January 2020

Dear Board Members,

After completing my first full year as commissioner, I continue to be excited about the work we do together to serve Massachusetts students, as I hope I conveyed in “Our Way Forward” in June. The four themes I outlined there - deeper learning for all, holistic support and enrichment, the use of innovation and evidence-based practices such as building a more diverse educator workforce, and framing our work as a partnership with districts – are critically important if we are to make Massachusetts schools number one for all of our students instead of just some of them.

I was glad that some of you were able to participate in the Kairos conference held in Amherst in March; you saw firsthand the types of engaging, hands-on tasks that lead to deeper learning.

When I was appointed commissioner, I said that I wanted to do more to celebrate teachers, and during the 2018-19 school year, we did just that through the #aMAzingEducators campaign. Hundreds of students and colleagues sent us short messages about their favorite teacher, many of which we shared on social media. We also celebrated teachers through public service announcements and billboards, reminding people of this essential profession. Our work in this area is ongoing.

Finally, I would like to recognize two members who left the Board in 2019: Paul Sagan, who was chair at the time of my hire and who stepped down in early 2019, and former Chair Margaret McKenna, who was a member at the time of my hire and recently completed her time on the Board. I am grateful for their support and look forward to working with the Board’s new members.