To: Sponsoring Organizations (SOs) with Educator Preparation Programs

From: Sandra Hinderliter, Educator Preparation Lead

Date: August 2018

Subject: Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Implementation Memo

The finalized [Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Guidelines](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/smk-guidelines.pdf) released along with this memo reflect a significant shift in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE’s) approach to outlining content expectations for teachers. This approach emphasizes the importance of aligning standards for students with expectations for educators. Please review the context section of the 2018 SMK Guidelines for details and rationales relative to these shifts.

DESE anticipates that for many providers, designing and implementing programs that robustly address the updated SMKs will require meaningful, and potentially significant, changes to programs of study. We liken this undertaking to the work that occurred with the updated 2014 [Professional Standards for Teachers](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/advisories/TeachersGuidelines.docx). For example, we anticipate that providers will need to consider the following shifts carefully:

* There are now crosscutting SMKs which are required in all initial license programs. As such, it is likely that programs of study will require new or modified content to cover these expectations sufficiently.
* The continuum of content knowledge expectations now makes clear the varying levels of depth and fluency associated with different licensure levels. This means that providers who previously screened only for content knowledge at admission will now have to think more deeply how they will continue to develop candidate fluency with that content knowledge as it relates to effective instructional practice.
* Most of the licensure area SMKs now point directly to *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* rather than providing a separate list of content expectations. Because of this, we anticipate that SO leaders and faculty will need to engage in unpacking the *Frameworks* themselves in order to ensure that programs of study sufficiently support candidates in developing the fluency or expertise of knowledge needed to build Pre-K—12 students’ knowledge to master the academic standards, which are outlined in the *Frameworks*.

To this end, full alignment to the updated SMKs will likely require more than adjusting or tweaking syllabi. We see this as an opportunity for a thorough examination of the ways in which programs are currently building candidates’ fluency with subject matter knowledge grounded in the [*Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) and the extent to which they could be strengthened. While DESE recognizes that all Sponsoring Organizations’ programs may require a different degree of redesign, all efforts should keep in mind that the updates to the SMKs, as well as those outlined in the recent [Pre-Practicum Guidelines](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/pre-practicum.docx) around content pedagogy-based gateway assessments, are closely linked initiatives that together encourage a shift that is evidence-based, content-focused, and increasingly driven by districts’ needs.

Implementation Implications

The timeline below outlines expectations for implementation of the 2018 SMKs, as well as implications as it relates to other connected initiatives\*.

| Topic | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SMK Guidelines | SMK Guidelines Finalized in August 2018 | Statements of Assurance submitted by May 2020 | 2018 SMKs fully implemented in all programs by September 1 | Outcomes of 2018 SMKs reflected in data |
| MTELs |  | Group A MTELs in place (see Appendix B) | Group B MTELs in place (see Appendix B) | Group C MTELs in place (see Appendix B) |
| Formal Review | Programs assessed based on pre-2018 SMKs | Program transitions to 2018 SMKs factored into review | 2018 SMKs examined as part of review | 2018 SMKs used in review, including outcome data |
| Informal Review | 2018 SMK Guidelines implemented | | | |
| Competency Review and 12 Credit route to Professional License | 2018 SMK Guidelines implemented | | | |
| Pre-Practicum Gateway Assessments | Model Gateway Assessments selected/ developed |  | Pre-prac Gateway Assessments fully implemented |  |
| Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) | CAP Rubric Refinements piloted | CAP Guidelines Updated |  | Updated CAP Guidelines fully Implemented |

\*For additional information about how all these initiatives connect, see the section below on “[Intersecting Initiatives](#Intersecting_Initiatives)”

As is indicated above, **DESE will collect a statement of assurance (see Appendix C) from all Sponsoring Organizations by May 2020** as confirmation that all educator preparation programs have made necessary changes to programs of study to ensure candidates develop fluency with the SMKs for their license. DESE maintains the authority to request additional documentation from any Sponsoring Organization at any point to assess the quality of preparation provided to candidates.

