusting the school calendar to provide a school year of at least 180 school days, while taking into account possible days of low attendance due to religious holidays.

Please share this information with your school building administrators. We hope you will find it helpful.

Enclosure:

[Enclosure](#)



## EVENTS CALENDAR

September 2006

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

## Holiday Observances in Massachusetts

(Statewide Legal Holidays are in Bold)

	2006-2007 School Yr.	2007-2008 School Yr.	2008-2009 School Yr.
Labor Day	<b>Mon., Sept. 4</b>	Mon., Sept. 3	<b>Mon., Sept. 1</b>
Rosh Hashanah*	Sept. 23- Sept. 24	Sept. 13- Sept. 14	Sept. 30- Oct. 1
Yom Kippur*	Mon., Oct. 2	Sat., Sept. 22	Thurs., Oct. 9
Sukkot*	Sat., Oct. 7	Thurs. Sept. 27	Tues., Oct. 14
Columbus Day	<b>Mon., Oct. 9</b>	Mon., Oct. 8	<b>Mon., Oct. 13</b>
Ramadan**	Mid-October	Mid-October	Mid-October
Veterans' Day	<b>Sat., Nov. 11***</b>	Sun., Nov. 11****	<b>Tue., Nov. 11</b>
Eid al-Fitr**	Tues., Oct. 24	Fri., Oct. 13	Wed., Oct., 1
Thanksgiving	<b>Thurs., Nov. 23</b>	Thurs., Nov. 22	<b>Thurs., Nov. 27</b>
Chanukah*	Sat., Dec. 16	Wed., Dec. 5	Mon., Dec. 22
Christmas Day	<b>Mon., Dec 25</b>	Tues., Dec. 25	<b>Thurs., Dec. 25</b>
Kwanzaa	Tues., Dec. 26	Wed., Dec. 26	Fri., Dec. 26
New Year's Day	<b>Mon., Jan. 1</b>	Tues., Jan. 1	<b>Thurs., Jan. 1</b>
Eid al-Adha**	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	<b>Mon., Jan. 15</b>	Mon., Jan. 21	<b>Mon., Jan. 19</b>
Presidents' Day	<b>Mon., Feb. 19</b>	Mon., Feb. 18	<b>Mon., Feb. 16</b>
Ash Wednesday	Wed., Feb. 21	Wed., Feb. 6	Wed., Feb. 25
Evacuation Day (Suffolk County only)	<b>Sat., Mar. 17***</b>	Mon., Mar. 17	<b>Tues., Mar. 17</b>
Palm Sunday	Sun., April 1	Sun., March 16	Sun., April 5
Passover *	Tues., 4/3-Wed., 4/4	Sun., 4/20-Mon., 4/21	Th., 4/9-Fri., 4/10
	Mon., 4/9-Tues., 4/10	Sat., 4/26-Sun., 4/27	Wed., 4/15-Thu., 4/16
Good Friday	Fri., April 6	Fri., March 21	Fri., April 10
Easter	Sun., April 8	Sun., March 23	Sun., April 12
Orthodox Easter	Sun., April 8	Sun., April 27	Sun., April 19

Patriots' Day	<b>Mon., April 16</b>	Mon., April 21	<b>Mon., April 20</b>
Memorial Day	<b>Mon., May 28</b>	Mon., May 26	<b>Mon., May 25</b>
Shavuot*	Wed., May 23	Mon., June 9	Fri., May 29
Bunker Hill Day (Suffolk County only)	<b>Sun., June 17****</b>	Tues., June 17	<b>Wed., June 17</b>
Independence Day	<b>Wed., July 4</b>	Fri., July 4	<b>Sat., July 4***</b>

\* According to the Massachusetts Lawyers Diary and Manual "In addition to dates noted, observant Jews celebrate the second, seventh and eighth days of Passover; the second, eighth and ninth days of Sukkot; and two days of Shavuot. All Jewish holidays begin at sundown, the evening prior to the day of the holiday".

