

MASC Policy Newsletter

MASC Field Directors–August, 2025

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In response to state regulation changes, requests from districts, and staff review, MASC provides the following new and updated model policies to ensure districts are in compliance federal and state law and regulation.

Because of the near deadline on the required submission of competency determination and graduation policies to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education—**no later than December 31, 2025**—MASC reminds school committee members that policy adoption processes are under local purview. Beyond a requirement that new or updated policies be accepted by vote in a posted public meeting by a majority of the school committee, there is no state requirement for other action. If local policy sets multiple readings or other processes that cannot be completed to ensure compliance with the state deadline, such policies can be temporarily suspended by majority vote of the school committee. Please see your local policies for discussion of this.

Please see the MASC website under “Policy Resources>>Updated/New Policies” for the text of all new and amended policies.

Graduation related policies:

IKFE - COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

DESE has shared guidance for districts regarding the required Competency Determination policy. The guidance document, which can be found on DESE’s website, requires that all districts submit a Competency Determination policy approved by their committees along with their IKF - Graduation Requirement policy no later than December 31, 2025. Districts may use the template policy in our model policy manual and supply their own district specific course requirements and definitions of mastery for each course. Submission guidelines can be found in the DESE guidance above.

IKF - GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

MASC does not recommend any language changes at this time, but districts should make sure their policies are up to date in conjunction with the Competency Determination policy.

Raffles and games of chance:

Raffles and other games of chance are very strictly regulated in Massachusetts. School districts may not be sponsoring organizations; students may not participate in organization of or sales for raffles. While parent groups supporting schools may conduct such activities, they are bound by the state laws and regulations surrounding such games. The following updates to current policies ensure this is made clear.

GBEBC - GIFTS TO AND SOLICITATION BY STAFF

This updates current model policy to note that staff may not organize raffles while acting as employees, as the district cannot be a sponsoring organization.

JJE - STUDENT FUND-RAISING ACTIVITIES

This updates current model policy to add that student organizations may not organize such games as fundraisers.

KBE - RELATIONS WITH PARENT/BOOSTER ORGANIZATIONS

This updates current model policy on parent organizations, including booster clubs, to add language clarifying that, should they wish to organize such fundraisers, they are expected to follow the law and regulation in doing so.

Visitors and facilities:

Ensuring that access to school facilities is covered by district policy allows the School Committee oversight of the safety of students and staff and the security of the substantial investment of buildings and grounds. The following updates are suggested.

ECAB - ACCESS TO BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

This new model policy provides an outline, to be adapted locally, for access to buildings and grounds during both the school day and during non-school hours.

KI - VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS

This redrafts our model policy on visitors to provide more broadly for the array of those who visit schools and school grounds. This should be adapted to local needs. It is expected that administration will create ancillary procedure.

School Food and Nutrition Program:

EFBA - SCHOOL FOOD AND NUTRITION - MEAL MODIFICATIONS

In response to recent DESE Coordinated Program Review reporting and in consultation with DESE School Food and Nutrition Program, MASC is providing a model policy for meal modification. All school districts must provide meal modifications, at no extra charge, for students with disabilities or other special dietary reasons that restrict the student's diet on a case-by-case basis, per USFDA requirement.

Parent organizations:

KBG - PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS (PACs)

Massachusetts state law requires the formation and support of specific Parent Advisory Councils for Special Education and English Language Learners. This model policy outlines the district obligations and cross references the DESE guidance for PACs.

Recent questions:

Cell phones:

MASC has received questions regarding a model policy on cell phones. School districts have a wide variety of current practices and priorities regarding access by students to student-owned technology during the school day. While we are monitoring state discussions, at this time, MASC has no plans to issue a single model policy. We recommend districts have local conversations that include students, families, staff, in drafting any such policy for the student handbook.

Generative AI:

MASC continues to get questions regarding a model policy on use of generative AI. As we noted last year, we have no plans for such a model policy, as the scope is far too large for a single policy. We include again below our recommendation from the August 2024 MASC Bulletin.

MASC has been receiving questions regarding a policy addressing artificial intelligence (AI). The use of artificial intelligence in schools by staff or by students encompasses a wide range of topics already covered by existing district policies. Use of AI for the creation of materials falls under procedures most often found in student and employee handbooks regarding plagiarism and citation of sources; the use of artificial intelligence, due to its model, conflicts with principles of intellectual property as embodied in policies outlined in district policy regarding standards of scholarship. The bias within materials developed by artificial intelligence may conflict with the anti-discrimination policies and policies regarding instructional materials. The use of artificial intelligence by students with disabilities is governed by Individual Education Plans developed for each student in need of one. The significant environmental impact of AI may violate goals, strategic plan priorities, and policies regarding green schools, climate change, and environmental impact. Additionally, the technology is evolving at a rapid pace that may require multiple rewrites of policies that are too specific.

In light of the many areas already covered within district policy, MASC will not be creating or distributing an individual policy specifically on artificial intelligence at this time. MASC instead suggests School Committees review related policies to ensure the language within them provides for the complications and overlaps within this issue in a way that is in line with policies already in place and values already held. If a district wishes to develop their own policies, we advise taking the approach of crafting an overall statement of intent and deferring the specifics to the appropriate administrators.