



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
**From:** Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner  
**Date:** May 14, 2010  
**Subject:** Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding our work with the "Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career." PARCC is one of two major consortia of states preparing to submit a proposal in response to the U.S. Department of Education's "Notice Inviting Applications" (NIA) for Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants.

The Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant program will complete the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top initiative. The grant program provides for two grants to consortia of up to \$160 million each for the rigorous assessment of grades 3-8 and high school standards and a grant of up to \$30 million for high school end-of-course assessments.

Initially, Massachusetts signed non-binding memoranda of agreement with three emerging consortia: one with a consortium led by Maine and West Virginia, one with a consortium facilitated by Achieve, Inc., and a third consortium led by Florida. Subsequently, Massachusetts took the lead with states from several consortia to form the "Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career." I believe that PARCC is best conceived and positioned to deliver the level of quality and rigor that the MCAS program has provided for our state. Further, PARCC has the potential to help Massachusetts raise its summative student assessment program to a higher level by engaging teachers and students in extended performance tasks. Such tasks allow assessment of students' ability to apply their content knowledge, in ways that go beyond measurement in traditional, one-time test administrations.

Massachusetts is helping to lead the PARCC consortium as a governing state and is joined to date by seven other jurisdictions: the District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. The NIA requires a minimum of five governing states and these entities must commit, as part of the application, to implement the resulting common assessment by the 2014-2015 school year. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus, Associate Commissioner Bob Bickerton, and I are taking an active role in developing the grant application. Massachusetts is well positioned as a governing state in PARCC and a participant on the design team. We anticipate that more than 25 states will ultimately participate in PARCC.

I have attached a description of the PARCC consortium to provide you with additional information about the various purposes and uses for which the new assessment system will be designed. Proposals are due to the U.S. Department of Education by June 23, 2010. I intend to provide the Board with periodic updates about this important initiative. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Enclosure: