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Patrick-Murray Budget to Include \$368 Million Increase in Education Aid**FY09 plan includes record amount of school aid, significant early education expansions; follows work of Readiness Project**

BOSTON-Tuesday, January 15, 2008-Governor Deval Patrick announced today that his budget for Fiscal Year 2009 will include a \$368 million increase in education funding, including a record level of school aid to cities and towns and significant increases in Universal Pre-K, full day Kindergarten and Extended Learning Time programs.

"Our budget will reflect the priority our administration places on providing Massachusetts students with the top quality education opportunities they deserve," said Governor Patrick. "While the Commonwealth faces tough fiscal challenges in the year ahead, we cannot afford not to invest in strategies that work to help students excel. We are making tough choices necessary to make this targeted investment."

The Administration's budget provides \$3.9 billion to cities and towns through Chapter 70 state aid, a \$223 million increase over FY08 that will result in additional funding for every school district in the Commonwealth.

The Governor's FY09 proposal to be filed later this month will also include a \$51 million expansion for high priority programs including universal pre-K, Kindergarten Expansion Grants and Extended Learning Time Grants.

Key to the Governor's plan for education reform is an extended school day that affords students the opportunity to participate in enrichment programs and allows teachers more time for planning and coordination. For the second year in a row, the Governor will propose doubling the amount of funding for Extended Learning Time grants, including \$26 million total in his FY09 budget. This additional \$13 million will allow over 8,900 students to participate in a lengthened school day.

In line with the Governor's vision for an education system that begins before kindergarten, the FY09 budget will include a \$15 million increase in funding for Universal Pre-Kindergarten, a 200 percent increase over FY08. This funding would allow for an estimated 892 new classrooms to prepare roughly 14,320 children for the school years ahead.

The budget also includes \$43.2 million to transition an estimated 440 half-day kindergarten programs to full day. This \$8 million expansion brings the Commonwealth significantly closer to universal full-day kindergarten. Currently, there are 1,050 half-day kindergarten programs statewide.

While Massachusetts consistently ranks at the top in education nationwide, a persistent achievement gap remains. To address that shortfall, the Governor will propose investing an additional \$4.5 million in chronically underperforming schools and districts. This 49 percent increase in funds will allow the Department of Education (DOE) to work with the "Commonwealth Priority Schools" to help students and teachers overcome the significant challenges they face in improving academic performance. The budget will also include an additional \$2 million to help close the achievement gap through MCAS Low-Scoring Student Support programs. This additional funding will allow DOE to expand student academic support at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Other education initiatives in the budget include:

- \$2 million for dual enrollment programs that allow 2,000 high school students to take college credits while completing their high school education;
- A \$1.5 million increase in the METCO program;
- \$234 million for the Circuit Breaker, which partially reimburses cities and towns for Special Education residential placement; and

- \$81.7 million for Charter School reimbursements

The education-related items included in the Governor's FY09 budget proposal were informed by the ongoing work of the Readiness Project, a 200-member group of education, business and community leaders established by the Governor last summer to develop a comprehensive 10-year plan to reform the state's education system. That plan is expected to be completed this spring.

Yesterday, the Governor received an update from the Readiness Project, which included four areas identified by the Readiness Project Leadership Council as areas for ripe for investment in the Governor's budget. Those areas include: early education and care; expanded teaching and learning time; student progression from high school to higher education, work and society; and the quality and supply of educators and administrative leaders.

"Governor Patrick has charged the Readiness Project to focus not on those things that will bring incremental improvement but rather, on those things that will bring dramatic, widespread improvement over the next 10 years," said Dana Mohler-Faria, the Governor's Special Advisor on Education. "We need a clear plan focusing first on what students need to succeed and then on improving the fundamental, systemic levers that will facilitate that success, will ensure that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to be a center of excellence in education."

The Governor's entire budget will be filed later this month.

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