



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

October 2, 2006

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this Update I have four announcements and two items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu for your review.

Update

Massachusetts Conference for Women

This year's Massachusetts Conference for Women will include a Young Women's Program geared toward junior and senior high school girls. This unique, one-day event offers women an opportunity to hear practical advice on everything from career advancement and professional development to money management and life skills from leaders in the fields of health, media, business, finance and personal development. The Young Women's Program will provide sessions that address topics most relevant to teens, and will feature speakers including actress Jessica Biel. The keynote speaker for the day will be author and poet Dr. Maya Angelou.

Scholarships are available for teenagers who want to attend the conference, which will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. I would encourage you to let your female students know about this opportunity, and to consider attending the conference. More information can be found online at www.maconferenceforwomen.org.

2006 MCAS State Results and Grade 10 Results Are Available Online

The **2006 MCAS state results**   were released on September 20. The link to the press release is www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3074. The 2006 MCAS Grade 10 results are also available online and can be accessed at www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3084.

School and district results for students in grades 3-8 will be released to the public on October 16. Please note that superintendents will receive these results electronically on October 10 and principals will receive them electronically on October 11, but the results are embargoed until the official public release on October 16.

Annual Technology Plan Data Collection

The online forms for the annual Tech Plan Implementation Report will be open for districts to enter their data for the 2005-2006 school year from Oct. 10 to Nov. 21. Districts need to report on their progress in implementing their technology plan to be eligible for technology grants and E-Rate discounts.

To access the forms, log in to the Department's security portal and click "Tech Plan." The first page contains instructions for completing the forms. Use the drop-down menus to select your district and the year "2005-2006".

The Department of Education will review each district's data, and technology plan through 2008. Districts should either post their technology plan on their web sites or email them to bozols@doe.mass.edu for review. Letters of approval will be sent out by February 2007 so districts will be eligible for FY2008 technology grants and E-Rate discounts.

Contact Baiba Ozols at bozols@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-6831 for more information.

Online Professional Development

Educators can apply online to participate in courses offered by the Partnership for Technology Professional Development (PTPD). The PTPD will offer courses through three of the top professional providers in the state: The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), The Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA), and Virtual High School (VHS).

Courses will be offered in three periods: December 2006 to Feb. 2007, March to May 2007, and June to August 2007. Courses will be delivered using a combination of online and face-to-face approaches, with all courses using MassONE as the delivery system. The courses include:

- 21st Century Literacy Skills for Teachers
- Creating Assessments Using Online Tools
- UDL in the General Education Curriculum
- Teacher Tech: Digital Media in the Classroom
- Principles of Curriculum Design
- Leadership for the 21st Century: Teaching, Learning, and Technology

This program provides a cost-effective way for districts to build their capacity to use technology in teaching and learning. The courses will be offered at no cost to the participants. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, with preference given to districts that are enrolling teams, followed by those offering stipends to teachers to share what they learned with their colleagues. Course descriptions, syllabi, and application forms are available at http://vessunweb1.doe.mass.edu/tutorial/ptpd_survey.htm.

Postings at www.doe.mass.edu:

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Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and All Hazards Planning

Update on Flu Pandemic Planning

To: School Superintendents
Education Collaboratives
Special Education Schools
Charter Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Paul J. Cote, Jr., Commissioner of Public Health

Date: September, 2006

This is the second in a series of updates and advisories on flu pandemic planning that you will be receiving periodically from the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Update: *Use of School Facilities as Hospital Influenza Specialty Care Units*

The unique challenges of pandemic flu and the potential for widespread illness require us to build response capacity in the healthcare system that is unprecedented. A flu pandemic will stress the healthcare sector well beyond its existing potential to provide care to the sick.

Therefore, all Massachusetts acute care hospitals have been directed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to evaluate potential sites in their area where they could, with the assistance of the state and local preparedness partners, provide inpatient care to flu patients.

These Influenza Specialty Care Units (ISCUs) will be licensed as satellite facilities of the hospital, and will be utilized for approximately 2-4 weeks, if needed, to provide screening of outpatients, and for the care of flu patients that do not meet the criteria for hospital admission, but who are too sick to be cared for at home. In the event of activation, staff and equipment will be provided.

Because school buildings meet many of the criteria for such a facility (eg food preparation and dining facilities, adequate restrooms, and large open rooms that can hold a number of patients in a single space), you may be contacted by your local hospital to discuss the feasibility of identifying buildings in your district, in an emergency, as an ISCU.

If you are contacted by a local hospital regarding possible use of school facilities in your district for this purpose, we urge you to cooperate in the planning to the extent feasible. It is important that you bear in mind that if the impact of a pandemic is such that we need to provide hospital level care in school buildings or other such facilities, there will be a declaration of a public health emergency and appropriate guidance from the state.

If a school building in your district is designated as an ISCU, it will be important to have a plan for temporary re-assignment of the students and staff in that facility to another building or alternate educational site in the event that the ISCU is activated.

If you have any questions about ISCUs being designated in your area, you may contact your local hospital's emergency planning coordinator or Dr. Lisa Stone, Hospital Preparedness Coordinator at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, (617) 624-5282 (office), (617) 908- 9001 (NEXTEL) or at Lisa.Stone@state.ma.us.

Update: *School Closings in the Event of a Flu Pandemic*

At this time, scientists and public health officials around the world have not come to any hard and fast conclusions about how to try to slow the progress of a flu pandemic when it arrives. They are working on models to meet various possible scenarios, and programmed school closings are one possible method under consideration. At this time, we are not anticipating the need for lengthy school closings, but we will keep you posted on the latest thinking on the subject. We are focusing now on what might trigger a school closing and what steps state and local authorities would take to carry out the plan.

