



Mitchell D. Chester  
 Commissioner of  
 Elementary and Secondary  
 Education

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## Commissioner's Update

June 5, 2008

Dear Superintendents,

I've had a busy couple of weeks getting settled here in Massachusetts, and have been touched by the many notes of congratulations and encouragement I've received from many of you. As Commissioner I hope to get to know you all and encourage you to contact me or a member of my staff directly if the need arises.

In my first few weeks I've visited schools in Fall River, Brockton, Lynn, Boston, Worcester, Salem and Lowell. In each of these communities I have met with students, teachers and parents and have been impressed with the level of commitment, dedication and enthusiasm I have witnessed. All of these communities are facing significant challenges, but are tackling them strategically and are making admirable progress.

As you may be aware both the House and Senate have passed their versions of the FY09 budget, which now lies in the hands of the conference committee. The Local Aid Resolution passed in March allowed the presentation of your final Ch. 70 numbers to assist you in your planning. I am encouraged that despite the state's current financial constraints, both chambers supported significant increases in education, and am hopeful the final version of the budget will reflect that universal support.

I wish you all luck in the final weeks of the school year and look forward to getting to know you in the coming months. I will see you at the MASS Summer Conference.

All the best,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
 Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

### Commissioner's Hotline for Educator Licensure Related Matters

Many of you have used the Commissioner's Hotline (781-338-3065), which was established to provide priority access for districts that need assistance on Educator Licensure related matters. I am pleased to report that **Nancy Perkins** has been appointed to monitor this line to replace Alan Cassidy, who retired recently after 12 years of

service.

While Nancy will provide you with personalized service when needed, I ask that you first attempt to use the Expedite Drop Box and Licensure Status Drop Box. These drop boxes are accessible after logging into the Security Portal. This year alone more than 500 requests were sent to the Expedite Drop Box, a significant increase over the 2006-07 school year. If an applicant's status is "Ready for Review," the request to expedite that application can be made through the expedite drop box and will be reviewed within **two days**. Applicants that are in the "Pending" or "Not Ready" status cannot be processed for an expedite.

The Licensure Status Drop Box is another useful tool that can provide you with the license status of all your district staff, school building, or selected staff. After submitting a file with the necessary information, the complete status file is ready to be retrieved from "Drop Box Central" the next day.

I thank you for your hard work and dedication to the students of the Commonwealth. Should you need assistance in utilizing the drop boxes or need assistance with licensure beyond that of an expedite, please contact the Commissioner's Hotline at (781) 338-3065.

### **Summer 2008 Professional Development Institutes Available At No Cost To Educators**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is pleased to announce that we will be offering Professional Development Institutes this summer at no cost to educators. This year's Institutes will focus on effective standards-based teaching skills and strengthening teachers' content knowledge in mathematics, science, and technology/engineering. This statewide program will sponsor more than 30 institutes that address both content and special topics including Sheltered English Immersion, mathematics coaching, using formative assessments, addressing students' misconceptions, increasing accessibility for special education students, and more. Follow-up sessions will be held in the fall and winter to support educators as they implement content instruction in the classroom. All institutes will offer professional development points (PDPs) and optional graduate credit that can be applied toward educator licensure. Registration priority is given to teachers from high-need districts who need to become licensed and knowledgeable in the subject area that they teach. A list of all institutes and information about other professional development experiences being offered this summer is now posted at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/cinstitute/08/>.

### **Announcement of Competitive Technology Grants**

I am pleased to announce two FY2009 Technology Enhancement Competitive Grant Programs, funded through Title II, Part D, Enhancing Education Through Technology, under the federal No Child Left Behind Act:

**[Technology for Data-Driven Decisions \(Fund Code: 164\)](#)**

**[Technology Enhancement Competitive Grants \(Fund Code: 170-B\)](#)**

Approximately \$1,200,000 will be available for each program. Grant awards will range from \$35,000 to \$125,000 for the grant period (subject to appropriation).

Proposals are due at the Department by 5 p.m. on **Monday, June 30, 2008**. 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.

Three technical assistance workshops will be held on:

**Tuesday, June 3, 2008** Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden (10 a.m. to noon)

**Thursday, June 5, 2008** Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center, Springfield (10 a.m. to noon)

**Monday, June 9, 2008** Duxbury High School, Duxbury (10 a.m. to noon)

To participate, please register online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=500>.

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

1. [Release of Spring 2008 IDEA Proficiency Test \(IPT\) Results for English Language Learners in Grades K-2 in Title III Districts](#)
2. [June Release of Multiple-Choice Results: Grades 3 and 10 English Language Arts \(ELA\) Reading Comprehension and Grade 10 Mathematics](#)
3. [Release of Spring 2008 MEPA Results](#)

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Release of Spring 2008 IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) Results for English Language Learners in Grades K-2 in Title III Districts

**To:** Superintendents and Elementary School Principals in Title III Districts and Directors of Title III Charter Schools

**Copy:** Directors or English Language Learner Programs

**From:** Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
 Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Date:** May 29, 2008

The spring 2008 IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) parent/guardian reports, student-level rosters, and electronic data files will be posted at [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com) on Monday, June 9. The IPT was administered in spring 2008 to all limited English proficient students in kindergarten through grade 2 who were reported as enrolled in Title III districts on the October 2007 SIMS.

#### How to Access IPT Results

Each superintendent is authorized to access results for his or her district and schools; each principal is allowed to access results for his or her school.

