



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

November 30, 2011

Dear Lawrence Public Schools Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff, and Others:

On November 29th, after significant deliberation and after hearing from Lawrence educators, parents, community leaders, and others, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to exercise receivership of the Lawrence school district. As a result, in the next few weeks, I will be naming a state receiver to lead the Lawrence Public Schools. This receiver will report directly to me, and will be accountable for improving education in Lawrence for the benefit of every student.

All children in Lawrence can be successful, but that is not happening now. I understand that the circumstances facing many of Lawrence's families and students create substantial challenges for the school district. However, we can and will build on the strengths of Lawrence students, parents, educators, and community to ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for success. It is my conviction that by providing consistently high-quality education services and addressing non-academic barriers to learning, strong educational outcomes will become the rule rather than the exception in Lawrence.

I understand that receivership causes anxiety that, in turn, can lead to the spread of inaccurate information. As one example of misinformation, I have heard a concern that receivership may result in the dismissal of large numbers of school staff. As I made clear at the November 29th State Board meeting, that is not my intent. The state needs – and more importantly, Lawrence students must have – skillful and dedicated staff who are committed to transforming education for the better. If you are one of the many educators who are committed to this important mission, I look forward to working with you.

Many of you have already provided thoughtful ideas. I will be coming to Lawrence in the coming weeks to speak with you directly. I appreciate the commitment of Interim Superintendent Mary Lou Bergeron and Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin to support the opportunity to transform education for the students of Lawrence. Please watch for notices about these meetings on the Department's website (www.doe.mass.edu) and on the Lawrence Public Schools website (www.lawrence.k12.ma.us).

We can and will build on the strengths of Lawrence students, families, educators, and community to ensure that every student graduates well prepared for success after high school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mitch D. Chester".

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education