

# Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

## 2003 Graduates from Alternative Adult/External Diploma Programs and Evening High Schools

To: Superintendents and Directors of Alternative Adult/External Diploma Programs and Evening High Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: March 21, 2003

In a memorandum to you dated November 19, 2002, I explained that June 2005 is the last month that school committees may grant a high school diploma based on local requirements only to students graduating from "adult" (also called "alternative," or "external") diploma programs. Thereafter, students enrolled in adult diploma programs will also need to meet the competency determination standard in order to be awarded a high school diploma. In that same memorandum, I also stated that this policy would not apply to high school dropouts enrolled in these programs who, at the time of dropping out, were on schedule to graduate in the class of 2003, 2004, or 2005. These students must meet the competency determination standard as a condition for graduating. This memorandum provides additional information on the opportunities available for these students.

**For students scheduled to graduate in 2004 or 2005:** We will provide these students with opportunities to meet the competency determination requirement by providing them with access to MCAS retests offered in November and March of each year, beginning in the 2003-2004 school year. I will be sending you more information about these retest opportunities in the near future.

**For students scheduled to graduate in 2003:** Since students enrolled in your adult diploma programs may not have had the opportunity to participate in the grade 10 MCAS tests or subsequent retests, I am opening the MCAS performance appeals process to these students as a mechanism for earning the competency determination. The MCAS performance appeals process for previous dropouts enrolled in adult diploma programs intending to graduate in 2003 is provided below.

<b>Summary of Eligibility Requirements for Previous High School Dropouts*Scheduled to Graduate from Adult Diploma Programs in the Class of 2003</b>
<b>Eligibility Requirements</b> To be eligible for a performance appeal, a student must <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• meet your program's attendance requirement</li><li>• be on track this spring to meet local graduation requirements</li></ul>
<b>Performance Requirements</b> A performance appeal must contain evidence that the student's knowledge and skills are equivalent to the <i>Needs Improvement</i> level on the grade 10 ELA and Mathematics MCAS tests. Required evidence includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the student's high school transcript (from last high school attended)</li></ul>

- a description (name and major topics covered) of all the English and mathematics courses that the student completed in your program
- two recommendations from the student's teachers (one from an English teacher, one from a mathematics teacher), describing the student's knowledge and skills, and stating whether, in their judgment, the student possesses the minimum level of skills required to pass the grade 10 ELA and Mathematics tests
- results from any previous MCAS tests taken by the student (e.g., grade 8 tests and/or grade 10 tests taken before dropping out)
- any other relevant information, such as scores on other standardized tests (e.g., SAT)

\* For purposes of this memo, "previous high school dropouts" means high school dropouts enrolled in adult diploma programs who, at the time of dropping out, were on schedule to graduate in the class of 2003, 2004, or 2005.

MCAS performance appeals applications for affected students in your programs in the class of 2003 must be received by the Department no later than April 30, 2003 in order for you to receive announcement of the resolution of the appeal by the end of May.

In addition to providing students in the class of 2003 access to the competency determination via the performance appeals process, there will be an opportunity for these students to participate in the MCAS tests during a summer 2003 retest administration, as well as retests scheduled for next November and March. Further details on registering for the summer retest administration are forthcoming.

Your programs play an important role for certain youth and adults in our state and I commend the good work you are doing. I thank you for your continued cooperation in implementing the competency determination standard for all Massachusetts graduates. Should you have any questions, please contact the office of MCAS Performance Appeals at (781) 338-3333 or via email at [mcasappeals@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcasappeals@doe.mass.edu).