

BESE 2018 Annual Report

Paul Sagan Chair, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education



January 2019

Dear Board Members,

It is an honor to serve as Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the 2017-2018 school year, my fourth on the Board, we focused our efforts on the work of supporting our mission to prepare all students for success after high school through five core strategies intended to accelerate the pace of school improvement by:

- Strengthening standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- Promoting educator development;
- Supporting social-emotional learning, health, and safety;
- Turning around the lowest performing districts and schools; and
- Enhancing resource allocation and data use.

The most significant accomplishments of the Board's work this year included but were not limited to:

- Approving the updated History and Social Science Curriculum Framework to ensure every student is prepared to be an engaged citizen, with emphasis on a new grade 8 course on civics;
- Engaging in data-driven discussions of our new Accountability and Assistance System, which we voted to approve in June 2018;
- Supporting the launch of the new Early College Initiative that designated its first programs to better serve young people in the Commonwealth;
- Promoting increased access to computer science in high school; and
- Appointing a new Commissioner.

With the untimely passing of Commissioner Mitchell Chester in June 2017, the Board embraced the critical the task of selecting a new Commissioner. In January 2018 and after a nationwide search, we voted to recommend Jeffrey C. Riley as the next Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. Commissioner Riley transitioned into the position in April 2018.

We are justifiably proud that Massachusetts leads the nation in many of the most important overall measures of performance for public schools, from how our students score #1 in the U.S. in reading and math on NAEP, to #1 in the world on reading on the PISA assessment, to #1 nationally in success on Advanced Placement.¹ It is an important accomplishment that our four-year high school graduation rate increased again this past year – and for the 11th consecutive year.² At the same time, the pressing need to bring equity to the Commonwealth's most challenged schools and districts remains at the forefront of what we must provide for the students we serve., Closing all achievement gaps statewide continues to demand our attention and best thinking. We clearly have not done enough to bring equal opportunity in public education to every community, and ending these divides remains our most critical work as we look ahead.

It is a privilege to serve with each of you, and I look forward to maintaining and fostering the spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship that is a hallmark of this Board's work and the work of the entire Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to improve outcomes for the Commonwealth's nearly one million public school students.

¹ Details on references at www.doe.mass.edu

² <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/>