

Governor Patrick Calls for 'Unleashing Innovation' to Spur Education Reform

Governor's Education Action Agenda targets access to higher education and growing a global, 21st century workforce

BOSTON - Wednesday, June 25, 2008 - Preceding an historic meeting of all education boards in Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick unveiled the final portions of his Education Action Agenda - the state's blueprint to move Massachusetts through its next phase in education reform by 2020 - focused on improving access to higher education for all Massachusetts residents, and unleashing innovation to spur long-term system change in the state's public education system. "We must prepare all students to be lifelong learners and successful, contributing citizens in a world economy and global society by creating a progressive education system that is fully integrated, coherent and seamless - serving children from birth through higher education and beyond," said Governor Patrick. "Success in the 21 st Century requires more than a high school diploma, and we must expand opportunities for post-secondary education for anyone who seeks it."

The announcement comes after nearly a year of work undertaken by the Readiness Project - a statewide initiative involving more than 200 educators, business leaders, and community leaders to develop a strategic blueprint for the next phase of education reform in the Commonwealth. The full action agenda is now available at www.mass.gov/governor/education . Reports completed by the Readiness Project's 13 sub-committees are also available on the same Web site.

"It is fitting the results of this report are shared publicly today as all of the state's education leaders meet together for the first time," said Paul Reville, Secretary Designate of Education. "It is now time to put these recommendations into action, and start the work necessary to transform the Commonwealth's public education system by 2020."

Transforming Higher Education

Whether it is community college or the equivalent training in a professional trade, the Governor's Education Action Agenda identifies the baseline public education system in Massachusetts will include two post-secondary years.

The Commonwealth is expanding its commitment to public education to include full access to community college for anyone who seeks it. Our long-term goal is to establish a public education

system that guarantees access to free community college or the equivalent postsecondary or vocational education. The first step toward that goal will focus first on existing and aspiring early education and care educators and the parents or guardians of income-eligible students in our pre-K through 12 system.

Recommendations include:

To capitalize on the critical role of community colleges in our education and workforce development system and to enhance the ability of Massachusetts' students and businesses to compete internationally, the public education system should **include guaranteed access to free community college** or the equivalent postsecondary or vocational education.

Create a **pilot program to provide community college opportunities** to: 1) existing and aspiring early education and care educators in exchange for several years of service in the Commonwealth's early education and care workforce; and 2) parents or guardians of income-eligible students in our pre-K through 12 system.

Increase high school graduation rates and college readiness, particularly among minority and low-income youth, by increasing the number of **Early College High Schools in the Commonwealth**. These high schools provide a unique and proven **opportunity for traditionally underserved students to earn simultaneously a high school diploma and two years of college credit** that can be applied toward an associate degree or a bachelor's degree.

Leverage information technology to expand student access to courses, content and credit by establishing **Mass Online University and Mass Virtual High School**.

Introduce budget language in increasing increments each fiscal year to create **the opportunity for dual enrollment (high school and college) for all students**, focusing initially on first-generation college-goers, students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and concurrent enrollment programs for students with special needs.

Beginning with the fiscal year 2010 budget, **increase needs-based financial aid for higher education to low-income students** and extend and pro-rate the same benefit to part-

time students.

Provide opportunities for **accelerated graduation and early entry into college** for qualifying students who at age 16 or over pass an internationally benchmarked exam, such as the International Bac-calaureate, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or Advanced Placement exams to bypass all other requirements, graduate from high school and enter college.

Support legislation to allow children of undocumented immigrants to attend a public college or university in the Commonwealth at the in-state tuition rate if they have attended Massachusetts' schools, passed the MCAS, received a high school diploma and are on a path toward citizenship.

Provide students with **maximum flexibility and mobility to earn a college degree** by guaranteeing transfer of course credit between and among the state's public higher education institutions.

Innovation and Systemic Reform

Bold and broad-based education reform calls for unleashing innovation and systemic change throughout the Commonwealth's schools, school districts, colleges and universities as well as in the partnerships and collaborations among education institutions, communities, businesses and nonprofits.

