**Massachusetts Department of**

**Elementary and Secondary Education**

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | October 17, 2023; **UPDATED: October 23, 2023** |
| **Subject:** | Commissioner’s Goals for School Year 2023-24 |

**Introduction**

In the spring of 2023, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE or Department) released an updated [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf) along with a set of strategic objectives to guide DESE in service of this new vision. In our vision, all students will excel at grade-level or beyond, with individualized supports. This board has charged me with proposing what a reimagined educational landscape may look like in light of this vision, and I plan to share that at the November 1 board retreat.

As we move forward to implement the vision and strategic objectives, DESE’s Racial Equity Decision-making Tool (REDT) will continue to support our work and alignment to DESE’s core values. For the 2023-24 school year, I have directed DESE leadership and staff to focus on the following priorities aligned to our strategic objectives and other departmental core functions:

**Strategic Objective 1: Cultivate systems to support the whole student and foster joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.**

1. Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE) Framework Implementation and Supports. The Department will:
   1. Launch a web resource in fall 2023 that includes an overview of the CHPE framework, implementation resources, and frequently asked questions.
   2. Provide professional development opportunities for educators to learn about the content in the new framework and share implementation resources and best practices through online webinars, in-person workshop sessions, and professional networking.

1. Safe and Supportive School Environments. The Department will:
   1. Provide approximately $4 million in grant funding to assist districts in improving chronic absenteeism rates.
   2. Support 108 school and district teams to participate in the Social, Emotional, Behavioral Academy, which aims to help them cultivate joyful, culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environments, and implement multi-tiered systems of social, emotional, and behavioral support.
   3. Provide approximately 200 districts with funding, guidance, professional development, and networking offerings through various initiatives at DESE including Safe and Supportive Schools, SEL & Mental Health and Wellness, Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ+ Students, and Rethinking Discipline that support districts in building safe and supportive school environments that promote the mental health and wellbeing of all students.
   4. Provide approximately 10 trainings on emergency management planning, threat assessment teams, medical and behavioral response plans, responding to and investigating bomb threats and swatting hoaxes, and cybersecurity. These will be offered in partnership with the REMS Center, the FBI Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force, and the Commonwealth Fusion Center.

1. Meaningful Partnerships with Families. The Department will:
   1. Coordinate the second annual *Better Together Family Engagement Summit 2023*, to advance transformative dialogues, collaborative strategies, and a shared vision for the future of education with an estimated 700 participants, including approximately 250 multi-lingual families and 60 district teams.
   2. Support the implementation of the *Family School Partnership Fundamentals* through the dissemination of the *Better Together* online training modules and resources and direct assistance through the Family School Partnership Initiative.
   3. Launch a *Family Communication Toolkit* in fall 2023 that will offer strategies to help schools build more inclusive, effective, and meaningful communication with families from diverse backgrounds.

**Strategic Objective 2: Promote deeper learning so that all students engage in grade-level work that is real-world, relevant, and interactive.**

1. Adoption and Implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). The Department will:
   1. Provide guidance, technical assistance, and $1 million in funding to support districts to use an equity-centered process to evaluate and select high-quality instructional materials across content areas.
   2. Award over $5 million in grant funding to support approximately 50 districts to purchase high-quality core math and English language arts programs and foundational professional development.
   3. Award $8.8 million in grant funding to provide 52 districts with intensive support for skillful implementation of high-quality instructional materials by providing consultants, professional development, and technical assistance.
   4. Award $2.7 million in grant funding to support approximately 50 districts with professional development, materials costs, and technical assistance in the adoption and implementation of history and social studies and science, technology, and engineering curricula with *Investigating History* and *OpenSciEd.*
2. Comprehensive Approach to Early Literacy. The Department will:
   1. Award approximately $9.6 million in grant funding to support high-quality curriculum, professional development, and assessment for early literacy.
   2. Support educators to learn evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining early literacy practices through approximately 8 targeted live and online professional learning offerings.
   3. Support districts that do not yet have high-quality foundational reading curricula to adopt Appleseeds, the DESE-developed curriculum for early reading foundational skills.
   4. Implement new expectations on teaching early literacy for educator preparation programs, and support updates to programs that provide training relating to licensure in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities. These criteria will guide program review and approval beginning in spring 2024.

