*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

March 1, 2024

Dear District Leader,

I hope this message finds you well, and that you are encouraged by district- and school-level data as you implement and monitor your instructional priorities for the year. As communicated in my [January 5, 2024](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/2024-0105ssos-district-communication.docx) message, we are eager to follow-up with guidance for the district prioritization submission process for SY24-25.

As you know, all schools identified as ‘requiring assistance’ by the [MA Accountability System](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) must develop improvement plans aligned to state and federal regulations. For the third consecutive year, the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) is providing guidance designed to address these school-level planning and reporting requirements through a single district-level instructional prioritization plan that aligns to the district’s broader strategic plan and to [DESE’s Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf).

Once again, we ask that districts engage in a collaborative planning processto articulate 1-2 key instructional priority(ies) you will focus on in the coming year, to close equity and opportunity gaps, promote excellence, and ensure that all students, particularly students in schools that require assistance, have equitable opportunities to excel. Guidance for the submission is provided below and will be [posted online here](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html?section=sustainable). ***This instructional priority will serve as the focus for SSoS support to your district.***

We believe this approach increases our collective attention and resources on the students who need it most, and addresses both the immediate instructional disparities in the identified schools and the systemic factors that contribute to inequities in student learning experiences across the district.

On **Thursday, March 14, from 3-4:30 p.m.**, we will host anoptionalwebinar (invitation forthcoming) to discuss the submission requirements and highlight the shifts we made in response to what we are learning as we monitor our work.The webinar will be recorded and posted on our website shortly after.

As a reminder, any school designated as [*Underperforming*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/about.html) will also need to renew their Sustainable Improvement Plans (SIPs) as per M.G.L. Chapter 69 1J. These school plans must align to the priorities outlined in the district’s Instructional Prioritization plan. Please reference the [Sustainable Improvement Plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html) guidance for details. **Both the district submissions and Underperforming school renewal plans (if applicable) for the 2024-2025 school year should be submitted to DESE by Friday, June 28, 2024** (**via email to** [**ssos1@mass.gov**](mailto:ssos1@mass.gov)**).** Your regional SSoS Leadership Consultant team is available to support your development of these plans over the course of the next several weeks. SSoS will provide additional feedback in August to inform the launch of your school year and will support implementation and monitoring throughout next school year.

*We look forward to partnering with you on this important work.*

Sincerely,

Charmie Curry, EdD

*Associate Commissioner, Statewide System of Support*

**Statewide System of Support (SSoS)**

**FY25 District Instructional Prioritization Planning Guidance**

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| **Background & Purpose** |

All schools identified as ‘requiring assistance’ by the [MA Accountability System](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) must develop improvement plans aligned to state and federal regulations. For the third consecutive year, the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) is providing guidance designed to address these school-level planning and reporting requirements through a single district-level instructional prioritization plan that aligns to the district’s broader strategic plan and also aligns to [DESE’s Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf).

*Please note that any schools identified as* [*Underperforming*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/about.html) *as per M.G.L. Chapter 69 1J are still required to renew their plans annually, using the* [*Sustainable Improvement Planning guidance.*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html)

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| **Overview** |

***Planning and Submission Requirements:*** Addressing the components outlined below will not only support an evidence-based approach to school and district improvement planning, but it will also meet state and federal planning and reporting requirements for schools identified as requiring assistance.

***Submission Format:*** We encourage districts to use [this template](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/fy25-submission-template.docx) to ensure all parts of the guidance are addressed. Districts may modify the template if doing so makes the submission more authentic and useful for your work.

***Due date:*** Please email your submission to [ssos1@mass.gov](mailto:ssos1@mass.gov) by **Friday, June 28, 2024**. SSoS will provide precise feedback in August to inform the launch of your school year and will support implementation and monitoring throughout next school year.

***Tips & Reminders:***

* We anticipate that most SSoS districts will maintain the same or similar priorities from FY24 into FY25 and will use this planning process to refine implementation and systems based on what you are learning this year.
* However, based on local conditions, some districts may need to change direction to address more pressing instructional needs. If this is the case, we encourage districts to build into their plan a compelling data narrative that clearly communicates this need to stakeholders.
* Collectively, a district’s various plans should align and send a clear, cohesive message to all stakeholders regarding the district’s vision for education, and its approach to achieving this vision.
* Priorities must directly impact all schools identified as Requiring Assistance by the MA accountability model. In some cases, a district may need two priorities to address the different contexts of the identified schools.
* Priorities should be specific enough that the district can expect to see progress in one year, while also addressing systemic factors that contribute to the identified inequities.

***Support Before & After Submission:*** Your regional SSoS Leadership Consultant team is available to support this process and help you strategically refine key components of your submission, including how the district will support implementation and monitoring, as outlined in the [SSoS-District Partnership Overview](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/ssos-district-partnership-overview.docx). Throughout the process and following your submission, your regional assistance team will provide feedback to strengthen your plan and will support your implementation of the plan in the coming year.

