

Governor Patrick Launches New Era of Education Reform

Strategies for closing state's achievement gaps and preparing students for 21st Century global economy unveiled in Governor Patrick's Education Action Agenda

BOSTON- Monday, June 23, 2008 - Advancing his vision to offer a consistently excellent, world-class education for all children in Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick today unveiled parts of a long-term plan for education reform. Governor Patrick's Education Action Agenda is designed to raise achievement of all students as measured against global benchmarks and to help prepare all students by 2020 to compete successfully in the global economy. The Plan builds on the success of the landmark 1993 Education Reform Act, and continues to construct a system that meets the specific needs of each child.

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 will be released on Wednesday, June 25th at the first-ever joint meeting of the state's education boards: the Board of Early Education and Care, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Board of Higher Education and the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees.

"Education transforms lives, and there is no better way to position Massachusetts for prosperity in the 21st Century than to prepare our children with the skills they need to compete anywhere," said Governor Patrick, surrounded by students at the Dorchester Boys & Girls Club. "It's time to build on the remarkable achievements of the past 15 years, and take public education to the next level."

"I commend the hundreds of participants who helped formulate the bold and informative results of this unprecedented discussion on the future of education in Massachusetts," said Paul Reville, Secretary Designate of Education. "The recommendations outlined in Governor Patrick's Education Action Agenda provide a blue print to guide us through the next phase of education reform with our partners in the Legislature and the many committed stakeholders across the Commonwealth."

Raising the Bar for All Students

Since the passage of the Education Reform Act in 1993, Massachusetts leads the nation in education achievement, with our students consistently scoring at the top on national tests. Notwithstanding this

success, when measured against top scoring students in other nations, Massachusetts does not rank in the top tier, and after 15 years of education reform, achievement gaps persist throughout our system between African American and Latino students and white and Asian students.

"Addressing the achievement gap requires that teachers are given the tools and the time to focus on the educational needs of each child," said Reville.

Recommendations to address the achievement of students include the following:

Develop a **comprehensive, statewide child and youth data and reporting system that would lead to development of a "Readiness Passport"** for every child and youth enrolled in Massachusetts schools. The "Readiness Passport" will provide parents, guardians and agencies with a simple tool to document key elements of a child's educational experiences as well as to chronicle various services, interventions, supports, data and performance evaluations related to that child. Consistent with any privacy constraints established by applicable federal and state law, the Passport will be accessible to parents, guardians, teachers, providers and, as appropriate, students. The data and reporting system as well as the Readiness Passport will increase the efficiency, effectiveness and collaboration of the schools, state agencies and community youth organizations.

Immediately create, by means of an executive order, a Task Force to **establish a statewide birth-to-school age strategy** to ensure the healthy development of children, particularly those from low-income families. This strategy should include various service agencies, link multiple funding streams and align pre-school and school-age care.

Continue to work toward reducing class size in K-2 classrooms in high-needs school districts.

Increase availability and accessibility of state Adult Basic Education and English for speakers of other languages **(ESOL) programs**.

Launch an **Urban Schools Early Warning and Dropout Prevention Pilot** in qualifying districts to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school and to implement tailored and appropriate interventions.

Place **Student Support Coordinator(s)** in every low-income school to assist teachers, connect students and their families to appropriate, non-educational, state and community-based services, and to provide ongoing guidance and assistance with coordinating and integrating those services.

Establish a **Commonwealth Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet** an inter-governmental agency cabinet chaired by the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services and including a

stakeholder advisory group, responsible for developing and implementing a shared vision to advance the health and well being of all children and youth.

Continued Support for Early Education

"Quality early education is one of the best predictors of educational success and full day kindergarten is an essential part of this strategy," said Governor Patrick. "My Administration will continue to support and expand these areas of education."

The Governor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2009 includes a \$368 million increase in education funding, including a record level of school aid to cities and towns and significant increases in Universal Pre-K and full day Kindergarten programs.

Recommendations include:

Continue support for high-quality early education by establishing a schedule of incremental increases in annual funding **to achieve universal pre-kindergarten**, beginning with the FY 2010 budget.

Continue state support for **high-quality, full-day kindergarten in every high-need district** by amending the Kindergarten Expansion Grant program in the FY 2010 budget to allow state funds to be used for transition from half-day to full-day programs, quality enhancements in all full-day programs in high needs districts, and to cover the gap year between grant funding and funding provided through Chapter 70.

Addressing Education Funding

Under the Education Reform Act of 1993, the Commonwealth established a minimum amount of funding to provide students with a "fair and adequate" education; but the foundation budget has not been recalculated in 15 years to reflect the resources schools need today to meet high standards and expectations.

School districts now spend an average of 18 percent above the foundation budget, and nearly every district spends at least at the level of foundation. The foundation budget clearly needs to be reexamined. Local funding, primarily in the form of property taxes, constitutes the bulk of education spending and property owners around the state feel the burden heavily - particularly in this time of economic uncertainty.

The Governor has named a Readiness Finance Commission comprised of top education, business, and policy leaders in the state. Its members will be charged with identifying short-term cost savings and potential new revenue sources, while outlining several options to correct the shortcomings of the current

state funding formula.

"The Governor has made a call to action to transform education in Massachusetts. It's our job to find the most efficient and financially-responsible way to fund it," said Gloria Larson, President of Bentley College and Chair of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, who will co-chair the Commission. "What's clear is that we can't afford not to do it."

"We are lucky to have the strong education system that already exists in Massachusetts, but we must do more to ensure every child in Massachusetts has access to a world-class education," said John Fish, President and CEO of Suffolk Construction Company, Inc., who will also co-chair the Commission. "The Commission will work to find the best way to fund these initiatives so children receive the resources they need from the time they start learning right through grade 12 and higher education."

The **Readiness Finance Commission** will recommend short-term education investments for the FY 2010 budget, including further adjustments to the Chapter 70 foundation budget and modifications to alleviate the burden on property tax. This Commission will also 1) project costs/cost savings for each Readiness Project Initiative and a 21 st century system of education; 2) recommend systemic cost savings and efficiencies; 3) identify potential sources of additional revenue; and 4) outline options for a comprehensive overhaul of the state's education finance system.

Members of the Readiness Finance Commission include:

Co-Chair John Fish

President and CEO, Suffolk Construction Company

Co-Chair Gloria Larson

President, Bentley College and Chair of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Chris Anderson

President, Massachusetts High Technology Council

Jeffrey Bussgang

General Partner, Flybridge Capital Partners

Jim Caradonio

Superintendent, Worcester Public Schools

Jack Connors

Founding Partner and Chairman of Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos, Inc

Mark Edwards

Edwards & Company

Michael Flynn

2008 MA Teacher of the Year

John Hamill

Chairman of the Board, Sovereign Bank

Wendell Knox

President and CEO, Abt Associates

Grace Lee

First Deputy Treasurer/General Counsel, Office of the State Treasurer

Karen Hawley Miles

Executive Director, Education Resource Strategies

Tom Payzant

Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Marta T. Rosa, M. ED

Director, Government Affairs/Senior Interim Director, Wheelock College

Jackie Jenkins-Scott

President, Wheelock College

Joe Tucci

Chairman, President and CEO of EMC Corporation

Mike Widmer

President, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

Anne Wass

President, Massachusetts Teachers Association