

Graduation Rate Improves for 10th Consecutive Year

At the February 28 Board of Education meeting, it was announced that the state's four-year graduation rate has improved for the 10th consecutive year, with 87.5% of students who entered as ninth graders in 2012-13—or who transferred into that same cohort at any time during high school—graduating within four years.

In addition to the overall improvement in the graduation rate, the graduation rate for all major ethnic and racial groups and for urban districts continues to grow. The state's annual dropout rate remained at 1.9% in 2015-16, the lowest overall rate in more than three decades.

According to the data released this year, 87.5% of the 74,045 students in the 2016 cohort graduated within four years, an increase of 0.2 percentage points from the 2015 cohort and

an increase of 7.6 percentage points from the 2006 cohort, when ESE first began calculating the cohort graduation rate. A cohort is comprised of students who entered high school as ninth graders or who transferred into the same cohort at any time during high school.

The dropout reduction—from the high point of 3.8% in 2006-7 to 1.9% in 2015-16—resulted in less than half as many students dropping out in 2015-16, when 5,523 students dropped out, than in 2006-07, when 11,436 students dropped out. Approximately 5,900 fewer students dropped out in 2015-16 than in 2006-7.

In addition, all major subgroups improved their four-year graduation rates compared to the previous year. The largest gains were made by black males (up 2.9 percentage points from

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Number of homeless families in MA doubles in 9 years

The number of homeless families in MA has more than doubled in the past nine years, an increase among the highest in the nation, according to a report released last week by the Boston Foundation.

More than 33,000 families, or more than 100,000 people, have spent at least one night in a homeless shelter since 2008, said the report, which analyzes the housing trends of families. Families make up more than half the state's homeless population, a reality on only one other state (New York), according to the report.

Length of stay in shelters is also on the increase, averaging nearly a year

state-wide and longer in Boston.

Children make up 60% of the 13,000 people who are experiencing homelessness on any given day in MA.

Contributors to the report attribute the increase in homelessness to several things, noting that the time frame overlaps the recession in 2008 and its aftermath and the ongoing skyrocketing costs of housing in the state. MA is also the nation's only "right-to-shelter" state, which means it guarantees shelter for homeless families (New York City also guarantees right to shelter).

The report also shows that during the last two years the state has begun

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MASC Calls on Lawmakers to Enact Recommendations of Foundation Budget Commission

MASC has voiced its support of proposed legislation that would revise the state's complex formula for state education aid in the current session. MASC President Patrick Murphy (Barnstable) announced the Association's support for the bill filed by Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz, S.223, An Act Modernizing the Foundation Budget for the 21st Century.

"This bill has substance and follows through on the blue print that targets badly needed financial support to where it is needed most and makes significant adjustments to key areas of expense that have been understated since the original formula was created 23 years ago," said Murphy.

"We've been dealing with mandates, regulations, and new challenges to serve students. The pressure on educators is enormous. Adequate financing of an equitably distributed source of revenue is key. This bill (S.223) sets its goal of fair funding for the real costs of educating children and includes all the things that work for the 'whole child.' That includes not only the basics for teaching and learning, but counseling, teacher training, arts, extra-curricular activities, and early education for some of our most economically vulnerable kids," Murphy added.

Filed by Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, S.223 fully implements the recommendations of the appointed, bi-partisan 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC). The FBRC found that

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Because YOU asked...

ISSUE: What school districts are doing/ considering doing by way of implementing policies that would effectively prevent ICE entry into schools (and the turning over of records) has been a recent topic on the MASC listserv.

In response to similar concerns raised by a number of school departments who are seeking to reassure their communities that protections remain in place for immigrant and transgender students, Attorney General Maura Healey issued an advisory last week reminding school districts statewide that children have a right to primary and secondary education regardless of immigration status.

“In light of the current climate around matters of immigration, parents should not be afraid to send their children to school,” said Healey. “In Massachusetts and across this country, we open our schools to all children because that is how we build a productive, educated, and safe society.” The advisory said state and federal laws guarantee every child “equal access to public education — irrespective of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or immigration status.” Children are protected under the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by state laws that prohibit bullying and discrimination, according to the advisory, which also points to a 1982 Supreme Court ruling that says states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public education on account of immigration status.

