



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

February 11, 2010

Superintendent Christine Stanton
Swansea Public Schools
1 Gardners Neck Road
Swansea, MA 02777

Dear Superintendent Stanton,

Congratulations on being one of the 256 district leaders to commit to participation in Massachusetts' Race to the Top initiatives. As you know, we delivered our application to the U.S. Department of Education on January 19, and Massachusetts is now anxiously waiting alongside 39 other states and the District of Columbia to see who will be awarded funding.

The development of our application took more than six months and involved the frequent input of educators, business leaders, parents and other stakeholders across the Commonwealth. We are particularly grateful to our participating districts, where the superintendent, School Committee chair and union president had to agree collectively to sign on. We recognize the leadership and willingness to tackle the tough issues that this required. We thank you for your commitment to participating in this critically important work, and look forward to working together.

Statewide, 257 districts and charter schools – more than two-thirds of the state – ultimately committed to implementing the initiatives outlined in our application. Of that total, 147 were cities and towns, 58 were charter schools, 31 were regional school districts and 20 were vocational-technical schools. In all, these LEAs represent 72 percent of K-12 students across the Commonwealth and 86 percent of the state's low-income students.

Each of these communities have committed to participating in efforts to:

1. Develop and retain an effective, academically capable, diverse, and culturally competent educator workforce
2. Develop curricular and instructional resources that support educator effectiveness with all students
3. Concentrate great instruction and supports for educators, students, and families in our lowest performing schools
4. Increase our focus on college and career readiness for all students.

The U.S. Department of Education plans to invite finalists to D.C. for in-person interviews in mid-March, and to announce the winning states in early April. We are confident in the strength of our application and are hopeful that Massachusetts will be selected. If we are not successful in this first application round, we will reapply for the second round in June. Regardless of whether we are funded, we expect that the RTTT objectives will frame our work going forward. To that end, we have already begun implementation planning and urge you to do the same in your community. We will be holding a summit for participating LEAs in early March to provide additional guidance and details. Once the date and location of that summit is set, we will let you know.

I have attached the executive summary of our application and encourage you to review it and share it with members of your community. We believe this makes a compelling case for how the initiatives we have outlined will help to close achievement gaps, better support our teachers and principals, and ensure that every student graduates from our schools prepared for college, career and success in the 21st century.

None of this could have happened without your support, encouragement and input. I am grateful for the time you put into this process and look forward to our continued collaboration in the coming months and years.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mitch D. Chester".

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Massachusetts” or the “state”) and Swansea School Department (“participating LEA”). This agreement establishes a framework of collaboration, roles and responsibilities in support of Massachusetts in its implementation of an approved Race to the Top grant project.

I. PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK

This Preliminary Scope of Work indicates which portions of Massachusetts’ proposed reform plans the participating LEA is agreeing to implement. The initiatives listed below track to the criteria in the federal RFP. See Attachment 1 for a draft summary of MA’s proposal for each of these initiatives, including the role of the LEA in each initiative.

The participating LEA is committing to implementing Massachusetts’ plan to:

- **Improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance: LEAs will:**
 - In collaboration with ESE, design and implement evaluation systems that incorporate multiple measures of effectiveness including significant attention to student growth (see Attachment 3 for definition)
 - Conduct annual evaluations and use evaluations to inform professional development and decisions around compensation, promotion, retention, professional teaching status (tenure) and removal
 - Provide effective support to teachers and principals in the form of high-quality professional development, and measure the effectiveness of that professional development
 - Collect and report aggregate effectiveness data and submit to the state annually
- **Ensure effective teachers and leaders in every school and classroom: The state will** expand and strengthen a pipeline of diverse and highly effective teachers and leaders, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; special education, and English language learners. **LEAs will** work with the state to access this pipeline to help them achieve an equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders across their schools.
- **Turn around the lowest-achieving schools (only for LEAs with level 4 or 5 schools):** With support provided by the state, **LEAs will** implement one of four school intervention models:
 - Turnaround model (replace up to 50% of staff)
 - Restart model
 - School closure
 - Transformation model (provided that an LEA with more than nine level 4 or 5 schools may not use the transformation model for more than 50 percent of its schools)
- **Use data to improve instruction:** Integral to implementing all the initiatives in Massachusetts’ plan successfully, **LEAs will:**
 - Support educator access to timely data about student learning and professional development on use of that data to improve instruction
 - Cooperate with the state to make available appropriate data for research and program evaluation

The state also strongly encourages the participating LEA to commit to participating in Massachusetts’ plan to:

- **Roll out statewide P-12 Teaching and Learning System: LEAs are encouraged to partner with the state to develop and implement a new P-12 Teaching and Learning System aligned to the Common Core of standards, including:**
 - Summative, benchmark, formative assessments and curriculum-embedded performance tasks
 - Exemplar curricula and instructional units
 - Educator professional development
 - Innovative technology solutions
- **Increase college and career readiness: LEAs are encouraged to partner with the state to develop and implement new programs, supports or incentives (such as International Baccalaureate middle and high schools, early college/dual enrollment programs, and an enhanced Adams Scholarship) to improve students’ preparation for college and careers**

<u>LEA participation (Y/N)</u>	
	Y
	Y

4. Will provide a Final Scope of Work to be attached to this MOU only if Massachusetts' application is funded; will do so in a timely fashion but no later than 90 days after a grant is awarded; and will describe the LEA's specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures ("LEA Plan") in a manner that is consistent with the Preliminary Scope of Work and with Massachusetts' Plan; and
5. Will comply with all of the terms of the Grant, the State subgrant, and all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, including laws and regulations applicable to the Program, and the applicable provisions of EDGAR (34 CFR Parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98 and 99).

IV. MODIFICATIONS

This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved, and in consultation with ED.

V. DURATION/TERMINATION

This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective, beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and, if a grant is received, ending upon the expiration of the grant project period, or upon mutual agreement of the parties, whichever occurs first.

VI. SIGNATURES

Signed MOUs must be submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by no later than January 13, 2010.

LEA Superintendent (or equivalent authorized signatory) - required:

Christine M. Stanton 1/11/10
Signature/Date

Christine M. Stanton Superintendent
Print Name/Title

Chair of the Local School Committee (or equivalent, if applicable):

Ellen Fortado 1/11/10
Signature/Date

ELLEN FORTADO CHAIR of SWANSEA S.C.
Print Name/Title

Local Teachers' Union Leader (if applicable):

Lawrence Abbuzzi
Signature/Date

Lawrence Abbuzzi President SEA
Print Name/Title

Authorized State Official - required:

By its signature below, the State hereby accepts the LEA as a Participating LEA.

Mitchell D. Chester 1/19/10
Signature/Date

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D. Commissioner DESE
Print Name/Title