Implications on Licensure Processes

There are two main areas of licensure that will be impacted by the SMK Guidelines (for detailed information on the impacts to specific licenses, please contact the DESE Licensure Office at 781-338-6600):

1. Competency Review to obtain a provisional license or obtain an additional initial or professional license in a new field.
2. Obtaining a professional license via the option of possession of a master’s degree and at least 12-graduate credits in the content area of the license.

Since the Competency Review is the process in which the DESE ensures a candidate has obtained the necessary subject matter knowledge when a content test is not in place, the new SMKs will impact what candidates need to demonstrate. Similar impact will take place with candidates attempting to obtain their professional license. Additionally, courses in the crosscutting knowledge section of the SMK Guidelines will not count towards advancing an initial license to a professional license.

*Support for Implementation*

Sponsoring Organizations are responsible for implementing the SMK requirements. While many organizations are familiar with the *Frameworks*, DESE recognizes educator preparation faculty may not yet have extensive exposure and experience with the *Frameworks*. In support of developing this knowledge, DESE recommends that providers leverage the many resources already available. DESE commits to ongoing communication and dissemination of additional resources or supports as they become available. For instance, over the next year, the bi-monthly Ed Prep Newsletter will include an entire section dedicated to SMK support and implementation resources.

DESE’s Center for Instructional Support (CIS) developed several resources to aid the Pre-K—12 field in deepening their familiarity with the *Frameworks*. These resources include the:

* [*Frameworks*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) website. In addition to housing all the *Frameworks*, individuals have access to:
  + “Highlights” of the framework revisions that impact planning and assessment (available for Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy)
  + Grade-by-grade explanations, and
  + Quick Reference Guides (QRGs). The QRGs are each two pages and each cover a specific topic of importance in the corresponding *Frameworks*.
* [Standards-Based Learning videos](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/) provide an overview of how educators are approaching standards-based learning in different content areas and grades.  [What to Look For Observation Guides](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/) (WTLFs). The WTLFs summarize standards for the relevant grade level and content area and lists teacher and student behaviors aligned with the model evaluation rubric and the *Frameworks*.
* [Writing Standards in Action](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/wsa/) (WSA) Project, which annotates student work to show how it demonstrates mastery of the Massachusetts standards. The [*2017 ELA/Literacy Framework*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf) also links directly from specific standards to relevant writing samples.

In the 2018-19 academic year, DESE will develop additional resources to support educators and leaders in providing content-specific feedback to classroom teachers in order to support stronger student outcomes. As this work develops, DESE encourages individuals from Sponsoring Organizations to leverage these supports when redesigning their educator preparation programs.

Intersecting Initiatives

The SMK Guidelines represent one component of a broader set of initiatives that impact preparation in Massachusetts. It is critical that these initiatives be implemented in a cohesive manner. Below are descriptions of other initiatives, which are directly connected to SMK implementation.