This case “made clear that a child’s immigration or citizenship status (or that of his or her parent or guardian) is not relevant to the child’s right to a public education,” said the advisory. “Enrollment practices that single out students based on their actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status violate state and federal law.” Last week, Trump’s administration ordered schools nationwide to disregard guidance from the previous administration regarding the rights of transgender students. The next day, Commissioner

Mitchell Chester, wrote a letter to state school officials.

In it, Chester said, he “would like to affirm for you that Massachusetts remains dedicated to protecting the rights of transgender students even in light of recent federal actions.”

The following day, Chester reiterated the state’s commitment to all students, saying in a statement: “Educating and supporting all students strengthens our communities and our Commonwealth as a whole.”

The advisory provides three bullet points for what school leaders statewide must do: (1) allow all students to attend; (2) avoid asking for information that might discourage or deny access based on race, national origin, or immigration or citizenship status; and (3) protect all students from bullying and harassment.

MASC Field Director Mike Gilbert suggest that districts refer to the Attorney General’s Advisory on Equal Access, which can be found online at: <http://www.mass.gov/ago/consumer-resources/your-rights/civil-rights/equal-access-to-public-education.html>.

In addition, he suggested that members refer to policies AC - Non-discrimination, IJ Instructional Materials, JB – Equal Educational Opportunities, and JFBB – School Choice in your policy manuals (links are to the MASC reference manual) which affirm the district’s commitment to providing a public education to ALL students regardless of citizenship status. ♦

Homeless Families

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reducing the population of homeless families which coincides with the use of other homeless assistance programs that offer both prevention and stabilization supports as well as recent changes in eligibility criteria.

Families served in MA look demographically like families served across the country: on average, a family staying in a MA shelter is headed by a female about 30 years old, with one or two children. A little more than half (56%) are white, 37% African-American and 40% Hispanic. Race and ethnicity vary somewhat by region however with Boston having the lowest percentage of families identified as white (35%) and the western part of the state having the highest percentage of white families (78%). The western part of the state also serves the highest percentage of Hispanic families (57%).

The report, which hopes to catalyze legislative and other advocacy decisions to prevent and address homelessness, provides detailed analysis that can guide future decisions. Data focuses on understanding the challenges of families receiving shelter through the state’s Emergency Assistance (EA) programs, including changes in the EA population’s size, characteristics and use of shelter services over the time-frame of the study and compares these to trends nationally and in selected communities.

The full report can be accessed online at: http://www.tbf.org/~media/TBFOrg/Files/Reports/Homlessness%20Report_Feb2017R.pdf ♦

On Friday, March 10 MASC is cosponsoring with MASS its first ever SUMMIT ON POVERTY at Clark University in Worcester. The program will focus on the unique challenges of poverty that urban, suburban and rural school districts confront; strategies in the field to mitigate the impact of poverty on children and families; and reports from students themselves on the effects of poverty on their academic and social well-being and how school initiatives that helped them bridge these challenges. A full report on the program, as well as handouts, additional resources and links will be posted on the MASC website at www.masc.org.

Graduation rate on the rise

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72.8% to 75.7 %) and students with disabilities (up 1.9 percentage points from 69.9% to 71.%).

Improvements for other major sub-groups were: low-income/economically disadvantaged students overall: up 0.2 percentage points from 78.2% to 78.4 %, English language learners: up 0.1 percentage points from 64.0 % to 64.1 %, male students: up 0.3 percentage points from 84.7 to 85 %, female students: up 0.2 percentage points from 90 to 90.2 %, Hispanic/Latino students overall: up 0.5 percentage points from 72.2 to 72.7 %, black students overall: up 1.4 percentage points from 77.5 to 78.9 %, white students: up 0.3 percentage points from 91.6 to 91.9 % and Asian students: up 0.3 percentage points from 92.4 to 92.7 %.

