



David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Commissioner's Update

May 7, 2007

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this Update I have five announcements and ten items for your review.

### Application Subsidies Available for National Board Certification

The National Board Certification process <http://www.nbpts.org> is an enriching personal and professional experience that allows teachers to reflect upon and improve their practice. For the past several years the Department has encouraged teachers to participate in the process by offering application subsidies to defray the application costs.

This year the Department is able to use federal funds to subsidize \$1,250 of the \$2,500 application fee for 51 first-time candidates. Priority will be given to teachers from high poverty/low performing school districts. Candidates are responsible for the remaining \$1,250.

Individuals who are interested should register on the Department's website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/eq/mt/nbpts.html>, and submit their National Board application by the end of day on December 31, 2007 [www.nbpts.org/become\\_a\\_candidate](http://www.nbpts.org/become_a_candidate). Subsidy funds cannot be allocated until candidates have made the initial payment of \$500 with the National Board online.

For additional information, please contact Cathy Depradine at 781-338-3324.

### Charter School Applications Available Soon

The Application for a Massachusetts Public Charter School will be posted on May 11th on the Department's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/new/>. Hard copies will also be available. There are currently 18 Commonwealth and 41 Horace Mann charters available in Massachusetts. Interested applicants should call the Charter School Office at 781-338-3227 or email [charterschools@doe.mass.edu](mailto:charterschools@doe.mass.edu).

### 2007 Mass Technology Leadership Council Awards

The Mass Technology Leadership Council (MTLC) is accepting applications through June 15, 2007 for their 2007 Above & Beyond Awards. The goal of the program is to encourage the creation and exchange of best practices in the teaching of science, technology, engineering and math, and to recognize, promote and encourage innovative teaching. Up to 10 Awards will be presented in the fall of 2007. Teachers can apply individually or as a team. Individual teachers are eligible to receive a \$1,000 grant, and teams of teachers are eligible to receive a \$2,500 grant for classroom use. Visit the MTLC website for more information: <http://www.masstlc.org/wor/edfoundation/>.

### Massachusetts Archaeological Society

The Massachusetts Archaeological Society is holding The First Annual Essay & Poster contest for Massachusetts Fifth Graders between now and 21 May 2007. Essay & Poster contest materials can be found at <http://www.massarchaeology.org/>.

### Office of Consumer Affairs Business Regulation

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation announces a no-cost, professional development training for educators on the new High School Financial Literacy (Hi-Fi) Program. HiFi has been well received in high schools and educators report its success and popularity. Registration information at [www.mass.gov/hifi](http://www.mass.gov/hifi).

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

- [Graduation Ceremonies for The Class of 2007: Participation by Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Announcement of Competitive Technology Grants](#)
- [School Building Health, Safety, and Fire Inspections](#)
- [Notice of Public Comment, Proposed Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00](#)
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6. [Invitation to Serve on Standard Setting Panels in August 2007](#)
7. [Invitation to Serve on High School Standard-Setting Panels in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering in August 2007](#)
8. [Invitation to Serve on Grade 3 Mathematics MCAS Standard-Setting Panel in August 2007](#)
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Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

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## Graduation Ceremonies for The Class of 2007: Participation by Students with Disabilities

To: Superintendents of Schools, Principals, Other Interested Persons

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: May 3, 2007

In a few weeks, high school seniors will be attending activities and ceremonies marking the end of their high school years. This is the fifth year that the high school diploma will be awarded to students who have met two conditions: they have achieved the state standards in English language arts and mathematics (the competency determination) and they have met local graduation requirements.

I hope that all students who are completing their senior year will be recognized at a memorable and positive event at which they are acknowledged for their accomplishments and encouraged to continue pursuing educational opportunities and success. Students with disabilities who are completing their twelfth grade year in good standing and who meet certain criteria are entitled under state law to participate in graduation ceremonies and related school activities with their peers, even if they have not yet earned the competency determination and will not be receiving a diploma. While a school committee may award the high school diploma only to students who have satisfied the competency determination requirement, there is no state prohibition against students attending or participating in graduation ceremonies even if they will not be receiving a diploma.

The law relating to students with disabilities participating in high school graduation, Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71B, § 16, was enacted in 2006. It reads 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.

