



***Report to the Legislature on:
Department of Education Strategic Vision and
Progress Report***

Line item 7010-0005
November 2007



This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Education
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Dear Legislator:

It is with pleasure that I submit the Department of Education's *Strategic Vision and Progress Report* pursuant to Chapter 61 of the Acts of 2007, line-item 7010-0005 in response to the following:

“ the department shall submit a progress report to the secretary of administration and finance, the chairs of the house and senate ways and means committees and the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education on efforts by the department to further define and advance the strategic vision of the department, along with a detailed implementation plan for realizing that vision.”

Prior to serving as Acting Commissioner of Education, one of my priorities as Deputy Commissioner was leading the Department's senior staff in the development of a *Framework for Leadership and Action*, which Commissioner David Driscoll submitted to you last year. The *Framework* introduced a specific vision and goals for the agency, the action principles that guide our work, and the specific "levers" such as grants, professional development, policy initiatives, and other tools we have at our disposal to promote improvements in the system. The three goals are: prevent the achievement gap from starting; close the gap where it exists; challenge all students to proficiency and beyond.

This year, the Department has taken this effort a step further to define more clearly the priority areas for our work that support achieving the goals, along with identifying the existing work and new initiatives we will employ to accomplish priorities. Our four priority areas are: support for students; support for educators; support for schools and districts; and state leadership. Details of the draft are in the report with the timeline to advance this strategic plan.

As we finalize this year's strategic plan, we have already begun to use these conceptual categories to focus our work in FY 2008 budget recommendations and the Department's research agenda. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Nellhaus
Acting Commissioner of Education

Massachusetts Department of Education Strategic Vision and Progress Report

INTRODUCTION

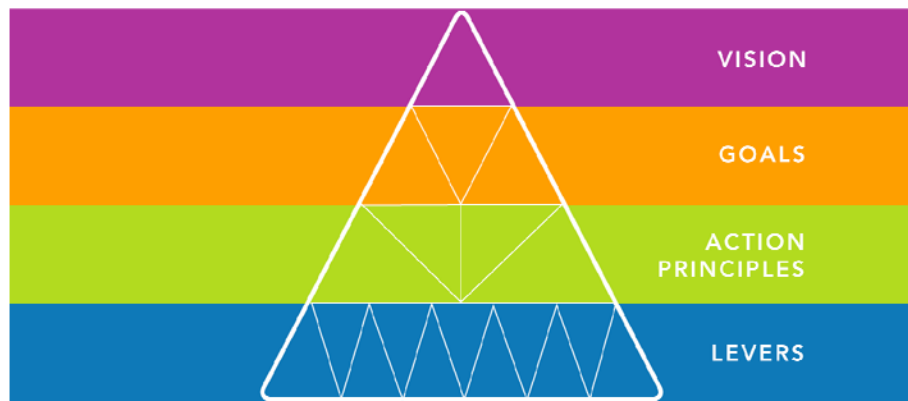
"Pursuant to Chapter 61 of the Acts of 2007, Section 2, line item 7010-0005, the Department of Education respectfully submits this report, *Department of Education Strategic Vision and Progress Report*, addressing the following:

7010-0005 For the operation of the department of education; provided, that the department, in collaboration with the commission on gay and lesbian youth established by section 67 of chapter 3 of the General Laws, shall allocate not less than \$200,000 for programming to ensure public schools' compliance with the board of education's recommendations for the support and safety of gay and lesbian students and the implementation of related suicide-prevention and violence-prevention efforts; and provided further, that *not later than November 15, 2007, the department shall submit a progress report to the secretary of administration and finance, the chairs of the house and senate ways and means committees and the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education on efforts by the department to further define and advance the strategic vision of the department, along with a detailed implementation plan for realizing that vision.*

BACKGROUND

In fall 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Education set forth a *Framework for Leadership and Action*: a statement of what the Department aims to accomplish and what a successful public education system will look like. The *Framework* introduced a specific vision and goals for the agency, as well as a visual image of a multi-layered triangle to communicate how each piece builds on and relates to the next.

Framework for Leadership & Action



Vision

- We will work in partnership with policy makers, communities, parents, school districts, and students to build a system that will prepare all students to succeed as productive and contributing members of our democratic society and the global economy.

Goals

- Prevent the achievement gap from starting
- Close the gap where it exists
- Challenge all students to proficiency and beyond

Action Principles

- Partner with others to address barriers to learning
- Build capacity at all levels
- Identify and communicate what works
- Promote high standards and accountability for results

Levers

- Aid & grants
- Bully pulpit
- Policies & regulations
- Information & communications
- Partnerships & networks
- Professional development
- Program reviews
- Standards and assessments
- Technical assistance
- Technology solutions

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2007–2008

This year, the Department has taken this effort a step further, working with our senior leaders and our Board to define more clearly the priority areas for our work that support achieving these goals, along with identifying the existing work and new initiatives we will employ to accomplish these objectives. This will allow us to frame our agency's work in the context of our goals and help us begin to identify which programs and activities are most critical to our making progress in these areas. Our draft priority areas are as follows:

1: Support for students

Identify and implement the supports students need to reach proficiency and beyond.