IPT results may be accessed using the MCAS/MEPA password that was mailed to school and district leaders on January 2, 2008. No paper copies of IPT results will be mailed to districts or schools, but I do encourage schools to print copies of the parent/guardian reports to share with parents.

For assistance downloading data from the secure Web site, please call the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103. TestWiz will not be updated to import IPT data files, but results may be read using Microsoft Excel or other spreadsheet software.

Thank you for your attention to this important information.

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### June Release of Multiple-Choice Results: Grades 3 and 10 English Language Arts (ELA) Reading Comprehension and Grade 10 Mathematics

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

**From:** Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
 Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Date:** May 29, 2008

Spring 2008 MCAS multiple-choice results for grades 3 and 10 will be released in June. The preliminary data files will be posted electronically at [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com). Please note that only multiple-choice results will be released in June; preliminary performance-level and scaled score results will be available on August 15.

Date for Release	Type of Results Released
June 18, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 3 ELA Reading Comprehension multiple-choice results</li> <li>• Grade 10 ELA Reading Comprehension multiple-choice results</li> </ul>
June 30, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 10 Mathematics multiple-choice results</li> </ul>

#### Purpose of the Grade 3 Release

The purpose of the grade 3 release is to provide preliminary information about students' reading performance at the end of the school year so that schools may plan, as necessary, special intervention in fall 2008 for students with weak performance.

## Purpose of the Grade 10 Release

The purpose of the grade 10 release is to provide preliminary information about the performance of students on the grade 10 ELA and Mathematics tests. Although the data files do not contain open-response or composition results, the information contained in the reports may be useful for the following purposes:

- Identifying students' individual areas of need in order to provide academic support services during the summer and fall
- Planning fall 2008 academic programs for students expected to score at the Failing level
- Informing curriculum and instructional activities for the upcoming school year

Please note that the raw score sections for students who did not participate in the ELA and Mathematics tests (e.g., students with a medically documented absence, students who took the MCAS-Alt, students who transferred) will appear blank in these files. A brief guide for interpreting the grade 10 preliminary multiple-choice test item analysis results will be posted with the data files.

## How to Access the Data

To access data files through the MCAS Service Center, go to [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com) and select "MCAS." Next, select "MCAS Reporting" from the menu on the left. Choose your district and school from the drop-down menus and enter the password mailed to you in the Commissioner's memorandum dated January 2, 2008. Finally, select "Report" at the top of the screen. The data files can be loaded into Excel or the latest version of TestWiz.

## Confidentiality of Data

Student level results are confidential and may only be reviewed by authorized school personnel, students, and their parents and/or guardians in accordance with federal and state confidentiality laws. Please ensure that your district/school procedures for maintaining the security of all confidential student data (electronic AND paper copies) are rigorous and followed scrupulously by all staff with access to these data.

If you have difficulty logging onto [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com), or if you have additional questions, please contact the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103. For policy questions, please contact the Department by phone at 781-338-3625 or via e-mail at [mcas@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcas@doe.mass.edu).

## Release of Scaled Score and Performance Level Results

Grades 3-8 and high school preliminary scaled score and performance-level results and test item analysis rosters for ELA, Mathematics, and Science and Technology/Engineering will be released on August 15, 2008.

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## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

### Release of Spring 2008 MEPA Results

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

**Copy:** Directors of English Language Learner Programs

**From:** Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
 Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Date:** May 23, 2008

I am pleased to report that the spring 2008 Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) student, school, and district results will be posted electronically to [www.mcasservicecenter.com](http://www.mcasservicecenter.com) on Friday, June 6.

The following MEPA results will be posted to the secure Web site by June 6:

- Parent/Guardian Reports
- *Preliminary Participation Report* (includes district and state comparisons)
- *Preliminary Results by Years of Enrollment in Massachusetts Schools* (includes district and state comparisons)
- *School Rosters* (student scaled score and performance-level results)
- *Guide to the MEPA for Parents/Guardians* (including translations in Cape Verdean, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Korean, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese)
- *Guide to Interpreting the Spring 2008 MEPA Reports for Schools and Districts*
- Student level data file and file layout at school and district levels (available to superintendents and principals)

Beginning June 8, the latest version of TestWiz will be available at [www.testwiz.com/mass/update.html](http://www.testwiz.com/mass/update.html). You will need to install the latest version in order to import the data files. The files also may be read using Microsoft Excel or

other spreadsheet software.

On Friday, June 13, principals will receive paper copies of the following reports:

- *Parent/Guardian Reports* for students, including translated report templates (two reports per student: one report for your records, one for parent/guardians)
- *Guide to the MEPA for Parents/Guardians* (including translated versions)
- Student reporting labels for student files (one label per student)

### How to Access MEPA Results

Superintendents are authorized to access results for their district and schools; each principal is allowed to access results for his or her school. To access the preliminary results, please use the MCAS/MEPA password that was mailed to school and district leaders on January 2, 2008. For assistance downloading data from the MCAS Service Center Web site, please call the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103.

### Reporting Discrepancy Information

There will be a brief discrepancy review and reporting window to report any cases of missing or irregular data. Please examine your results carefully for cases of missing or inaccurate data and report these cases to the MCAS Service Center at 800-737-5103 by **5 p.m., Monday, June 30**.

Thank you for your attention to this important information.

Final data files will be posted in early fall.

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