

HOUSE No. 589

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Aaron Vega, (BY REQUEST)

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act supporting evolving educational standards that allow interdisciplinary education, need-based 3R instruction, and reduced testing time.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Kristin Beatty</i>		<i>1/15/2019</i>

HOUSE No. 589

By Mr. Vega of Holyoke (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 589) of Kristin Beatty relative to evolving educational standards that allow interdisciplinary education, need-based 3R instruction, and reduced testing time. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act supporting evolving educational standards that allow interdisciplinary education, need-based 3R instruction, and reduced testing time.

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. Section 1D of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out paragraphs one through four and inserting in
3 place thereof the following paragraphs:-

4 Section 1D. The board shall establish a set of statewide educational goals for all public
5 elementary and secondary schools in the commonwealth as follows.

6 (a) Core academic standards shall be set for grade levels or clusters of grades to include
7 reading, writing, language arts, mathematics, sciences, health, and the subjects of history,
8 government, civics, and social science, the latter 4 of which may be combined under the
9 umbrella term social science and history. Additional standards may also be developed for
10 technology, foreign languages, English literature, and other subjects.

11 The standards shall clearly set forth knowledge expected to be possessed at the
12 conclusion of clusters of grades, but not so as to control and define all knowledge taught but
13 instead in order to insure acquisition of basic as well as necessary knowledge and skills to
14 advance students as capable learners and citizens. In particular, core academic standards shall be
15 designed for flexibility and to allow for interdisciplinary and alternative models of learning. The
16 use of standards shall not circumscribe students to an ivory tower model of learning, nor shall
17 standards require that students master all subjects for which standards exist.

18 (b) Academic standards shall follow the following guidelines.

19 Recognizing that not all educational and interpersonal exchanges can or should be
20 measured, standards shall not be used to narrow acceptable content and deny the reasonable but
21 extraneous integration within classroom lessons of informal and age-appropriate interpersonal
22 relations, tangents, break activities, related subjects, art, or current events, provided that the
23 standards are met. Neither shall standards be designed to prescribe, quantify, and measure
24 student character or interpersonal relationships, leaving any issues in this area for to
25 administrators and teachers to address on a more personal level.

26 Neither shall the design or promulgation of state educational standards serve to require
27 intensive time meeting bureaucratic requirements from either teachers or administrators. Neither
28 shall the length of content in standards be so extensive and inflexible as to dictate unremitting
29 study, disallow student breaks, prevent extracurricular activities, or defeat local input or teacher
30 creativity regarding educational content. Standards shall be appropriate for grade level and
31 respectful of time constraints.

32 Neither shall state educational standards and coursework prescriptions be designed so
33 inflexibly as to prevent a public school, within the traditional time frame, from engaging in
34 interdisciplinary learning, pursuing immersive foreign language learning, or allowing for
35 alternative models of education such as Montessori, Waldorf, or vocational training.

36 Neither shall state standards serve to “standardize” education, serving to limit diversity of
37 content, methodology, and points of view.

38 Standards shall be expressed primarily in terms that lend to objective measurement, but
39 shall not deny or eclipse the value of less measurable value in interpersonal exchanges, art,
40 imagination, and the humanities. They shall be designed to inculcate respect for the cultural,
41 ethnic and racial diversity of the commonwealth and for the contributions made by diverse
42 cultural, ethnic and racial groups to the life of the commonwealth. Standards shall be designed to
43 avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes. Standards shall reflect sensitivity
44 to different learning styles and impediments to learning.

45 The standards shall provide for instruction in at least the major principles of the
46 Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers. The
47 standards shall provide for instruction in comparative political and economic systems. The
48 standards shall provide for instruction in the fundamentals of the history of the commonwealth as
49 well as the history of working people, voting, consumer rights, and the labor movement in the
50 United States. The standards shall provide for practical instruction in availing oneself of
51 consumer rights, legal protections, and government representation, as well as of understanding
52 the purpose of state and federal legal and financial agencies.

53 The standards for mathematics shall include basic financial management skills.

54 The standards for health shall provide for instruction in the issues of physical education,
55 human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome education, nutrition,
56 self-care, violence prevention, including teen dating violence, bullying prevention, conflict
57 resolution, abusive patterns, digital risks, marketing tricks, potential pharmaceutical hazards,
58 mold, radon, and drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse prevention. Health standards shall provide for
59 instruction on state and federal health, agricultural, and environmental agencies, including
60 functions and failures in policing environmental pollution, consumer products, and
61 pharmaceuticals. Health standards shall provide for attention to recognizing and avoiding current
62 environmental pollutants and risks, including discussion of cosmetics, construction, industrial
63 run-off, technology, and within foods. Health standards shall include the teaching of family life
64 skills, emergency care, basic child care, the necessity of social contact, and the value, process,
65 and difficulty of nursing children with breast milk.

