



**Jeffrey Nellhaus**  
Acting Commissioner  
of Education

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## Commissioner's Update

December 4, 2007

Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

In this Update I have three announcements and four items for your review.

### Student Records - New Federal Guidance on Information-Sharing in Emergencies

The U.S. Department of Education has released new guidance for K-12 educators, parents, and colleges and universities about the ways that educators can share education records and personal observations about students in emergencies without violating the federal student confidentiality law known as FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). The guidance says that even though FERPA generally requires parental consent before the school discloses student information to third parties, the law allows school officials to share personally identifiable student information with appropriate parties such as law enforcement officials to protect the safety of the student or others. The guidance, along with links to other information on this issue and FERPA generally, is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/safeschools/index.html>. The Massachusetts Student Records Regulations contain a similar provision, 603 CMR 23.04(7)(e), that allows schools to share information regarding a student with appropriate parties in connection with a health or safety emergency to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals. The Student Records Regulations are available at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr23.html>.

### Full-Day Kindergarten Grants Offered

The state is offering \$6 million in competitive grants to districts interested in offering full-day kindergarten classes in September 2008. The purpose of the state-funded Kindergarten Development Grant program is to enhance the educational experience of children by: increasing the number of full-day kindergarten classrooms; improving overall quality and curriculum; increasing inclusion; promoting continuity of curriculum from preschool (PreK) to third grade; and developing other program components.

To apply, send a letter of intent by Wednesday, December 5, 2007. All proposals must be received by 5 p.m. on Friday, December 21, 2007. For more details, review <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/Grants/grants08/rfp/702.html> or contact Nermina Peric, Office of Elementary School Services, [nperic@doe.mass.edu](mailto:nperic@doe.mass.edu) or 781-338-6353.

## Free ALEKS Mathematics Subscription for Study Participants Preparing for the Mathematics MTEL Tests

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is conducting a pilot study to examine the potential benefits to teachers and teacher candidates of using a web-based tutorial program to prepare for the MTEL Elementary Mathematics (#53) and Middle School Mathematics (#47) tests given on March 8, May 10, or July 19, 2008. Study participants will receive a free three-month subscription to Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) software, a web-based assessment and learning system.

After an initial adaptive diagnostic assessment, ALEKS will provide each participant with a summary report that can guide the participant's use of the learning mode tutorial where the program provides detailed explanations, opportunities for practice, and tracks the mastery of concepts and skills. **Please note that although the ALEKS system addresses some of the same content as the MTEL mathematics tests, it is not specifically designed for or aligned with the MTEL mathematics test objectives or test items.**

Participants in the study will be asked to use ALEKS (minimum of 10 hours), document their experience, register and take an MTEL mathematics test, and provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with their MTEL results (participants and schools will not be identified in the study). For more information or to sign up for the study, please contact Emily Hamilton at [ehamilton@doe.mass.edu](mailto:ehamilton@doe.mass.edu) or (781) 338-3541.

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

1. [Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment \(MEPA\) District Report](#)
2. [John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Eligibility Criteria](#)
3. [The Advanced Placement Exam Fee Subsidy Program](#)
4. [2008-2009 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Program](#)

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Nellhaus  
Acting Commissioner of Education

last updated: December 4, 2007

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ESE Phone: 781-338-3000

## EVENTS CALENDAR

November 2008						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	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	1	2	3	4	5	6

## NEWS/EVENTS SEARCH

Keyword:

Dates:

Past 30 days

Past 90 days

Date Range

Start:

End:



## Family & Community

### John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Eligibility Criteria

To: Superintendents and Charter School Directors

Copy: High School Principals

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Education

Date: November 29, 2007

I am writing to correct an error in a memorandum that the Department sent to you in early November with the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship letters and accompanying materials. In that memorandum we asked that you distribute Adams Scholarship letters only to students who are U.S. citizens. This request should not have been included. In a 1982 decision, *Plyler v. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution prohibits public schools from denying admission to students based solely on their immigration status or that of their parents. Consequently, K-12 public school staff may not inquire about a student's citizenship status or require documentation of a parent's or student's legal immigration status as a condition of school enrollment.

