

## Accountability Changes Coming from DESE

### Changes on so many levels

We've all become used to the annual reports: what are the MCAS scores and what level does that place our schools at this year?

In Massachusetts, this will no longer be the case.

When Congress passed the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it triggered a new plan from Massachusetts on how the state would fulfill the law. After input from stakeholders across the Commonwealth, the state has had a plan accepted by the feds which most notably will change our current accountability system. There will be more to come on this as the state rolls out the plan, but here is what we know thus far:

### It's not all about testing.

Schools and districts will be evaluated on: ELA, math, and science MCAS achievement values (based on scaled scores); student growth in MCAS scores (as measured by the student growth percentile); high school completion (as measured by the four year graduation rate; the extended engagement rate; (see below) and the annual dropout rate and English language proficiency (as measured by progress made by English learners towards proficiency).

### Other measures to include:

- chronic absenteeism in all schools;
- percentage of students passing all ninth grade courses (for high schools);

- percentage of students completing advanced course work (for high schools).

Note that extended engagement is a new measure, incorporating both the five year graduation rate PLUS the percentage of students still enrolled in school after that time. Districts thus will be credited with keeping students who have yet to graduate in school.

### A focus on kids who need the most help

In addition to meeting targets for the school as a whole, schools will be responsible for the performance (in all indicators, not just testing) of the lowest performing 25% of students who have been enrolled for more than one year. The intent

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## Finalists for DESE Commissioner Announced

Three finalists have been chosen to interview for the position of Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The finalists are: **Angélica Infante-Green**, deputy commissioner of the Office of Instructional Support P-12 in New York State Education Department; **Jeffrey C. Riley**, superintendent/receiver of the Lawrence Public Schools; and **Penny Schwinn**, chief deputy commissioner of academics at the Texas Education Agency. They were picked from a pool of 18 applicants from around the country and will be publicly interviewed later this month by the entire Board of

Elementary and Secondary Education in the final round of interviews before the Board votes to recommend one candidate for the position.

The Preliminary Screening Committee, which included five Board members who are voting members of the committee and 10 non-voting members from the public, selected the finalists after meeting in December and January to review applications and interview candidates.

**Ms. Infante-Green** has overseen and directed all programmatic and administrative activities of the Office of Instructional Support P-12 for the New York State Education Department

since 2015. Prior to that, she was associate commissioner of the New York State Education Department's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages. Before her leadership roles at the state level, she was assistant superintendent/executive director of the New York City Department of Education's Office of English Language Learners. She began her career as a teacher and administrator in New York City public schools.

**Mr. Riley** has overseen the functioning and improvement of 35 schools serving more than 14,000 students as the Lawrence Public

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### MSBA STATEMENT OF INTEREST (SOI) 2018 SUBMITTAL PERIOD OPEN

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has announced that they will begin accepting Statements of Interest ("SOIs") for consideration in 2018 on Friday, January 5, 2018, 10:00AM.

Submitting an SOI is the critical first step in the MSBA's program for school building construction, addition/renovation, and repair grants. It allows districts to inform us about deficiencies that may exist in a local school facility and how those deficiencies inhibit the delivery of the district's educational program.

The following provides program detail and closing date information to guide local actions and approvals for those planning to file an SOI:

- The SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the Accelerated Repair Program ("ARP"), which is primarily for the repair and/or replacement of roofs, windows/doors, and/or boilers in an otherwise structurally sound facility, is Friday, February 16, 2018.
- The SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the CORE Program, which is primarily for projects beyond the scope of ARP, including extensive repairs, renovations, addition/renovations, and new school construction, is Friday, April 6, 2018.

For questions about the 2018 SOI process, please see the Statement of Interest User Guide at <http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/> or email: [SOI@massschoolbuildings.org](mailto:SOI@massschoolbuildings.org) or by phone: 617-720-4466

### CHIP FUNDING EXTENDED THROUGH MARCH

Federal funding for children's health care got a jolt of congressional cash late last month that should last through March in the Bay State, according to the Baker administration. A short-term government funding bill that passed at the end of the year included a provision providing \$2.85 billion for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP),

putting off a larger budget debate that could include immigration and border security.

The federal government paid nearly \$14.5 billion for CHIP expenses in fiscal 2016, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The short-term federal budget runs through Friday, Jan. 19, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services published preliminary information indicating Massachusetts would receive \$119.7 million in CHIP funding as part of the funding extension.