| **Intersecting Initiative** | **Overview** | **Connection to SMKs** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) | The state updated the ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks in 2017. Schools and districts fully implemented these standards beginning in 2017-2018 school year. The History and Social Science Curriculum Framework was updated 2018, and the Arts and Health Curriculum Frameworks are in the process of being updated. | The alignment of the SMK requirements to the standards for in-service teachers ensures that newly prepared educators enter the classroom ready to support success of all students. |
| [Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTELs)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/) | The MTEL was initiated by DESE in 1998 as part of a statewide education reform initiative. It includes tests of subject matter knowledge, which are designed to ensure educators are knowledgeable in the subject matter of the license(s) sought. | As a result of the updated SMK Guidelines, related MTELs are undergoing revision to align with these requirements. The MTEL test development process takes 18-24 months; a timeline for anticipated MTEL revisions can be found in Appendix B. |
| [Pre-Practicum Guidelines](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/pre-practicum.docx) | The pre-practicum consists of field-based experiences with diverse student learners that take place during the early part of a candidate’s preparation, providing candidates with multiple opportunities to apply learning from coursework into authentic teaching experiences with students in Pre-K—12 settings and prepare to successfully demonstrate readiness during the capstone preparation experience known as the practicum. | During the pre-practicum experience, Sponsoring Organizations must evaluate candidate readiness by employing a minimum of two gateway assessments, which are outcomes-oriented measures of candidate performance. Both gateway assessments must assess content-specific pedagogical skill.  DESE has also issued a Request for Information (RFI) to develop a suite of model pre-practicum gateway assessments that will measure the application of content pedagogy. These model assessments can be used as one part of a measure of fluency of SMKs. |
| [Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/cap/) | All preparation programs are required to assess candidates’ readiness for licensure using a department-defined performance assessment. The Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) is modeled after the [MA Model System for Educator Evaluation](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/). The CAP assesses candidates’ readiness to positively impact students’ learning from their first day in a Massachusetts classroom. Successful completion on the CAP is required for program completion. | Candidates must acquire fluency with subject matter knowledge in order to design effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measureable outcomes (Standard 1 Indicator a).  In addition, the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation rubric language is currently undergoing refinements. These refinements will be mirrored in the CAP rubric. Therefore, the CAP Guidelines will be updated and will be put out for public comment in Spring 2019. Through this process, there is potential to include an additional CAP element focused on subject matter knowledge: Standard I, Indicator A, Element 1 (Subject Matter Knowledge). This would provide an opportunity for the fluency of SMKs to be assessed through CAP in a more explicit manner. |
| [Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) and Indicators](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/pst/) | Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) and Indicators speak to candidates’ pedagogical knowledge and skills. | Together, the SMK and PSTs and indicators are the foundation on which all preparation programs should be designed. As preparation providers revise programs according to the SMK requirements they should do so with the PSTs in mind as well. |
| [Program Review Process](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/pr.html) | All Sponsoring Organizations undergo formal review every seven years. Approval allows Sponsoring Organizations to endorse completers for licensure. DESE has developed a comprehensive review process for evaluating Sponsoring Organizations based on the Program Approval Standards adopted in June 2012. | The [Program Approval Standards](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=03) require Sponsoring Organizations to “ensure that completers have content mastery based on the subject matter knowledge requirements…” Subsequently, providers are responsible for updating their programs to incorporate the SMK requirements and for ensuring candidates have mastered them. |
| [Educator Evaluation](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval) | The state adopted regulations for the evaluation of Massachusetts educators in 2011 in an effort to promote the growth and development of educators; place student learning at the center of conversations about improvement; shorten timelines for improvement; and recognize excellence in the profession. The Educator Evaluation Framework was implemented in all districts in the 2013-2014 school year. | Educators are held accountable to student achievement on the MA curriculum standards. By aligning the SMK requirements to the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*, they align with the expectations outlined for current Massachusetts teachers. This alignment ensures that educators are prepared under the same expectations on which they are evaluated and supported once employed. |
| [CURATE CUrriculum RAtings by Teachers](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/resources.html) | Expanding access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials can significantly improve student outcomes, especially when teachers have the professional learning opportunities they need to make the most of those materials. The work of Massachusetts teacher CURATE panels will result in a series of brief, user-friendly reports that provide schools and districts with guidance as they work to select high-quality core curricular materials aligned to Massachusetts learning standards. | Strong curricular materials, in addition to modeling high-quality instructional design, also build content knowledge in teachers and teacher candidates. Materials closely aligned to Massachusetts standards will also be closely aligned to the SMKs. |

