SPRING MESSAGE

Happy spring! We may not say it enough, but, we are very proud of the academic successes of the Massachusetts charter schools and students and the work that you do each day to narrow or completely close the achievement and opportunity gaps and sustain the success over time. As always, we would like to extend our thanks to all of you for providing students in Massachusetts with high quality educational options.

This newsletter contains a number of important items with multiple links to new or updated information, and though lengthy, we suggest you review it carefully, pass on the information to others as appropriate, and act where requested.

In addition, we encourage you to stay current with key updates from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) by reading the Commissioner’s Weekly Message each Friday. We will also continue to send out periodic email messages that require timely notice/action for charter schools to our various listservs (leaders, business managers, special education directors, and board chairs; be sure to update Directory Administration), as needed.

A Few Highlights:

- On Tuesday, May 3, 2016, Commissioner Mitchell Chester announced that Sydney Chaffee, a ninth grade humanities teacher at Codman Academy Charter Public School in Dorchester, is the 2017 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. May 3, 2016 was National Teacher Day, and in recognition of that, Commissioner Chester, a talented student, and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) staff produced this video to thank the Commonwealth's teachers for all they do.¹

²017 Massachusetts Teacher of the Sydney Chaffee speaks to the crowd in Codman Academy Charter Public School's black box theater May 3, 2016. "I return to this work every day because it's full of joy, not to win awards," she said.

¹ From May 6, 2016 Commissioner’s Update: http://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/?update=5/6/2016
• On March 21, 2016, in response to the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the U.S. Department of Education convened a committee of experts, educators, and advocates to participate in a negotiated rulemaking process. On April 19, 2016, this committee, charged with developing regulations on two key issues under ESSA – assessments and the provision that federal Title I dollars supplement, not supplant, state and local funds – reached agreement on the assessment provision. They were not able to resolve issues on the supplement-not-supplant provision.

• April 18, 2016, 17 Charter Schools make the U.S. News and World Reports list of top 100 high schools in Massachusetts.

• April 26, 2016, the Brookings Institute hosted the seventh annual A. Alfred Taubman Forum on Public Policy, Examining Charter Schools in America.

• May 1-7, 2016, was National Charter School Week.

IMPORTANT DATES – Mark your calendars!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>Annual Report webinar from 1-2 PM. Register at <a href="http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337">http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337</a></td>
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<td>June 7</td>
<td>Annual Report webinar from 1-2 PM. Register at <a href="http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337">http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337</a></td>
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<td>June 9</td>
<td>Student Driven Secondary Transition Conference (for special education directors and guidance counselors) at the MCSPA offices in Hudson</td>
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<td>June 13</td>
<td>Annual Report webinar 11 AM-12 PM. Register at <a href="http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337">http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8337</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Deadline for letters of intent to submit a charter application</td>
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<td>August 1</td>
<td>Deadline for requests to expand grades, enrollment, or charter region</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Deadline to submit the Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter</td>
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<td>August 1</td>
<td>Deadline to submit Annual Reports (please also remember the submission of the school schedule as well)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August (date TBD)</td>
<td>Webinars highlighting changes to Massachusetts Special Education Primer</td>
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<td>August (date TBD)</td>
<td>New special education and ELL directors meeting (Department)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>Deadline for submission of 2015 disclosure of financial interest (Trustees)</td>
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PENDING AUTHORIZING DECISIONS

Renewal 2017
This year, 13 charter schools will apply for renewal of their public school charters. Information regarding renewal, including a memo explaining the Department’s approach to the renewal process can be found here: http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=renew. Renewal decisions are typically publicized during the January and February Board of Education meetings.

UPCOMING EVENTS and OPPORTUNITIES

Go Higher! Opportunity for High Schools
The Department of Higher Education invites school districts to submit applications for a limited number of free Go Higher! college readiness programs for the 2016-2017 school year. The program brings five to six University of Massachusetts, state university, and community college students into high schools for a student-to-student discussion about making a successful transition from high school to college. Students from the state's public campuses share personal stories about their own high school experiences; how
they chose a college and a major; and how they learned to organize their time, get involved in campus activities, and either commute to or live on campus.

Districts may also apply for a public college and university admissions fair or evening program for parents. An application and further information are available on the Department of Higher Education’s website. The deadline for submitting a program application is June 10, 2016.

Investing in Innovation Development grants
The U.S. Department of Education’s Investing in Innovation (i3) program announced its Development competition, which will award up to $3 million each to between 9 and 11 applicants. The grant focuses on generating new approaches to implementing rigorous standards and assessments, improving school climates and developing alternatives to exclusionary school discipline, improving student outcomes and closing opportunity gaps for underserved students through fostering racially and socioeconomically diverse schools, and addressing the unique challenges of rural areas. Applications are due by May 24, 2016.