Local school officials have discretion to permit broader student participation in graduation ceremonies, beyond including those students with disabilities who meet the conditions set forth in M.G.L. c. 71B, § 16. The law simply establishes the baseline for schools and school districts that limit participation in graduation ceremonies to students who will be receiving the high school diploma. If a school or school district has a more inclusive policy that allows students to participate in graduation ceremonies even if they will not be receiving a diploma, school officials do not have to consider all of the elements set forth in the statute.

For students who have not yet met the competency determination standard, my hope is that they will receive the appropriate certificate at graduation ceremonies in June, take the MCAS retest when it is offered, and subsequently earn a diploma from your high school. Further, I hope you are ensuring that your high school personnel are discussing plans with each and every student who still needs to earn a diploma. Please see the memo posted at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3051> for specific outreach requirements and links to other resources. You will find additional information on "pathways to success" on our Student Support, Career & Education Services website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pathways/>. Help for students is available through local one-stop career centers, community college MCAS study programs, district and regional summer schools, and re-test opportunities. I urge you to encourage students and their parents to take advantage of the resources that the Department of Education has identified.



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## Educational Technology

### Announcement of Competitive Technology Grants

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Collaborative Directors  
From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education  
Date: May 7, 2007

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We are pleased to announce the fiscal year 2008 technology competitive grant programs funded through Title II, Part D, Enhancing Education Through Technology, under the No Child Left Behind Act.

- [Technology for Data Driven Decisions \(Fund Code: 164\)](#)
- [Technology Enhancement Competitive Grant Program \(Fund Code: 170-B\)](#)

Subject to appropriation, approximately \$1,000,000 will be available for each program. Grant awards will range from \$75,000 to \$250,000 for these two-year grants. Go to <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/grants/> for more information.

Proposals are due at the Department of Education by 5 p.m. on **Friday, June 29, 2007**. If you have any questions, please e-mail Connie Louie at [clouie@doe.mass.edu](mailto:clouie@doe.mass.edu) or call her at 781-338-6865.

Two technical assistance workshops will be held on:

**Tuesday, May 22** Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center (10 a.m. to noon)  
**Thursday, May 24** Massachusetts Department of Education (10 a.m. to noon)

Please register online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=299> to participate.

I encourage you to take advantage of this grant opportunity to advance education reform and the goals of No Child Left Behind.



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## School Building Health, Safety, and Fire Inspections

To: Superintendents of Schools, Charter School Leaders, and School Principals

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 25, 2007

It has come to my attention that a number of the Commonwealth's school buildings may not have current health, safety, and fire inspections. Pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, sec. 68, school committees, under the direction of municipal officials, are responsible for ensuring that school buildings are well-maintained for the use of students and other members of the school community. Proper maintenance of school buildings must include regular building health, safety, and fire inspections. These inspections are to be done on a prescribed timeline as determined by the city or town, unless otherwise directed by a state agency or another authority, for each building to which students have access. This is a serious matter that needs to be addressed immediately in order to ensure the health and safety of all children and staff members throughout the school day, as well as in after-school programs.

Therefore, I ask that you review the status of these inspections for the school buildings in your district, update the inspections if necessary, and work with your local building inspector, health inspector, and fire department officials to take the necessary steps to address any concerns.

To highlight the importance of having these inspections current, we will include a statement to that effect in the annual Assurances Statement document that school superintendents must sign and submit to the Department of Education each year as a condition of the release of certain federal and state funds. Also, we will include a reminder about having up-to-date inspections in our annual Back to School mailing.

If you have questions regarding your responsibilities in this area, I suggest that you contact your school legal counsel or town counsel.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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Wednesday, May 02, 2007

## Notice of Public Comment, Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 4.00, Vocational Technical Education Regulations

Pursuant to its authority under M.G.L. c. 69, §§ 1B, 1D and 1F and c. 74, § 2, and in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 3, the Massachusetts Board of Education is soliciting public comment on the proposed amendments to the Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00.

The proposed amendments concern standards for licensure of vocational technical superintendents and principals and will align these regulations more closely in several areas with the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00.