66 The standards shall integrate major principles of environmental science and ecology. The
67 standards shall include other sciences, and shall be written and evolve in such a way as to reflect
68 current and credible science, as well as analytical reflection and social aspects including the
69 dangers and pitfalls possible with science and technology.

70 The standards for English shall be careful to distinguish between English literature as
71 compared to language arts, the latter which shall be a core academic standard.

72 The purpose of assigning language arts as a core subject, as opposed to the subject
73 English, is to place skills of writing, reading, and understanding at the forefront, and to set aside
74 literary terms and complex English literature analysis as a core academic subject for all students.

75 Instead of English literature analysis and literary terms, language arts shall serve as the core
76 academic standard as this allows students to pursue courses outside of English literature.

77 Language arts, as conveyed in this section, is inclusive of creative writing, nonfiction,
78 fiction, expository writing, and analytical reading, but does not connote an ivory tower education
79 in the sense of constructing essays of literary analysis or knowing obscure literary terms.
80 Occasionally, English is mistakenly misconstrued as solely the province of English literature
81 studies. When expressed in this section, English shall mean language arts and skills, and shall not
82 mean to refer to “English literature.” Core academic standards shall be designed to allow for
83 language arts or English to be taught in subjects besides English literature. This shall allow
84 course requirements for English to include subjects other than English literature, besides
85 allowing for interdisciplinary learning and improving flexibility.

86 The board may also set reasonable standards for student community service-learning
87 activities and programs.

88 (c)

89 Neither shall the promulgation of state standards and expectations serve to prevent course
90 work that meets student needs. Basic mathematics, writing, and reading skills at the eighth grade
91 level are necessary to allow learning to proceed at the secondary and collegiate level, and so the
92 provision of alternative and intensive coursework in either mathematics or reading to bring
93 students to grade level shall be encouraged. To use “expectations” as excuse to ignore and
94 neglect serious barriers in reading and mathematics, leaving students permanently struggling, is a
95 failing that shall not be allowed on the part of the Department of Elementary and Secondary
96 Education. To allow attention to the needs of students who are behind reading and mathematics

97 expectations, provision for intensive instruction in the area of reading, writing or mathematics
98 needs and a separate set of intensive instruction and leveled standards shall apply to these
99 students to bring them up to speed, setting aside some other academic coursework if helpful, but
100 not depriving students of physical education, health, and beloved extra-curricular activities.
101 These special standards shall be termed leveled standards, and their use alone shall not serve to
102 penalize schools or students, but instead to assist. Placement on leveled standards shall be a
103 temporary measure until students can return to grade-level standards.

104 Leveled standards shall serve to bring students to grade level in an area of need, but shall
105 not serve to excuse students from state requirements for graduation.

106 (d) The board shall direct the commissioner to institute a process to develop academic
107 standards according to grade level or clusters of grades, serving to provide parity in basic or
108 necessary expectations in a particular course or for a grade or clusters of grades.

109 In developing standards, the board shall offer the task to willing public school teachers,
110 respective to grade level and specialty, as well as to willing public school legal guardians and
111 parents. Retired teachers may also participate. Committees for different standards shall be
112 distributed across the commonwealth to develop templates, and shall be provided with a
113 mechanism to share drafts with the public at large and to invite additional remote participation
114 and comment. Committees may invite graduate students in education or professors with relevant
115 degrees to participate in development of standards. These committees shall be called Standard
116 Committees, and secondarily labeled according to the standard and grade level or levels
117 addressed. Where possible and subject to appropriation, funding shall be provided to reduce
118 teacher workloads or to allow for participation of low-income teachers, with emphasis on

119 providing support for committees needing to make significant changes or develop entirely new
120 standards.

121 In creating a standards committee for English or language arts, the composition of the
122 committee shall be inclusive of subjects outside English literature, as the English standards are
123 meant to be interdisciplinary.

124 Upon completion of a final draft, committees shall present and share this final draft with
125 the community for final analysis. A local and state public meeting shall be allotted for
126 presentation and discussion, to which teachers, parents, and community members shall be
127 invited.

128 The minimum timeline for initial draft shall be one year, and the minimum timeline for
129 completion shall be 4 months later, but completion may occur sooner. Upon completion, the
130 Department of Education shall continue to collate and receive criticisms of the standards. In a
131 year or two following completion of standards, criticisms and praise shall be addressed with the
132 formation of new standards committees, who shall be provided commentary, improve upon the
133 existing standards, and follow the same procedure. Continuing forward, this pattern shall repeat
134 every four years.

