*****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:**  | September 15, 2022 |
| **Subject:** | Proposed Amendments to Certificate of Mastery and Seal of Biliteracy Regulations, 603 CMR 31.00  |

At the meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on September 20, 2022, I will ask the Board to vote on proposed amendments to the Certificate of Mastery and State Seal of Biliteracy Regulations, 603 CMR 31.00. On April 26, the Board voted to solicit public comment on the [proposed changes to the regulations](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2022/2022-04/item4.1-a603cmr31-redline.docx). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) received comments from three organizations regarding the regulations (summary provided below).

After considering those comments as well as conducting a further internal review, I am recommending additional amendments to streamline the regulations, align them with the Competency Determination standard, and provide greater clarity.

**Background on Certificate of Mastery and the Seal of Biliteracy**

The Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery is called for under state law (G.L. c. 69, §1D (ii)) and recognizes high academic achievement on MCAS as well as areas not included in MCAS. Similar to the John and Abigail Adams scholarship, the Certificate of Mastery provides a $700-$1700 tuition credit to students attending MA public colleges and universities. Unlike recipients of the Adams Scholarship, students do not need to score in the top 25th percentile of their school district on MCAS to qualify. Certificate of Mastery recipients meet initial eligibility through MCAS scores, then complete an application demonstrating their mastery of academic areas covered by MCAS and non-traditionally tested areas such as arts and foreign language. Each year, the Commonwealth awards the Stanley Z. Koplik Certificate of Mastery to between 500–1500 students.

The State Seal of Biliteracy is an award that school districts may grant to students who have attained a high level of proficiency in English and not less than one other language in addition to English. The State Seal of Biliteracy is called for under state law (G.L. c. 69, §1Q) and was created by the Board through regulations approved in 2018. Additional information about the State Seal of Biliteracy can be found on the [Department's website.](https://www.doe.mass.edu/scholarships/biliteracy/default.html)

**Rationale for Proposed Amendments**

At its August 2022 meeting, the Board voted to adopt amendments to the competency determination (CD) regulations (603 CMR 30.00). Those amendments, which establish a new CD standard for students beginning with the graduating class of 2026, necessitate corresponding amendments to the associated regulations for the Certificate of Mastery Award and the State Seal of Biliteracy.

In addition, our continued internal review of the regulations provided an opportunity to streamline the regulations and remove outdated references.

**Summary of Public Comment**

The public comment period on the proposed changes to the regulations opened after the Board meeting on April 26 and closed on June 3. The Department received comment on the proposed amendments from three organizations via email.

The Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Students of Other Languages and Boston Public Schools commented that the State Seal of Biliteracy should be kept in alignment with the CD requirements. The changes being presented do align to the CD requirements as updated in August.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association suggested that DESE “incorporate non-test alternative demonstrations” of academic performance as part of the criteria for the Certificate of Mastery and the State Seal of Biliteracy. While students must earn the competency determination to be eligible, the criteria for the Certificate of Mastery scholarship award do include non-test related demonstrations of academic performance.

**Summary of Proposed Changes**

The proposed changes to the regulations, reflected in the red-lined version attached to this memorandum, are summarized as follows:

*Certificate of Mastery*

1. Updates to align with the corresponding changes to the CD regulations.
2. Streamlining of the regulations to consolidate the current two categories (Certificate of Mastery and Certificate of Mastery with Distinction) into one program. This consolidation does not affect the number of students who can receive the award.
3. Elimination of outdated references (e.g., SAT II).
4. Clarification and simplification of the standards and criteria to receive the award.

*State Seal of Biliteracy*

1. Updates to align with corresponding changes to the CD regulations.

I recommend that the Board vote to adopt the proposed amendments to 603 CMR 31.00 as presented. A redlined version of the regulations is attached, along with a motion to adopt the amendments.

Erin Hashimoto-Martell and Alexia Cribbs from the Center for Instructional Support, as well as Lucy Wall from our legal staff, will join us for the discussion on September 20.

Attachments:

* Redlined version of proposed amendments to 603 CMR 31.00
* 603 CMR 31.00 with proposed amendments incorporated
* Motion to adopt revised regulations