



Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Date: August 10, 2022
Subject: Amendment to Competency Determination Regulations, 603 CMR 30.00:
Establishment of New CD Standard for the Classes of 2026–2029

At the meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on August 15, 2022, I will ask the Board to vote on proposed amendments to the Regulations on MCAS and the Competency Determination (603 CMR 30.00). The proposed amendments would establish a new passing standard for the Competency Determination (CD) for the classes of 2026 through 2029 for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (STE).

On April 26, the Board voted to solicit public comment on the proposed changes to the regulations. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) received comments from 10 organizations and from 235 individuals. A summary of the proposed changes is included below, and a summary of the public comment is attached. After careful consideration of the comments submitted, I have decided to recommend moving forward with my original recommendation as presented at the April meeting.

At the April meeting, the Board also voted to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to Certificate of Mastery Regulations, 603 CMR 31.00 (Standards for Students in the Classes of 2026-2029). I will return to the Board with my recommendations for these regulations at a future meeting.

Background

For a full discussion on the history of the CD, the transition to next-generation MCAS tests, and the CD advisory committee, please review those sections in my April 2022 [memorandum to the Board on this topic](#).

Rationale for and Summary of Proposed Amendments

As I discussed with you at our February and April meetings, the evidence heard by the CD advisory committee and by this Board strongly points to the importance of raising the CD standard beyond the current cut scores. This current CD level, which was identified by linking to the 220-equivalent score on the legacy MCAS tests, falls into the lowest possible achievement level on the next-generation MCAS tests—*Not Meeting Expectations*.

As [presented at the April meeting](#), ongoing analyses produced by Educational Opportunity in Massachusetts (a research-practice partnership between Brown and Harvard Universities and DESE) provides compelling evidence about students' MCAS scores and later outcomes in education and the workforce. Among other findings, the research showed that MCAS scores predict later outcomes in education and earnings and that a high percentage of students who score at or near the 220-equivalent on the high school MCAS tests are not well prepared for postsecondary success.

This evidence underscores the importance of raising the CD standard and also highlights the need to articulate clearly to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders how the different levels of achievement on the MCAS tests—and in particular the CD level—signal whether a student is on track for success beyond high school, whether in postsecondary education, the military, the workplace, or independent and productive community life. Raising the CD standard is critical, as is the message that we believe students are capable of meeting the higher standard and the Commonwealth and its educators will support them to do that.

Students earn their CD at various times throughout high school. To ensure a consistent graduation standard across a full high school cohort, my proposed revisions to the CD regulations would apply to students in the class of 2026 through the class of 2029. I believe that using this cohort approach allows us to gather information before making a decision about future graduating classes.

The proposed revisions to the CD regulations would establish the following:

1. Students in the classes of 2026–2029 would be required to earn a scaled score of at least **486** (the scaled score just beyond the midpoint within the *Partially Meeting Expectations* achievement level category) on the ELA and mathematics MCAS and a scaled score of at least **470** on the STE MCAS tests to earn their competency determination in those subjects.
2. Students in the classes of 2026–2029 who earn a scaled score of at least **470** (the lowest scaled score in the *Partially Meeting Expectations* achievement level) on the ELA and/or mathematics MCAS would not be required to take an MCAS retest or file an appeal, but they would be required to complete an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP).
3. Updates to the components of the Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)
 - a. A requirement that the school provide a student's EPP to their parents/guardians on an annual basis
 - b. A requirement to describe the tutoring or other individualized academic supports the student will receive
 - c. The establishment of different expectations for the EPP for students who are actively enrolled and successfully progressing in the Mass Core curriculum, an approved Chapter 74 vocational-technical program, or a designated Early College or Innovation Pathway program
 - d. Clarifications to the types of courses and assessments required in a student's EPP
 - e. Clarifications around the expectations for adult learners, students who have exited high school without a CD, seniors who have already completed all their required

courses in the relevant subject matter, students who are not continuously enrolled or are enrolled in an alternative program, and students who enroll in senior year

The public comment period on the proposed changes to the regulations opened after the Board meeting on April 22 and closed on June 3. The Department received several hundred comments via email on the proposed amendments. A summary of the public comment is attached.

I recommend that the Board vote to adopt the proposed amendments to 603 CMR 30.00 as presented. A redlined version of the regulations is attached, along with a motion to adopt the amendments.

Rob Curtin, Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability, Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel, and Lucy Wall of our legal staff will join us for the discussion.

Attachments:

- Redlined version of proposed amendments to 603 CMR 30.00
- Summary of public comment
- Motion to adopt revised regulations