*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | June 11, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Proposed Amendments to Competency Determination Regulations, 603 CMR 30.00: Extending Interim Standard Through Class of 2025 |

At the meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on June 22, 2021, I will ask your approval to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to the Regulations on MCAS and the Competency Determination (603 CMR 30.00). The proposed amendments would extend the interim passing standard for the Competency Determination (CD) through the class of 2025 for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.

**Background**

The next-generation grade 10 ELA and mathematics MCAS tests were administered for the first time in the spring of 2019, and student results from those tests were reported using the new achievement levels that the [Board adopted in spring 2017](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2017/2017-03/item5.html): *Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations, and Not Meeting Expectations*. To ensure fairness for students seeking to attain their high school competency determination (CD) as we transitioned from the legacy high school MCAS assessments to next-generation assessments, [in February 2018](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2018/2018-02/item6.html) the Board voted to approve amendments to the regulations that established an interim passing standard for the CD for students in the classes of 2021 and 2022, the first two classes to take the next-generation tests in ELA and mathematics. The interim standard on the next-generation tests is defined as a similar level of achievement to the current required standard on the legacy tests: 240 (*Proficient*), or 220 (*Needs Improvement*) and the fulfillment of the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) in ELA and mathematics. [In January 2020](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2020/2020-01/item1.docx) the Board extended the interim passing standard for ELA and mathematics for one additional year to the class of 2023.

[In February 2019](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2019/2019-02/item6.html), the Board voted to amend the regulations to establish an interim passing standard in science and technology/engineering (STE) for students in the classes of 2023 and 2024. At the time, the first administration of the next-generation high school STE tests was planned for spring 2020 for ninth graders (the class of 2023).

In the winter of 2020, the Department’s Office of Student Assessment began convening an advisory committee—composed of classroom teachers, educational administrators, policymakers, representatives from higher education, and other stakeholders—to assist me in preparing my recommendation to the Board regarding a new passing standard for the CD. Along with this advisory committee, I planned to engage and consult with the public and other stakeholders before presenting my recommendations to the Board in the spring of 2020, ensuring that we gathered information from representatives across the education, business, and community sectors as we decided how to define and implement a new competency determination.

**Rationale for and Summary of Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 30.00**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of all testing in spring 2020, and the next-generation tests in STE (planned for that spring), were postponed until the spring of 2022, due to the ongoing uncertainties of the pandemic during the 2020–21 school year. The advisory committee, which had met several times, was also suspended.

The proposed amendments to the regulations, summarized below, are needed because of the unavoidable delays and changes in our plans caused by the pandemic. The amendments:

1. Update existing language to accurately reflect the delay in implementing the next-generation STE tests.
2. Extend the interim passing standard for all three subjects for two additional years—through the classes of 2024 and 2025. The class of 2024 will be entering 10th grade and the class of 2025 will be entering 9th grade in the fall of 2021. This proposed extension of the current CD standard would provide timely notice to these students, their families, and educators that the Board is maintaining the interim standard as to their graduating class, and allow time for the Board to consider, adopt, and provide fair notice of any new standard for future graduating classes.

During the upcoming school year, we will reconvene the advisory committee and work toward establishing a new CD standard for the class of 2026 and beyond.

With the Board's approval, the Department will solicit public comment on the proposed amendments. After reviewing any comments that are received and determining whether further changes are needed, I plan to bring the amendments back to the Board in September 2021 for final adoption. At that time I will also update you on our plans to establish the requirements for the new CD standard that will apply beginning with the class of 2026.

A redlined version of the regulations is attached, along with a motion to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments. Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel and Lucy Wall of our legal staff will join us for the discussion on June 22.

Attachments:

Redlined version of proposed amendment to 603 CMR 30.00

Motion to solicit public comment