On June 18, 1993, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act was signed into law. This historic legislation created the framework for unprecedented improvements in student learning, teacher professionalism, school management, and equity of funding. Chapter 69, Section 1D specifically states:

*The board (of elementary and secondary education) shall establish a set of statewide educational goals for all public elementary and secondary schools in the commonwealth. The board shall direct the commissioner to institute a process to develop academic standards for the core subjects of mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages and the arts. The standards shall cover grades kindergarten through twelve and shall clearly set forth the skills, competencies and knowledge expected to be possessed by all students at the conclusion of individual grades or clusters of grades. The standards shall be formulated so as to set high expectations of student performance and to provide clear and specific examples that embody and reflect these high expectations, and shall be constructed with due regard to the work and recommendations of national organizations, to the best of similar efforts in other states, and to the level of skills, competencies and knowledge possessed by typical students in the most educationally advanced nations. The skills, competencies and knowledge set forth in the standards shall be expressed in terms which lend themselves to objective measurement, define the performance outcomes expected of both students directly entering the workforce and of students pursuing higher education, and facilitate comparisons with students of other states and other nations.*

The first Curriculum Frameworks were adopted by the Board in:

- 1996 for Mathematics (Math), Science & Technology Engineering, Arts, and Comprehensive Health
- 1997 for English Language Arts (ELA) and History/Social Science
- 1999 for Foreign Languages
- 2003 for English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes
- 2006 for Vocational Technical
- 2008 for Kindergarten Learning Experiences

The standards for mathematics were significantly updated in 2000 and ELA in 2001 based upon lessons learned since implementation of the original frameworks and updated research. While a combination of federal Goals 2000 grants and state appropriation provided some support, upgrades to local curricula and associated professional development were led and supported by local school districts.

By 2008, after having gathered more information from research and educators around the state (particularly emerging data and research related to shortcomings in the transition from high school to college and work), Commissioner Chester convened teams of Massachusetts teachers, administrators, higher education faculty and ESE staff members to begin drafting revisions to the ELA and Math Frameworks. In 2009, the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) started their bi-partisan
effort to write a set of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The work of our two state committees was deliberately coordinated with the NGAs and CCSSOs effort. The coordinated timeline was as follows:

- In spring 2009, the Governor and Commissioner Chester signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) that committed the Commonwealth’s support to the development of K-12 internationally benchmarked, rigorous Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics aligned to college and career expectations.

- In February 2010, CCSSO and NGA released public drafts of the K-12 Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics and solicited public comment. Department staff and the Curriculum Framework Review Panels for Math and ELA compared the Common Core Standards with our 2000/2001 frameworks, and determined that they were not only consistent with our own emerging revisions, but were stronger in several regards.

- Massachusetts played a key role in the development of these standards. A member of the Board, Sandra Stotsky, Harvard University professor Catherine Snow, and other prominent educators, served on the Validation Committee for the English Language Arts standards; six of our staff members were invited by CCSSO and NGA to serve on the Common Core State Standards Development Teams; and 14 Massachusetts scholars and educators contributed their expertise to reviewing successive drafts in order to shape Massachusetts’ written comments to CCSSO and NGA. The deep involvement of Massachusetts in this effort is important for two reasons. First, our existing standards were considered the best in the nation and we wanted the Common Core Standards to be every bit as challenging. Second, adoption and statewide dissemination of the Common Core Standards was a key component of our Race to the Top application.

- The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education discussed the draft Common Core Standards in March of 2010 and voted to release them for public comment in May 2010.

- Commissioner Chester appointed independent ELA and math expert panels composed of PreK-12 educators and representatives from higher education and the business community to review the Common Core Standards and report back to the Board whether they found that they were: (a) equivalent to, (b) more rigorous than, or (c) less rigorous than our draft revised Massachusetts standards for ELA and mathematics. In addition to the panels, the Commissioner secured experts from outside of Massachusetts to compare the Common Core Standards to the Massachusetts draft revised standards and report their findings to him and the Board.

- At the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting in July 2010 the finding of the expert panels were heard. The findings were as follows:
  - By the Massachusetts Educator Panels: The English language arts panel (with one member dissenting) concluded that the Common Core was a better choice of standards than the Massachusetts draft. The mathematics panel concluded that both sets of standards were excellent options for Massachusetts. Both panels cited the greater depth and increased specificity of the Common Core standards as beneficial. Both panels identified areas of the
Common Core Standards that, if adopted, could be strengthened by adding standards that were contained in the Massachusetts drafts, but not in the Common Core.

- **Report on the Results of the ESE Public Survey on the Common Core Standards**: 1329 teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, advisory councils and professional organizations visited the site, and 178 completed surveys. The majority of respondents rated both the Massachusetts and the Common Core standards as "good" to "excellent" in terms of their content, rigor, clarity, vertical alignment, relevance to college and career readiness, and measurability.

- **WestEd was commissioned by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE)** to conduct an independent analysis of the revised Commonwealth of Massachusetts state standards and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to address the following key question: *To what extent do the revised Commonwealth of Massachusetts state standards correspond with the CCSS in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics?*

  From a qualitative examination of the standards, both sets were deemed to have merit. The CCSS were credited with tending to include a slightly higher percentage of standards that reflect higher levels of cognitive demand (i.e. Strategic Thinking in mathematics; Strategic Thinking and Extended Thinking in ELA). A full copy of the report can be found at [http://www.mbae.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Report_MA-CCS-Analysis_071910_Final.rev_.pdf](http://www.mbae.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Report_MA-CCS-Analysis_071910_Final.rev_.pdf)

- **Achieve's Report Comparing the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and Leading State Standards (California and Massachusetts)**: The major findings of this report was that the three sets of standards cover similar bodies of knowledge but the Common Core State Standards were more rigorous, coherent, and focused than the California and the Massachusetts standards.

- At a special Board meeting on July 21, 2010, the board voted to adopt the Common Core Standards. In September 2010, the department staff, in collaboration with the members of the original Framework Revision Committees, made additions to the CCSS. These additions are unique to our state. This final version was adopted by the board in December 2010 and published and widely disseminated in March 2011.

- Since the adoption of these Standards, they have been on our website and publicized statewide. Professional development sessions were conducted through the Department's District and School Assistance Centers and in other venues. Massachusetts school districts have updated their ELA and math curricula, have conducted professional development, and teachers have been focusing instruction on these upgraded standards for ELA and math ever since.

- Currently, over 90 Model Curriculum Units, in ELA and mathematics, are available on the ESE website for teachers to use in their classrooms; more model units will be posted in the near future. These instructional units show how the changes in the standards can be reflected in instruction. These units were developed by hundreds of teachers across the Commonwealth, in collaboration with the Department.