135 A copy of said standards shall be submitted to the joint committee on education at least
136 sixty days prior to taking effect.

137 (e) Subject to appropriation, the board shall establish a grant program which shall award
138 grants to school districts for the costs associated with establishing advanced placement courses.
139 The board shall promulgate regulations defining the standards of eligibility and other
140 implementation guidelines.

141 Subject to appropriation, the board shall establish an advanced placement test fee grant
142 program which shall award grants to school districts for the reimbursement of application fees
143 for students based on financial need in order to assist students with paying the fee for advanced
144 placement tests. The board shall promulgate regulations defining the standards of eligibility and
145 other implementation guidelines for this program.

146 (f) Competency tests shall be provided by the state, but shall be limited in the amount of
147 time allowed for testing. In elementary, time limits as stated for testing shall be based on time
148 needed for an average, competent student to complete the test at his or her grade level. Through
149 seventh grade, the total amount of student testing time, as per average student, shall be no more
150 than 2 hours total and no more than 40 minutes at a sitting and shall be completed within two
151 days. From eighth to twelfth grade, the total amount of testing time shall be no more than three
152 hours total and no more than 40 minutes in a sitting, and shall be completed within two days.
153 Additional time, which may be divided, of up to 90 minutes total shall be allowed to familiarize
154 students with test procedures.

155 Competency tests shall be straightforward tests of subject matter and shall not be
156 designed with trick questions or to provide assessments of student political beliefs or personal
157 lives.

158 In one school year schools shall be allowed one day outside of testing to familiarize
159 students with the state competency test, but shall otherwise not focus on providing test
160 familiarity nor shall schools provide students with materials and assignments that compare to the
161 state competency tests except to address the content of the standards.

162 (g) The standards shall include criteria for three determinations or certificates with
163 respect to graduation. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a student from beginning a program
164 of vocational education before achieving a determination of competency. Such vocational
165 education may begin at grade nine, ten or eleven. No provision of law shall prohibit concurrent
166 pursuit of a competency determination and vocational learning. There shall be no cause of action
167 for a parent, guardian or student who fails to obtain a competency determination, a certificate of
168 mastery or a certificate of occupational proficiency.

169 The standards shall also include criteria for three determinations or certificates as
170 follows:

171 (1) The "competency determination" shall be based on the academic standards and
172 curriculum frameworks for tenth graders in the areas of mathematics, science, history and social
173 science, English, and any other subjects as decided by the local district or charter school.
174 Competency shall mean that a particular student has demonstrated mastery of these core
175 academic standards. A determination of competency shall be measured not only at the local
176 level, but by meeting a minimum score in eighth grade competency tests in mathematics and
177 language arts, and in one other competency test at the eighth or tenth grade level in any academic
178 subject. Satisfaction of the requirements of the competency determination shall be a condition for
179 high school graduation.

180 If the particular student's assessment results in the eighth or tenth grade do not
181 demonstrate the required level of competency, the student shall have the right to participate in
182 the assessment program the following year or years. Students who fail to satisfy the requirements
183 of the competency determination may be eligible to receive an educational assistance plan

184 designed within the confines of the foundation budget to impart the skills, competencies and
185 knowledge required to attain the required level of mastery. The parent, guardian or person acting
186 as parent of the student shall have the opportunity to review the remedial plan with the student's
187 teachers. Nothing in this section shall be construed to provide a parent, guardian, person acting
188 as a parent or student with an entitlement to contest the proposed plan or with a cause of action
189 for educational malpractice if the student fails to obtain a competency determination.

190 (2) The "certificate of mastery" shall be based upon a determination that the recipient has
191 demonstrated mastery of a comprehensive body of skills, competencies and knowledge
192 comparable to that possessed by accomplished graduates of high school or equivalent programs
193 in the most advanced educational systems in the world. The criteria for a certificate of mastery
194 may incorporate a number of factors which may include, but not be limited to, any of the
195 following: high school graduation standards, state assessment instruments, and demonstrated
196 excellence in areas not reflected by the state's assessment instruments, such as artistic or literary
197 achievement. Eligibility for potential receipt of a certificate of mastery shall extend to all
198 secondary students residing in the commonwealth.

199 (3) The "certificate of occupational proficiency" shall be awarded to students who
200 successfully complete a comprehensive education and training program in a particular trade or
201 professional skill area and shall reflect a determination that the recipient has demonstrated
202 mastery of a core of skills, competencies and knowledge comparable to that possessed by
203 students of equivalent age entering the particular trade or profession from the most educationally
204 advanced education systems in the world. No student may receive said certificate of occupational
205 proficiency without also having acquired a competency determination.