*****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:** | January 14, 2022 |
| **Subject:** | High School MCAS Chemistry and Technology/Engineering Tests |

At the January 25, 2022, meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, we will continue our discussion from [the December 2021 meeting](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2022/2021-12/item6.docx), during which I presented my recommendations for phasing out – as of spring 2024 – two of the four MCAS high school science and technology/engineering (STE) subject tests that are currently available to students seeking to meet the competency determination (CD) requirements for graduation. Students need to meet the state standard on only one MCAS high school STE test to earn the competency determination.

At the December meeting, we discussed the reasons that I am recommending this phase-out of the two tests, including continued low and declining participation in the two tests as well as the significant costs associated with the development of new tests. As noted in our discussion in December, in 2019 a total of 71,700 students took the MCAS high school STE subject tests. Most took either the biology or introductory physics MCAS test; only 3 percent (2,319 students) took the chemistry or technology/engineering MCAS test.

Eliminating these two MCAS tests does not mean eliminating courses in chemistry and technology/engineering. Our high school MassCore requirements include three years of a laboratory science, so most students will have opportunities to take either or both of these subjects. At the December meeting I presented information showing that the declining participation in the tests has not had an impact on those courses being offered in schools. In fact, in the 2020-21 school year, 23,594 students took a course in technology/engineering and 67,814 students took chemistry. Students will continue to have opportunities to take chemistry and technology/engineering courses in high school.

The Regulations on MCAS and the Competency Determination, [603 CMR 30.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr30.html?section=all), call for students to “take a discipline-specific high school STE MCAS test approved by the Board, by grade 10.” 603 CMR 30.03(4). Under this regulation, the Board has flexibility to consider enrollment numbers and other relevant factors and determine by a policy vote which subject area MCAS high school science tests will be offered to students in order to meet the CD standard.

I recommend that the Board vote to phase out the high school MCAS chemistry and technology/engineering tests, as follows:

1. To accommodate the small number of students and schools who still participate in the chemistry and technology/engineering tests on a regular basis, I am proposing to continue offering these two tests for two additional years—in spring 2022 and spring 2023. This deferred elimination allows students in the class of 2025 (who are in 9th grade this year) to take either of these two tests at the end of either 9th or 10th grade and gives high schools time to adjust their course sequences if needed.
2. Beginning in spring 2024, the chemistry and technology/engineering tests would no longer be available, and only tests in biology and introductory physics would be offered to students in the class of 2026 and beyond. To support students and schools during the transition, we would continue to allow students in the class of 2025 and earlier to submit performance appeals in chemistry and technology/engineering.
3. The Department will make the announcement this winter in order to provide fair notice to students and to high schools for their course planning.

A motion is attached for your convenience. Rob Curtin, chief officer for data, assessment, and accountability, along with Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel and Lucy Wall of our legal staff, will join us for the discussion on January 25.

Enclosure: Motion