1. Opportunities for Accelerated Learning. The Department will:
   1. Dedicate approximately $11.4 million to partner with vetted and contracted vendors to assist districts in providing high-dosage tutoring services to students in literacy in grades K-3 and math in grades 4 and 8. These programs will focus on students and districts with the most need and will support over 4,500 students.
   2. Dedicate approximately $1 million to provide priority districts and schools with access to a high-quality digital math supplemental program for over 9,000 4th and 8th graders.
   3. Provide approximately $10 million in grant funding to districts for Acceleration Academies. This year DESE will offer three Acceleration Academy focused grant opportunities: an Acceleration Academy grant for a targeted group of districts that meet certain eligibility criteria, a competitive Math Acceleration Academies grant, and a competitive Summer Acceleration Academies grant.
2. Targeted Supports for Students with Advanced Learning Needs. The Department will:
   1. Launch the Continuum of Services for Advanced Learning guidance document with a webinar in November 2023.
   2. Facilitate a professional learning program designed to aid district teams with the development of responsive, equity-focused, advanced learning services.
   3. Hire a Manager of Advanced Learning to increase capacity within DESE.
3. Targeted Supports for Multilingual Learners. The Department will:
   1. Award approximately $2.5 million in grant funding for English learner education (ELE) program support and award approximately $500,000 in grant funding to support World Languages, Heritage Languages, and English Learner (EL) programming, including Seal of Biliteracy programs and the effective implementation of the 2021 World Languages Framework.
   2. Continue to provide resources, technical assistance, and professional learning to districts via four full-day multilingual learner leadership networks, including the ELE Directors Network, Bilingual Leaders Network, Seal of Biliteracy Network, and World Language Leaders Network.
   3. By the end of the 2023-24 school year, convene 6 panels of educators to evaluate materials using the new *HQIM for ESL* (English as a Second Language) rubric and develop and pilot 11 professional learning modules to support districts’ use of the Next Generation ESL Toolkit.
   4. Develop and disseminate resources, tools, and best practices to help districts meet the needs of growing numbers of newcomer ELs and students with limited or interrupted formal education, including the facilitation of a SLIFE Community of Practice that serves nearly 50 districts, the development of updated SLIFE guidance, and targeted technical assistance for districts welcoming large numbers of newcomers.

1. Targeted Supports for Students with Disabilities. The Department will:
   1. Award $10 million in grant funding to support the implementation of the new statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) in school districts, approved special education schools, and educational collaboratives.
   2. Provide interactive professional learning opportunities for special education professionals, administrators, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders on the new IEP through venues such as monthly office hours, training of trainer sessions, and virtual meetings for special education leaders.
   3. Develop and share a variety of tools to support the implementation of the new IEP including sample IEPs, a technical guide, a sample parent letter, and a playbook based upon three years of learning from early adopter schools and districts of the new IEP.

1. Authentic Academic and Career Planning and the Continuum of College and Career Pathways/Programs. The Department will:
   1. Launch the Career-Connected Learning Instructional Resource Hub, a resource that serves educators across the state looking to integrate careers and relevant, real-world experience into their courses and programs. This platform allows for regular alignment and updates to stay current with industry updates, so that students engaged in career technical education (CTE) Chapter 74 programs can access careers at graduation.
   2. Support 100 middle and high schools in the planning and/or implementation of MyCAP to better connect students’ learning to their academic, personal/social, and career goals.
   3. Provide targeted technical assistance, resources, and a community of practice to 50 districts around student reengagement, dropout prevention, and alternative education.
   4. Increase the number of high-quality pathway programs available across the Commonwealth that provide students with relevant, real-world experiences that prepare them for their post-graduation goals, including increasing Innovation Career Pathways, CTE Chapter 74 programs, and CTE Partnership Chapter 74 programs.
   5. Increase the number of high-quality designated Early College programs across the Commonwealth that allow students to participate in guided academic pathways with intentional, tiered supports to increase exposure, enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment in post-secondary education.

1. Deeper Learning Support. The Department will:
   1. Provide professional development, individualized coaching, and implementation support for 20 districts through the Learning Acceleration Network that promotes culturally and linguistically sustaining grade-appropriate instruction.
   2. Provide an Instructional Prioritization and Planning Institute for 50 district leadership teams in the spring of 2024 to support instructional improvement planning for SY 2024-2025 that results in participating districts establishing data-informed, equitable instructional priorities and aligned implementation plans.
   3. Continue DESE’s Kaleidoscope partnership with the Boston Public Schools (BPS) by providing school-based implementation support of deeper learning in alignment with district priorities and provide $500,000 in grant opportunities to partner with 5-10 additional schools and/or districts to support and expand deeper learning implementation.

**Strategic Objective 3: Develop and sustain a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators.**

1. Educator Diversification Efforts and Recruitment and Retention Programs. The Department will deepen investments in recruitment and retention programs to advance diversification efforts and improve overall retention.
   1. Award approximately $3 million in teacher diversification grant funding to districts to provide financial incentives (such as signing bonuses and relocation assistance) and financial support (such as MTEL preparation and examination vouchers) to prospective educators from diverse backgrounds.
   2. Continue to offer a pilot of the 24 alternative licensure assessments with a focus on the implementation and evaluation of these alternative assessments.