\*\*Due to the lunar calendar these are only approximate dates.

\*\*\*Under G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 18, legal holidays that fall on a Saturday are observed on that day.

\*\*\*\*Under G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 18, a legal holiday shall be observed the day following when said holiday shall occur on Sunday.

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## Education Laws and Regulations

### Legislative Action on behalf of Students with Disabilities, Summer 2006

To: Superintendents, Administrators of Special Education, and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 15, 2006

I am writing to call your attention to two new pieces of legislation:

1. *An Act Allowing Students with Disabilities to Participate in Graduation Ceremonies*

This Act<sup>1</sup> was adopted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, thereby amending Chapter 71B (the Special Education Statute) to add a new Section 16, as follows:

Section 16. A school age child with a disability, in this section called a student, who is completing the twelfth grade but who has not yet earned the competency determination as required under section 1D of chapter 69 for high school graduation, shall be allowed to participate fully in high school graduation ceremonies and activities conducted or sponsored by the school or school committee even though the student will not receive a diploma during the ceremony if:

1. The student has maintained at least a 95 per cent attendance level, meaning no more than 9 days of absence from school in a 180 day school year, during the school year before the twelfth grade, but, a student's absence from school due to disability, illness, religious observance or other reason that constitutes an excused absence under the school's or school committee's rules shall not be counted for purposes of this section;
2. The student has taken the grade 10 MCAS examination in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score at least 3 times, or has participated in the MCAS alternate assessment by submitting at least 2 portfolios; and
3. The student is in good standing, having met all of the school's or school committee's nonacademic standards for students to be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies and related school activities.

Nothing in this section shall compel a student to participate in the high school graduation ceremony and activities. The superintendent shall consider the recommendation, if any, of the student's individualized education program team as well as the student's own expressed preference. A student's participation in the high school graduation ceremony and activities without award of the high school diploma shall not affect or limit the student's eligibility for special education services.

In my [Commissioner's Update of May 22, 2006](#), I indicated that this bill was pending and encouraged you to consider allowing students with disabilities who had not completed all graduation requirements to participate in graduation ceremonies this past school year. I want to thank everyone for their attention to this when it was fully voluntary and not a requirement. We received very positive feedback about the closing activities of schools, including the flexibility on allowing students with disabilities full participation in graduation ceremonies even when they had not completed all

graduation requirements. I encourage you to continue to offer opportunities to participate in graduation activities to all students as you implement this new requirement from now on.

## 2. *Concurrent Enrollment*

In the fiscal year 2007 budget, the legislature included a new appropriation as line item 7061-9600. This new appropriation directs the Department of Education to create a discretionary grant pilot program with the purpose of providing monies to school districts and state public institutions of higher education partnering together to offer concurrent enrollment programs for students with disabilities who are 18-22 years of age in higher education credit or non-credit courses that include non-disabled students. The appropriation for this new program is \$2,000,000. The Department, through its Office of Special Education Planning and Policy Development, is currently developing guidelines and a new grant application form to implement this program. Please consider whether there are students in your district who might benefit from such an opportunity and whether there are institutions of higher education nearby with whom you can create a partnership and be ready to make application for these funds in the fall.

We are in the preliminary stages of developing this grant program, but are committed to making it available as early in this school year as possible. Please direct questions or comments to Madeline Levine ([mlevine@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mlevine@doe.mass.edu)) at the Department about this program.

Thank you in advance for your work at the district level in helping to ensure that students with disabilities are full participants in the public schools in Massachusetts.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 152 of the Acts of 2006.

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### IMPORTANT MCAS NOTICE: Change in November 2006 Retest Schedule

**To:** High School Principals and Directors of Alternative Adult/External Diploma Programs, Evening High Schools, Charter Schools, Approved Private Special Education Schools, Institutional Schools, and Collaboratives

**Copy:** Superintendents

**From:** David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

**Date:** August 21, 2006

To accommodate the high schools that will be closed on Monday, November 13, 2006, in observance of the Veterans' Day holiday, the Department is rescheduling the November 2006 MCAS Mathematics Retest as follows:

- Wednesday, November 8: Mathematics session 1
- Thursday, November 9: Mathematics session 2

There is no change to the previously announced dates for the November 2006 MCAS English Language Arts retest. The ELA retest will be administered on the following dates:

- Wednesday, November 15: ELA Composition sessions A and B
- Thursday, November 16: ELA Language and Literature sessions 1 and 2
- Friday, November 17: ELA Language and Literature session 3

An updated testing schedule is now posted on the Department's Web site at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/cal.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/cal.html). Please be sure to notify parents/guardians, students, and staff so that they can plan accordingly.

Please contact the MCAS Service Center at (800) 737-5103 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Reporting Discrepancies in Spring 2006 MCAS Results

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

Copy: MCAS Coordinators

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 21, 2006

As you know, I provided the [schedule](#) for the release of 2006 MCAS results in my update of July 25, 2006. As announced in the schedule, the Department is releasing preliminary results from the spring 2006 MCAS (with raw scores only) through the MCAS Service Center today, August 21st. You are responsible for reviewing the data and reporting discrepancies by **August 25, 2006**, for grade 10 and by **September 8, 2006**, for grades 3-8.

### Obtaining Preliminary Spring 2006 MCAS Results

To access your results, begin at the [MCAS Service Center](#) Web page. Select MCAS, then select MCAS Reporting and use your password from the spring 2006 MCAS test administration.

These files do not include performance levels for students who took the standard MCAS. However, there are codes for students who were absent, who transferred, or who took the MCAS-Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt). Performance levels are available using TestWiz (<http://www.testwiz.com>) or may be determined using the raw score to scaled score conversion tables available at the Department's Web site at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/results.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/results.html).

### Instructions for Discrepancy Reporting

The discrepancy reporting form is posted at [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com). The Department will allow limited types of corrections to data reported on the student answer booklets. We encourage districts and schools to report large blocks of missing data. In addition, the following types of discrepancies may be reported:

- Medically documented absence (MED) designation incorrectly reported
  - Student's performance level was reported as MED, but the student participated in testing. (Test results should not be suppressed.)
  - Student's performance level was not reported as MED, but student was absent for a medically documented reason. (Student's performance level should be reported as MED.)
- First-year Limited English proficient (LEP) designation incorrectly reported
  - Student's performance level reported as LEP, but student was not a first-year LEP student. (Test results should not be suppressed.)
  - Student's performance level was not reported as LEP, but the student was a first-year LEP student. (Student's performance level should be reported as LEP.) In order to change a student's performance level to LEP he or she must have been reported as LEP in SIMS and also must have been enrolled in Massachusetts public schools for the first time in the 2005-2006 school year.

- Alternate assessment designation incorrectly reported
  - Student's performance was reported with an alternate performance level (*Incomplete Portfolio* (INP), *Awareness* (AWR), *Emerging* (EMG), *Progressing* (PRG), or *Needs Improvement-Alt* (NIA)), but he/she participated in the standard assessment.
  - Student participated in the MCAS-Alt, but his/her performance is not reported with an alternate performance level.
- Transfer designation incorrectly reported
  - Student is designated as a Transfer (TRN), but he or she did not transfer into your school or district.
  - Student is not designated as a Transfer, but he or she did transfer into your school or district.
- Results reported but student not enrolled in your school or district
- Results not reported but student tested at your school or district

## Deadlines

Grade 10 discrepancies must be reported **no later than August 25, 2006**, in order for changes to be incorporated in *Parent/Guardian Reports* and school and district summary reports. These reports will **not** be updated for any discrepancies reported after August 25th.

For grades 3-8, discrepancies must be reported **by September 8, 2006**, in order for changes to be incorporated in *Parent/Guardian Reports* and school and district summary reports. These reports will **not** be updated for any discrepancies reported after September 8th.

If you have any questions, please contact the MCAS Service Center at (800) 737-5103. As always, direct policy-related questions to the Department's Student Assessment Services Unit at (781) 338-3625.

Thank you.

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### MCAS High School Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Competency Determination: Test Participation and Administration Requirements

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

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Copy: Kit Viator, Director of Student Assessment

Date: July 24, 2006

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information about the Competency Determination in science and technology/engineering for the class of 2010, and details regarding the participation and administration requirements for the spring 2007 high school (grades 9 and 10) Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) tests in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering.

- In addition to meeting or exceeding the state standards in English language arts and mathematics, starting with the class of 2010, students must meet or exceed the scaled score of 220 on one of the MCAS high school STE tests in order to satisfy the requirement of the Competency Determination.
- **Every student in the class of 2010 (and beyond) must take at least one STE test by the end of grade 10.** Students who pass one of the STE tests in grade 9 (class of 2010) in spring 2007 will earn a Competency Determination in science and technology/engineering.
- As a reminder, state law requires all students-including students designated as limited English proficient, and students with disabilities-to participate in MCAS testing. Current requirements for compiling science and technology/engineering MCAS-Alt portfolios for high school students with significant cognitive disabilities who are not expected to earn a Competency Determination are outlined in the *2006 Educator's Manual* for MCAS-Alt available at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/). Portfolio requirements to earn a Competency Determination in science and technology/engineering will be provided during the next school year.



### Spring 2007: Test Administration and Participation Requirements

*Test Administration Schedule: 2007*

- STE tests in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering will be administered June 5-7, 2007:
  - Session 1 will be administered June 5
  - Session 2 will be administered June 6
  - Make-up tests will be administered June 7

This testing is for all students enrolled in a corresponding STE course, including those who have taken a yearlong course and those who may have taken the course in a fall or spring semester block.

See Attachment A, "2007 High School STE Test Administration and Student Participation

Requirements: Step-By-Step Guide,"   for additional information on student participation.

#### *Grade 9 Participation Requirements: 2007*

- Schools must offer a corresponding MCAS STE test to grade 9 students enrolled in a biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering course who wish to participate. Participation of grade 9 students may allow for more testing opportunities to meet the STE requirement for the Competency Determination. The Department strongly encourages students to take advantage of the opportunity to take an STE test in grade 9 if they are enrolled in one of the four STE courses that corresponds with the tests. However, parents/guardians, in consultation with teachers, guidance counselors, and principals, have the option to exclude a student from this testing opportunity. The Department will develop a process to assist schools in documenting this decision.

#### *Grade 10 Participation Requirements: 2007*

- Each grade 10 student (class of 2009) enrolled in a biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering course **must participate** in a corresponding MCAS STE test. These students are required to take the test in 2007 in part because the Department needs sufficient data to accurately set the cut scores that will be used to determine eligibility for the Competency Determination based on student performance in 2007.

#### *Students Ineligible to Participate: 2007*

- Students in grades 11 and 12 are not eligible to participate in the 2007 high school STE tests.



## **Spring 2008 and Beyond: Test Administration and Participation Requirements**

#### *Grade 9 Participation Requirements: 2008 and Beyond*

- In spring 2008, schools **must offer** a corresponding MCAS STE test to grade 9 students enrolled in a biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering course who wish to participate. The Department strongly encourages students to take advantage of the opportunity to take an STE test in grade 9 if they are enrolled in one of the four STE courses that corresponds with the tests. However, parents/guardians, in consultation with teachers, guidance counselors, and principals, have the option to exclude a student from this testing opportunity. The Department will develop a process to assist schools in documenting this decision.

#### *Grade 10 Participation Requirements: 2008 and Beyond*

- Schools **must also offer** a corresponding MCAS STE test to grade 10 students enrolled in a biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering course as follows:
  - Students who have not taken and passed an STE test at grade 9 will be required to participate in one of the tests.
  - Students who have taken and passed an STE test at grade 9 are not required to take an additional STE test. However, they may be given an additional testing opportunity if funding allows.