- **Supports for academic excellence:** Provide students with academic supports and incentives to close the achievement gap and reach proficiency and beyond.
- **Supports for the whole child:** Provide students and families with access to the school- and community-based social, health, nutrition, and other supports they need to reduce barriers to learning.

2: Support for educators

Prepare and support educators to achieve and sustain instructional excellence.

- **Standards:** Enhance the standards for the professional skills educators should demonstrate at each stage of their career and develop means for assessing performance on those standards.
- **Career pathways:** Redesign the state educator licensure and professional development system into one that is standards-based, results-oriented, coordinated, and differentiated by career stage. Provide supports to novice teachers to encourage more people to choose and stay in teaching as a profession.

- **Leadership:** Prepare, support, and sustain leadership that can provide instructional leadership and transform schools and school systems to produce improved academic performance.

3: Support for schools and districts

Provide schools and districts with the structures, systems, and resources essential for effective educational practice.

- **Systems of support:** Identify the structures, systems, and resources schools and districts require for effective educational practice. Align state aid and grant programs to those requirements. Provide high-priority districts with additional services structured to reflect the differing challenges districts face in improving educational outcomes.
- **School and district redesign:** Support alternative administrative and governance structures that hold promise for improving educational outcomes.
- **Data collection and use:** Determine the design features for the next generation of the state’s student assessment system. Refine the state’s school and district accountability system. Provide more timely and more useful information to teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

4: State leadership

Strengthen the Department of Education’s ability to provide effective, efficient support to students, educators, schools, and districts.

- **Innovation:** Promote innovation in Department practices and procedures to increase efficiency and minimize administrative burden on students, educators, schools, and districts.
- **Effectiveness:** Strengthen staff skills, organizational structures, technical resources, and communication vehicles to enable the Department to work more efficiently and effectively towards achieving its goals.
- **Research and planning:** Evaluate Department and program performance through research and data and build the Department’s capacity to use evidence to improve educational outcomes.

We are now fleshing out the specific activities that support our efforts under each objective. Our timeline for dissemination and implementation is as follows:

November 2007	Complete draft of goals, objectives, initiatives, and activities and distribute to Department administrators.
November & December 2007	Hold meetings with administrators to discuss the plan, gather feedback, and set expectations for implementation.
December 2008	Revise the plan in accordance with feedback from administrators, develop a final version, and distribute to staff.
January & February 2008	Conduct a series of unit meetings throughout the agency focused on explaining the plan and how each unit fits into the agency’s overall work, as well as on gathering staff suggestions for achieving our initiative around becoming more innovative.
Spring 2008	Hold workshops with administrators to define measurable outcomes and milestones of progress for each initiative and activity; collect baseline data on each.

Our goal is to capture baseline data for every priority area by the end of FY08, so that we can begin to monitor our progress towards our goals.

THE PLAN IN ACTION

Even as we finalize the strategic plan, we have already begun to use these conceptual categories to focus our work. For instance, this year for the first time we organized our state budget around the priority areas, which helped us to identify programmatic areas of strategic importance that required additional resources to reach their objectives.

We are also using the priority areas to drive our agency's research agenda, so that we can ensure that we are collecting the information we need to make evidence-based decisions and, ultimately, to improve student outcomes.

We look forward to continuing to develop and implement our strategic plan over the next several months and expect to reap many benefits from a greater focus on planning and performance measurement.

Attachments:

- State budget by priority areas
- Research agenda by priority areas

**Massachusetts Department of Education
FY07 and FY08 state budgets by priority area**

ACCOUNT NUMBER	PROGRAM	FY2007 G.A.A. Chapter #139	FY2008 G.A.A. Chapter #61
1 - Support for students			
7010-0012	Metco	19,615,313	20,615,313
7027-0016	Work Based Learning	2,329,566	2,804,566
7027-0019	School-To-Work Connecting Activities	4,129,687	4,129,687
7030-1002	Kindergarten Grants	27,000,000	33,802,216
7030-1005	Early Intervention Tutorial Literacy	2,900,000	2,900,000
7032-0500	Comprehensive Health/Human Services	0	0
7035-0002	Adult Learning Centers	29,522,628	30,101,384
7051-0015	Supplemental Food Assistance	1,247,000	1,247,000
7053-1909	School Lunch Mandated State Match	5,426,986	5,426,986
7053-1925	School Breakfast Program	2,266,575	4,277,645
7053-1927	Breakfast - Universal Feeding	2,011,060	0
7061-9404	Student Supports to Close the Achievement Gap	10,332,793	13,215,863
7061-9600	Pilot Concurrent Enrollment Program	2,000,000	1,575,000
7061-9610	Matching Grants to Citizen Schools	300,000	475,000
7061-9611	After-School Grant Program	1,000,000	2,000,000
7061-9614	Alternative Education	1,250,000	1,195,840
7061-9621	Gifted & Talented Program	750,000	765,000
7061-9626	YouthBuild Programs	2,050,000	2,270,500
7061-9634	Massachusetts Service Alliance Grants	712,000	712,000
	Subtotal: Support for students	114,843,608	127,514,000
2 - Support for educators			
7010-0216	Teacher Workforce Development	664,797	845,881
7027-1004	P.D. for English Language Acquisition	500,000	470,987
7030-1003	John Silber Early Literacy Program	3,672,990	3,540,000
7061-9411	P.D. for Leadership	1,000,000	1,000,000
7061-9604	Educator Certification Program - Admin.	1,806,679	1,820,065
7061-9804	P.D. for Mathematics	2,000,000	895,367
	Subtotal: Support for educators	9,644,466	8,572,300
3 - Support for schools and districts			
7035-0006	Local Aid - Regional School Transportation	55,500,000	58,300,000
7035-0007	Local Aid - Trans. of Non Resident Students	2,000,000	1,950,000
7052-0006	Local Aid - Construction Planning Grants	19,076	19,076
7061-0008	Local Aid - Chapter # 70, Foundation Aid	3,505,520,040	3,725,671,328
7061-0011	Local Aid - Foundation Reserve	4,500,000	5,500,000
7061-0012	Local Aid - SPED Circuit Breaker	207,700,000	220,000,000
7061-9010	Local Aid - Charter School Tuition Reimbursements	73,790,525	73,790,525
7010-1022	Certificate of Occupational Proficiency	1,300,000	1,300,000
7028-0031	Special Education in Institutional Settings	7,567,383	7,645,700
7061-96xx	Vision Library	0	0
7061-0029	Office of Educational Quality & Accountability	3,430,618	2,974,554