Over the past five years (between 2010-11 and 2015-16), the urban school districts that have seen the largest percent change in the number of dropouts include:

- Springfield, which had 448 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 57 % decrease;
- Holyoke, which had 104 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 54% decrease.
- Lawrence, which had 150 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in 2010-11, a 51 % decrease; and
- Brockton, which had 110 fewer students drop out in 2015-16 than in

2010-11, a 41 % decrease.

In addition, several urban school districts had annual dropout rates below the statewide dropout rate of 1.9 percent. They are: Cambridge at 0.8 percent, Quincy at 0.9 percent and, at 1.8 percent, Framingham, Lowell and Taunton.

In addition, Quincy (90.1 percent), Cambridge (88.8. percent) and Taunton (88.7 percent) had four-year graduation rates above the statewide rate.

In October 2015, ESE was awarded \$200,000 through the America's Promise Alliance for a multi-year effort to raise statewide graduation rates. The Department is using the grant to create a coalition of 10 districts to improve high school graduation rates for students whose first language is not English. The participating districts are: Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Holyoke, Lowell, New Bedford, Revere, Somerville and Worcester.

Graduation rate data is available online at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/gradrates.aspx and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/>. For additional information on the annual dropout rate, including school and district numbers, go to http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/dropout.aspx and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/dropout/>. ♦

Budget Commission

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the current formula underestimates the resources necessary to serve ELL and low-income students and fails to account for rising health care and special education costs. In all, the FBRC found that Massachusetts is underestimating the total cost of education by \$1-2 billion each year. "These funds are essential to narrow the achievement gap between our wealthiest and most economically vulnerable kids," Murphy said.

S.223 follows the FBRC's recommendations to update the formula by using actual averages from the state government's cost-efficient health insurance network—the Group Insurance Commission—to adjust insurance estimates, increasing the assumed special education in-district enrollment and out-of-district costs to reflect reality, and adjusting the ELL and low-income components to align with 21st century best practices. The bill will also establish a Data Advisory Task Force to review school level education data to better inform future policy decisions.

The Foundation Budget was first established in 1993 by the Education Reform Act, and was designed to serve as the starting point for funding school districts across the Commonwealth, by calculating the circumstances and needs of each student. Little has been done to update the formula in the 24 years since its passage, leaving it insufficient to meet the needs of a modern public education system. ♦



Tuesday, April 25, 2017

8:30-11:00am

Followed by meetings with your legislator.

Note new location for this year:

Grand Lodge of Masons
186 Tremont St, Boston 02111

(across the Common from the State House)

Detailed program information coming soon.

Massachusetts Joint Committee Memberships

Listed below are the recently announced appointments to Joint Legislative Committees of particular interest to MASC members. A list of all legislative committees can be found at: <https://malegislature.gov/Committees>.

Ways & Means

Senate:

Karen Spilka, Chair
Sal DiDomenico, Vice Chair
Patricia Jehlen, Assistant Vice Chair
William Brownsberger
Sonia Chang-Diaz
Kenneth Donnelly
Eileen Donoghue
James Eldridge
John Keenan
Joan Lovely
Thomas McGee
Michael Moore
Kathleen O'Connor Ives
Michael Rush
James Timilty

House:

Brian Dempsey, Chair
Stephen Kulik, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Malia, Assistant Vice Chair
James Miceli
Thomas Walsh
Robert Koczera
Thomas Stanley
Sean Garballey
James Arciero
Brian Ashe
Tricia Farley-Bouvier
Russell Holmes
Josh Cutler
Mary Keefe
David Rogers
Alan Silvia
Daniel Cullinane
Carole Fiola
Daniel Hunt
RoseLee Vincent
Evandro Carvalho
Carmine Gentile
Carlos Gonzalez
Joseph McGonagle, Jr.
Rady Mom
Paul Tucker
Adrian Madaro
Gerard Cassidy
Todd Smola
Angelo D'Emilia
Donald Berthiaume, Jr.
Nicholas Boldyga
Kate Campanale
Shawn Dooley
Timothy Whelan
Donald Wong

Education

Senate:

Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair
Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair
Jason Lewis
Barbara L'Italien
Michael Barrett

House:

Alice Peisch, Chair
Chris Walsh, Vice Chair
John Rogers
William Pignatelli
James Cantwell
Diana DiZoglio
Paul Tucker
Chynah Tyler
Bud Williams
Kimberly Ferguson
James Kelcourse

Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Senate:

Jennifer Flanagan, Chair
Joan Lovely, Vice Chair
Linda Dorcena Forry
Julian Cyr
Thomas McGee

House:

Kay Khan, Chair
Aaron Vega, Vice Chair
John H. Rogers
Carolyn Dykema
Jonathan Hecht
Paul Schmid, III
Tricia Farley-Bouvier
Steven Ultrino
Jack Lewis
Shaunna O'Connell
William Crocker

Economic Development and Emerging Technologies

Senate:

Eric Lesser, Chair
Adam Hinds, Vice Chair
Thomas McGee
Sonia Chang-Diaz
Marc Pacheco
Michael Barrett

House:

Joseph Wagner, Chair
Nick Collins, Vice Chair
Sean Garballey

Chris Walsh
Frank Moran
Carole Fiola
Brendan Crighton
Stephan Hay
Brian Murray
Bud Williams
Keiko Orrall
Kevin Kuros
James Kelcourse

Elder Affairs

Senate:

Barbara L'Italien, Chair
Julian Cyr, Vice Chair
Patricia Jehlen
Eric Lesser
Walter Timilty

House:

Danielle Gregoire, Chair
Brian Ashe, Vice Chair
Bruce Ayers
Marjorie Decker
Paul Heroux
Jonathan Zlotnik
Carmine Gentile
Joseph McGonagle, Jr.
Steven Ultrino
Kate Campanale
David Muradian, Jr.

Health Care Financing

Senate:

James Welch, Chair
Joseph Boncore, Vice Chair
Michael Barrett
Barbara L'Italien
Eric Lesser
Jason Lewis

House:

Jeffrey Sanchez, Chair
Jeffrey Roy, Vice Chair
James Cantwell
Carolyn Dykema
Tackey Chan
Daniel Cullinane
Daniel Donahue
John Velis
Steven Ultrino
Randy Hunt
Mathew Muratore
Leonard Mirra

Committee on Higher Education

Senate:

Michael Moore, Chair
Eileen Donoghue, Vice Chair
Adam Hinds
Eric Lesser
Kathleen O'Connor Ives

House:

John Scibak, Chair
Sean Garballey, Vice Chair
Thomas Petrolati
Denise Provost
Aaron Vega
Rady Mom
Stephan Hay
Solomon Goldstein-Rose
Natalie Higgins
Susannah Whipps
Timothy Whelan

Committee on Housing

Senate:

Joseph Boncore, Chair
Linda Dorcena Forry, Vice Chair
Michael Barrett
Julian Cyr
Adam Hinds

House:

Kevin Honan, Chair
Russell Holmes, Vice Chair
Robert Koczera
Nick Collins
Christine Barger
Carmine Gentile
Mike Connolly
Solomon Goldstein-Rose
Chynah Tyler
Geoff Diehl
David DeCoste

Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery

Senate:

Jennifer Flanagan, Chair
John Keenan, Vice Chair
Kenneth Donnelly
James Eldridge
William Brownsberger
Adam Hinds

House:

Denise Garlick, Chair
Daniel Ryan, Vice Chair

Angelo Scaccia
Michael Finn
Diana DiZoglio
Jeffrey Roy
Michael Day
Jose Tosado
Dylan Fernandes
Natalie Higgins
Susannah Whipps
William Crocker
Shaunna O'Connell

Revenue

Senate:

Michael Brady, Chair
Cynthia Creem, Vice Chair
Kathleen O'Connor Ives
Michael Rodrigues
Joseph Boncore

House:

Jay Kaufman, Chair
Linda Dean Campbell, Vice Chair
Colleen Garry
Brian Ashe
James Dwyer
Alan Silvia
Daniel Hunt
Brendan Crighton
Brian Murray
Shawn Dooley
Peter Durant

State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

Senate:

Walter Timilty, Chair
Joan Lovely, Vice Chair
Jennifer Flanagan
Michael Moore
Kenneth Donnelly

House:

Peter Kocut, Chair
Paul Schmid, III, Vice Chair
William Pignatelli
Denise Provost
Linda Dean Campbell
Brian Ashe
Marjorie Decker
RoseLee Vincent
William Driscoll
Kevin Kuros
Mathew Muratore

Three new charter schools approved

At its February 28 meeting, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted (5-3-1) to approve a new charter school in Westfield; a new charter school in Plymouth (8-0-1); and a new charter school in Sturbridge (5-4). The Board also approved expansion plans at three existing charter schools. When combined with other expansions the Board has approved since November, the state added approximately 1,000 seats to existing schools during this year's approval cycle.

