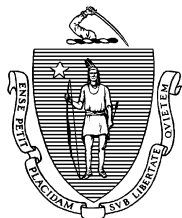


Senate, No. 2466

[Senate, June 23, 2008 - Substituted by amendment by the Senate (Ways and Means) for Senate, No. 2462]



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

IN THE YEAR OF TWO THOUSAND AND EIGHT

AN ACT TO IMPROVE DROPOUT PREVENTION AND REPORTING OF GRADUATION RATES

*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 76 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 1A the following section:-

3 Section 1B. (a) The department of elementary and secondary education shall provide
4 public school districts with a standardized format for the accurate reporting of high school
5 graduation and dropout data. The data shall facilitate the department's implementation of a
6 longitudinal data collection system and reporting of graduation rates and shall include, but not
7 be limited to, a 4-year graduation rate, 5-year graduation rate and adjusted graduation rates.

8 The data shall be disaggregated in the following categories: limited English proficiency, low-
9 income, special education, race or ethnicity and gender. Data shall be coded within the Student

10 Information Management System to reflect various withdrawal designations. The department
11 shall publish annually the reported data by various means, including on its electronic website.

12 (b) There shall be a graduation and dropout prevention and recovery commission to
13 survey dropout prevention and recovery best practices and programs nationwide and to evaluate
14 dropout prevention and recovery programs currently in use. The commission shall consist of
15 the secretary of education or his designee and the secretary of labor and workforce development
16 or her designee, who shall serve as co-chairs; the commissioner of elementary and secondary
17 education or his designee; the commissioner of higher education or his designee; the
18 commissioner of social services or his designee; the commissioner of youth services or his
19 designee; the commissioner of transitional assistance or her designee; the commissioner of
20 mental health or his designee; the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education; 1
21 member to be appointed by the speaker of the house; 1 member to be appointed by the senate
22 president; 1 member to be appointed by the house minority leader; 1 member to be appointed by
23 the senate minority leader; 1 representative from the Boston Private Industry Council; 1
24 representative from the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education; 1 member from the
25 Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents; 1 representative of the Massachusetts
26 Secondary School Administrators Association; 1 representative from the Massachusetts
27 Association of School Committees; 1 representative from the committee for public counsel
28 services; 1 representative of the Commonwealth Corporation; 1 representative of the American
29 Federation of Teachers of Massachusetts; 1 representative of the Massachusetts Teachers
30 Association; and 1 representative of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

31 The commission shall examine and make recommendations on:

32 (1) setting a goal and timeline for reducing the statewide annual dropout rate;

33 (2) further developing early indicator systems to identify students who are at risk of
34 dropping out, or who are not likely to graduate on time from high school without
35 receiving additional support, and school policies that exacerbate dropping out;

36 (3) expanding the definition of “structured learning time” to include internships and
37 work-study programs and exploring ways to encourage school districts to incorporate
38 quality internships, work and learning programs into structured learning time to engage
39 all students in relevant and rigorous curriculum;

40 (4) developing a reimbursement mechanism for districts sending students to alternative
41 education programs;

42 (5) exploring the connection between school discipline policies and students’ level of
43 engagement or alienation from school, with emphasis on school referrals for discipline
44 purposes and court-involved youth;

45 (6) providing financial incentives for districts that are effective in graduating at-risk
46 students and recovering high school dropouts;

47 (7) raising the compulsory attendance age from 16 years of age to 18 years of age; and

48 (8) creating a dropout prevention and recovery grant program to: (a) provide school
49 districts with funds to implement early indicator systems; (b) create capacity within
50 regions by engaging local workforce investment boards for outreach to dropouts and
51 referral to local school districts and alternative education programs; or (c) provide funds
52 to local districts or nonprofit programs to develop alternative routes to a diploma or its
53 equivalent to prevent students from dropping out and to meet the needs of those
54 returning to education.

55 The commission shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the senate
56 and house chairs of the joint committee on education and the chairs of the house and senate
57 committees on ways and means not later than December 31, 2009.

58 (c) Each school district with an annual dropout rate of greater than 4 per cent shall
59 develop a district-wide action plan to reduce dropout rates and effectively track students.
60 Action plans shall be submitted to the department of elementary and secondary education and
61 shall include an outreach and referral strategy and a comprehensive listing of alternative
62 education options and other pathways to earn a diploma offered within the public school system.
63 Districts shall work with teams of community stakeholders including, but not limited to,
64 workforce investment boards through their youth councils and Pathways to Success by 21 teams
65 and adult learning centers to develop a comprehensive approach to address the dropout issue.
66 The approach shall include school districts offering alternative options that enable students who
67 have dropped out to return and receive a high school diploma; provided, however, that such
68 options may be delivered directly by the public school district or by nonprofits approved by the
69 public schools.

70 (d) The department shall provide each district with technical assistance to gather and
71 analyze data, assist in the development and implementation of action plans and enhance a
72 district's ability to meet the diverse needs of its student population. Technical assistance shall
73 include research-based alternative options and strategies.