



Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner of
Elementary and Secondary
Education

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Commissioner's Update

July 23, 2008

Dear Superintendents and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaboratives:

I enjoyed meeting with many of you at the recent MASS Summer Institute. Thank you for your suggestions and comments, and I encourage you to continue providing me with feedback as we move toward the start of the upcoming school year.

As many of you know I was able to visit a handful of districts prior to the start of the summer vacation, and greatly enjoyed the opportunity to tour some schools and meet with teachers, administrators, parents and students. I hope to start up these visits again in the fall, and would welcome suggestions of particular programs or communities you think I should visit.

I am pleased to tell you that former Lowell Superintendent Karla Brooks Baehr started here at the Department on Monday, July 21 as my second Deputy Commissioner, working alongside Jeffrey Nellhaus. In this newly-created role she will oversee the agency's partnerships with and support of schools and districts. Many of you are already familiar with Karla and her work and I am confident that adding her to my senior team will help us add increased value to your work.

I hope you are all enjoying your summer.

Sincerely,

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

In this Update I have four announcements and one item for your review.

Advisory Council Applications Due July 31

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is seeking candidates to serve on the many of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's 15 Advisory Councils. The list of councils can be found here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac/recruit.html>.

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 established the Advisory Councils to advise the Commissioner and the Board on matters related to their specific areas of focus to enhance efforts to improve public education and advance student achievement. We are seeking a wide range of diverse constituents including educators, parents, students, business leaders and other community members who have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to excellence in public education, in addition to content experience and subject-specific expertise.

Nominations will be accepted through July 31, and recommendations will be made to the Board of Education in September. Interested parties should submit 2 copies of a letter of intent along with 2 resumes to Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5023, (attention Advisory Councils).

Community Service Learning Grant Opportunity

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is pleased to announce a recently posted competitive grant opportunity to support the use of community service-learning (CSL) as a teaching and learning strategy to engage students. These federal grants, supported by funds from Learn and Serve America, are intended to support schools and districts that implement and institutionalize CSL. Grant awards of up to \$10,500 will be funded through Fund Code 354-B. All districts are eligible to apply except for those that will be receiving Fiscal Year 2009 CSL Continuation Grants (through Fund Codes 354-A and 355-A).

Letters of intent to apply are encouraged, and grant applications are due July 28, 2008 for a September 2008 start date, or September 23, 2008 for a November 2008 start date. For more details, see the [RFP](#) or contact Kristen McKinnon via kmckinnon@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-6306

FY09 Special Education Transportation Pilot

The FY09 State Budget includes \$450,000 to provide funding for 10 intercollaborative transportation networks throughout the Commonwealth. This funding will support the expansion of the pilot program initiated three years ago to demonstrate that transportation of students to out-of-district special education placements can be accomplished at a lower cost and with improved quality of service by delegating the planning and contracting to educational collaborative networks. The Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC) will provide coordination and support services to the 10 collaborative transportation networks. In addition, \$2 million has been set aside to provide reimbursement of special education transportation costs to districts participating in the pilot.

Staff from ESE, MOEC and the pilot participants are working out the details of the program for the upcoming fiscal year. Additional information will be posted at the School Finance website (<http://finance1.doe.mass.edu>).

For additional information, contact Christine M. Lynch at 781-338-6520 or at clynch@doe.mass.edu or Jay Sullivan at 781-338-6594 or at jsullivan@doe.mass.edu.

FY09 Foundation Reserve ("Pothole") Program

The FY09 State Budget includes \$5,250,000 funding for the FY09 foundation reserve ("pothole") program. The pothole program is intended to provide supplemental financial assistance to cities, towns, and school districts to address a variety of special circumstances. Foundation reserve awards are one-time awards that are not included in base aid calculations for Chapter 70 aid in future years. The application deadline is **August 15, 2008** and award announcements should be made by the end of September.

For additional information, contact program director Christine M. Lynch at 781-338-6520 or at clynch@doe.mass.edu.

Items Posted at www.doe.mass.edu:

1. [Updated 2008-2009 Statewide Testing Schedule and Release of 2009-2010 Statewide Testing Schedule](#)

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