**District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) Foundational Services**

**Summary of Assistance Options**

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| **1. Supporting Self-Assessment and Improvement Planning** |
| ***Level 3 districts have priority for these services.***   1. **District Self-Assessment:** DSAC staff support the use of ESE[District Standards and Indicators](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/)to support district-level self-assessment. DSAC staff partner with districts to emphasize the alignment between district and school self-assessment and planning. 2. **School Self-Assessments:** DSAC staff support the use of ESE [Conditions for School Effectiveness](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/)  to support schools’ evaluation of their implementation of ESE standards for districts and schools. 3. **Focused Planning for Implementing High Leverage Strategies:** DSAC staff support planning by utilizing a range of data resources, including the ESE Accountability District Review Report and findings. DSAC staff work with districts using planning tools, protocols and resources to identify high leverage areas in which the DSACs can provide assistance and engage districts in the Cycle of Inquiry and Improvement. |
| **2. Targeted Assistance to Districts in Training, Modeling, and Facilitating the Implementation of Effective Practices** |
| ***Level 3 districts have priority for these services; Level 2 districts and others may receive assistance as resources allow.***  DSAC staff partner with district and school leaders to support the implementation of research-based practices designed to address targeted strategies in improvement plans. These are aligned with the Conditions for School Effectiveness and the District Standards and Indicators. Among the practices and resources available from the DSACs are assistance in:   1. Implementing effective data use systems and practices **using ESE data resources, including the** [District Data Team Toolkit,](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/) **the** [Education Data Warehouse](http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/)**, the** [Student Growth Model](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/)**, and others;** 2. Conducting classroom observations using the [Learning Walkthrough Guide;](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/) 3. Organizing and supporting ongoing [Professional Learning Communities;](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/) 4. Planning to implement components of the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support, and 5. Identifying other resources and assistance to support the implementation of high leverage strategies. |
| **3. Enhancing Regional Opportunities to Learn About and Share Effective Practices to Improve Student Achievement** |
| ***Level 3 districts have priority for professional development; other districts in the region may access courses if space is available.***   1. **Professional Development:** DSACs provide access to a [menu](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/) of high-quality ESE sponsored and approved courses in leadership, mathematics, literacy, sheltered content, and inclusive practices/special education. DSAC staff assist with professional development planning and are able to recommend professional development from the DSAC menu that is targeted to specific district needs.   ***Level 3 districts have priority for networks; other districts in region may participate on a space available basis.***   1. **Networks for Educators**:DSAC staff convene regional networks to support capacity building in districts, on topics including math, literacy, and leadership. DSAC networks build on and enhance the expertise of network participants, connect to state and regional initiatives, use data to inform conversations, and focus on establishing systems to support effective, standards-based instruction. Characteristics of DSAC networks are further described in the Features of District and School Assistance Center Networks.  * A focus of networks in 2011-2012 will include alignment to new ESE Curriculum Frameworks and the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support. * Leadership network topics may include support for participants in National Institute for School Leadership training (NISL), principals networks, and cross-district resource sharing.  1. **Study Groups on** **High Interest & High Need Issues:** DSAC staff may convene groups with targeted membership to address regional issues such as:  * Serving English language learners with interrupted schooling or in low-incidence districts * Studying the characteristics and implementation processes in “Commendation Schools” and other successful school and district models in the region * Implementing specific Conditions for School Effectiveness |
| **4. Targeted Assistance and Improvement Grants** |
| ***Level 3 districts have priority for grant funding; districts exiting Level 3 may be eligible for limited funding to support participation in DSAC services as resources allow.***  DSAC grants provide limited funding to districts to support participation in professional development, networks, and initiatives to support systemic approaches to accelerate student achievement. |

The six DSACs partner with districts and their schools to support systemic approaches to accelerate student achievement. DSAC teams and districts work together to identify a set of assistance activities customized to meet district needs.

**District and School Assistance Centers**

**Overview**

In late fall 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) established six regional District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs), with the goal of helping districts and schools improve instruction and raise achievement levels for all students. In collaboration with partner organizations, DSACS’s use a regional approach that emphasizes the development of district capacity to accelerate and sustain improvement and leverages the knowledge, skills, and expertise of local educators to address shared needs.

By design, DSACs are demand-driven, with participating districts and schools accessing relevant services to address their own needs and improvement priorities. DSACs may serve all non-Commissioner’s Districts[[1]](#footnote-1)\* in a region but give first priority to level 3 and Level 4 districts, as outlined in the ESE Framework for District Accountability and Assistance.

Each DSAC is led by a Regional Assistance Director, a part-time recently retired superintendent, who works with a small assistance team of a former principal, a data specialist, a mathematics specialist, and a literacy specialist. The DSAC teams collaborate with districts to assess their strengths and needs, and facilitate access to resources and professional development, establish partnerships and networks, and deliver individualized assistance for the region’s districts.

DSAC assistance services include supporting district and school self-assessment and planning through use of the District Standards and Indicators and Conditions for School Effectiveness; implementing effective data use systems and practices using ESE data resources; conducting classroom observations using the Learning Walkthrough Guide; providing access to a menu of high quality ESE sponsored and approved professional development courses; convening networks and study groups for educators, and providing funding to districts to support participation in DSAC services.

The DSAC Regional Assistance Directors are:

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1. \* Commissioner's Districts receive direct ESE assistance through the Office of District and School Turnaround. The Commissioner's Districts are Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)