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Governor
Deval Patrick

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Governor Patrick Signs Historic Education Reform Bill to Close Achievement Gaps, Transform Massachusetts Public Schools

Signed on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, new law delivers on Governor's promise to give all students access to a world-class education, strengthens state's ability to access \$250M in federal funds



Additional and full size photos available on [Governor Patrick's Flickr Account](#).

BOSTON - Monday, January 18, 2010 - Delivering on his promise to transform public education in Massachusetts and give all children the chance they deserve to succeed, Governor Deval Patrick today signed historic legislation that will turnaround underperforming schools, promote innovation and choice and eliminate achievement gaps that persist despite the successes of the state's landmark Education Reform Act of 1993.

"For far too long, too many of our children have been left behind. Today is the beginning of the end of that achievement gap," said Governor Patrick. "What a fitting tribute to Dr. King's message of hope and opportunity to launch the second chapter of Massachusetts education reform today."

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

"The Patrick-Murray Administration has made education a top priority with a vision to provide world-class public education to students in the Commonwealth," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray. "Today, with the support of the Legislature, the signing of this landmark education bill will help deliver the promise of reforming public education, close achievement gaps and improve underperforming schools so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed."

Joined at the Boston Children's Museum by a cross-section of state, municipal, education and business leaders, Governor Patrick applauded Senate President Therese Murray, House Speaker Robert DeLeo and members of the Legislature for their commitment to making a difference in the lives of the Commonwealth's children and noted that the new law greatly strengthens Massachusetts' ability to access \$250 million or more in federal Race to the Top funding. The Patrick-Murray Administration will submit the state's application for the \$4.35 billion competitive grant program aimed at driving reform and change in the nation's schools tomorrow, Tuesday, January 19th.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who oversees the Race to the Top program for the Obama Administration, joined Governor Patrick when he announced his reform legislation last summer, praising the proposal for its innovative approach to eliminating achievement gaps by aggressively intervening in low-performing schools, enhancing opportunities for autonomy and innovation and expanding the number of charter schools in Massachusetts. Last Thursday, the Senate and House of Representatives gave final approval to a bill that largely mirrors the proposal the Governor filed in July.

"The changes provided in this legislation strengthen the Commonwealth's ability to compete for federal Race to the Top funding worth up to \$250 million or more," said Senate President Therese Murray. "This money represents a one-time-only opportunity to help improve our education system, which is especially important in this economy when budgets are being slashed and programs are being cut."

"Thanks to the work we have done together, the Commonwealth has strengthened its position to receive much-needed federal Race to the Top dollars," said House Speaker Robert DeLeo. "Governor Patrick, Senate President Murray and I -- along with the members of the House -- are taking strong action to narrow our unacceptable achievement gap and promote accountability and innovation in our schools."

The bill the Governor signed today includes the following provisions:

- Establishes the state's first-ever Innovation Schools to serve as in-district charter schools developed and managed at the local level to implement autonomy and flexibility in how students are educated to the state's high standards;
- Authorizes new approaches to underperforming and chronically underperforming schools by granting authority to the commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education and superintendents to make the changes necessary to allow for rapid improvement; and
- Institutes a "smart cap" increase on charter schools in the 10% lowest performing districts from the current 9% of school spending to 18% and allows only proven providers with track records of success with students in the greatest need and requires new schools to present student enrollment recruitment and retention plans.

"Not since 1993 has the Commonwealth taken such a bold step to transform public education," said Education Secretary Paul Reville, who was responsible for helping to develop and guide the administration's bill through the Legislature. "The education reform bill passed by the Legislature provides Massachusetts with strategies and authority to close achievement gaps and help all, and all means all, students achieve success. We are now poised to strengthen our role as a national leader in education reform by fundamentally changing the way we deliver education to students."

"This legislation will provide better educational opportunities for young people in Massachusetts by closing the achievement gap in our poorest communities and by encouraging innovations in all our schools," said Senator Robert A. O'Leary, Senate Chair, Joint-Committee on Education.

"The achievement gaps in our state starkly illustrate how we are leaving some children behind even as we have some of the highest achieving students in the country. With this legislation, we are assuring that all students in Massachusetts can achieve their full academic potential," said Representative Marty Walz, House Chair, Joint-Committee on Education.

"I have said all along that education reform is about our kids. Equal access to quality education is the civil rights issue of our time, and we've delivered a tremendous win for students and families with this legislation," said Mayor Menino. "Boston is well-positioned to take action with the tools provided, but we can't lose sight of how important this bill is for all urban school districts in the Commonwealth. These reforms have been a long time in the making, but the hard work that is delivering on the promise of outstanding results for all of our youth begins in earnest today."

"Education reform is a difficult but necessary step needed to give municipalities like Fitchburg the tools it needs to ensure its students are ready for the workplace," said Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Massachusetts stands to gain \$250 million or more in Race to the Top grants, based on the size and enrollment of the state. The state's application will include four assurance areas:

- Developing and retaining an effective, academically capable, diverse and culturally competent educator workforce;
- Providing curricular and instructional resources that support teacher effectiveness and success for all students;
- Concentrating great instruction and supports for educators, students and families in our lowest performing schools; and
- Increasing our focus on college and career readiness for all students

By the end of last week, 256 school districts and charter schools had signed onto the Massachusetts Race to the Top application expressing their intent to implement the bold reforms outlined in the state's plan. The signatures represent superintendents, school committees and teachers unions coming together with the expressed interest of improving student achievement through new strategies and approaches.

In addition to the immediate boost provided by earning a Race to the Top grant, the new law stands to help Massachusetts secure its designation as a preeminent state for future funding opportunities. For example, Race to the Top states are likely to receive further considerations under the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and from national foundations who have indicated they will strongly consider investing in states that receive Race to the Top grants.

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