

SENATE NO. 278

AN ACT TO IMPROVE AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled,
And by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting the following paragraphs at the end of section 38G:-

3 The board of education shall promulgate revisions to the Regulations for Educator Licensure and
4 Preparation Program Approval (currently 603 CMR 7.00) to ensure that all special education and
5 regular education teachers who apply for Massachusetts Educator certification or re-certification on
6 or after January 1, 2008, shall receive training and preparation in the use of augmentative and
7 alternative communication for students who are nonverbal or who have limited speech as a
8 requirement for such certification or recertification. Such training and preparation shall include
9 coursework in augmentative and alternative communication and practical experience in the
10 classroom with children that utilize augmentative and alternative communication, including but not
11 limited to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy and other
12 disabilities that result in limited or no verbal abilities (speech). Said coursework and practical
13 experience must be included for each level of Massachusetts educator certification and for all types
14 of teacher licenses referenced in 603 CMR 7.00. Teacher and specialist teacher licensure
15 requirements, subject matter knowledge requirements for teachers, professional standards for
16 teachers, requirements for field-based experiences, and educator preparation program approval
17 requirements shall specifically address augmentative and alternative communication competencies
18 to educate students with disabilities who are nonverbal or have limited verbal abilities.

19 The term “Alternative and Augmentative Communication” shall be defined as methods of
20 communication other than oral speech that enhance or replace conventional forms of expressive
21 and receptive communication to facilitate interaction by and with persons with disabilities who are
22 nonverbal or have limited speech, including, but not limited to: specialized gestures and signs;
23 communication aids such as charts, symbol systems, language boards; mouth sticks; facilitated
24 communication, and electronic communication devices such as switches, head pointers, eye
25 tracking, dynamic displays, auditory scanning, or speech synthesizers.