Educator Effectiveness Teacher Advisory Cabinet: 
2013-2014 Summary

Purpose & Background

The office of Educator Policy, Preparation, and Leadership at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) supports educator quality initiatives, including educator preparation, evaluation, and recognition. As we work to build capacity in districts and schools to promote educator effectiveness work, we know it is critical to engage school-based educators to inform our ongoing work. ESE began convening two statewide principal cabinets in 2011 and launched a statewide teacher cabinet in 2014. Members of the Teacher Advisory Cabinet share their insights (for example, successes and challenges they experience), suggestions, and feedback to help refine current policies and inform the development of new policies and resources at the state level.

Who was on the Cabinet?

In its first year, the Cabinet was comprised of twenty-four teachers (see page 2) from a variety of schools and districts across the state. These teachers were chosen through a competitive process for their ability to provide thoughtful, nuanced, solutions-oriented comments and feedback from a range of perspectives and backgrounds. Many of them will be continuing their membership into the 2014-15 school year.

What Topics were Discussed?

The Teacher Advisory Cabinet convened bimonthly during the second half of the 2013-14 school year. At these in-person meetings, teachers weighed in on timely topics such as educator evaluation, effective teacher leadership and recognition models, and educator preparation and licensure.

For example, the Teacher Advisory Cabinet contributed to the ESE’s ongoing work in the following ways:

- Cabinet members shared solutions to the challenge of attracting and retaining great teachers to work at Level 4 and 5 schools. Teachers offered suggestions about what they would look for during the hiring process, what qualities a school leader would need to possess and what kinds of benefits (including and beyond a stipend) would help convince them. Their suggestions were shared with the Office of School Turnaround, as well as with HR departments and principals in Level 4 and 5 districts across the state.

- Teachers participated in small focus groups aimed at helping ESE reimagine teacher licensure. Teachers discussed questions such as: What should be the purpose of a teaching license? Can licensure play a role in elevating the teaching profession? Should licensure play a role in career pathways and opportunities? Their responses were compiled and shared with the Licensure Team, which is currently drafting some options for redesigning licensure in Massachusetts. Cabinet members will have additional opportunities to weigh in on those options during the 2014-2015 school year.

- Cabinet members looked at drafts of the Staff and Student Feedback guidance document prior to publication in July 2014 and gave specific suggestions and helpful edits to ensure that the document would be clear, accessible, and helpful to teachers and district leaders charged with designing the staff and student feedback component of evaluation. Some Cabinet members participated in additional opportunities related to Staff and Student Feedback, such as attending Expert Review Sessions and

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Final Item Selection Sessions for the Model Surveys and serving as panelists at the Spring Convening session focused on this topic.

- Teachers also offered feedback on the following ongoing topics, to which we will be returning during the 2014-2015 school year: what structures and supports make teacher leadership roles effective and sustainable; how K-12 educators can be meaningfully involved in the educator preparation program review process; how state level teacher recognition opportunities can be both better publicized and better utilized, so that honored teachers feel more connected to each other and are better able to share best practices with the field at large.

Teachers were also invited to engage with ESE between sessions when opportunities arose that were of interest to individual members. For example, one teacher attended a national conference on educator evaluation with ESE staff, two others offered testimony to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education about the value of state policymakers engaging with teachers and how this translates into better implementation practices at the school level, and four shared their experiences negotiating various aspects of the educator evaluation system as part of their local teachers’ associations with the Educator Policy, Preparation, and Leadership Team.

We surveyed Teacher Advisory Cabinet members at the end of each meeting and teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with their experience on the Cabinet. Teachers are eager to offer suggestions, give feedback, and learn more about how policy decisions are made at the state level that ultimately impact teachers and students across the state. We are equally as eager to learn from their unique perspectives, which we believe will result in higher quality end products. We look forward to continuing to engage Teacher Advisory Cabinet members during the 2014-2015 school year.

2013-2014 Cabinet Members

Mark Acton, Smith Academy, Hatfield • Jaime Alberts, Bigelow Middle School, Newton • Sarah Alwon, Dean Technical High School, Holyoke • Robert Baroz, Dearborn STEM Academy, Boston • Mary Bashir, Needham High School • Christina Borges, Westport High School • Portia Botchway, Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter • Lisa Caponigro, McKinley Elementary, Revere • Rebecca Duda, Lakeview Junior High, Dracut • Chris Faucher, Bay Path RVTHS, South Worcester • Ruth Freeman, Abbot Elementary School, Westford • Riana Good, Boston Latin Academy, Boston • Julianna Keyes, Ottoson Middle School, Arlington • Michele Leduc, Brookside Elementary, Milford • Ann McConchie, Nauset Regional Middle School • David Mitchell, Masconomet Regional High School • Dan Monahan, Cambridge Public Schools • Elizabeth Morgan, Littleton Middle School • Talmadge Nardi, Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter • Kristen O'Connor, Varnum Brook Elementary School, North Middlesex Regional • Robert Powers, Apponequet Regional High School, Freetown-Lakeville • Nancy Sawyer, Tantasqua Regional High School • Christine Size, Martha Jones Elementary, Westwood • Derek Vandegrift, Waltham High School

Thank you to this amazing group of educators for sharing your time, ideas, and expertise with all of us at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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