CHIP covers health care for 8.9 million children in families that do not qualify for Medicaid but who have trouble affording market-rate private insurance.

Before the recent federal funding bill passed, MA Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders estimated CHIP money would run out in mid-January unless Congress took action. Funding for the program in Massachusetts is now expected to run out by April.

Since a September deadline passed without CHIP reauthorization by Congress, funding in Massachusetts has included a combination of fiscal 2017 carry-over funds and "redistribution funding" from the

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, according to the Baker administration.

If Congress does not fully fund CHIP and MassHealth maintained the current program, Massachusetts would lose out on an estimated \$147.5 million in fiscal 2018 and \$295 million annually starting in fiscal 2019, according to the Office of Health and Human Services.

The short-term budget also made cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund, according to an aide to U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who said that fund is critical for children's health, too.

The American Academy of Pediatrics held a conference call on January 12 to urge Congress to pass long-term funding for CHIP. Every Child Matters, a non-partisan non-profit, urged the public to call on their elected representatives to "act immediately on a 5-year CHIP reauthorization."

"The short term patch that lawmakers included in an end-of-year funding deal only provides momentary relief," the organization wrote. "Funding is still set to run out as early as January 19 in some states."

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## Grants to help students arriving from Puerto Rico

Last week, the Governor's office announced that \$60,000 in federally-funded, competitive McKinney-Vento Homeless Education grants would be released to assist 12 districts. These districts serve approximately 85% of the Puerto Rican students who came to Massachusetts after losing their housing due to hurricane Maria.

Districts can use the money to offer a variety of activities, including tutoring, before and after-school programs, and collaborations with mental health providers and other support/community services.

The 12 districts will receive \$5,000 each. The districts are: Boston, Chicopee, Fall River, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, New Bedford, Southbridge, Springfield and Worcester.

As of mid-December, more than 2,100

students from Puerto Rico impacted by Hurricane Maria were enrolled in K-12 schools across the Commonwealth.

Governor Baker also announced plans to request additional school funding to help local school districts pay for the education of children who have been evacuated. In addition, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education voted last month to grant in-state tuition rates to evacuees from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands who have been displaced by Hurricane Maria. Community colleges, state universities and the University of Massachusetts campuses will offer in-state tuition rates immediately and through the spring semester of 2018.

# Evaluating Ed Reform: Twenty-five years later

Since last fall, MASC has been participating in a statewide planning effort for “Leading the Nation,” a 2018 celebration of K-12 achievement sponsored by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

This effort, which will be highlighted with events at the State House and across the state, recognizes student successes in many forms, at both the local and statewide level. Massachusetts leads the nation in reading and math on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) and number one in the world in reading on the PISA international assessment (2016) and most recently in the annual Quality Counts report compiled by Education Week. “Leading the Nation” is intended to celebrate these and other important benchmarks, while honoring the work of teachers, school committees, administrators, parents and communities that have contributed to the state’s longstanding reputation as an education

leader. “Leading the Nation” will also mark the 25th anniversary of the passage of the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act, which provided for greater and more equitable investment in public schools as well as a heightened emphasis on accountability.

DESE has launched a **Leading the Nation** website, which includes local planning resources and ideas. As the campaign develops, the website will begin to incorporate more of what’s happening in districts.

More information about the campaign, including an **April 5 celebration at the State House** (scheduled for 10 a.m. to 12 noon) is available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/Leading-TheNation/>.

MASC considers this an excellent opportunity to call attention to the role of school leaders and others

who have stood fast in the face of public school naysayers, and who advocated for the resources and supports that have contributed to the state’s “first in the nation” status. DESE has reached out to school administrators and faculty who may

be interested in developing local programs or events that will spotlight their community’s particular success stories. DESE is also planning a series of five regional best practice conferences to be held in May and local districts may receive inquiries about hosting a conference at their schools.

MASC will share more information as we learn it, and members are encouraged to visit the DESE website for further updates to support this celebration of 25 years of student achievement.



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## Finalists for DESE Commissioner Announced

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Schools superintendent/receiver since 2012. Prior to that, he worked for Boston Public Schools as academic superintendent/chief innovation officer. Mr. Riley has worked in urban and suburban educational systems as a teacher in Baltimore, Md., administrator at High Tech Academy @ Madison Park Technical Vocational High School in Boston and principal of Tyngsboro Middle School and Boston’s Edwards Middle School.

