



School and District Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council (AAAC) Annual Report

Submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for information and consideration, by Joe Esposito, Council Chair. The attached report reflects the work of the AAAC over the course of School Year 2012-13.
June 2013



This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

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**SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSISTANCE ADVISORY
COUNCIL (AAAC)
Annual Report
June 2013**

I. INTRODUCTION

The 15-member Advisory Council on School and District Accountability and Assistance (AAAC) advises the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Commonwealth's School and District Accountability and Assistance system. The Council reviews and advises the Department and the Board on the policies and practices of the Centers for Targeted Assistance and School and District Accountability. In the 2012-13 year, the Council continued to advise on Level 3 and 4 school and district planning, planning for the first Level 5 schools, and targeted assistance strategies.

II. 2012-2013 WORK OF THE COUNCIL

Overview

As it did last year, the work of the Council continued to reflect the current context in which the Department is focused on implementation of accountability and assistance efforts, rather than on the comprehensive redesign of these efforts. The Council continued to identify important questions and considerations relative to implementation of various initiatives.

Priority areas of focus centered on refining practices and policies that the Council has been helping to develop over the past several years. These areas include:

- District Reviews
- Level 3 District Assistance Efforts
- Level 4 Schools Assistance and Exit Determinations
- Level 5 Schools Planning

Activities

The Council met five times this year. Topics of discussion included:

- District Review Planning
- Level 4 District Accelerated Improvement Plan Process
- Level 4 Schools
 - Learning from Years 1 and 2
 - Sustainability Planning
 - Exit process
- Update on priority Department initiatives:
 - New Accountability Reporting
 - Educator Evaluation
 - Rethinking Equity in the Teaching of English Language Learners (RETELL)
- Coherence among priority Department initiatives

III. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council offered specific input on the various topics outlined above. Recommendations include the following:

- **District Reviews.** The Council offered guidance and recommendations on the Department’s ongoing work as the agency continues to implement and enhance the district review process, especially given its increasingly limited resources. Based on feedback from the Council last year, the Department presented for discussion various options as alternatives to the comprehensive district review model, including the possibility of conducting targeted reviews in certain circumstances (i.e., with a narrowed focus on a limited set of district standards). The Council recommends that the comprehensive district review process be maintained, while finding efficiencies and cost-savings in the process. The Council also recommends that annual reviews of the lowest performing districts be prioritized, while at the same time ensuring that some number of higher performing districts is also reviewed as a way to capture learning from those districts and ensure statewide accountability. The Council has expressed support for the Department’s efforts to ensure that the district review process aligns with assistance efforts.
- **Level 4 Exit Process.** The Council offered input on the Department’s early planning efforts related to the Level 4 school exit determination process. Specifically, the Council recommends that the Department emphasize the district systems of support criteria to ensure that schools exiting will be more likely to sustain improvements. The Council recommends that the Department clearly and explicitly document districts’ efforts to effectively support turnaround. The Council also offered input on accountability and assistance structures, systems, and implications for schools that exit Level 4 status.
- **Turnaround Sustainability Planning.** The Council offered input on the Department’s efforts to support districts with Level 4 schools in their sustainability efforts. The Council communicated strong support for the Department’s development of an “Academic Return on Investment” framework and tools for districts to consider practices and programs worth sustaining, while at the same time being clear about the limitations of this kind of analysis since it is not formulaic.
- **Level 5 Schools.** The Council offered recommendations on the Department’s planning relative to Level 5 schools, including efforts to pre-empt Level 5 school determinations. The Council recommends strong evaluation, tight oversight, and real accountability of restart operators.
- **Coherence.** The Council received updates throughout the year on priority Department initiatives, including Educator Evaluation and RETELL, and offered general comments. From an accountability and assistance perspective, the Council offered input on ways the Department can assist districts in meaningfully engaging with and ensuring coherence among these and other important initiatives to which they are being held accountable. The Council recommends that the Department be explicit in helping districts make connections between the various initiatives. Members specifically and strongly recommend that the Department identify, document, and find avenues for sharing examples of effective coherence and integration in districts and schools across the state. The Council also strongly recommends that the Department commit to the development of an internal role focused on external communication and messaging.

IV. COUNCIL DETAILS

Department Administrator: Lynda Foisy

Department Liaison: Erika Werner

Chairperson: Joe Esposito

Members of the 2012-2013 Advisory Council:

Mr. Joseph Esposito (Council Chair), Retired CFO, Solid Works; Former EMAC Board Member*

Dr. David Riley, Executive Director, Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, EDC

Beverly Miyares, Professional Development Specialist, Massachusetts Teachers Association*

Julia Bowen, Executive Director, Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School, (MA Charter Public School Association representative)*

Elizabeth Freedman, Principal, Greater Lawrence Technical High School, (Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association representative)

Jeff Thielman, President, Cristo Rey Boston High School, (MA Association of School Committees representative)

Tari Thomas, Assistant Superintendent, Mahar Regional Public Schools (Massachusetts Elementary Principals Association representative)

Linda Noonan, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education*

Anne McKenzie, Executive Director, Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative*

Dr. John Portz, Chair, Political Science Department, Northeastern University*

Laura Perille, Executive Director, EdVestors, BPS Parent*

Dr. Susan Therriault, Research Analyst, American Institutes for Research*

Andrew Churchill, Assistant Director, Center for Education Policy, UMass/Amherst*

Ms. Margaret Doyle, Principal, Thorndyke Road Elementary School, Worcester; (MA Elementary and Secondary School Principals Association Representative)

Dr. Matthew Malone, Superintendent, Brockton Public Schools (MA Association of School Superintendents representative) through February 2012

Meg Mayo Brown, Superintendent, Fall River Public Schools (MA Association of School Superintendents representative) (April 2012- present)

Council Meeting Dates:

October 10, 2012, December 12, 2012, February 13, 2013, April 10, 2013, June 12, 2013

* Members who have completed their Council terms and will be cycling off.