Recommendations include:

Establish the **Commonwealth Education Innovation Fund**, a public-private fundraising partnership to strengthen our collective capacity to meet pressing, statewide education challenges. Building on a modest annual investment, the state will seek additional funds from the business and nonprofit communities, as well as individual donors and philanthropists. Based on recommendations from the Executive Office of Education - developed in consultation with the Boards and Commissioners of Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education, and the president and Board of Trustees of the University of Massachusetts - the Fund will establish a discrete list of evolving funding priorities to foster innovation in policy, practice, research, professional development and other capacity-building measures.

Charge each of the education sector boards with **strengthening, clarifying and improving accountability** and linking the functions of accountability and assistance.

Develop a **comprehensive statewide strategy for integrating 21 st century skills into all aspects of public education**: standards and assessments, curriculum and instruction, professional development and learning environments. These reforms will be guided by the work of task forces of the Boards of Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education, Higher Education, and the University of Massachusetts' Board of Trustees.

Establish **regional Readiness Centers dedicated to the continuous improvement of education** at all levels of our public education system. These Centers will be hubs for local partnerships and collaborations to support continuous improvement of teaching, the development of academic curriculum and content professional development opportunities and resources, teacher externships and student teaching internships.

Allow **tuition retention** for both state supported and continuing education courses.

Fully fund the **Department of Higher Education funding formula**.

Continue investing in the state's **Expanded Learning Time Program**.

Work with the Massachusetts federal congressional delegation to explore options for **advocating for the reallocation of federal Title I and special education funds** for early education and care programs.

Close the compensation gap between faculty at Massachusetts' higher education institutions and peer institutions in other states, particularly the New England states.

Prioritize the state's commitment to and investment in a **robust high school-to-college Web portal** by supporting and advancing the existing partnership among the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Higher Education, and the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. The Web portal will improve student, parent and counselor access to information and tools about postsecondary education opportunities.

Develop and make available a state **diagnostic College Readiness Assessment for all 11th graders** to inform their course selection and senior-year activities. These assessments may be similar to those currently given to entering college freshmen.

Establish **incentives to encourage expansion of the school year** and launch a competitive grant program to support high-impact summer programming, tutoring and mentoring opportunities in high-needs communities.

Ensure access to **high-quality after-school and out-of-school time programming in every high-needs community** by streamlining responsibility, funding, authority and accountability of all state after-school and out-of-school-time programs.

Close the home-family technology gap by establishing a state framework for low-cost, district-driven, home-computer lease programs.

Provide incentives for **information technology partnerships** to improve teaching and learning, education administration and management, or delivery of education services and support.

Provide **incentives for regional pre-K through higher education purchasing and service delivery partnerships** beginning with legislation to provide full funding for districts that participate in regional partnerships for transportation of special education students.

Introduce **legislation to allow state and municipal agencies to lease available space in state-owned facilities** at below-market rates to qualified early education and care program providers.

Growing a 21st Century Workforce

Growing a highly-skilled workforce in Massachusetts requires a strong partnership between the state's public education system and the workforce system to work with students, particularly in high-need districts, to identify how they fit into the workforce and what skills they need to be productive.

Recommendations include:

Better **align the education system to real world market needs** by analyzing and

communicating the academic, skill, and training needs of emerging and high-growth business and industry sectors through a schedule of state studies designed to provide public schools and higher education institutions with easy access to current information that will inform programming and planning decisions.

Develop a statewide **Research and Development Co-facilities Plan**.

Market licensable intellectual property generated at state supported colleges, universities, research and other institutions to businesses located in and out of state.

Build on the Connecting Activities work of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to place a **Career Readiness Counselor** first in every high-needs high school, and then into every high-needs middle school .

Introduce legislation to provide **incentives to businesses that provide space at below-market rates for high-quality early education and care programs**, or that give community residents access to the company's early education and care programs.