

Educator Effectiveness Teacher Advisory Cabinet

2014-2015 Report

Members of the Teacher Advisory Cabinet (TAC) share their insights, suggestions, and feedback with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE) Center for Educator Effectiveness to help refine current policies and inform the development of new policies and resources at the state level.

During the 2014-15 School Year, Teacher Cabinet Members:

Informed ESE's work on teacher leadership and recognition: Teacher Advisory Cabinet members collaborated with Principal Advisory Cabinet members to produce a written compilation of advice for their peers about [how to build a school culture that supports teacher leadership](#). TAC members also gave input on the design of ESE's new [Teacher Leadership website](#), including providing feedback on the teacher leadership case studies and helping compile challenges and solutions to implementing effective teacher leadership roles. TAC members gave input on revising the MA Teacher of the Year application questions and process, helped design new communication documents, and served as application readers.

Provided input on the MA Equity Plan: Teachers identified educational equity gaps and root causes to inform the MA State Equity Plan submitted to the United States Department of Education in June 2015. Feedback from the Teacher and Principal Cabinets was particularly helpful in demonstrating the cyclical nature of causes, inequities, and gaps in students' access to excellent educators. For example, school climate and culture can affect educator retention/turnover rates. In countering this attrition, hiring practices can lead to gaps in teacher experience, preparation and effectiveness, which in turn exacerbate inequities in school climate. Several strategies to eliminate equity gaps outlined in the plan—particularly those that are more appropriate for district- and school-level action—come from teachers' and principals' suggestions and are represented in both new and existing ESE priorities.



Quick Links to Resources

- [Teacher Leadership Website](#)
- [Building a School Culture that Promotes Teacher Leadership, Advice from Teachers and Principals](#)
- [Teachers' Top Three from ESE](#)
- [Video: Educator Voices in Policy](#)
- [Video Series: Transforming Educator Evaluation in Massachusetts \(TEEM\)](#)
- [MA State Equity Plan](#)
- [Alternative Pathways for Establishing Educator Impact](#)



Working Groups

In addition to attending six meetings, TAC members participated in three working groups throughout the year that allowed subsets of the group to dive more deeply into areas of personal interest. Those groups:

1. Wrote [Building a School Culture that Supports Teacher Leadership](#), in collaboration with members of the Principal Advisory Cabinet.
2. [Updated the MA Teacher of the Year application and review process.](#)
3. [Served as "pen pals" with ESE staff.](#)

For more information about the Teacher Advisory Cabinet, please contact Kat Johnston at ksjohnston@doe.mass.edu.

Gave feedback on alternative pathways to measuring student impact: In the winter of 2015, ESE developed the “[Alternative Pathways Proposal](#),” which provided districts with new flexibility for engaging stakeholders in the development of processes for evaluating educator impact on student learning. Teachers from the TAC were among the stakeholders asked to look over the proposal while still in confidential draft form and give feedback on how they thought it would be received by teachers. The eventual policy change that made the Alternative Pathways Proposal official benefitted from TAC input.



Helped develop new communication guidelines and resources: The Teacher Advisory Cabinet is an invaluable resource for candid feedback on how ESE shares its work with the broader field of teachers and school and district administrators. The teachers often pushed on the question of “WHY”: “*Why is this policy necessary? Why are we changing this? Why is it important to do this?*” This led to a lot of reflection on the Educator Effectiveness team’s part about how we can better communicate and has prompted us to always “lead with the why” – a central team goal for the upcoming year. This has meant a more systematic move towards a student-focused orientation in our communication. Additionally, we are striving for clearer and simpler explanations and more direct communication with teachers. As a result of TAC members’ feedback and suggestions, ESE increased its presence on social media ([@MASchoolsk12](#)) and launched a teacher-focused bi-weekly e-newsletter, [Teachers’ Top Three from ESE](#). Teacher Advisory Cabinet members are also featured in *Top Three* publications.

Gave feedback on proposed changes to pre-service teacher assessments: In revamping pre-service teaching requirements, Teacher Cabinet members shared their observations on the skills teachers need in order to be effective on day one with their students. They were an integral part in suggesting the types of evidence teacher candidates will provide through observations, student feedback, and student outcomes to demonstrate effectiveness in a way that is aligned with the in-service evaluation framework. This new performance assessment, the [Candidate Assessment of Performance](#) (CAP), will be piloted in 2015-16, and will be required by all teacher candidates for program completion in 2016-17, replacing the Pre-Service Performance Assessment (PPA).



