

## House Bill No. 1955

### **An Act To Improve Assessment And Accountability To Ensure Students Acquire 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

**Rep. Carl Sciortino**

The Commonwealth has yet to fully realize the goals of the Education Reform Act of 1993 (ERA), which called for a comprehensive assessment system composed of a variety of instruments and methods.

Our current system has its strengths but has also brought unintended consequences such as narrowed curriculum, too much time spent on standardized testing and test preparation, student disengagement, stagnant achievement gaps and rising dropouts. To build on the strengths of our public schools, address weaknesses, close achievement gaps and move toward a full realization of ERA, we need a balanced assessment and accountability system that will promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, educate the whole child and focus state attention and resources on schools and districts that most need help in their efforts to improve quality and outcomes for every student.

This balanced system will consist of the following integrated components:

- **Locally-developed and state-approved assessments to evaluate student achievement and school quality.** It will retain some MCAS testing and incorporate multiple measures, including exhibitions, projects and portfolios, to better assess 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. A balance between traditional testing and other assessments will remedy the problems of too much standardized testing, too much test preparation, and too little attention to developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and educating the whole child.
- **State-developed end-of-course exams in English, math, science and history that measure key content and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.** This will help remedy an MCAS-driven curriculum that is too often a mile wide and an inch deep, and assess our high school students' mastery of the core curriculum with greater rigor and relevance. Students will take them seriously because they will count for 20% of their course grades.
- **A school quality review model to assess the effectiveness of school practices and support improvement where it is needed most.** It will expand to middle and elementary schools the widely accepted New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation process already used successfully by state high schools.
- **Required annual local reporting by schools to their communities,** using a state-defined set of indicators that focus on equal opportunity and access to knowledge for all students as well as results on local assessments, statewide standardized tests, and the quality review.
- **Accountability and intervention** based on a range of quantitative and qualitative information for chronically underperforming schools and districts.
- **This new balanced system will maintain high standards,** comply with NCLB, be cost-neutral and not repeal the MCAS.

**Please contact your state legislators and voice your support for this important bill. A list of state legislators by town/city is available at: [http://www.mass.gov/legis/city\\_town.htm](http://www.mass.gov/legis/city_town.htm)**

For questions about this legislation, please contact Daniel Glasser in the office of Rep. Carl Sciortino at [daniel.glasser@state.ma.us](mailto:daniel.glasser@state.ma.us) or (617) 722-2018.

Read the entire Bill: <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H01955>