**Crosscutting Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Matrix (Required)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sponsoring Organization: |  |
| Licensure Program (License and Grade Level): ­ |  |

| **Crosscutting Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Requirement** | **Course(s) that cover the knowledge needed to meet these requirements** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Basic | Functional | Fluent | Expert |
| Support the integration of standards for literacy across the content areas as outlined in the [2017 ELA/Literacy Framework](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf). |  |  |  |  |
| Apply basic principles and concepts for digital literacy and computer science in Computing and Society, Digital Tools and Collaboration, and Computing Systems as outlined in the [2016 Digital Literacy Computer Science Framework](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/dlcs.docx). |  |  |  |  |
| Apply the theories of cognitive, social, emotional, language, and physical development from childhood through adolescence. |  |  |  |  |
| Understand the characteristics and instructional implications of moderately and severely disabling conditions. |  |  |  |  |
| Apply special education policies and procedures. |  |  |  |  |
| Support English learners through English learner education instruction. |  |  |  |  |

**Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Program of Study Mapping Tool (Optional)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Licensure Program (License and Grade Level): ­ |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Curriculum Framework Domain**  (e.g. Counting and Cardinality in Math) | **Grade level(s) in which students are taught this domain** | **Functional or Fluent content knowledge needed?**  (functional if in two grade levels below/above license, fluent if in the license grade(s)) | **Knowledge needed to teach this content** | **Course(s) where majority of content is taught and/or assessed** |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |
|  |  |  Functional  Fluent |  |  |

**Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Candidate Tracking Tool (Optional)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Candidate: |  |
| Licensure Program (License and Grade Level): ­ |  |

| **Curriculum Framework Domain**  (e.g. Counting and Cardinality in Math) | **Current level of content knowledge:** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Basic | Functional | Fluent | Expert |
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The [Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/) is designed to assess a certain level of content knowledge as outlined in the SMKs, which serve as a key resource both in considering and prioritizing content and in determining candidate readiness relative to the overall continuum of content knowledge.

A complete list of required MTEL’s for each license area is available on the [DESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/testrequire.html). Additional resources, including MTEL test objectives, are also available on this website.

With the revision to SMKs, some MTELs will also change. Below is the development schedule for affected tests:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Projected MTEL Test Development Schedule | | |
| Group A | Group B | Group C |
| Updates began in 2017-2018 | Updates to begin in 2018-2019 | Updates to begin in 2019-2020 |
| Operational Spring 2020 | Operational Winter 2021 | Operational Spring 2021 |
| General Science, 5-8  Mathematics, 5-8  Mathematics, 8-12  Foundations of Reading  English Language Arts, 5-12 | Biology, 8-12  Chemistry, 8-12  Mathematics, 1-6  Physics, 8-12  Technology/Engineering, 5-12  Digital Literacy/Computer Science, 5-12 | General Curriculum  Middle School English/History  Earth & Space Science, 8-12  Middle School Math/Science  Early Childhood, PreK-2  History, 5-12  Social Science 5-12  Reading Specialist |

*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| --- | --- |
| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

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**Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Guidelines**

**Statement of Assurance**

Sponsoring Organization:

**Directions**: This form should be completed by the Sponsoring Organization's President, Executive Director, Dean, or other person responsible for oversight and ultimate decision-making associated with educator preparation programs at the organization.

Place your initials in the appropriate yes/no box. If the answer is no, please provide a comment explaining why and intentions to fully meet the expectations set forth. Attach additional documentation as necessary.

Please sign and submit this form to [edprep@doe.mass.edu](mailto:edprep@doe.mass.edu) by May 30, 2020.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement of Assurance** | **Yes** | **No** | **Comments** |
| By September 1, 2020 all educator preparation programs will have been revised in support of ensuring candidates meet expectations as outlined in the 2018 Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Guidelines, including incorporating the new crosscutting SMKs into all Initial Licensure programs (Required Crosscutting SMK Matrix enclosed). |  |  |  |
| Our organization has a system/process in place to continually monitor individual program efficacy to ensure that candidates who complete the program are prepared to be effective in the licensure role as it relates to fluency in content knowledge. |  |  |  |

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President/Executive Director/Dean Name (Print) Educator Preparation Contact Name (Print)

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