



# 2017

## Back-to-school Basics

How the state and  
local school districts  
work together to  
serve your child



## A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

## The state's role

The state sets learning standards that outline what students should know and be able to do in each subject area and grade level. The standards set high expectations for all students, regardless of where a student attends school.

## Teachers use standards and tests to help guide instruction

Learning standards are not classroom curriculum, so while the state sets expectations for students, it is up to educators at the local level to decide the most effective ways to help students meet the statewide standards. Curricula, lesson plans, books, materials, and other resources are all selected at the district or school level or by individual teachers. (Unlike some states, Massachusetts does not have state-mandated curricula and textbooks.)

## Approaching 25 years of high standards and strong commitments

The 1993 Massachusetts Reform Act created learning standards, set a minimum requirement for school funding, established new requirements for teachers, and created a statewide test, MCAS, to give parents, educators, and community members an objective look at students' and schools' progress toward reaching the standards.

## Becoming #1 in the nation

Since Massachusetts' education reform, the state's students have moved to the top of the nation in academic achievement. Now, Massachusetts students are even competitive on a global scale. But while Massachusetts students perform well overall, that success has not yet spread to every student. The state's education leaders understand that preparing our students for success in the 21st century requires frequent re-examination of and improvements to our standards and assessments.

**Step by step,**  
schools use state standards  
and testing to improve  
teaching and learning.



### STANDARDS

The state works with Massachusetts educators to establish learning standards that outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.



### CURRICULUM

Each school district has the freedom to choose curriculum and assemble materials – lesson plans, assignments, text books, and other resources – to help students meet the learning standards, without interference from the state.



### INSTRUCTION

Teachers are responsible for providing instruction that helps students learn and retain information so that they build on their knowledge each year.



### TESTING

Just as individual teachers' quizzes and tests measure whether students understood a specific lesson, state assessments help teachers, administrators, and state officials get an objective look at where students are mastering material and where they require additional help.