

A message from the
Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

February 2, 2017

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1. FYI: Learn More about Inclusive Environments through Massachusetts FOCUS Academy Courses

The application process for spring 2017 Massachusetts FOCUS Academy courses is open through Wednesday, February 8. The courses help teams of educators build skills, knowledge, and instructional strategies to support inclusive environments. The 10 ESE-sponsored, graduate-level, on-line or hybrid courses start the week of February 27 and end the week of June 12. [Information about the courses and the application process](#) is available online.

2. FAQ: Adolescent Literacy

Some readers have asked for resources related to literacy and adolescent literacy in particular. Here are a few suggestions that might be helpful:

- On [ESE's humanities web page](#), you'll find links to the National Endowment for the Arts' [Big Read](#) and [Poetry Out Loud](#); the [National Writing Project](#) and its local counterparts in [Boston](#), [Buzzards Bay](#), and [Western Massachusetts](#); and the [Massachusetts Reading Association](#).
- The National Council of Teachers of English has a [web page devoted to high school](#).

ASCD's "Educational Leadership" publication frequently focuses on literacy, and one edition included this article on "[Supporting Older Students' Reading](#)."

- [AdLit.org](#) offers multimedia resources.
- If you're looking for a book to keep on hand, one staff member recommends "Strategies That Work," by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis.

Have a favorite adolescent literacy resource or suggestion? Please share it on Twitter with the hashtag #top3fromESE!

3. The Buzz: Next-Generation MCAS Update

Students in grades 3-8 will take the next-generation MCAS in math and English language arts this spring, and as part of the phased move to computer-based testing, more than 90 percent of school districts [plan to administer the computer-based version](#) of the test to grades 4 and 8. In addition, many schools are choosing to use the computer-based version for other grades.

You can get a look at the next-generation MCAS on the [MCAS support page](#), which has practice tests, and more information is available in the most recent [Student Assessment Update](#). In addition, at 10 a.m. February 10, the assessment office will host [an "office hours" session via conference call](#) to answer questions about the practice tests and student tutorial.

High school testing is not changing this year and will remain on paper. The development of a [high school version of the next-generation MCAS](#) was one of the topics the Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education discussed at their recent joint meeting.





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