The new schools are:

- Hampden Charter School of Science—West, will open in 2018, initially serve 252 students in grades 6-9 from Agawam, Holyoke, Westfield and West Springfield, and grow to serve 588 students in grades 6-12. It would be located in Westfield. Like the existing Hampden Charter School of Science in Chicopee, the school will focus on math and science.
- Map Academy Charter School, which will open in 2018, will initially serve 130 students in grades 9-12 from Carver, Plymouth, and Wareham, and grow to 300 students. It will be located in Plymouth. It would serve students who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out.
- Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School, which will open in the fall of 2017. The school will initially serve 160 students in kindergarten through grade 3 from Sturbridge, Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Monson, North Brookfield, Palmer, Southbridge, Spencer-East Brookfield, Wales and Webster, and grow to serve 360 students.

In addition to considering whether to award new charters, the Board also considered whether to grant expansion requests to several schools. In November, the Board approved a request from Foxborough Regional Charter School to increase its maximum enrollment by 400 seats. In January, the Board approved three requests to increase maximum enrollment: Boston Collegiate Charter School (35 seats), Boston Preparatory Charter Public School (300 seats), and Sturgis Charter Public School in Hyannis (50 seats).

This month, the Board approved three schools' requests to increase enrollment: Alma del Mar Charter School in New Bedford (90 seats), Community Charter School of Cambridge (60 seats) and a temporary increase in enrollment of 70 seats for UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, a Horace Mann school in Boston. ♦

Ways & Means Committee Budget Hearing Schedule Announced

Annual state budget hearings begin the week of March 6 and continue throughout the month.

After a March 9 public hearing at the State House, members of the House and Senate Ways and Means panels plan a Wednesday, March 15 hearing at Everett High School focused on economic development, labor and housing matters in Gov. Charlie Baker's \$40.5 billion budget bill.

On Thursday, March 16 lawmakers plan to travel to Endicott College in Beverly for a public hearing on energy, environment and transportation line items and policies in Baker's budget.

Worcester State University will be the location for a Monday, March 20 public hearing on spending related to public safety agencies, including district attorneys and sheriffs.

Health and human services spending will be examined during a Tuesday, March 21 public hearing at the Reggie Lewis Center at

Roxbury Community College. Baker's call for new employer assessments and provider rate caps, aimed at addressing surging Medicaid enrollment, will likely be discussed.

A second hearing on health and human services agency spending, including operations at the Department of Children and Families, is planned for Monday, March 27 at Kuss Middle School in Fall River.

Education and local aid accounts are up for debate Wednesday, March 29 at the Old Chapel at UMass-Amherst before a final public hearing, open to anyone who wishes to testify, on Friday, March 31 at the State House. The House Ways and Means Committee usually released its rewrite of the governor's budget in mid-April, with floor debate usually the week after public school vacation week. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 16

MASC Regional Schools Committee meeting

6:00pm

Assabet Voc. Tech., Marlboro

Friday, March 17

MARS Legislative Breakfast

8:30am

Nashoba Valley Tech., Westford

Saturday, March 18

Beyond Spreadsheets & Powerpoints: Budget Development Workshop

8:30am-Noon

Beatrice Wood Elementary School, Plainville

Tuesday, April 4

**MASC/Board Docs Webinar
Cloud-based Solutions to Organized Meetings and Materials**

11:00am-Noon

Thursday, April 20

MASC Regional Schools Committee meeting

11:00am-Noon

Assabet Voc. Tech., Marlboro

Tuesday, April 25

MASC Day on the Hill

8:30am-11:00am

Grand Lodge of Masons, Boston