1. Support for Staff who Entered Through Alternative Pathways. The Department will expand supports to emergency licensed educators employed in Massachusetts schools to assist them in converting to a permanent license:
   1. Provide every teacher employed on an emergency license in SY2023-24 with a free MTEL voucher.
   2. Approximately $1 million will be invested in four regional centers to provide individualized licensure support, MTEL preparation, and coaching to currently employed emergency licensed educators.

1. Staff Pipeline Development. The Department will continue its initiatives to help districts and schools address staffing challenges, including:
   1. Continue support for the implementation of licensure flexibilities and changes that open access to high-need roles through new provisional licenses for ESL, special education, nurses, and school leaders.
   2. Create an advisory group to design a teacher apprenticeship model for Massachusetts that will launch as a pilot in school year 2024-25.
   3. Design and launch the first Aspiring Principals Fellowship to support up to 40 aspiring school leaders advance to provisional licensure.
   4. Continue the Influence 100 program to develop current leaders across the state to be superintendents. The program will continue to focus on equity leadership and will include 23 participants this year.
   5. Collect and analyze district-level information via a survey on staffing shortages to inform resources and supports to assist schools and districts with staffing needs.

**Additional Initiatives in DESE’s Core Function Focus Areas: Targeted Assistance, Data, Assessment, and Accountability, and Funding Mechanisms**

1. Coordinated Support for Newly Arrived Students in the Emergency Assistance Shelter System. The Department will:
   1. Provide direct assistance to the districts in which emergency shelters have been established by the state to strengthen their systems for welcoming, enrolling, placing and effectively serving new students. This includes support to districts in effective strategies for (1) providing English Language Development and Sheltered English Instruction in appropriate classroom settings; (2) staffing a sufficient number of well-trained educators; and (3) collaborating with external agencies to provide students and families with medical, dental, mental health, and other community and state services.
   2. Supported districts will attend introductory workshops, receive 1:1 district-specific technical assistance, and access a variety of resources provided by the Department, including translation and interpretation services, ESL MTEL courses for educators, no-cost SEI endorsement courses, and professional development for school staff.

1. Evaluation of Progress and Targeted Assistance to Districts and Schools Identified in the State’s Accountability System. The Department will:
   1. Continue to provide technical assistance, funding, and accountability to districts and schools identified in the state’s accountability system, with a focus on (1) monitoring district and school progress on student achievement and operational indicators and (2) implementing culturally responsive grade-appropriate instruction, sense of belonging, and systemic improvement strategies aligned to turnaround and improvement plans.
   2. Continue to provide technical assistance, funding, and accountability to the state’s largest district, in line with the 2022 Boston Public Schools (BPS) Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP). Key domains include student safety, special education, transportation, facilities, supporting English learners, transformation schools, and data and accountability.

1. Expand Innovative Assessments. The Department will:
   1. Expand both the new science assessment and the new civics assessment. The civics assessment is being field-tested statewide in 2024 ahead of operational use in 2025; the science assessment continues as a pilot for 2024, with expected field test in 2025.
2. Engage Stakeholders in Accountability System Review Process. The Department will:
   1. In alignment with the Racial Equity Decision-Making Tool (REDT), initiate ongoing stakeholder engagement around the strengths and weaknesses of the current accountability system with a focus on alignment to the Educational Vision.
   2. Gather a diverse range of perspectives from within the educational ecosystem (including but not limited to students, families, educators, administrators, advocacy groups, policymakers, business and industry professionals, and community organizations) to incorporate stakeholder feedback into the accountability system review process.

1. Launch the Education to Career (E2C) Research and Data Hub. In partnership with EOE, DHE and EEC, DESE will:
   1. Complete the launch of the new [Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub](https://educationtocareer.data.mass.gov/) in fall 2023. The E2C Hub is designed to make the state’s data easier to find, use, and understand for a wide range of audiences including students and families, educators, researchers, and policy makers. As one example, the E2C Hub has published a data story on mental health staffing and more data stories are planned on key policy topics.

1. Support for Districts on the Development and Submission of Three-Year Evidence-Based Student Opportunity Act Plans (SOA Plans). The Department will:
   1. Provide guidance to districts on the submission of their new three-year SOA plan that includes supporting the use of disaggregated data, selecting evidence-based programs to address academic disparities among student groups, and measuring impact.
   2. Administer approximately $10 million in grants that enable more districts to effectively implement DESE-approved evidence-based strategies.