School officials should distribute the Adams Scholarship letters to all students who have qualified through high performance on the grade 10 MCAS tests. The guidelines that accompany the scholarship letter explain that each student who qualifies must still meet the eligibility criteria set by state law and the Board of Higher Education in order to be awarded the Adams Scholarship tuition waiver. Those criteria include that the student must be a permanent Massachusetts resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen. The *Plyler* decision, mentioned above, applies only to K-12 education, not higher education.

To avoid misunderstandings, we encourage principals and guidance counselors to advise all students who receive the letters to read the *Adams Scholarship Guidelines* carefully.

Students with questions about their eligibility should contact the Board of Higher Education's Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617-727-9420 or via e-mail at [osfa@osfa.mass.edu](mailto:osfa@osfa.mass.edu).



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## Advanced Placement

### The Advanced Placement Exam Fee Subsidy Program

To: Advanced Placement Coordinators and Guidance Counselors

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Education

Date: November 28, 2007

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This year, Massachusetts will participate in the U.S. Department of Education's Advanced Placement (AP) Exam Fee Subsidy program. The purpose of this program is to reduce the cost of an Advanced Placement exam from \$84 to \$10 for students who meet the eligibility criteria.

For a student in a public, private, or parochial high school to be eligible for an AP exam fee subsidy (or subsidies), that student must be:

- 1. enrolled in the Advanced Placement course for which he/she is taking the exam, and**
- 2. eligible for free or reduced priced school lunches under the National School Lunch Act.**

High schools must maintain secure files with the documentation that students who are receiving AP exam fee subsidies have met the eligibility requirements. This is important because you need to assure your students that all family financial information will remain confidential. It should also be noted that it is a condition of this grant that the state program coordinator conduct on-site reviews of the files documenting student eligibility.

In January, the College Board will send you an Advanced Placement exam order form. The form will include instructions as to how to order the Advanced Placement exams at a reduced fee for your eligible students.

In the interim, if you have any questions regarding the Advanced Placement Exam Fee Subsidy Program, please contact Richard Salus at (781) 338-6252 or by e-mail at [rsalus@doe.mass.edu](mailto:rsalus@doe.mass.edu).



- › Educator Recognition Home
- › History Teacher of the Year
- › Christa McAuliffe Fellowship
- › Fulbright Memorial Fund
- › George Washington Scholars
- › Master Teacher Program
- › Milken Family Foundation
- › Nat'l Teachers Hall of Fame
- › Presidential Awards
- › Teacher of the Year

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## Recognition Programs

### 2007-2008 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Program

### 2008-2009 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Program

To: Superintendents, Principals, Teachers, and Other Interested Parties

From: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Education

Date: November 2007

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It is again time to solicit nominations for the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Program. This is the 46th year Massachusetts will participate in this nationwide program.

The Teacher of the Year should be an exemplary educator who demonstrates professionalism, leadership, excellent communication skills, and an outstanding and measurable commitment to student achievement and to the teaching profession.

Anyone can nominate a teacher, including administrators, teachers, parents and/or community members. To do so, send a letter to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by Monday, February 4, 2008, explaining why that teacher should be considered. Once the nomination letter is received, the teacher will be sent an application form to complete.

The Massachusetts Teacher of the Year will share his/her expertise with educators and students, community members, and others on a limited basis in the evenings, on weekends, and during the summer while maintaining regular classroom responsibilities.

Teachers who are selected as Massachusetts Teacher of the Year finalists and semi-finalists will be included in a pool of outstanding educator talent, who may be called upon to assist the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on various review panels.

We are making every effort to see that as many teachers as possible are nominated. Public school teachers from all geographic areas, every ethnic and racial group, veteran teachers, or newcomers may be considered for nomination.

Hannaford Supermarkets is a partner with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in supporting the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Program and will award the Teacher of the Year, finalists, and semi-finalists grants to be used for classroom purposes or for personal professional development.

I have enclosed a flyer for you to distribute. **The deadline for nominations is Monday, February 4, 2008.**

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Elementary & Secondary Education*

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