TeachJax’s Top Three from ESE - May 19, 2016

Reminder: Applications for ESE’s 2016-17 Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets are due May 31. Learn more and apply at tinyurl.com/2016Cabinets.

1. Get Involved: Join #edchatma and ESE for a Twitter chat about distributed leadership on May 24
   In October, ESE launched a professional learning network focused on different approaches for distributing leadership. The benefits of distributing leadership include ensuring all educators receive high quality feedback, promoting teacher leadership, and building collaborative school cultures, all of which ultimately benefit students.

   Over the course of the year, the eight participating districts emphasized the importance of building a culture that supports giving and receiving feedback (#culturework). Join our districts and other educators across the state in discussing this work from 8-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 24 in a Twitter chat with #edchatma.

   We appreciate the opportunity to partner with the moderators of #edchatma on this month's Twitter chat! Massachusetts educators moderate a chat at 8 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month. You can learn more about #edchatma, see previous chats, and brush up on your Twitter knowledge online.

2. FYI: Collecting Feedback on School and District Accountability Systems
   Beginning in 2017-18, the new federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), will require Massachusetts to modify its school and district accountability and assistance system (the system which currently designates schools and districts as Level 1-5 and provides corresponding supports). As a result, ESE has the opportunity to reconsider the principles of our current system, the data used to measure school and district progress, and the types of supports and assistance available.

   The Department has launched an online statewide feedback form through which we aim to gather feedback from a broad range of stakeholders. The survey includes a series of questions about considerations for accountability and assistance systems and includes open-ended questions. The feedback form also has a place to attach a letter or other written feedback instead of or in addition to completing the form. The Department welcomes all feedback and encourages educators to share the link widely so that as many community members and educators as possible participate. The form will remain open through June 17, 2016.

   For more information about the form or to submit comments to ESE directly, please email esea@doe.mass.edu. You can also learn more about our current accountability and assistance system in general at the first link above and in more detail at the accountability lists, materials, and tools page.
3. Teacher Reflection: Members of ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets Share their Experiences

Below, two members of ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets share their experiences and what other interested educators can expect. Applications for ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets are due May 31, 2016. Teachers and school administrators interested in learning more about state education policy, providing feedback on implementation, suggesting ideas and solutions, and giving input on new resources are encouraged to apply. The cabinets are also a great leadership opportunity and provide a chance to collaborate with educators from across the state.

Applications and more information are available online. To learn more about the cabinets, check out the 2014-15 Teacher Advisory Cabinet Summary and Principal Advisory Cabinet Summary.

Elizabeth Leidel, Teacher, Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School, Worcester

I have valued my experience on the Teacher Advisory Cabinet for what I was able to contribute to it as well as for what I was able to take away from it. One of the images that stands out the most to me from various cabinet meetings is of DESE staff members furiously typing, taking notes or listening closely to what my colleagues were telling them about our experiences and ideas. I have been impressed by how seriously DESE staff members take our input, and it has been satisfying to feel as though I am contributing to something that has real impact on the work of the educators state-wide.

On a more selfish level, I have benefitted in my own work immensely because of the information, guidance and resources that I have received as part of the cabinet. I find myself bringing up things and using ideas I have come across as part of cabinet in staff meetings, while working with new teachers in my district, as I plan for my own professional development, and as I engage in the teacher evaluation system. I have appreciated opportunities to clarify with

Steve Guditus, Lead Learner (Principal), Manchester Essex Regional Middle School, Manchester-by-the-Sea

When I first viewed the description of ESE’s Principal Advisory Cabinet, I wasn’t sure how DESE would structure a group like this. I wasn’t sure how our voices would be heard, and I wasn’t sure if this would be a good use of my time. As a public school educator, I know how valuable every minute is and how many things are on our plates. I attended the first cabinet meeting and was thrilled. The Department has created an opportunity for public school educators to have a voice, to truly listen, and to engage with public school educators. I found the experience rewarding, enlightening, and a wonderful use of time – for both me professionally and for my building and district.

As a result of my participation in the cabinet, I have been able to voice my opinion, share frustrations and success, and understand the direction that DESE is heading. Being able to authentically provide input, engage in policy discussions, reflect on my experiences, and share it with DESE has affirmed my belief that
DESE staff directly a wide range of issues related to the intentions as well as requirements for various state initiatives and programs.

It’s been a great opportunity and I encourage other teachers to apply!

the cabinet is a wonderful use of time and energy. My participation has given me a space to reflect, share, and network with fellow educators who are interested in thinking about public education and policy at the state level.

I would encourage others to apply. If you aren’t sure if the cabinet is a good use of your time and energy, I can confirm: It is. If you aren’t sure if DESE will truly hear your voice: It will. If you don’t know if you have something to bring to the table: You do – your experience as a public school educator.

Help us reach more teachers — Share this email with your colleagues and encourage them to sign up! To subscribe, please complete this short form: http://DESE.Top3fromESE.sgizmo.com/s3/. We also invite you to connect with other teachers across the state and ESE staff on Twitter. Find us at @MASchoolsK12 and use #Top3fromESE to discuss items from this newsletter or suggest new topics.

If you have suggestions for content, questions, or comments, you can reach a member of our staff at Top3fromESE@doe.mass.edu.