Feedback Sought on Autism Endorsement
When the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to approve the regulations for the creation of the Autism Endorsement for special educators, it also asked ESE to investigate the expansion of eligibility for the newly created Autism Endorsement to general educators. The Department has posted an online survey to solicit stakeholder feedback on this potential expansion and on options the Department is considering relating to the expansion. This survey will be open until June 30, 2016.

POLICY UPDATES

Feedback about the Statewide Accountability and Assistance System
We are in the early phases of gathering input from stakeholders on the state’s school and district accountability and assistance system. Coming changes in statewide assessments and federal law have provided us an opportunity to reconsider the principles of our current system, the data we use to measure school and district progress, and the types of supports and assistance we make available.

Through our online statewide feedback form, we are hoping to gather high-level feedback from a variety of stakeholders. The questions on the form are in the attached document so that respondents can review them ahead of completing the survey if they wish. The survey includes closed-ended questions about various priorities for the system as well as the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback on a number of guiding questions.

The following is the link to the feedback form and we ask that you share it as well so that as many community members as possible participate: http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2708886/Accountability-and-assistance-stakeholder-feedback-2016.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Renewal 2017
The current Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter is found on our website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=renew.

Volunteer Site Visitors
The Department seeks volunteers with expertise in classroom instruction, school leadership, and/or school governance to serve as external site visitors on charter school accountability visits. If you are interested in applying to be a site visitor, please fill out a brief online survey at the following link: http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1694009/Site-Visit-Volunteer-Interest-Form.
http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=visit for a FAQ related to participating as a site visitor.

CHARTER APPLICATIONS AND EXPANSIONS

The Department has posted resources related to the 2016-2017 charter application and expansion cycle and will accept charter applications and charter amendments for all school districts except Everett, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell, and Malden, which are at the limit established by statute. Estimates of seats available in Boston and all other districts are available online.

The Department is projecting that there will be approximately 225 additional seats available in Boston under the net school spending charter cap. Applicants who would like to start a school in Boston and/or expand an existing school in the city will be required to be identified as proven providers by Commissioner Chester.

Existing Massachusetts charter school boards of trustees must notify the Department of their intent to apply for a new charter by 5 p.m. on August 1, 2016. Expansion requests to increase maximum enrollment, and/or add grade levels are also due by August 1, 2016. Anyone with questions about the availability of seats in Boston or about providing comment during the upcoming cycle can contact Alyssa Hopkins at 781-338-3219 or ahopkins@doe.mass.edu. Individuals with questions about the charter application process, the charter amendment process, or the proven provider requirement can also contact Alyssa.

Request for Qualified Charter Application Reviewers

The Commonwealth has the best charter application reviewers in the country and we couldn’t claim that distinction without the participation of experienced experts like you. Please visit our website for an overview of the experience and a volunteer form for you to submit with a resume if you are interested in participating this year.

ACCESS AND EQUITY

Transition Professional Development Opportunity

In conjunction with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, the Office of Charter School and School Redesign will be hosting a conference on student driven transition planning on June 9th. Schools that serve students in grades 7-12 are encouraged to send their special education director or teachers as well as guidance counselor or college placement coordinators. There will be presentations from the Department’s Special Education Program, Planning, and Policy, the Institute for Community Inclusion, the Executive Office of Education, as well as best practices from various charter schools. REGISTER HERE. Lunch and breakfast will be provided.

Multiple Disabilities

There have been some questions raised by the field about the disability type “multiple disabilities”. Although this is not a disability type on the eligibility determination flowchart used at evaluation determination meetings, schools can report it as a part of the SIMS data collection for DOE 036: Special Education Nature of Primary Disability.

Multiple disabilities are defined in IDEA regulations as “concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness or mental retardation-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities do not include deaf-blindness.” (34 CFR 300.8 (c) (7))

Special Education directors are encouraged to review the technical assistance guide “Is the Special
**Education the Right Service?** When multiple disabilities are suspected, the recommendations for evaluation should encompass sufficient assessments that the Team will have good information related to each of the suspected disabilities and can determine the presence or absence of each the suspected disabilities as well as the educational impact.

IEP teams may make a determination of multiple disabilities if all disabilities are inextricably meshed and there is no primary disability. Determination of a primary disability would be appropriate if the Team believes that the educational impact of one type of disability is much greater than any other impairment of the student.

**Guidance on Programming for ELL students**

The Access and Equity team continues to work closely with the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OELAAA) on the implementation of the Rethinking Equity in Teaching English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative in the charter community. Please contact Ellie Rounds Bloom at erounds-bloom@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3212 if you have questions regarding the RETELL initiative.