See Attachment B, "2008 High School STE Test Administration and Student Participation Requirements: Step-By-Step Guide,"   for additional information on student participation.

#### *Test Administration Schedule: 2008 and Beyond*

- Our current plans are for schools to administer the STE tests to students in early June 2008. This testing is for all students enrolled in a corresponding STE course, including those who may have taken the course in a fall or spring semester block.
- The Department plans to offer a Biology test twice a year, starting in 2009, to accommodate

students on semester block schedules and to offer an additional retesting opportunity. Due to limited test enrollments in chemistry, introductory physics, and technology/engineering, the Department has determined that it will not be feasible to offer testing twice a year in these disciplines.

## Test Format, Structure, and Score Reporting Categories

Each STE test will be administered in two sessions. Each session is designed to take approximately 60 minutes to complete (see possible exception regarding the technology/ engineering test below). However, test administration is not timed. The following table shows the distribution of items by type. Common items are those used to determine student scores; matrix items do not count toward student scores. Multiple-choice items are worth one point each, and open-response items are scored on a 0-4 point scale.

### *Technology/Engineering Test*

In order to provide Technology/Engineering tests in 2008 and beyond, the number of field-test items-and consequently, the estimated testing time-will need to be substantially increased in spring 2007. A greater number of students taking this test is needed to support test development in this area. The continued viability of the Technology/Engineering test will depend largely upon student participation in spring 2006. The Department will make a determination about the future of the Technology/Engineering test later this year and will provide an update to districts and schools as soon as possible.

### Test Items by Type Per Form for MCAS High School STE Tests

	Number of Multiple-Choice Items	Number of Open-Response Items	Total Number of Items Per Test Form
<b>Common (% of Total Score)</b>	40 (67%)	5 (33%)	45 (100%)
<b>Matrix</b>	12	2	14
<b>Total Per Form</b>	52	7	59

- Test items will be aligned with the January 2006 revised high school science and technology/engineering standards. The tables below show high school STE test reporting categories derived from the *Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework* content standards. The approximate percentages (+/- 5%) of these categories for each of the tests are provided.

### Biology

Reporting Categories	Approximate Percent of Items (+/- 5%)
Biochemistry & Cell Biology	25
Genetics	20
Anatomy & Physiology	15
Ecology	20
Evolution & Biodiversity	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### Introductory Physics

Reporting Categories	Approximate Percent of Items (+/- 5%)
Motion & Forces	40
Heat & Heat Transfer	15
Waves & Radiation	25
Electromagnetism	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## Chemistry

Reporting Categories	Approximate Percent of Items (+/- 5%)
Properties of Matter & Thermochemistry	25
Atomic Structure & Periodicity	25
Bonding & Reactions	30
Solutions, Equilibrium, & Acid-Base Theory	20
Total	100

## Technology/Engineering

Reporting Categories	Approximate Percent of Items (+/- 5%)
Engineering Design	20
Construction & Manufacturing	20
Fluid & Thermal Systems	30
Electrical & Communications Systems	30
Total	100

## Reporting of Results and Test Item Release

- Scaled scores and MCAS performance levels - *Advanced*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Failing* - will be reported at the student, school, district, and state levels for STE tests administered in spring 2007.
- Released items from the 2004, 2005, and 2006 administrations may be found at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html). In addition, open-response items with student work may be found at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/). High school technology/ engineering test items from the 2006 administration will not be released in order to support development of future tests in this area.

## STE Retesting Opportunities

The Department is in the process of developing details of its plan to provide multiple opportunities for students to meet the Competency Determination in science and technology/engineering. Our current plans for those students who do not initially pass a high school STE test are listed below.

- Retesting opportunities will begin in spring 2008 for those grade 9 students who take and fail an STE test in spring 2007.
- Students may participate in a test the following spring in the same content area in which they first tested. For example, if a student fails a Biology test in grade 9, he/she may take a Biology test the following year, regardless of course enrollment.
- Students may participate in a test the following spring in a content area different from that in which they previously tested, provided they are completing a course that corresponds with that test. For example, if a student fails an Introductory Physics test in grade 9, he/she may take a Chemistry test in grade 10 if he/she has completed or is completing a high school chemistry course.
- As mentioned above, the Department plans to offer a Biology test twice a year (January/February and June), starting in 2009, to accommodate students on semester block schedules and to allow an additional retesting opportunity.

Please contact Katie Bowler, Administrator for Science and Technology/Engineering Test Development, at [cbowler@doe.mass.edu](mailto:cbowler@doe.mass.edu) or 781-338-3625 if you have further questions.



**Attachment A: 2007 High School STE Test Administration and Student Participation Requirements: Step-By-Step Guide**



**Attachment B: 2008 High School STE Test Administration and Student Participation Requirements: Step-By-Step Guide**

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

September 2006

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	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

## NEWS SEARCH

Keyword:

Dates:

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:



## 2007 Davidson Fellow Scholarships

To: Superintendents, Principals, Teachers and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 2006

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development seeks to recognize, nurture, and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference. To that end, they are offering high achieving young people across the country the opportunity to be named as 2007 Davidson Fellows. Winners will receive a \$50,000, \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship, which must be used at an accredited institute of learning.

To enter, students must submit an original piece of work which has the potential to make a positive contribution to society and is recognized by experts as "significant." Entries can be in the fields of science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy, or a category the Institute calls "Outside the Box."

There is no minimum age to enter, but applicants must be under 18 as of October 1, 2007. Applicants must also be either a United States citizen or permanent United States resident residing in the United States.

The deadline to apply is March 30, 2007. Applications should be sent to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, Attn: Davidson Fellows Applications, 9665 Gateway Dr., Suite B, Reno, Nevada 89521.

For more information on the Davidson Fellows, or to download an application, please visit [www.DavidsonFellows.org](http://www.DavidsonFellows.org). For additional opportunities for talented youth, provided by the Davidson Institute, visit the Institute's website at [www.davidson-institute.org](http://www.davidson-institute.org).

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

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## NEWS SEARCH

Keyword:

Dates:

 Past 30 days Past 90 days Date Range

Start:

End:



## District/School Administration

### Constitution Day and Citizenship Day: September 17

To: Superintendents, Principals and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 21, 2006

A federal law enacted in December 2004 designates September 17 as "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day," to commemorate the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787. The federal law is included in Section 111 of Pub. L. 108-447 (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005). It contains the following provision in Section 111(b): **"Each educational institution that receives Federal funds for a fiscal year shall hold an educational program on the United States Constitution on September 17 of such year for the students served by the educational institution."**

The U.S. Department of Education has published additional information about the new law at [www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2005-2/052405b.html](http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2005-2/052405b.html). It states that since September 17 falls on a Sunday in 2006, educational institutions may hold the educational program during the preceding or following week, i. e., between Monday, September 11 and Friday, September 22.

Many excellent resources are available on why the Constitution was written, how it describes the structure of our federal government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Among these are:

- [Constitution Resources](#)
- [National Constitution Center](#)
- [National Archives](#)
- [Library of Congress](#)
- [Text of the Constitution and other primary documents relating to it](#)
- [Role of the Continental Congress during the Revolution, including relations with Native Americans](#)
- [The Center for Civic Education](#)
- [Discovering Justice](#) (at the Moakley Federal Courthouse, Boston)
- [First Amendment Schools](#)
- [The Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework](#)

I hope you will find these resources useful. For further information about the role schools can play in commemorating Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, please contact: John Chiang Keh, Content Specialist for History & Social Sciences, at (781) 338-6226 or [jkeh@doe.mass.edu](mailto:jkeh@doe.mass.edu).

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