Served as “pen pals” with ESE staff: Teachers (and principals from the Principal Advisory Cabinet) were paired with individual staff members from the Center of Educator Effectiveness, Center for Curriculum and Instruction, and the Office of Planning and Research to form a year-long relationship that included emails, phone conversations, and in-person school and classroom visits. Over the course of the year, pen pals got to know each other’s work better and developed new perspectives and insights. Pen pal interactions allowed ESE staff to better understand how state and district policies are implemented and experienced by teachers and principals.

Participated in two series of instructional videos: At the suggestion of the Teacher and Principal Cabinets, ESE developed video training resources to support educator evaluation implementation. The [Transforming Educator Evaluation in Massachusetts \(TEEM\) video series](#) features members of the cabinet and other MA educators and provides concrete examples of meaningful evaluation systems. The videos highlight aspects of the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle, as well as innovative district systems that support implementation. In addition to the TEEM videos, cabinet members participated in a series of training videos that provide a comprehensive overview of the MA Evaluation Framework for educator preparation programs and educators in training.



Presented at local and national conferences: TAC members presented during workshops and spoke on the opening plenary at ESE's Spring Convening in May 2015 in Marlborough, MA . Several members were selected to participate in the United States Department of Education's [Teach to Lead Summit](#) in Boston. One TAC representative traveled to Tampa, FL, to attend the Common Core State Standards Fall 2015 national conference along with leaders from the Curriculum & Instruction team at ESE. Another TAC member presented her district's distributed leadership structure and how it promotes teacher voice at the [New Teacher Center's](#) Symposium in San Francisco.

Making Connections

Members of the Cabinet found it helpful to be able to bring information they learned at meetings back to their schools and districts. Also, they often gathered input from colleagues that informed discussions at meetings. Some examples of how teachers brought information back to their districts include:

- Forwarding agendas, memos, and opportunities for input to colleagues, principals, district, and union leaders.
- Reusing activities or materials from Cabinet meetings at staff meetings in their schools or PD sessions in their districts.
- Bringing additional information or resources to inform the collective bargaining process.
- Meeting with district leaders to provide updates on topics covered at meetings to ensure that district leaders are aware of new resources and opportunities from ESE.



As one member of the Cabinet put it, “Talking with other teachers and talking and learning about the intent of policies from DESE enables me to go back to my school and explain the intent behind policy and rise above just talking about compliance.”

What do teachers have to say?

At the end of each meeting, TAC members completed a survey to share feedback on the structure and content of the meeting, provide additional comments on the discussion topics, and suggest ideas for next steps for ESE or future topics. The participant feedback data we collect is tremendously helpful in setting future meeting agendas, gathering additional feedback and comments on the topics we covered, and ensuring that the experience continues to be a positive and worthwhile one for teachers.

Our meeting format includes whole and small group work, guest speakers, and focus groups to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Here is what 2014-2015 participants say about their experience:

“As a member of ESE’s teacher cabinet, I have been able to more effectively collaborate with my colleagues at my own school, as well as to engage in conversations at a district level about how to improve student learning in the classroom and how development of district policy can impact student learning. It is important for educators to have opportunities to have conversations about policy so that there is understanding of its intent and spirit. Just reading about it on a piece of paper is not enough. The level of discussion, collaboration, and commitment on the part of members of the cabinet has inspired and challenged me to look from many angles, not only at education in Massachusetts, but also in my district, my school, and my own practice to further seek to improve.” – Ann McConchie, Nauset Public Schools

“The Teacher Advisory Cabinet has given teachers the unique opportunity to play a key role in education at the state level. As a special educator, it is refreshing to have a voice in decisions that impact all students. It has also given me the opportunity to have open discussions and share ideas with some of the most brilliant and accomplished educators in our state. I am able to take that information back to my district to help them make decisions that directly impact what is happening in our classrooms.” - Tim Tichacek, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District

“DESE’s Teacher Cabinet is encouraging cross-pollination, drawing teachers in to the latest thinking and policy decisions, and sending staff members out into our classrooms. As a “pen-pal,” I have been able to share my perspective on the implementation of the educator evaluation process with a Professional Development Specialist, and she is bringing her new understandings and questions back to her colleagues. I’m feeling hopeful that our connection will serve as impetus to improve the education evaluation process for others.” - Riana Good, Boston Public Schools