**Massachusetts Primer Special Education and Charter Schools Revisions**

Initially published in 2009, the Access and Equity team has been in the process of revising this three part document to reflect changes in regulations and statute. We hope to have updated versions published this spring, with concurrent webinars to highlight the changes in August.

**BOARDS OF TRUSTEES**

**Guidance for Charter School Board Members**

As public agents authorized by the state, the members of the board of trustees of a charter school are responsible for governing the school and hold the charter for the school. Upon beginning service on a board and subsequent years, each trustee must meet a number of legal requirements set forth by the Commonwealth. These requirements are clearly outlined in guidance information available at: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=trustees](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=trustees). All board members should be well-informed of their obligations and responsibilities as members of a charter school board of trustees. Please direct board members with questions regarding these obligations to the overview on the Department’s website.

**2015 Disclosures of Financial Interest**

The Department distributed 2015 disclosures of financial interests on **Friday, May 20, 2016** to all trustees who were active board members for 30 days or more during the 2015 calendar year. Please be sure to remind individuals of their obligations to complete these forms by September 1 to be in compliance with Massachusetts law.

**Board Member Management System**

When a charter school’s board of trustees votes to accept new members, the individual must be approved by the Commissioner prior to any action by the new member, including counting towards a quorum or voting. Please find information regarding the use of the system to request the approval of new board members, including the content of the request letter uploaded via the system when a new member is created at: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=bmms](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=bmms). Please note that schools are also required to notify the Department through the system when members leave the school’s board of trustees, whether it is through a resignation, the expiration of a term, or a removal.

The Department reviews requests for approval of new board members on a monthly basis with other charter amendments subject to Commissioner approval. We will do our best to ensure that review and
approval, as appropriate, of each completed request that is submitted by the end of each month is communicated back to the school no later than the close of the following month.

Please Call Us!
If you have any questions regarding the obligations of board members or the online system, please contact Alyssa Hopkins, at 781-338-3219 or ahopkins@doe.mass.edu; or James DiMaio, at 781-338-3228 or jdimaio@doe.mass.edu.

FINANCE AND DATA

Superintendent’s Checklist
Please be sure you adhere to all relevant reporting deadlines and requirement outlined in the 2015-2016 Superintendent Checklist.

Preliminary 3rd Quarter FY16 Commonwealth Charter School Tuition
The Department’s calculation of preliminary 3rd quarter FY16 charter school tuition and reimbursements has been posted at FY16 Preliminary Tuition. Final FY16 tuition and reimbursements will be calculated in June 2016. All districts and charter schools are reminded that these tuition calculations are still estimates. For a summary of the tuition disbursement process, please go to the School Finance: Charter School web posting.

FY17 Pre-enrollment, Waitlist, and Significant Expansion Report
Thank you all for successfully submitting the FY17 Charter School Pre-enrollment report by March 15th The memo to the state’s superintendents went out on April 1st and showed that in FY17, there will be 43,648 students attending Massachusetts charter schools! The FY17 waitlist submission was due on Tuesday, March 15th and the results will be posted shortly. New schools and schools that are significantly expanding will be contacted soon to submit a significant expansion report that will be due in June. This report is similar to the pre-enrollment submission where the schools indicate how many of their students will have SPED or ELL status.

Preliminary FY17 Commonwealth Charter School Tuition
The Department’s calculation of preliminary FY17 charter school tuition and reimbursements has been posted at FY17 Preliminary Tuition based on the FY17 Charter School Pre-enrollment. All districts and charter schools are reminded that these tuition calculations are still estimates. For a summary of the tuition disbursement process, please go to the School Finance: Charter School web posting.

FY15 CHART
The Charter Analysis and Review Tool (CHART) for 2015 was posted on March 17th. This tool was designed to assist charter schools in monitoring their progress with their Recruitment and Retention Plans. The tool provides multi-school, multi-year demographic comparison data in three categories: enrollment by subgroup, attrition by grade level and subgroup and student indicator statistics, including suspensions. We hope that the charter schools find the data available to be useful.

FY15 Fiscal Dashboard
The fiscal dashboard has been updated to reflect the financial data received from charter school’s audits and CSEOTFR.

FY15 Commonwealth Charter School Excess Surplus Report
The FY15 Commonwealth Charter School Excess Surplus Report and memo was posted on January 21st Please be reminded that for surplus calculations for FY16 and subsequent years, a vote of the board of trustees of a charter school is required to designate funds to be held in reserve for the purchase or
renovation of an academic facility pursuant to a capital plan. In addition, compliance testing procedures and additional details for the surplus calculation are included in the Charter School Audit Guide.