**Dr. Schwinn** has been responsible for providing resources and supports to effectively improve quality, access and opportunity for over 5.3 million preK-12 students as chief deputy commissioner of academics for the Texas Education Agency since 2016. Prior to that, she was associate secretary of

education in the Delaware Department of Education. After beginning her career as a teacher in Baltimore, Md., she founded Capitol Collegiate Academy in Sacramento, Calif. and served as assistant superintendent of performance management and strategic initiatives for the Sacramento City Unified School District.

The Board will interview the finalists at a public meeting on January 26, 2018 at the Omni Parker House in Boston. The meeting will also be streamed live at <https://livestream.com/accounts/22459134>. Representatives from stakeholder groups are being invited to suggest interview questions for the candidates, and these stakeholders are being invited to attend the January 26 meeting and submit written comments to the

Board after the interviews conclude.

The Board is anticipating that it will meet again in public session on January 29 in Malden to select one candidate from among the three finalists to recommend to Secretary Peyser for appointment as the state’s next commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. Under state law, the recommendation requires a two-thirds majority vote of all members (Secretary Peyser has a vote as a member of the Board), and the secretary decides whether to appoint the recommended candidate or ask the Board to submit another candidate for consideration.

Representatives from MASC are planning to attend the interviews on January 26 and will provide more insights following the meeting.

# Legislative Forum anticipates upcoming Day on the Hill

On Friday, February 9, MASC's Division VII and the Cape Cod Collaborative will present a legislative forum that will focus on issues around the upcoming FY19 state budget and will include a presentation on the state's new accountability system from Robert Curtin, Director, Center for District Support, DESE. The program, which will run from 9:30-Noon, will be held at the Cape Cod Collaborative in Osterville. There is no charge to attend, but MASC's asks that you rsvp to Division VII Chair Geoff Swett at swettgw@comcast.net.

MASC's annual **Day on the Hill** is once again having to relocate due to ongoing renovations at the State House. The morning legislative

program will be held on **Wednesday, April 25** at the Grand Masonic Lodge in Boston at the corner of Boylston and Tremont Streets, approximately a five-minute walk from the Common garage and an eight-minute walk to the State House. (The program was also held at this location in 2017.)

**BACK AGAIN THIS YEAR THOUGH:** The luncheon buffet prepared and hosted by vocational students from across the state will be held at the State House in its usual location, the Great Hall of Flags.

Details about the program and registration information will be announced shortly. **Save the date (April 25) on your calendar today.**

## DESE

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is to credit schools with the work they do with students they have for a sustained period of time.

### No More Levels

Schools will no longer be placed in a vertical hierarchy of levels 1-5. The lowest 10%—not, as now, the lowest 20%—will be “normatively placed” as in need of intervention. Only approximately 15% of schools will be classified as in need of assistance or intervention:

- those with percentiles under 10%, plus:
- those with persistently low graduation rates
- those with low testing participation over two years.

MASC will keep you posted as we learn more.

### **LEGISLATIVE ALERT!** *Possible shortage of funds for FY2018 Special Education Circuit Breaker*

The Special Education Circuit Breaker provides state funding for 75% of all approved costs that exceed 4 times the statewide average per pupil foundation budget, as defined in Chapter 70, for the previous fiscal year. The final FY 2018 funding for the Circuit Breaker was \$281 million. DESE estimated an increase of 4.5% for all claims; however, the costs thus far are approximately 8.1%. It is preliminarily estimated that a shortfall of \$36 million may occur in this account. DESE is currently conducting its circuit breaker audits with 60 school districts and the results are due by early March. The audit results could add to or reduce the projected shortfall.

**MASC urges you to contact your legislators, as soon as possible,** to seek additional funding necessary to meet the Circuit Breaker shortfall of about \$36 million. Such funding for FY 2018 could be funded through a Supplementary Budget, which the Legislature frequently employs to meet various shortfalls and emergency funding requests. The Governor's FY 2019 State Budget is scheduled to be released by January 25, 2018 and MASC will send you a Legislative Bulletin with the highlights.

**MASC**

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**Massachusetts Association of School Committees**