Copies of the **proposed amendments**   are available on the Department of Education's web site at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/> or by calling 781-338-3944. Written comments on the proposed amendments may be submitted by mail to Jeffrey Wheeler, Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main St., Malden, MA 02148, by fax to 781-338-3950, or by e-mail to [jwheeler@doe.mass.edu](mailto:jwheeler@doe.mass.edu). The deadline for submission of public comment in **Friday, June 8, 2007**. The Board is expected to vote on the proposed amendments at its regular monthly meeting scheduled for June 26, 2006.

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## Soliciting Promising Parent/Family and Community Involvement Practices

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Collaboratives

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 30, 2007

This memorandum is an invitation to submit information regarding promising programs or practices that include parent/family and/or community involvement. These submissions will be reviewed for possible posting and distribution in an updated supplement to the information collected in school year 2004-2005, which is posted to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac/parent/>.

I am requesting this information in partnership with the Parent and Community Education and Involvement (PCEI) Advisory Council to the Board of Education, a council that is committed to helping Massachusetts's schools, families, and community members work together to help improve student achievement. We are aware that many school districts in the state are already implementing innovative and creative programs and strategies. Your response to this request can help us identify and share information about these promising practices so that school districts throughout the Commonwealth can benefit from your experience.

We are inviting you to answer the questions on the next page. You can identify one or more practices or models that you use in your district, school, or collaborative to facilitate involvement and/or a specific program. Please provide any information you feel is pertinent. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

- District/School/Collaboarative and Contact Person Name/title/address/phone/e-mail:
- Name of program/model (a way to identify the program in a few words).
- What age group of students is the program/model intended to benefit (e.g., elementary, high school, etc.)?
- What group(s) are you involving (e.g., parents, grandparents, business leaders, etc.)?
- In what ways (if any) do you encourage and/or facilitate participation of culturally and linguistically diverse community members?
- Description of the Model/Program.
- How long has the model/program been in place and in which schools?
- In what ways do you think the model/program has been effective?
- If available, please provide further documentation of your model/program (e.g., manual, website, brochure, etc.).

Please send responses and questions by Tuesday, June 26, 2007 to:

Eileen Robinson, Academic Support Liaison and liaison to the PCEI  
 via email: [erobinson@doe.mass.edu](mailto:erobinson@doe.mass.edu),  
 via mail: 350 Main Street Malden, MA 02148,  
 or via phone: 781-338-6246.

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Invitation to Serve on Standard-Setting Panels in August 2007

To: Superintendents; Principals; Directors of Charter Schools, Approved Private Special Education Schools, Institutional Schools, and Educational Collaboratives; Higher Education Personnel; Members of the Business Community, and Community Organizations; and the General Public

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: May 7, 2007

In August 2007 the Department of Education will convene MCAS standard-setting panels for grade 3 Mathematics and for high school Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering. These panels will assist the Department in establishing cut scores for each of the MCAS performance levels (*Above Proficient/Advanced*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Warning/Failing*) for these tests. To assist with these tasks, the Department of Education invites classroom teachers, administrators, higher education personnel, and members of the community to apply to serve on the panels. Please share this important information with members of your staff and community.

[Grade 3 Mathematics Memo](#)

[High School Science and Tech/Eng Memo](#)

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Invitation to Serve on High School Standard-Setting Panels in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering in August 2007

**To:** Superintendents; Principals; Directors of Charter Schools, Approved Private Special Education Schools, Institutional Schools, and Educational Collaboratives; Higher Education Personnel; Members of the Business Community, and Community Organizations; and the General Public

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

**Date:** May 7, 2007

#### Deadline to Respond: Friday, May 25, 2007





The Department of Education invites classroom teachers, administrators, higher education personnel, and members of the community to apply to serve on standard-setting panels for Science and Technology/Engineering. The purpose of standard setting is to establish cut scores for each of the performance levels (*Advanced*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Failing*) for the high school tests in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering that are being administered this spring.

Approximately 20 individuals will be selected for each standard-setting panel and will receive training in the standard-setting process. The Department will provide a \$450 honorarium to participants and provide meals and reimbursement for mileage. Professional Development Points (PDPs) will be available to educators. Standard-setting panels will meet on **August 14-16** from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day.

