



**For immediate release**

**Thursday, March 4, 2010**

**Contacts: Heidi Guarino 781-338-3106 or JC Considine 781-338-3112**

**Landmark Opportunity for Students in Massachusetts' Most Struggling Schools**  
*Schools with Strong Plans Eligible for Federal Support*

**MALDEN** - The state's 35 most persistently low performing schools are now eligible for federal aid and state support to bring about dramatic improvements in student achievement through a blend of new school designs, better instructional support and stronger leadership.

The list of the so-called "Level 4" schools was released on Thursday, and state officials urged district leaders to view the announcement as an opportunity to better serve the needs of their students.

"This is about changing business as usual," said Governor Patrick. "We are working harder now to place our lowest performing schools on a path to success, so all students will get the education and the opportunities they deserve."

"Our administration is committed to improving the state's public education system," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "As a result of federal funding and the successful passage of our education reform, we can support plans to assist these underperforming schools, and provide all students equal opportunity for success."

Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester agreed.

"This is an unprecedented opportunity for management and teachers to come together and institute the long-lasting, transformative changes these schools need to turn things around to the benefit of students," he said. "We take no pleasure in identifying these schools, but we can't be satisfied with the status quo any longer."

The identification of and quick intervention in Level 4 schools was made possible through the state's new Education Reform law, which was filed by Governor Patrick and signed into law in January.

Under this law, the identified schools will develop redesign plans in collaboration with the superintendent, school committee, teachers' union, administrators, teachers, community representatives and parents. The redesign plan at each of the identified schools will serve as its application for the federal grant funding. The schools are also now eligible for additional federal funds to help the planning and implementation.

"Dramatically improving student learning is the bottom line for school reform in Massachusetts," said Education Secretary Paul Reville. "Through the combination of substantial targeted federal funding and new authority for districts to act, we expect to quickly see significantly better results for the students and families attending the Commonwealth's most struggling schools."

Education officials expressed appreciation again for the work of the Legislature and particularly the leadership of the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Education.

"Making sure each and every child in this state gets the best education possible was the impetus for our tackling education reform this session, and as a result there is framework in place to help these struggling schools access the federal and state resources they need to succeed," said Joint Committee on Education Co-Chair Senator Robert O'Leary.

"Today's announcement allows these districts to immediately begin developing strategies for improvement, ensuring that these schools are on a path to success as quickly as possible."

"By starting our turnaround efforts in these 35 schools, Massachusetts will begin its critical work to close our troubling achievement gap," said Representative Marty Walz, the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Education. "It is gratifying to know that these children will no longer be left behind. Their schools will now have the ability to make rapid improvements."

More than 17,000 mainly minority students attend the 35 schools. Nearly 9 out of 10 are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch based on family income, 21 percent are students with disabilities and 26 percent are limited English proficient.

Two-thirds of the schools are located in the Commonwealth's two largest cities, Boston and Springfield. The other schools are in seven other cities: Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford and Worcester. In all, 20 are elementary schools, 8 are middle schools, 3 are K-8 schools and 4 are high schools.

In February, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) finalized regulations to allow states to offer competitive grants over the next three years to intervene in each of their lowest performing schools. Through this program, Massachusetts is eligible for an estimated \$76 million over the next three years, which will be awarded to the districts. Those that commit to one of four intervention models identified by USED can apply for grants of \$500,000 or more per year on behalf of each Level 4 school.

Of the 35 schools, 33 were identified based on an analysis of 4-year trends in overall school performance, student growth and improvement as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. Two are schools previously identified as "chronically underperforming".

The three-year plan will be a blueprint for change that will:

- Provide a pathway for significant improvement at each identified school;

- Address district-level capacity to support low performing schools; and
- Set measureable, annual goals that will serve as the standard for exiting Level 4 status.

Schools can exit Level 4 status by showing an ambitious yet achievable 3-year increase in student achievement, as well as demonstrating that the conditions are in place at both the school and district to sustain that improvement. Year-to-year funding commitments will be dependent on making progress towards these goals.

#####

### List of Likely Level 4 Schools

District	School	Level
1. Boston	Agassiz	ES
2. Boston	Blackstone	ES
3. Boston	Dearborn	MS
4. Boston	Elihu Greenwood	ES
5. Boston	Harbor School	MS
6. Boston	Jeremiah E Burke High	HS
7. Boston	John F Kennedy	ES
8. Boston	John P Holland	ES
9. Boston	Orchard Gardens	ES/MS
10. Boston	Paul A Dever	ES
11. Boston	The English High	HS
12. Boston	William Monroe Trotter	ES
13. Fall River	Henry Lord Middle	MS
14. Fall River	John J Doran	ES
15. Fall River	Matthew J Kuss Middle	MS
16. Holyoke	Morgan Elem	ES/MS
17. Holyoke	Wm J Dean Voc Tech High	HS
18. Lawrence	Arlington Elementary School	ES
19. Lawrence	South Lawrence East Middle School	MS
20. Lowell	Charlotte M Murkland Elem	ES
21. Lynn	E J Harrington	ES
22. Lynn	Wm P Connery	ES
23. New Bedford	John Avery Parker	ES
24. Springfield	Alfred G Zanetti	ES/MS
25. Springfield	Brightwood	ES
26. Springfield	Chestnut Street Middle	MS
27. Springfield	Elias Brookings	ES
28. Springfield	Gerena	ES
29. Springfield	High School Of Commerce	HS
30. Springfield	Homer Street	ES
31. Springfield	John F Kennedy Middle	MS
32. Springfield	M Marcus Kiley Middle	MS
33. Springfield	White Street	ES
34. Worcester	Chandler Elem Community	ES
35. Worcester	Union Hill School	ES