“Through the cabinet, I better understand the meaning behind policies. Learning the intent behind policies helps me to see that the ultimate goal of the evaluation system is about educator growth and development.” – Beth Morgan, Littleton Public Schools

“The cabinet humanizes the Department. It’s not just an institution, there are people you can reach out to.” – Julianna Keyes, Arlington Public Schools

“Being on the cabinet is a form of leadership. I want to be better and I want my district to be better, the cabinet helps us do that.” – Michele Leduc, Milford Public Schools



Background

The Center for Educator Effectiveness at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) oversees educator preparation, evaluation, recognition, and other educator quality initiatives. As we work to support districts, schools, and teachers in educator effectiveness work, we know it is critical to engage school-based educators whose feedback can inform our ongoing work.

ESE convened a Principal Advisory Cabinet in August 2011, shortly after passage of the new educator evaluation regulations ([603 CMR 35.00](#)), to support the development and rollout of the evaluation model system in Race-to-the-Top districts. In 2013-14, the Educator Effectiveness team launched a pilot Teacher Advisory Cabinet that, like the Principal Advisory Cabinet, provided feedback on ongoing projects, mostly related to the effective implementation of the new educator evaluation framework, as well as improving channels of communication between the teachers and the Department. The pilot was successful – teachers found the experience to be meaningful and the Educator Effectiveness team found great value in teachers' input, so the group was extended into the following school year.



My team and I highly value the thoughtful input and insight we gain from the teachers on the Cabinet. I enjoy building relationships with them that allow us to have candid conversations about what's going well, what's not going well, and how we can work together to make improvements."

**- Heather Peske, Associate
Commissioner, Center for Educator
Effectiveness**

2014-2105 Teacher Advisory Cabinet Members

Mark Acton	Hatfield Public Schools
Jaime Alberts	Newton Public Schools
Robert Baroz	Boston Public Schools
Lisa Caponigro	Revere Public Schools
Sabra Dickson	Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District
Rebecca Duda	Dracut Public Schools
Kate Fallon	Braintree Public Schools
Chris Faucher	Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical Schools
Lisa Ford	Douglas Public Schools
Chris Forest	Natick Public Schools
Ruth Freeman	Westford Public Schools
Riana Good	Boston Public Schools
Theresa Kao	Prospect Hill Academy Charter School
Julianna Keyes	Arlington Public Schools
Michele Leduc	Milford Public Schools
Liz Leidel	Abby Kelly Foster Charter School
Lisa Lopes	Falmouth Public Schools
Caitlin Macleod-Bluver	Boston Public Schools
Hannah Marino	North Middlesex Regional School District
Ann McConchie	Nauset Regional School District
David Mitchell	Masconomet Regional School District
Dan Monahan	Cambridge Public Schools
Beth Morgan	Littleton Public Schools
Talmadge Nardi	Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter School
Kristen O'Connor	North Middlesex Regional
Rob Powers	Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District
Nancy Sawyer	Tantasqua Regional School District
Jeff Shea	Belmont Public Schools
Kathy Sullivan	Rockland Public Schools
Tim Tichacek	Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District

How does the Cabinet work?

In 2014-15, the Cabinet convened six times. At these in-person, 2.5 hour meetings, teachers weighed in on timely topics such as educator evaluation, effective teacher leadership and recognition models, educator preparation, and licensure. The meetings were usually held at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Malden, MA, which allowed for visitors from the Educator Effectiveness Team and others from within the agency to attend meetings. Commissioner Chester attended the final meeting of the school year. Other times, meetings were held at Cabinet members' schools in the western and central parts of the state. In addition to the in-person meetings, Cabinet members spent 1-2 hours in between meetings responding to requests for feedback via email, shared documents, and conference calls.

Who was on the Cabinet?

The 2014-15 Teacher Advisory Cabinet was comprised of 30 teachers from 28 different districts and charter schools spanning the state of Massachusetts. Cabinet members teach a variety of ages and subjects, from SEI Kindergarten to High School ELA. Additionally, some serve in a single classroom and others serve across schools or in other unique positions, such as School-to-Career counselor or K-8 Science Instructional Coach. Many of the teachers hold leadership roles in their schools, districts, and unions. These teachers were selected through a competitive application process for their ability to provide thoughtful, nuanced, solutions-oriented comments and feedback from a range of perspectives and backgrounds.

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