

A message from the
Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

[View this email in your browser](#)

April 5, 2021

Commissioner's WEEKLY UPDATE

News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley and the Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

Contents:

1. [MCAS Updates](#)
 2. [Picture of the Week: Welcoming Words](#)
 3. [Free PPE Supplies](#)
 4. [Prom Guidance](#)
 5. [CVTE Programs Update](#)
 6. [FY22 Charter Schools Pre-Enrollment Report](#)
 7. [History/Social Science Curriculum Pilot Opportunity](#)
 8. [State Student Advisory Council Information Sessions](#)
 9. [DESE Resource Corner: Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems for Educators in 2021-2022](#)
 10. [Summer and School Year Programs to Accelerate Math Instruction](#)
 11. [AP Exam Fee Subsidies](#)
 12. [New Innovation Pathways Designations Announced](#)
 13. [For Your Info: Webinar on teen mental health](#)
-

1. MCAS Updates:

On Thursday, April 1, [Commissioner Riley announced](#) that he will recommend to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that they modify the state graduation requirements for the Class of 2022. If approved, this year's 11th graders would not be required to take the MCAS test. In addition, the timeline for administering the tests in grades 3 through 8 and 10 will be extended until June 11 in an effort to provide maximum flexibility for school districts.

Current juniors and seniors may still take the test this spring to qualify for the [Adams Scholarship](#) and [Koplik Certificate of Mastery](#). Juniors who do not participate this spring will be able to test for scholarships during the retest period in fall 2021.

In addition, DESE will offer remote administration of the English language arts, mathematics, and science assessments this spring for grades 3 through 8 to accommodate families who chose to have their children learn remotely through the end of the school year. The Department will provide school districts with additional information in the coming weeks.



2. Picture of the Week:

Chalk messages welcomed students to Blanchard Memorial Elementary School in Boxborough on April 5 as they began their first week of full in-person school since March 2020. *(Photo courtesy of Acton-Boxborough Regional School District)*

3. Free PPE Supplies:

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has personal protective equipment that they are offering for free to public schools, collaboratives, and approved special education schools. Supplies are limited and dwindling, so not all order requests will be fulfilled. Stock will be disseminated equitably, based on demand. Interested districts should [fill out an order form](#). Districts must be able to pick up the supplies at the MEMA warehouse at 20 Forge Parkway in Franklin. Because demand is heavy and supplies are limited, the order period ends at **11:59 p.m. this Friday, April 9.**

4. Prom Guidance:

On Thursday, April 1, DESE posted [guidance on high school proms](#) (*download*). Given the health risks inherent in holding a prom during the COVID-19 pandemic, DESE strongly recommends that schools do not have proms and instead substitute alternative celebrations for seniors. If schools do choose to hold proms, it is strongly recommended that they delay the prom until after the end of the school year, ideally delaying until such time when most students attending prom will have been vaccinated. If schools do hold proms, they must follow the [State Event Guidance](#) and the [State Travel Advisory](#).

5. CVTE Programs Update:

As of April 1, **culinary sites** at career/vocational technical education schools may begin serving external guests in addition to internal guests (e.g., staff and students) within a dine-in restaurant setting, as long as they comply with all [state reopening guidance for restaurants](#). Also as of April 1, **cosmetology sites** can begin serving both external customers as well as classmates and staff, as long as they comply with all [state reopening guidance for close contact personal services](#). The [updated CVTE guidance](#) is available for download.

6. FY22 Charter Schools Pre-Enrollment Report:

In accordance with M.G.L. c.71 § 89(o), and 603 CMR 1.08(5), superintendents must be notified by April 1 of the number of students from their district who are expected to be enrolled in Massachusetts Commonwealth Charter Schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Accordingly, all relevant superintendents were emailed the FY22 Pre-Enrollment Data report on Thursday, April 1. The report is also [posted](#)

[online](#). Please email Joanna Laghetto at Joanna.C.Laghetto@mass.gov with any questions about FY22 charter school enrollment.