Standard setting provides a unique opportunity to assist in the development of the Commonwealth's Science and Technology/Engineering high school testing program. It also provides an opportunity to learn more about the MCAS program and standards-based assessment. Beginning with the class of 2010, students must meet or exceed the scaled score of 220 on one of the MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering tests in order to satisfy the requirement of the Competency Determination for science and technology/engineering.

If you are interested in serving on a standard-setting panel, please complete the attached application and return it to the Department of Education by Friday, May 25, 2007. The Department will inform you of the status of your application by mid-June.

If you have any questions, please contact Katie Bowler, Administrator for Science and Technology/Engineering Test Development, at [cbowler@doe.mass.edu](mailto:cbowler@doe.mass.edu) or at 781-338-3464.

-   [Science and Tech/Eng Educator Application](#)
-   [Science and Tech/Eng Higher Ed/Community Application](#)



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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Invitation to Serve on a Grade 3 Mathematics MCAS Standard-Setting Panel in August 2007

**To:** Superintendents; Principals; Directors of Charter Schools, Approved Private Special Education Schools, Institutional Schools, and Educational Collaboratives; Higher Education Personnel; Members of the Business Community, and Community Organizations; and the General Public

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

**Date:** May 7, 2007

#### Deadline to Respond: Friday, May 25, 2007

The Department of Education initially administered a grade 3 Mathematics test in spring 2006 in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. Although standards were set for this test in summer 2006, the Department of Education is reconvening a standard-setting panel in summer 2007. I am writing to invite you to consider applying to serve on this important panel.

One outcome of the 2006 standard setting was a very narrow range of possible performance at the upper end of the performance continuum; only a perfect score (40 out of 40 raw score points) earned the highest possible performance level (*Above Proficient*). This outcome is the result of not having enough test questions on the 2006 test that were able to fully measure performance at the *Above Proficient* level.

The 2007 grade 3 Mathematics MCAS test has been designed to measure more robustly student performance at the *Above Proficient* level. To refine the *Above Proficient* cut score for the grade 3 Mathematics test, the Department plans to conduct a standard-setting session this summer. To assist with this task, the Department of Education invites classroom teachers, administrators, higher education personnel, and members of the community to apply to serve on the panel, which will meet August 15-16, 2007, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day.

Members from last year's grade 3 Mathematics standard-setting panel will be invited to serve again, and up to seven additional individuals will be selected to join this year's panel. Panelists will receive training in the standard-setting process. The Department will provide a \$300 honorarium to participants and provide meals and reimbursement for mileage. Professional Development Points (PDPs) will be available to educators.

This activity provides a unique opportunity to assist in the continued development of the Commonwealth's grade 3 Mathematics testing program. It also provides an excellent opportunity to learn more about the MCAS program and standards-based assessment.

To apply, please complete the attached application and return it to the Department of Education by **Friday, May 25, 2007**. The Department will inform you of the status of your application by mid-June.

If you have any questions, please contact Haley Freeman, Mathematics Test Development Specialist, at [hfreeman@doe.mass.edu](mailto:hfreeman@doe.mass.edu) or at 781-338-3636.

Mathematics Educator Application

Mathematics Higher Ed/Community Application



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## Educational Technology

Tuesday, May 08, 2007

### Technology in Massachusetts Schools 2005-2006

May 2007

Dear Educators, Parents, and Other Interested Parties,

I am pleased to share with you this report, **Technology in Massachusetts Schools 2005-2006**,   which includes findings from the data submitted electronically by school districts in 2006. As this report shows, Massachusetts school districts continue to make progress in providing the conditions that support the effective use of technology.

The Department uses the data submitted by school districts to gauge their progress in implementing their technology plans. Through this process we are able to approve districts' plans, making the districts eligible for funding such as E-rate discounts and technology grants.

We look forward to working with you toward our mutual goal of increasing student achievement through the use of technology. As you read this report, you will learn about technology resources that the Department offers to help you in your efforts.

I hope that you will find this report helpful in your technology planning.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll

Commissioner of Education

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# Eye on Education

Exploring issues... helping students find their way

## Plan Your Path

What do you want to be when you grow up? Clue or no clue, it's time to start planning. Get tips by grade and find out which Boston high school's right for you.

Got a stake in public education in Massachusetts? Let your voice be heard! Listen to provocative perspectives, tap into our resources, and share your own ideas.



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