If you have any questions or wish to provide feedback on any of the finance and data news, please contact Joanna Laghetto at jlaghetto@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3221.

RESOURCES: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This new section of the newsletter will be dedicated to disseminating resources to charter schools across the state on a variety of topics. Each newsletter will highlight a variety of resources on key topics, which will then be archived for future reference in the Department’s Charter School News Archive. The previous newsletter highlighted various social and emotional learning/school discipline resources.

Research shows that meaningful engagement with families supports school academic success. It is essential for schools to implement strategies, which are also suitable for diverse populations, to develop true partnerships with families in order to engage parents in their child’s learning process and educational success.

The Department does not promote or endorse commercial products, services, or websites, as we do not fully research them and thus cannot verify their effectiveness, and cannot and do not monitor their web pages. With that said, the Department from time to time, does provide resources that you might find helpful.

Optimally, the Department is looking for your input for this section! If you have requests for topics in future newsletters or want to share your school’s evidence-based resources or stories, please contact Melissa Gordon (mgordon@doe.mass.edu).

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harvard Family Research Project</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/overview">http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/overview</a></td>
<td>A variety of resources from Harvard Graduate School of Education on evidence-based, effective ways to support family involvement in children’s learning and development.</td>
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<td><strong>Highlights:</strong></td>
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<td>• Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) Newsletter: shares family engagement research and resources from Harvard Family Research Project.</td>
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<td><strong>Highlights:</strong></td>
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<td>• Six types of parent involvement,</td>
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<td>• Resources for parents based on age levels</td>
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<td>• Sample best practices</td>
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<td>• Self-assessment</td>
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| The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCCE) | http://nafsce.org/resources/#publications-archive | NAFSCCE is a membership association focused solely on advancing family, school, and community engagement. **Highlights:**  
• Topics ranging from culturally appropriate practices, father engagement, dual language families, and home visits  
• Several resources translated into Spanish |
| Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) | http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/parent-and-family-support/ | Education resources for families around child development, education, nutrition, health and safety. The majority of the resources are focused on birth through PK development, but is applicable through early elementary school. **Highlights:**  
• Several translated brochures (5 languages)  
• Parent resources for birth through age 18 |
| National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University | http://nnps.jhucsos.com/publications-products/ppp | Technical assistance in using research-based approaches to improve policies and practices of school, family, and community partnerships. **Highlights:**  
• Multicultural partnerships book  
• Free Promising Partnership Practices downloads |
| Family Engagement Inventory (FEI): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services | https://www.childwelfare.gov/FEI/what-works/ | The “Education” domain includes methods, plans of action, processes, and/or policies designed for use by direct service staff in order to enhance or achieve family engagement. **Highlights:**  
• Classroom family engagement rubric (hover mouse over Classroom Family Engagement under “Education” title for link)  
• Resources for parents and schools  
• Self-assessment  
• Resources on overcoming barriers to parent participation and action steps  
• Middle and high school resources  
• Father engagement  
• Working with translators and interpreters |

**COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTACTS**

**Electronic Correspondence**

We plan to continue to deliver official correspondence as much as possible via electronic means, emailing and scanning, as appropriate, school-specific approvals and documents. If you would like a hard copy mailed to you, please be sure to let us know on a case-by-case basis. Because we also collect many of our files through Security Portal dropboxes, please be sure to follow electronic file naming instructions included with each submission. In general, please be sure that your electronic files are named in a uniquely identifiable way, either including the school’s name, acronym, or LEA code along with identifying the date/year and report type. For example, **Not unique:** Annualreport.doc or Audit.pdf **Unique:** ABCS_annualreport2015.doc and ABCS_FY15Audit.pdf

**Contact You: School and District Profiles and Directory Administration**

**Implementing Security Processes for ESE Security Portal**

It is important that Directory Administrators within charter schools take the time to maintain the members list within each district and school at all times. Individuals who are no longer employed by the
school should be removed immediately from the application and should have all access terminated. Security processes should be put into place within each school to be sure that all data and information within the Security Portal remains secure at all times.

Director Administrators should also be sure all physical and mailing addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, email and web address information are up to date. That information is used to populate the Department’s School and District Profiles page as well as provide information for the MCAS shipping list.

For instructions on how to remove, add or change users and update contact information, please go here and download the Directory Administration Quick Reference Guide. To address any problems, please submit a helpdesk ticket through our Contact Us page and from the subject dropdown box, choose MassEdu Gateway/Security Portal. You may also contact Lee DeLorenzo (delorenzo@doe.mass.edu 781-338-3227) for assistance.

The members listed as Charter Leader, School Business Official, and Board Chair in your Department profile should have received this message.