7. History/Social Science Curriculum Pilot Opportunity:

The Department is looking for schools and districts to field test a set of innovative fifth, sixth, and seventh grade history/social science curriculum units. Developed in Massachusetts and fully aligned to state standards, these open-source materials emphasize inquiry and investigation, culturally affirming pedagogy, the development of historical empathy, and connections to the current world and civic engagement. This is a unique professional learning opportunity for teachers to help shape history/social science education across the state. To find out more, please [download the pilot overview](#) or [sign up to attend an informational webinar](#) at **3:00 p.m. on Monday, April 12**.

8. State Student Advisory Council Information Sessions:

Commissioner Riley, State Student Advisory Council Chair Jasper Coughlin, and other Student Advisory Council members will hold two information sessions for high school administrators, educators, and students about holding school elections for Regional Student Advisory Council Members and about the Student Advisory Council network overall. More [information about the Student Advisory Council](#) is available online, and [registration is open online](#) for the webinars. Interested individuals are asked to choose either **10:30 to 11:15 a.m. or 3:30 to 4:15 p.m., both on Thursday, April 29**. The sessions will also be recorded and posted on the Student Advisory Council section of DESE's [website](#). Anyone with questions about the councils is asked to email Donna Taylor at DonnaM.Taylor@mass.gov.

9. DESE Resource Corner:

Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems for Educators in 2021-

2022: The Department has developed an [online resource](#) for district and school administrators as they continue to build supportive talent systems for educators in the 2021-2022 year. The guide includes resources, considerations, and updates for supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on racial equity in the unique context of the upcoming school year. It also features the input and voices of current Massachusetts educators. The resource is being released in parts throughout the spring and will be updated to reflect the changing circumstances of teaching and leading as fall approaches.

- **Now available:** [Hiring](#) and [Student Teachers](#)
- **Mid-April:** Supporting New Educators
- **Early May:** Professional Learning, Evaluation, and Retention

To receive email notifications when new sections of the resource are released, please complete this [brief form](#). Please contact educatordevelopment@mass.gov with any questions or feedback or for additional partnership.

10. Summer and School Year Programs to Accelerate Math Instruction:

The Department is identifying vendors to offer three programming options to help schools and districts accelerate math instruction this summer and during the 2021-2022 school year:

- A digital conceptual mathematics program,
- Summer intensive programming and high-quality instructional materials support during the school year, and
- Targeted acceleration using high-quality instructional materials.

The vendors will provide access to the program or curriculum and professional development for teachers. The programs will be offered at no cost to schools and

districts.

The [bid solicitation](#) is posted online. The selected vendors will be announced in May, and more information around school and district priority and registration will be coming soon. For help with any questions about these opportunities, please email AcceleratingMath@mass.gov.

11. AP Exam Fee Subsidies:

Please see the following updates and reminders about Advanced Placement exam fee subsidies:

- The low-income Advanced Placement exam fee subsidy program has now been expanded to include **science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and English language arts** for students in all Massachusetts public schools.
 - In addition, exam subsidies are available for AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams for low-income public school students in [districts](#) that have one or more schools identified as requiring assistance in the state's accountability system. (Please note that this does not apply to districts where low MCAS participation was the only reason a school was identified as requiring assistance.)
 - Additional avenues of subsidizing low-income student exam fees for *all* districts are highlighted in this [memo](#).
 - **Saturday, May 15** is the last day to submit subsidy requests.
 - Visit www.doe.mass.edu/ap for information on how schools and districts can file for reimbursement.
-

12. New Innovation Pathways Designations Announced:

The Baker-Polito Administration recently awarded designations to 18 high schools

for new [Innovation Pathways](#) that will connect students' learning to a career pathway by providing work-based learning experiences with rigorous technical coursework. Congratulations to the [18 schools and their partners!](#)

13. For Your Info:

- **Webinar on teen mental health:** Waltham-based [Families for Depression Awareness](#) is presenting a free webinar, "Pandemic Parenting: Supporting Teen Mental Health," at **7:00-8:15 p.m. on Thursday, April 8**. Anyone interested can [register](#) to participate or watch it after it airs. People who are new to the topic of teen depression or in need of a refresher are encouraged to watch [Understanding Teen Depression](#) as a foundation to the webinar.



Copyright © 2021 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, All rights reserved.

Superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and charter school leaders will receive the update automatically. For others wishing to receive this update, [please subscribe](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

