



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: Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards: Next Steps

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with a revised process and schedule for reviewing and potentially adopting the K-12 Common Core Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The revised process and schedule replaces the one I presented to you this past January, and is designed to ensure a rigorous and transparent review of the standards prior to asking the Board to consider adopting them this summer. The federal rules for our Race to the Top proposal require that we specify a date by which the Board will vote on the standards. In order to receive the full number of points for this section of our proposal, the Board must take a vote by August 2, 2010.

Assuming that a final draft of the Common Core Standards is released by the end of this month, I propose that the Board adopt the following timeline and process for voting on adoption of the Common Core Standards.

June 1, 2010:

- I will invite public comment on the Common Core Standards by posting them on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website. For both ELA and mathematics, there will be a link to an online survey that asks respondents to make a holistic assessment whether the Common Core Standards for that subject are: (a) equivalent to, (b) more rigorous than or (c) less rigorous than our current Massachusetts standards for ELA and mathematics (2001 and 2000, respectively). This survey will also have space for respondents to provide written reasons for their judgments.

By June 15, 2010:

- I will appoint two independent expert panels, one for ELA and one for mathematics, composed of PreK-12 educators and representatives from higher education and the business community, to review the Common Core Standards and report back to the Board whether they find that they are: (a) equivalent to, (b) more rigorous than, or (c) less rigorous than our draft revised Massachusetts standards for ELA and mathematics (2009 and 2010, respectively) and the reasons for their judgments.
- In addition to the panels, I will secure one or more experts from outside of Massachusetts to compare the Common Core Standards to the Massachusetts draft revised standards in ELA and mathematics and report their findings.