Update: *Regional Conferences on Flu Pandemic Preparedness*

Since our last communication with you on this subject, some of you participated in one of five regional flu pandemic planning conferences that were held around the state early this summer.

These meetings brought together hundreds of representatives of municipal government, primary and secondary education, higher education, business and industry, civic, faith and community organizations, hospitals and healthcare providers, and regional emergency preparedness coalitions involving local health and public safety officials to be briefed on the pandemic threat and how to prepare continuity of operations plans.

See a report of the proceedings at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/epii/flu/pandemic.htm> and note the featured link to the DOE Pandemic Influenza and All Hazards Planning website (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pandemic/>) for information and tools that can help your school system prepare.



Update: *Regional Exercises of Continuity of Operations Plans*

In order to further strengthen the Commonwealth's ability to respond effectively to a pandemic flu event, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPS), and the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), is planning a series of "tabletop" exercises to practice implementation of our Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs) at the local level across the state.

DPH and MEMA will be hosting approximately 26 regional tabletop exercises across the Commonwealth to enhance and integrate state and local pandemic plans during October and early November. Community and state college campuses are being considered as potential locations for these exercises. HSPH has designed the master exercise scenario and is creating a web-based course that will provide municipalities and other local stakeholders with a baseline of pre-requisite information in advance of the tabletops.

Each event will have between 100-200 participants, and invitations to participate in these exercises will be coordinated jointly by MEMA, DPH, and our municipal boards of health.

Reminder: *PK-12 Continuity of Operations Planning*

In order to participate in any local or regional exercise of emergency preparedness, it will be necessary for each school district to have a flu pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). We see this as an essential adjunct to your district's [Multi-Hazard Evacuation Plan](#), and urge you to familiarize yourself with the Department of Public Health's Influenza Pandemic Planning Flyer at [MDPH Pandemic Planning Flyer 01/2006](#)  and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's sample checklist for school districts at [School District \(K-12\) Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist](#)  - 99KB].

Update: *Statewide Public Information Campaign: "Flu Facts - What You Need to Know"*

With the regular flu season approaching, and concern rising around the world that avian/bird flu may mutate from a version that affects primarily birds to one that can spread rapidly and easily among humans, DPH is developing a statewide public information campaign regarding the flu.

"Flu Facts: What You Need to Know" will be rolled out this fall and is aimed at educating the public regarding what flu is and simple things that they can do to help protect themselves and their families from getting it.

The campaign, in conjunction with local and regional media outlets, will consist of a broadly advertised flu information website and print and broadcast media messages. We will be asking you, as the education leader of your district, school, or collaborative, to help us communicate the campaign message to your staff, students, and parents.

Posters and a downloadable coloring book for elementary school students high-lighting the steps families can take to protect themselves from seasonal influenza, bird flu or a pandemic flu will be available. For middle and high school students we'll have resources for teachers to help them incorporate flu education and prevention tips into existing health and social studies curriculum. Staff from DPH will be available for assistance in planning school assemblies. All this information will be available by October 4th at www.mass.gov/dph/flu/ and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pandemic/resources.html>.

We value and appreciate your involvement in this important task, and we plan to stay in regular contact with you as the planning process proceeds. Please feel free to contact DOE Associate Commissioner John Bynoe at jbynoe@doe.mass.edu or DPH Assistant Commissioner Kathy Atkinson at Kathy.Atkinson@state.ma.us if you have any questions.

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Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium

Our vision is successful families. Our mission is successful partnerships.

November is Family Literacy Month

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: October 2, 2006

Dear Friends:

In recognition of the critical role parents play in their child's success in school and achieving the goals of Education Reform and the federal No Child Left Behind law, I am pleased to announce that Governor Mitt Romney has declared November 2006 as Massachusetts Family Literacy Month. This annual celebration, sponsored by the Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium and its member agencies, underscores the importance of strong literacy skills that help each family member be successful in school and in life.

The Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium, a statewide partnership of 14 state agencies including the Department of Education, statewide and community organizations, parents, and other interested parties, is working to integrate and coordinate family literacy and family support for at risk families. Its members provide education, health, employment, and human services and work toward the common purpose of helping families achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

We know that students do better in school when they are reading, writing, and participating in literacy activities with their families. Family Literacy Month is a great way to engage parents in supporting their children's education; to help children toward lifelong learning; and to engage your community partners in organizing a variety of family-centered events. Community groups such as schools, libraries, adult literacy programs, parent support programs, social service agencies, businesses, and other community partnerships can organize easy, creative, fun, inexpensive, and effective activities for families including: read-a-thons; bookmaking and storytelling projects; numeracy and problem solving activities; providing discounts on books and supplies; and inviting local authors and community leaders to read aloud to children.

Our [website](#) has resources that can help:



[Governor Romney's 2006 Proclamation of Massachusetts Family Literacy Month](#)

[A Guide to Celebrating Massachusetts Family Literacy Month](#)

[Family Literacy Public Service Announcements](#)

[Every Grownup is a Famous Storyteller](#)

[Promoting Social and Emotional Health Through Early Literacy](#)

[The Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline](#)

[The Especially for Parents page](#) of the U.S. Department of Education website

[The National Center for Family Literacy website](#)

I hope you will take advantage of this special month to involve parents and families in their children's education and encourage you to make this a vibrant tradition in the Commonwealth. We are collecting information about community events and posting it on our website as well as announcing selected events as examples in press releases. If you would like to post information about your event(s), please send an e-mail to MFLC@doe.mass.edu with the following information:

- Brief Description of Event
- Date, Time, and Place
- Time and Length of Event
- Target Audience
- Contact Person's Name, Phone, and E-mail

Together, we can build the successful partnerships that will help us achieve success for all Massachusetts students. Thank you.

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