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| **Information to be Addressed** |

**Status of HQIM adoption in your district**. DESE believes that [high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/default.html) provide a strong foundation for all students, particularly students from systematically underserved groups and communities, to have "equitable opportunities to excel at grade level (or beyond)" and support teachers to do what they do best: make learning relevant and interactive for students while also providing data-informed, targeted individualized supports.

* **Please confirm that what is reported on** [**DESE’s School and District Profiles**](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/Curriculumdata.aspx) **is accurate**. If it is not, or if nothing is reported, please work with your district administrator to [update the information](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/data-collection.html).
* If any curriculum for ELA, Math, and/or Science are not [high quality as defined by DESE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2024/165/#:~:text=Fund%20Code%3A%20165,mathematics%2C%20ELA%2C%20or%20science), please list the grade(s) and subject(s) and briefly describe the status of the district’s efforts to implement HQIM in those areas (learning and preparing, investigating and preparing, or launching), with particular focus on implementing HQIM in any schools that require assistance.
* See [ImplementMA](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/implement-ma.html) framework for more information on HQIM adoption and implementation.

1. **Priority(ies): What are your district’s top 1-2 instructional priorities for SY24-25?** What are the meaningful changes in educator practice that are the focus of this priority? What will be the meaningful changes students will experience in their learning because of this focus? Which specific equity and opportunity gaps will this priority address? What will be the same or different about the focus for the Instructional Priority this school year?

**For each instructional priority, please respond to the remaining prompts below.**

1. **Analysis of Strengths and Challenges:** What data led the district to recommit, adjust, or change direction with this priority? Please summarize your analysis for both the district and for specific schools identified as requiring assistance. **What are the systemic factors that contribute to the inequitable outcomes you identified?** Of all the factors the district has identified that contribute to the inequities, which 1-2 will the district prioritize to address as part of implementation of this Priority this year, and why?
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** How did input from students, families, educators, and community members inform this this priority and the design of this plan? What input did you get from stakeholders in schools identified as Requiring Assistance? How will stakeholders be continuously engaged in implementation and monitoring?

**Tips:**

* Per USDOE **“***To develop a* ***high-quality sustainable improvement plan****, schools should gather* ***meaningful input*** *from an* ***array of key stakeholders****,* ***incorporate that input*** *into their plan, and* ***continue to regularly share progress with and elicit input from stakeholders*** *as the plan is implemented.”*
* Prioritize talking with a handful of students from the student population your priority is focusing on. How would they describe their experience in the classroom? What are they learning? What advice would they give on how to improve teaching and learning?

1. **Outcomes: What annual targets will the district use to demonstrate progress on this priority?** At minimum, please identify which specific [Accountability](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) targets will be met because of focusing on this priority. In addition to these accountability targets, identify other annual outcomes that the district expects to achieve by focusing on this priority. Annual goals should be set for the aggregate and for the prioritized student group(s), and for each school identified as requiring assistance.
2. **Role Clarity:** It is critical that all stakeholders have a clear role related to implementation of the priority, that they understand, and for which they receive support and accountability. Please describe, at minimum, the key actions for district, school, and classroom educators.
3. **Monitoring Implementation:** What 2-4 high-leverage interim benchmarks will you track throughout the year at both the district and school level to know if your collective actions are resulting in the desired changes in adult practice and student learning experiences? How will teachers, school leaders, and district leaders monitor those?
4. **Resources:** What partnerships, programs, or resources will the district leverage to implement this priority? These could include external resources (e.g., supports offered by DESE or other partners) as well as internal resources (e.g., staffing, funding from TAG, ESSER, M3, etc.) Briefly describe any inequities in resource allocation discovered during the district’s review of local district and school budgeting data, as required by ESSA, and describe how the district will address these inequities as part of this prioritization plan. In particular, please identify and address any resource inequities impacting schools identified as requiring assistance.
5. **Differentiation:** How will the district differentiate assistance for each of the schools identified as requiring assistance by the Accountability system, and for other schools that the district determines need more support with this priority? Presuming all the actions outlined in the Role Clarity and Progress Monitoring sections are in place, what additional actions will district leaders take to support instruction in these schools?

**Notes:**

* + Examples of differentiation include resource allocation (if not already addressed in #7), scheduling, staffing, frequency and/or intensity of PD, coaching, collaborative time (ILT, PLC, etc.), and progress monitoring.
  + Note that districts will be asked to update this portion of their plan if additional schools are identified as Requiring Assistance in the fall of 2024. In some cases, it may be necessary to adjust other aspects of the district’s Instructional Prioritization Plan or even add a 2nd Instructional Priority if new schools identified as Requiring Assistance are not currently addressed by the district’s plan (for example if a newly identified school is in a different grade span than the district priority is focusing on).
  + Schools identified as Underperforming must also submit a Sustainable Improvement Plan, and schools applying for the Intensive Assistance Grant (IAG, formerly School Redesign Grant) must also submit a school plan. For these schools, please include a link to that plan and briefly summarize the differentiated assistance they will receive relative to the Instructional Priority.