7061-9400	Student Assessment (MCAS)	27,800,000	27,749,039
7061-9408	Targeted Assistance to Schools & Districts	4,977,344	9,100,434
7061-9412	Expanded Learning Time Grants	6,500,000	13,000,000
7061-9612	W.P.I. School of Excellence	1,525,231	2,025,231
7061-9619	Franklin Institute	300,001	1
	Subtotal: Support for S&D	3,902,430,218	4,149,025,888
	Subtotal minus local aid accounts	53,400,577	63,794,959
4 - State leadership			
7010-0005	Department of Education - Admin.	11,052,905	13,612,790
7061-9200	DOE Information Technology - Admin.	768,866	5,515,000
7061-9300	DOE & District Data Reporting Tools	5,200,000	0
	Subtotal: State leadership	17,021,771	19,127,790
	Grand Total:	4,043,940,063	4,304,239,978

Department of Education Research Agenda

The Department has identified four strategic objectives of critical and immediate importance in achieving its goals: support for students; support for educators; support for schools and districts; and state leadership. The research agenda aligns with these objectives, identifying the key questions in each where more information would be useful for policy- and decision-making.

- **Support for students**

A key Department objective is to identify and implement the supports students need—whether academic, social, emotional, health, or otherwise—to close the achievement gap and reach proficiency and beyond. Research advancing our knowledge in this area could:

- Measure the impact of specific supports on student outcomes
- Measure the impact of specific incentives on student outcomes
- Develop models for predicting student retention, dropout, and/or graduation
- Identify measures of college readiness and analyze student performance with respect to those measures
- Identify promising practices for encouraging proficiency and engagement and reducing barriers to learning

- **Support for educators**

State education policy can only affect student outcomes through a strong partnership with teachers. Improving educator effectiveness, therefore, is a primary lever by which the state can improve student outcomes. Research advancing our knowledge on this objective could:

- Analyze the relationship between educator characteristics and student outcomes
- Evaluate the impact of specific educator-oriented development programs (such as professional development, mentoring, or leadership training) on student outcomes
- Analyze the educator workforce to identify gaps between supply and demand and opportunities to improve recruitment and retention
- Combine educator and student data to allow us to measure the impact of educators on student achievement

- **Support for schools and districts**

The ability of districts and schools to improve student outcomes is limited by their organizational capacity and the tools they have at their disposal, so efforts to expand these resources play a key role in the Department's ability to achieve its vision and goals. These may take the form of changes in governance, financial resources, student or educator standards, data accessibility, or other infrastructure. Research advancing our knowledge on this objective could:

- Measure how changes in systems and structures in schools or districts affect student outcomes
 - Analyze the financial situation of districts and identify possible sources of financial distress
 - Analyze the systems and structures required for effective district management and their associated costs
 - Measure the impact of our interventions and suggested practices with schools and districts on student outcomes
 - Measure how specific standards-based programs such as formative assessment, the MassCore recommended curriculum, or literacy programs affect student outcomes
 - Analyze and explain trends in student performance by subgroup on MCAS and other assessments
 - Create a suite of survey-based self-assessment tools for districts and schools
- **State leadership**

Research and evaluation helps measure the success of the programs we administer, but it can also be useful in understanding and improving our own internal processes. Research advancing our knowledge on this objective could:

 - Define outcome measures and milestones for each Department strategic objective and initiative
 - Measure the impact of internal process changes on cost, time management, efficiency, job satisfaction, or other measures
 - Analyze data collected by programs and monitoring units to identify areas for process improvement or policy change
 - Coordinate research efforts between related agencies such as the Department of Early Education and Care, the Board of Higher Education, and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
 - Create appropriate comparison groups for each school and district in the state