



*News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

On the Desktop - April 10, 2020

Legislation Enacted on MCAS, SOA Plans, and Regional School District Budgets

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Assistant Superintendents,

Earlier today, Governor Baker signed legislation that addresses many concerns municipalities and school districts might have because of the state of emergency related to COVID-19, including this year's MCAS testing and the competency determination, the deadline for Student Opportunity Act plans, and the process for regional school districts to approve their annual budget.

MCAS

We previously requested and received a waiver from the federal requirement for annual statewide student assessment. Now, with the state legislation enacted, the MCAS testing requirement is waived for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

As a result of these federal and state actions and in light of the on-going health crisis, I am cancelling this spring's regular administration of grade-level MCAS tests for students in grades 3-10.

In addition, the legislation allows the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, upon my recommendation, to modify or waive the requirements of the [competency determination](#) for high school graduation in order to address disruptions caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 or the state of emergency. I am considering various options, and further guidance will be forthcoming.

Student Opportunity Act

The legislation that the governor signed today gives me the ability to move the deadline for the three-year plans required by the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) to May 15, 2020 or later. I appreciate the work that several dozen districts did to submit plans in time for the original April 1 deadline. I recognize how challenging it is for school districts to complete the SOA district planning work right now. I will announce a new deadline soon.

Regional School District Budgets

Approving budgets for regional school districts can be particularly challenging during a time of social distancing. The legislation that the governor signed today states that, if a town's or city's

vote on the approval of a fiscal year 2021 regional school district budget is delayed beyond June 30, 2020 as a result of COVID-19 and the state of emergency, the district should notify DESE. At that point, we will certify an amount sufficient for the operation of the regional district starting July 1, 2020, in an amount not less than one-twelfth of the regional district's total annual budget in FY20. The Department will set similar sums for each successive month as needed. We expect to issue guidance on FY21 regional school district budgets in the near future. If you have questions about this process in the meantime, please email [Michelle Griffin](#).

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner