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|  | Advisory Councils to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education: Annual Reports for 2020-2021 |
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| September 2021, December 2021 (Updated) |
| Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370www.doe.mass.edu |
| ESE logoThis document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary EducationJeffrey C. RileyCommissioner **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members**Ms. Katherine Craven, Chair, BrooklineMr. James Morton, Vice Chair, SpringfieldMs. Amanda Fernández, BelmontMr. Matthew Hills, NewtonMs. Eleni Carris Livingston, Wellesley, Student MemberMs. Darlene Lombos, BostonMr. Michael Moriarty, HolyokeMr. James Peyser, Secretary of Education, MiltonMr. Paymon Rouhanifard, BrooklineMs. Mary Ann Stewart, LexingtonDr. Martin West, NewtonJeffrey C. Riley, CommissionerSecretary to the BoardThe Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.  Inquiries regarding the Department’s compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.© 2021 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary EducationPermission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the “Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.”This document printed on recycled paperMassachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370www.doe.mass.eduState Seal of Massachusetts |

**Massachusetts Department of**

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

September 2021

Dear Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,

Enclosed please find the 2020-2021 Advisory Councils’ Annual Reports to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Advisory councils, established by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15, Section 1G, advise the Commissioner and the Board on matters pertinent to the implementation of education reform in the Commonwealth and provide programmatic recommendations.

There are currently 12 advisory councils: Adult Basic Education, Arts Education, Braille Literacy, Educational Personnel, Digital Learning, English Language Learners/Bilingual Education, Gifted and Talented Education, Parent and Community Education and Involvement, Racial Imbalance, School and District Accountability and Assistance, Special Education, and Vocational Technical Education. This document compiles the reports from the eleven advisory councils that submitted a report this year. In addition, the State Student Advisory Council, whose members are elected by other students rather than appointed by the Board, is an active and important advisory council to the Board.

Each council’s annual report, submitted by the council chair, includes a summary of the work of the council, recommendations to the Commissioner and Board, council leadership and membership, and meetings held. The reports and their recommendations are those of the councils and not of the Department.

Thank you to the council members and liaisons for their time, efforts, and constructive feedback. If the Board is interested in greater detail on the activities and recommendations of any council, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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**Adult Education Advisory Council**

**2020 -2021 Annual Report**

1. INTRODUCTION

The 9-member Adult Education (AE) Advisory Council advises the Board and the Commissioner on matters pertinent to the development of adult education services in the Commonwealth. The FY21 charge for the Council was to advise the Adult and Community Services Unit (ACLS) on (1) navigating AE through COVID-19 pandemic; (2) supporting adult education students and programs; (3) deepening integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts in all aspects of adult education; and (4) advising on open and competitive bid plans for FY23.

1. **2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council was updated on the progress of goals set for FY20. The Council continued to advise ACLS on FY19-23 Theory of Action, policies, and areas for system development.

The Council members were updated, reviewed, and provided feedback on the following ACLS initiatives:

* Impact of COVID-19 on funding, program services, staff, and students. Council discussed impact on higher education, employment, training, and professional development. (November, January, March, and November)
* COVID relief funding increase. Council expressed support for additional funds to support expenses related to remote instruction, professional development, and PPE (March)
* Reviewed FY22 grant funding rationale as it relates to outcome-based incentives (i.e., enrollment) (March)
* Discussed FY23 open and competitive plan to announce intention to bid to the field. Council supported recommendation to request 1-year extension to current grant funding cycle, to support programs rebounding after pandemic (November, January, March)
* Discussed building capacity by conducting focus group with programs not currently funded through Title 2 grants (January)
* Discussed advisory board panel to discuss issues of equity with the field at annual Directors’ Meeting. Council in support of this activity. (March)
* Discussed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as it relates curriculum and instruction, students not currently being served well or at all in adult education. Council recommended holding an additional meeting to discuss pertinent DEI issues and how AE can improve (November, January, March, June)
* Discussed critical need for program support around recruitment and retention of students because of COVID-19 challenges (health, employment, housing, and children’s needs facing adult learners and changing priorities. (June)
1. **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Council members provided feedback on all initiatives discussed above which informed further development and refinement of those initiatives, as well as next steps.

1. **COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:** Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, AE Administrator

**Department Liaison:** Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, AE Administrator

**Chairperson:** Stacy Randell Shaheen, Director, North Shore Community College

**FY2020-2021 Council Members**

1. Kate Anderson, Coordinator of IT and Assessment System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES)
2. Ernest Best, Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance of Adult Learners
3. Rachel Pleasants McDonnell, Associate Director, Jobs for the Future
4. David Cedrone, Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development, MA Department of Higher Education
5. Rachael Gwaltney, Director, Mass Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE)
6. Mary Sarris, Executive Director, North Shore Workforce Investment Board
7. Stacy Randell Shaheen, Director, North Shore Community College
8. Barbara Krol-Sinclair, Director, Intergenerational Literacy Program, Chelsea, MA
9. Drey Morse, Adult Education Student, North Shore Community College, Danvers, MA

**Council Meeting Dates:**

1. November 13, 2020
2. January 22, 2021
3. March 12, 2021
4. June 25, 2021

**Special Meeting:**

January 13, 2021- *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Discussion and Action-Planning*

Discussed rationale for special meeting, insights, and processes from the ACLS/DESE internal work and reflections from poem: *My Name is Not “Those People*” by Julia Dinsmore

Discussed racism in the United States of America and beyond as it relates to the essential questions:

1. *How do we best unearth and teach about national and international Civil Rights and White Supremacy movements to ABE and ESOL students?*
2. *What are potential “deliverables” that we could create to help reduce or end systemic racism in the United States?*
3. *How do we sustain our own conversations and next steps about DEI in the Commonwealth?*

**Arts Education Advisory Council Report**

**2020- 2021Annual Report**

1. Introduction

Over the year, the council focused on giving feedback on the Arts and Culture Vitality Index, Ed Prep programs, and ESSER. The council also heard updates on the Diverse Arts Guidebook, Arts Leaders Network, and the DESE Share-a-thons.

1. Work of the Council

Diverse Arts Guidebook

* The council showed support for this and is looking forward to the release.
* Excitement around these resources in the arts.
* Concern about language and examples being more geared toward secondary and many would like to see elementary examples in the future.

Arts and Culture Vitality Index

* Support for the Index as a whole.
* Positive response to community being included.
* Concerns regarding timeline of pilot and the amount of time needed to do a thorough evaluation.
* Ensure there is language all stakeholders will understand
* Great tool for advocacy.

Ed Prep Programs

* Information collected on Media Arts in higher education

Conferences/Networking

* Council in support of the Arts Leaders Network and working groups associated.
* The council would like to see conferences such as the Arts Literacy Conference moving forward.
* The council would like to see more sessions about frameworks at state-wide arts conferences (ex. MAEA, MMEA, etc.)
1. **Council Members**

Department Council Liaison:

Dawn Benski,

Arts Content Support Lead

Center for Instructional Support

Chair:

Lynn Souza,

Director of Fine Arts

New Bedford Public Schools

# Members of the 2020-2021 Arts Education Advisory Council

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name**  | **Title**  | **Institution**  |
| Elizabeth Byron  | Visual Art and Special Education  | Billerica Public Schools  |
| Diane Daily  | Education Programs Manager  | MA Cultural Council  |
| Christopher P. Dearbeck  | Fine Arts Coordinator  | Billerica Public Schools  |
| Alice Matthews Gentili  | Visual Art Educator  | Mendon Upton Regional School District  |
| Hannah Hammond  | Theatre Teacher  | UP Academy Holland Elementary School  |
| Priscilla Kane Hellweg   | Executive Artistic Dir.  | Enchanted Circle Theatre Holyoke  |
| Julie Jaron  | Director of Visual and Performing Arts   | Springfield Public Schools  |
| Richard P. King  | Music, Theatre, Visual Art Coordinator  | Newton Public Schools   |
| Simone Kivett  | Visual Art Teacher  | Lynn Public Schools  |
| Timmary Leary   | Visual Arts Liaison  | Worcester Public Schools   |
| Sandra Nicolucci Ed. D.  | Music Education Consulting  | For any or All School Districts  |
| Joan A. Ortu   | Visual Art Teacher  | Malden Public Schools   |
| William Thomas Pappazisis   | Director of Performing Arts  | Arlington Public Schools  |
| Luci Prawdzik Ed. D.  | Supervisor of Art K-12  | Somerville Public Schools  |
| Lynn Souza  | Director of Fine Arts K-12  | New Bedford Public Schools   |
| John Travlos  | Visual Arts Educator/Curriculum Liaison For The Visual and Performing Arts  | Lawrence Public Schools  |
| Blake Siskavich | Music Teacher, Music Curriculum Lead Teacher | Lincoln Public Schools |
| Kimberly Smith, Ed.D. | Former Superintendent | Wakefield Public Schools |

Meeting Dates: December 3, 2021, January 7, 2021, March 4, 2021, and May 13, 2021

Submitted by Lynn Souza, Chair

**Braille Literacy Advisory Council**

**2020– 2021 Annual Report**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Braille Literacy Advisory Council (BrlAC) was established in 1997 by the Massachusetts Department of Education in compliance with provisions of the Braille Literacy Act of 1996. This nine-member council, appointed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, is responsible for developing policies, making recommendations on best practices, and providing technical assistance to parents, educators, administrators, and rehabilitation personnel on how to provide braille literacy services to students and adults who are blind in the Commonwealth.

1. **2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

The Braille Literacy Advisory Council held five virtual meetings during the school year 2020-21.

Topics discussed:

1. Feedback to DESE Student Assessment Services
2. Braille competency test for persons who are certified as a teacher of students with visual impairments

Business items conducted

1. Review of the BrlAC Charge
2. Vacancies
3. Updated the BrlAC list-serv
4. DESE Student Assessment Services

DESE Student Assessment Services contacted BrlAC to obtain feedback from MA Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) in relation to a project on new assessments that are more engaging for all students. In an effort to develop equitable test items for students with visual impairments, DESE requested information regarding resources for teaching students who are blind/visually impaired and details about curriculum areas/topics/concepts that are particularly challenging to teach and/or assess in students who are blind or visually impaired. BrlAC agreed to create and disseminate a simple survey to MA TVIs through the AIM Library and AMESVI (Association of Massachusetts Educators of Students with Visual Impairments) membership. A link to the raw results was provided to Student Assessment Services.

1. Braille Competency Test

During the 2020-21 school year, BrlAC primarily focused on the topic of a braille competency exam for teachers of students with vision impairments (TVIs) to meet the requirements detailed in the Massachusetts Braille Bill. The Council had previously outlined components that should be included on a competency exam and explored options for braille competency testing. The field was narrowed to two national exams: the Praxis Braille Proficiency and the National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB). The Council eliminated the NCUEB exam which did not contain all of the essential components.

The Praxis Braille Proficiency from Educational Testing Service (ETS) is a test to measure the requisite braille knowledge and skills that an entry-level teacher of visually impaired students (TVI) or an entry-level teacher of braille must possess. Topics covered on the test are UEB non-technical text and math in both UEB and Nemeth Code. The test taker must use both a traditional slate and stylus and a manual brailler for the transcription assignments. Test items measure knowledge in the areas of braille reading and writing.

BrlAC invited representatives from ETS to provide an overview and to discuss the test in detail on March 2 and April 6, 2021.

At the March 2nd meeting, M. K. McKinley, Sr., Director of Client Relations, Eric Steinhauer, Executive Director, and David Muller, Assessment Specialist from ETS Professional Educator Programs provided an overview of the exam which was developed in 2015. The presenters outlined work done on test design, described standard setting, and shared discussions and decisions of the National Advisory Committee to develop the test. Proficiencies and aspects of the braille code that are measured on the test were discussed in detail.

Stakeholder representatives were invited to the April 6 meeting. Representatives from AMESVI and the Vision Studies Program at UMass Boston attended the presentation and participated in a question & answer session with the ETS representatives. The presentation included a thorough review of test items with a look at the question formats and scoring for reading in Nemeth code, UEB math, and UEB non-technical content. Example items for the production assignments with slate and stylus and braillewriter were also reviewed and discussed. Production assignments included content in UEB non-technical, UEB math and Nemeth Code. The group also had an opportunity to hear about the standard-setting process for the test which took place in January 2015. A panel of twelve educators, working with a form of the test, made judgments about the expected performance of the “Just Qualified Candidate” or JQC to produce a passing score recommendation. Some questions raised during the presentation required further research and discussion. A subcommittee of Council members was assembled to compile and summarize the information.

**III. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Braille Literacy Advisory Council continues to evaluate the Praxis Braille Proficiency test and consider how it can meet the requirements detailed in the Massachusetts Braille Bill. The Council has no recommendations at this time.

**IV. COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:**

**Department Liaison:** Martha Daigle

**Co-Chairs:** Wendy Buckley

**Members of the 2020-2021 Council:**

Kim Charlson: Consumer Representative, Bay State Council of the Blind

Amy Ruell: Consumer Representative, National Federation of the Blind

Kate Crohan: Braille Reader, Perkins School for the Blind

Jackie Sheridan: Braille Producer, National Braille Press

Wendy Buckley: Educator, Perkins School for the Blind and UMass Boston Vision Studies

Katrina Traut Savino: Educator, Brockton Public Schools

Three positions remained open during the year: (2) parent representatives and (1) braille reader

**Council Meeting Dates:**

All meetings were held via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings.

January 5, 2021

February 2, 2021

March 2, 2021

April 6, 2021

May 13, 2021

**Digital Learning Advisory Council (DLAC)**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

# I. Introduction

The 2013 virtual schools legislation ([Chapter 379 of the Acts of 2012, An Act Establishing Commonwealth Virtual Schools](http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter379)[[1]](#footnote-2)) created the Digital Learning Advisory Council (DLAC) to advise the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (Commissioner) on:

* The development of policies guiding virtual schools, supplemental online courses, education technology, and other matters related to virtual education.
* The identification of best practices to encourage online education to complement classroom instruction in district schools.
* The assessment of the appropriateness of the fee that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) may retain for the administration of the virtual school program.

The law specifies that the DLAC include representatives from various statewide education organizations, districts and schools including virtual schools (i.e., teacher, administrator, parent), higher education, and non-profit and technology companies. The current DLAC includes a broad range of experts who meet these criteria.

# II. Work of the Council in 2020-21

During the 2019-20 school year, the DLAC spent considerable energy providing advice to DESE and the Commissioner on how best to support school districts interested in delivery of remote and online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, the DLAC spent the 2020-21 school year primarily focused on addressing remote learning challenges in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The DLAC discussed topics ranging from connectivity for all students and families, support for districts regarding accessibility and assistive technology, tools for families, professional development for remote learning, sustainable and equitable access to digital learning opportunities, education technology spending, child safety, as well as pedagogical best practices.

The DLAC met five times during the 2020-21 school year. Members were deeply engaged in sharing experiences from the field, surfacing issues, and problem solving. At the March 3, 2021 meeting, the DLAC brainstormed and documented concerns about long-term sustainability of equitable access to digital learning beyond 2020-21 for the following areas:

* Internet Access
* School Network Infrastructure
* Learning Management System/Platform
* Assistive Technology
* Digital Learning Tools
* Device Management, Maintenance, and Repair and Replacement
* Professional Learning
* Staffing
* Family Engagement
* Devices and Accessories
* Students and Digital Literacy

The group articulated these issues, listed current practices in response to those issues, and suggested sustainable practices for the future to address these issues. Please see **Appendix A** for more detailed information.

# III. Council Details

**Department Administrator:** Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign

**Co-Chairs:** Angela T. Burke and Elizabeth Tripathi

**Members of the 2020-21 DLAC:**

* Amanda Huggon-Mauretti, parent of a student currently attending a virtual school in Massachusetts
* Amy Michalowski, Dean, The Virtual High School
* Andrea Wadsworth; Former Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance, Mt. Greylock Regional School District
* Angela T. Burke, Director of Professional Services, Collaborative for Educational Services
* Bill Silver, Director of Information Communication and Technology Services, Chelmsford Public Schools
* Daniel Murphy, Director of Education Policy and Programs, American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts
* David O’Connor, Founding Executive Director, MAPLE Consortium
* Elizabeth Tripathi, Education Policy Specialist, Massachusetts Teachers Association
* Jared Perrine, Director of Technology, Narragansett Regional School District
* Keith Ford, Assistant Principal, Needham High School
* Lynn McCormack, Software Engineer, Center for Applied Special Technology
* Patrick Larkin, Assistant Superintendent, Burlington Public Schools, (Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents)
* Robert Reilly, School Committee Member, Northern Berkshire Regional Vocational Technical
* Sarah Haavind, Senior Research Project Manager, The Concord Consortium
* Sarah Kyriazis, Manager of Instructional Technology and Digital Learning, Worcester Public Schools

**Council Meeting Dates:**

September 30, 2020; November 18, 2020; January 27, 2021; March 3, 2021; and May 5, 2021.

# IV. Appendix A – Digital Learning: Sustainability and Equity

| **Topic** | **Issue** | **Current practice** | **Sustainable practice** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Internet Access** | * The cost is too high.
* The bandwidth is limited.
* There are problems with congestion.
* Internet is sometimes unreliable.
* There are a variety of issues that create barriers to broadband access in schools and homes (limited income challenges, urban/rural area access issues).
* Some teachers’ internet is unstable.
* There are some broadband providers with city monopolies.
 | * Provide hotspots to students and staff.
* Single Payer for broadband (Issue: many addresses are not qualifying).
 | * For urban areas, work with internet providers to host hot spots all over the town, that are free to use for students.
* For rural areas, obtain the funding to build out the last mile infrastructure so that all homes have access to high-speed internet.
* Rights to access internet in homes with students. May include providing no-cost internet access in public housing, Section 8, shelters, and/or other state/federal funded housing programs.
* Possibility of municipal broadband.
* Use federal funding.
 |
| **School Network Infrastructure** | * Proliferating devices (including personal ones) will constantly put pressure on Wi-Fi bandwidth. We need to find a long-term approach to funding enhancements on a regular, possibly annual basis.
* Many schools have old buildings/facilities.
* There is limited bandwidth; this is a growing need.
 | * Many districts wait to upgrade Wi-Fi until (1) there is a problem or (2) the building is being renovated.
 | * Current Wireless Access Points (WAPs) can support about 75+ simultaneous connections. One WAP per classroom should alleviate the issue with personal devices.
* Ensure that network infrastructure is updated on a regular basis (at least every 5 years) - this is a combination of e-rate and local spending.
* Assist schools with basic firewall support so that we can ensure that schools networks are always accessible Distributed denial of service (DDoS) (DDoS mitigation, etc.)
* Wi-Fi access at school should be 802.11x based. No Guest connections for students. They are not guests. It is simple to set up Active Directory authentication for this.
* Next school year schools/districts will need to increase bandwidth with an increase of users in the building.
* Management of the network is a balance between higher level support services and district support services; funding needs to be in place to ensure this continues.
* Annual evaluation of bandwidth requirements and upgrade of building Wi-Fi for new demands.
 |
| **Learning Management System (LMS)/Platform** | * It is important to provide students with a central location to access instructional materials, assignments, turn in work, receive feedback and grades, and communicate with peers.
* It is important to have district-wide expectations for use.
 | * Countywide collaboration with an LMS, Canvas. Funding has been raised to continue collaboration for two more years as a tool for the schools. Eight out of eleven schools participated.
* Many schools just purchased a simple LMS. It is important to purchase products with training provided.
 | * This can be sustainable if folded into budget planning for future years.
* Creates a hub for shared learning and professional development for faculty. They can share lessons and especially help specialists.
* State procurement and purchasing could capitalize on economies of scale for pricing, Professional Development (PD) and it would be easier for students and teachers as they move from district to district. Lessons can easily be shared across the state and schools could more easily collaborate with each other.
* MA shared repository of digital lessons and objects organized by curriculum standard but searchable by other criteria (e.g., common textbooks in use, accessibility, etc.), to which teachers can contribute as well.
 |
| **Assistive Technology (AT)** | * Not all tools/applications work with AT.
* There is a need for AT training for teachers and administrators.
* AT staff know more about low incidence cases than Tier 1 using technology.
* There is limited guidance or best practice resources written for school-level practitioners.
* There is a need for training for paraeducators who work with students who use assistive technology.
 | * Some districts purchased “read/write” but need funding to sustain.
* Tech coaches have been meeting with AT staff to start to collaborate, and better understand student issues.
 | * AT testing should be part of all new tools/application purchase processes
* Possibly have more in-house AT, many of the consultants for this seem to recommend whatever they have used in the past.
* Understanding the tools used in the district could have positive impacts on proper selection of AT tools.
* Ongoing training and PD on assistive tech tools embedded or native to LMS systems and learning platforms.
* Certain Universal Design for Learning products such as screen readers, voice to text and predictive word processing should be accessible for all students as the base products of a tech like the device itself. All staff should be trained on how to use these tools.
 |
| **Digital Learning (DL) Tools** | * Educators are overwhelmed by an abundance of digital tools, as well as keeping up with new ones.
* Tools can create privacy/security issues if not properly vetted and configured.
* DL Tools may not be accessible (e.g., screen readers, mobility requirements, timers, enlargement etc.) to all students.
* It is a challenge to manage student data privacy for these resources.
 | * Some tools have been vetted for security/privacy by MA Data Privacy Alliance.
 | * Expand [CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/)
* DESE should provide a listing of vetted/reviewed products or provide a template for districts to use to vet digital learning tools and products.
* Any vetting or approval should include a rating against standards for accessibility, data privacy, curriculum alignment, device compatibility, bandwidth requirements, integration with LMS and Student Information systems and other emerging areas as identified by stakeholders.
 |
| **Device Management, Maintenance, and Repair and Replacement** | * How to increase staff knowledge/capacity.
* How to access funding to support device management, maintenance, repair, and replacement.
* Time.
* Many districts do not have enough technical staff for the increase of technology use.
 | * In-house repair. Training for technical staff to help run management systems. Set up a repair class at high school and use the students who complete the class as repair folks.
 | * Line item sustainable budgeting for a baseline of staff and equipment.
* Create statewide plan/program to train students to repair and support devices, this addresses workforce development goals as well as some chapter 74 programs - schools are perfect intern locations for our students to practice their newly learned skills.
 |
| **Professional Learning** | * Time for professional learning is limited.
* There are licensing challenges.
* There are unclear and non-uniform career paths, training, and certification for digital learning coaches and specialists.
* PD budgets especially for effective digital learning are too small and often cut.
* Instructional Technology Specialist Teacher License.
* Professional learning needs to be ongoing - things change all the time, and new skills are needed all the time.
* There is often a lack of integration of tech/curriculum.
* Limited programs for teachers to add Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS) teacher license approved by licensure office. Teachers do not pursue license or work off computer science license.
* "Remote learning" practices adopted on emergency basis are not necessarily the best practices for "online learning"/digital learning.
* Principals need to prioritize/build skills related to online learning.
 |  | * We have our iPrincipal and iAP cohorts to help us with leadership skills.
* Extended paid school day for teachers to allow for PD and common planning.
* Encourage schools to utilize the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model for technology learning and award PD points for it.
* Prioritize additional pathways - include district-based approvals - for ITS teacher license.
* Staff drop-in help hours (virtual).
* PD on developing ALT text for screen readers - particularly in science/social studies where graphics commonly provide essential information.
* Work with teacher prep programs to offer courses on products that are actually used in schools. Change outcomes for all courses to include tech skills embedded as a part of student assessments for the courses.
* Year-round teacher contracts for two months of planning and preparation paid.
* Incentivize professional learning related to digital literacy and instructional technology in licensure. (e.g., Professional Development Plans (PDP) or applying coursework to license applications)
* Train the trainer program.
* Require a certain number of technology-based PDPs for re-licensure.
 |
| **Staffing** | * Wealthy suburban districts often have Directors of Innovation to help identify and support change. Lower-income districts need this support too.
* There needs to be a district leader who understands all the moving components and complexity of Educational Technology in our schools.
* There are not enough technology coaches.
* There is not enough IT support.
* There is a need for expert tech tool/resource curators.
* You end up having IT leaders making education decisions and education leaders making IT decisions.
* Finding specialized staff – (i.e., a technology coach who understands special education).
* Not enough PD coaching - one-off workshops do not change practices. Virtual coaches for digital learning (technological pedagogical content knowledge) is needed.
 | * The use of in-house teachers and ITS for professional development extends the learning beyond formal training.
* Current Practice: Most tech staff work a minimum of 40-60 hours per week and most work weekends as well.
* A typical enterprise network that supports even 200-500 users has at least three network admins, a security admin, and a handful of techs. Districts with over 5,000 users have a fraction of the support staff.
* This is a two-prong issue - one is the support of the infrastructure, the other is the support for the teachers. We need both staffed adequately to achieve success.
 | * Train the trainer (teacher leaders).
* Requirements of at least one full-time instructional tech person per x number of staff at school.
* Regular end of school year PD on new technologies (so teachers can use summer to practice).
 |
| **Family Engagement** | * Schools not always inviting places for parents /guardians of students who struggle.
* There are language barriers for some families.
* There is a lack of understanding about how to navigate the system.
* There are some transportation issues that limit family engagement.
* There are some childcare issues.
* There are some work hours issues that limit family engagement.
 | * Purchased Google Voice.
* Live closed captioning.
* Purchased enterprise Zoom.
* Talking points (texts sent to parents in home language)
* Parents have enjoyed being able to meet teachers/admins virtually this year. Participation seems higher.
* Online conferences were used this year, and it was very well received by parents and teachers. We plan on continuing this practice.
* Created "Microsoft Live Events" for school recruiting. Both live and recorded for parents to access the presentation later. It was very successful.
 | * Virtual meetings have improved family engagement and have been a bright spot in the pandemic.
* Collaboration with community organizations.
* Live translation services.
* Added district app.
* Principals and teachers report that they have never had so many families attending things like “know your school night,” Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and site council meetings since they are now virtual.
* Make virtual teacher-parent conferences a regular occurrence to sustain parent involvement (and accommodate their work schedules).
* IEP Teams could continue to have virtual IEP meetings.
* Districts and schools could provide websites with translations specifically for caregivers with videos and quick guides.
* Schools and districts could provide multiple forms of communication: text messages, email, social media, WhatsApp, and notes in backpacks.
* Provide regular open office hours for parents.
* Provide virtual drop-in hours for tech help in multiple languages.
* We hired a technology coach who speaks Spanish and Portuguese.
* Record tech seminars, post and promote.
* Live drop-in tech help for families in multiple languages.
 |
| **Low Technology/Low screen time (ensure that students have no-screen-time activities)** | * A lot of teachers initially started to deliver instruction the way they delivered face to face, but quickly realized they had to change practice. School districts did not have the luxury to develop meaningful PD around teaching online.
* Student and staff eye strain, headaches, and physical pain from using screens with improper seating, workspaces, or lighting conditions.
 | * Teachers design lessons for the online classroom and troubleshoot with families on how to access them.
* Teachers delivering packets of materials to students' homes.
 | * Build “Brain Breaks” into school schedules.
* Design lessons with dual accessibility. All assignments posted to online classrooms can be converted to hard copy. Send to students at the outset of each unit for flexible use.
* Professional development for teachers to learn how to balance the resources they learned over this past year. Funding and the support of leadership will be important.
* Intentional reflection on the amount of screen time students have each day when in school.
* Use textbooks and print resources alongside digital learning tools.
 |
| **Devices and Accessories** | * There is limited funding.
* Schools and districts don’t always have powerful devices or accessories.
* These are not sustainable.
* There are not enough devices for when we come back face to face.
* In some countries the department of education determines the 1:1 for students, and it has been successful.
 | * The district gave devices to students who did not have a laptop.
* Admins/teachers scramble to provide devices and accessories, and sometimes substitute with old technology.
 | * Building a budget to support 1:1 moving forward.
* See Kentucky Educational Technology Master Plan.
 |
| **Students – Digital Literacies** | * Lack of staffing for classes that focus on digital literacies.
* Some parents do not have the skills to help their children in this area.
* Focus is too much on programming and not enough on digital citizenship.
* Hard to find qualified ITS teachers to teach.
* Foundational skills in digital literacy and computational thinking not provided in most elementary schools.
 | * Offered training sessions at the beginning of the year for all students but this was an abbreviated version of what they really needed to know.
* Quickly developed an internal training program.
* Trying to do more training on International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards.
 | * Have MA adopt the new ISTE standards in addition to the Digital Literacy/Computer Science Standards (DLCS).
* DLCS needs to begin in K and continue right through the entire student career.
 |

**Educational Personnel Advisory Council**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Educational Personnel Advisory Council (EPAC) advises the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on issues pertaining to all educational personnel and specifically on policy and programming pertaining to the educator workforce.

During 2020-2021, EPAC focused on the preparing, recruiting, hiring and retaining of educators amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the diversity of the educator workforce.

**II. 2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

At each meeting, EPAC members provided updates on the work at their respective organizations. In addition, DESE provided a written update from the Licensure and Educator Effectiveness offices that was shared in advance of the meeting and then there was time allocated for questions and discussions. Based on a survey issued in August 2020, we asked EPAC members to tell us what areas related to the educator workforce they were most interested in discussing during the 2020-21 school year.

The following were the four focus areas at meetings in 2020-21:

* **The Alternative Assessment for Licensure Pilot** – EPAC members were given an overview and update on this new portfolio of work and provided input and advice on the development of various communication and guidance documents that were developed in support of this Pilot.
* **The DESE Talent Guide** – EPAC members provided their thinking and feedback on the following:
	+ What has your organization done or seen as an example and/or model to share in the guide?
	+ How can and should district leaders be leveraging this aspect of the talent guide in supporting the hiring and retaining of a diverse workforce?
	+ Over the next year, what choice points will school and district leaders face, relative to this topic, to advance racial equity?
* Overview of the [**Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/) – The discussion with EPAC members focused on ideas and resources for Using the Blueprint to Promote Improvement for ELs
* **DESE Principal Readiness Work**: We engaged members with an overview of the Principal Readiness Portfolio and purpose of each project within the initiative and solicited initial insights and feedback on implementation support in 2021-22 and beyond. The discussion focused on the following: 1) How can preparation programs understand or measure their candidates' level of readiness on these indicators? 2) What supports will mentors need to effectively engage novice principals in an induction and mentoring program centered on equitable leadership practices? and 3) As we continue to build out our implementation support for this work, we recognize that programs, organizations, and/or districts may already be doing work to develop and support anti-racist leadership (or components of it) well. Are there places you know about that are already doing this work (or components of it) well?

The insights and good thinking from EPAC members helped shaped the development, support and resources associated with: the [Pilot of Alternative Assessments for Licensure](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/alt-assess/default.html), the [2021-22 MA Guide to Building Supportive Systems for Educators](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/default.html), the [MA Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/), and the Principal Readiness Portfolio.

**IV. COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Liaison:** Elizabeth C. Losee, Director of Educator Effectiveness Policy

**Members of EPAC:**

| **Name** | **Title** | **Representing Organization** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ms. Desiree Ivey, 2020-2021 EPAC Chair | Executive Director, Shady Hill Teacher Training Center | Shady Hill School |
| Mr. John Antonucci | Superintendent, Duxbury Public Schools | Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents |
| Dr. Ray Lewis | Dean, Worcester State University | Standing Committee on Preparing Educators, Public University System |
| Ms. Carol Gregory | Executive Director | Massachusetts Association of School Personnel Administrators |
| Dr. Cheryl Stanley | President | Massachusetts Association of Colleges for Teacher Education |
| Mr. Daniel Murphy | Director of Ed. Policy & Programs | American Federation of Teachers, MA |
| Mr. Richard Pearson | Associate Executive Director; Council Chair | Massachusetts School Administrators Association |
| Ms. Elizabeth Shevlin Tripathi | Educational Policy Specialist | Massachusetts Teachers Association |
| Mr. Elijah Heckstall | Managing Director of Teacher Leadership Development | Teach for America |
| Ms. Jill Flanders | Elementary Committee Member | Massachusetts School Administrators Association |
| Mr. Takeru Nagayoshi | 2020 Teacher of the Year | New Bedford Public Schools |
| Ms. Marla J. Solomon | Director of Partnership Programs | Five College Consortium |

**Council Meeting Dates:** 12/1/2020, 1/14/2021, 3/23/2021, and 4/29/2021

**English Language/Bilingual Education Advisory Council (ELBAC)**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

1. **INTRODUCTION.** This ELBAC committee was primarily appointed in spring 2018, with new members joining in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 School Years. For SY 2020-2021, the ELBAC has been tasked *with* ***“providing input and advice on family engagement for ELs and remote and/or hybrid learning”.***

**Tasks associated with the charge:**

* + 1. Continue to provide more specific recommendations for serving ELs during remote and/or hybrid learning.
		2. Provide advice on family recruitment strategies to increase English Learner Parent Advisory Council membership in districts and schools.
		3. Provide input to the vendors on the pilot implementation of [Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/dashboard.html) for **Pillar one:** *English learners in Massachusetts attend schools in which educators share responsibility for their success, engage effectively with their families, and value and nurture their linguistic and cultural assets.*
		4. Provide feedback to topics at request of the Department.
1. **2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL.** The ELBAC held three meetings, including parent and student panels, during which we examined the following education topics and conducted the following business items:
	1. ***Education Topics Examined***
		1. Serving English learners during remote and hybrid learning
		2. ELPAC Family recruitment strategies
		3. OLA EL Blueprint and Implementation
		4. Additional topics requested by the Department
			1. Dyslexia Guidance
			2. Promoting Equitable SEPAC Engagement for Black and Brown Parents
			3. A Multi-System Investigation on the Death of David Almond (March 2021) & ESSER III
	2. ***Business Items Conducted***
		1. Receipt and review of Open Meeting Materials
		2. Review of ELBAC Charge
		3. Vacancies
2. **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS.**
	* 1. ***Continue to provide more specific recommendations for serving ELs during remote and/or hybrid learning. The ELBAC recommends that districts:***
* Implement a team approach to engage students during remote learning - teacher, principal, trained multilingual translators
* Provide before- and after-school multilingual support for students
* Connect schools with existing community-based organizations that support our EL communities
* Hire a family engagement coordinator
* Create a communication structure so multiple stakeholders (counselors, teachers, administrators, liaisons, social workers, etc.) can inform each other on their work
* Partner with students’ and families’ voices when developing reopening plans and re-designing post-COVID educational systems
* Re-engage with students who experienced disrupted education during the pandemic
* Focus work on dropout prevention among high school students.
	+ 1. ***Family recruitment strategies to increase English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) membership in districts and schools.***
* Offer ELPAC leaders training on the statewide framework for family engagement
* Provide trainings and educational workshops for ELPAC members
* Leverage outside agencies to help with EL family outreach
* Recruit families through schools, community based organizations, religious institutions, etc.
* Allow families to engage in meetings virtually or in-person.
* Bring representatives from family engagement council to consult on the ELBAC charge
* Create an ELPAC Leadership Network (survey districts to find the ELPAC chairperson, district liaison)
* Emphasize that family engagement means partnering with families to determine their needs and respond to them
* Encourage schools to hold listening sessions with families to learn what families need and work with them to provide it
* Investigate opportunities to collaborate across districts sharing family engagement personnel and resources especially with low incidence languages
* Develop family engagement support from within; utilize our EL families as resources and empower them to support other families. For instance, recruit families and parents who grew up in the town and/or attended schools to connect with new families
	+ 1. ***Provide input to the vendors on the pilot implementation of*** [***Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success***](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/dashboard.html) ***for Pillar One:* *English learners in Massachusetts attend schools in which educators share responsibility for their success, engage effectively with their families, and value and nurture their linguistic and cultural assets****.*
* Implement comprehensive DESE structures to ensure EL Blueprint has its intended effects
* Train all district leaders (not just EL directors) beyond the coaching sessions
* Develop a long-term monitoring system and/or connection
* Train instructional coaches in a “train the trainer” module. They are instrumental in supporting classroom changes (for Pillar 1)
* Add a “WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE” reference document where the various district roles are listed and their connection to Blueprint
* Develop procedures to connect Blueprint to district strategic plan and school improvement plan
1. ***Additional topics requested by the Department***
2. ***Feedback on the English learner section in the Dyslexia Guidance document (as requested by Jane Ewing, Supervisor, Metro/NE Team)***
* Include guidance on screening and supporting students in middle school and high school, not just young children.
* Provide actionable guidelines to support district personnel engaged in necessary screening
* Recommend timelines for employing MTSS before referring a student for screening
	+ - * + Include case studies in the guidance
1. ***A presentation from the SEPAC soliciting advice on increasing Black and Brown family engagement generated ideas that should also be considered in ELPAC family recruitment (as requested by Erin*** ***VandeVeer, Educational Specialist, Metro/NE Team)***
* Improve quality of translation and interpretation
* Consider how to address participation barriers such as transportation and childcare
* Provide virtual meetings for families who cannot attend in person
* Recruit fathers and male caregivers to participate
1. ***Feedback on A Multi-System Investigation on the Death of David Almond (March 2021) & ESSER III (as requested by Cliff Chuang, Associate Commissioner)***
* Simone Lynch, Federal Grants Director, and Kendra Winner, Research & Evaluation Coordinator, conducted breakout sessions and collected confidential feedback.

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The ELBAC invited two guest panels to inform recommendations for the first three tasks from the charge as indicated in items 1, 2, and 3 above. The panelists also recommended the following actions for family and student support. The first set of recommendations is from a panel of school counselors, bilingual counselors, and parent liaisons from three districts. The second set is from a panel of students from two districts.

1. ***Educators Working Together to Support Multilingual Students and Families. (****Brockton, Waltham, and Somerville Public Schools, school counselors, bilingual counselors, and parent liaisons)*
	* Establish working partnerships between community agencies and school personnel to help bridge connections with linguistically diverse families entering the school system
	* Hire community relations facilitators and advocates who speak the languages used by families and students in the school community.
	* Invest in district cell phones for all advocates and community facilitators to provide direct contact to staff members or parents.
	* Consider assigning one school-wide counselor dedicated to EL students and families
	* Consider assigning one district-wide social worker to oversee all social workers in a district, specifically for supporting vulnerable and marginalized students and families
	* Establish communication over social media to provide community and school information for students and families
	* Establish three-way calls with interpretation services for parent-school communication
2. ***Student voices: “What I Want My Teachers To Know”****.* *Brockton and Burlington Public Schools students)*
	* Offer opportunities for students to engage in rigorous content classes in their native language
	* Provide multilingual students the same opportunities as native English speakers
* Elevate the assets of multilingual learners in all aspects of student life
	+ Reinforce that all teachers are teachers of English learners
	+ Engage in two-way translations and interpretation through audio, video, written, and social media options.
	+ Invest in cultural brokers to reach out directly to families and communities to include student voice in school and district initiatives.
1. **Plans for the coming academic year**

Upon reviewing the charge for SY2020-21, the ELBAC would like to engage in the following tasks for SY 2021-22:

1. Address the disproportionate number of ELs attending career technical and vocational schools
2. Create platforms for districts to share their practices (e.g., curriculum, communication, etc.) and allow other districts to learn from each other and implement best practices
3. Add students to the ELBAC or, at a minimum, having a student listening session (similar to the panel we did this year) as a regular practice of the ELBAC.
4. **COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:**

Sibel Hughes

**Department Liaison**:

David Valade

**Chairpersons**:

Christine Montecillo Leider, Clinical Asst. Professor/Director, Bilingual Education and TESOL, Boston University

Antonina Parris-Yarbrough, EL Specialist, Excel Academy Charter Schools

**Members of the 2020-2021Advisory Council**:

Monica Abdullah, Special Education/Vocational Tech Educator, The Center School, Holyoke

Allison Balter, Founding Principal, ENLACE, Lawrence Public Schools

Ivonne Borrero, Supervisor, English Learners and Students with Disabilities, Boston Public Schools

Meg Burns, President, MABE, Asst. Professor TESOL/Bilingual Education, Lesley University

Craig Consigli, Asst. Superintendent, Milford Public Schools

Jill Davan, Parent, ELD Instructional Coach/Teacher Dual Immersion, Framingham School District

Virginia Guglielmo-Brady, EL Director and Curriculum Coordinator, Pittsfield Public Schools

Kellie Jones, Director of Bilingual Education, Brockton Public Schools

Meghan Lampert, Parent, English Learner Teacher

Kerri Lamprey, ESL Curriculum Coordinator, Burlington Public Schools

Christine Montecillo Leider, Clinical Asst. Professor/Director, Bilingual Education and TESOL, Boston University

Heidys Mendez, Parent Liaison, Haverhill Public Schools, Chatham Elementary School

Andrea Parker, Parent, DEI Consultant, Federation for Children with Special Needs, Senior Statewide Family Engagement Specialist

Antonina Parris, Dean of Student Supports, Excel Academy Charter Schools

Mary Jo Rendón, Family/Community Engagement Specialist, Waltham School District

Dalida Rocha, Political Coordinator SEIU

Ahmed Noor, Director of EL Community Outreach, Boston Public Schools

Taran Tiwari, Nepali Parent Liaison, Springfield Public Schools

Anis Abdulle, Chair of the Board of Directors, African Community and Economic Development of New England (ACEDONE)

**ELBAC Meeting Dates:**  SY 2020-2021

October 29, 2020, February 24, 2021, May 13, 2021

**Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Council**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

# Introduction

The Gifted & Talented Education Advisory Council (GTAC) was reinstated by Commissioner Jeffrey Riley and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) in 2020 amidst the backdrop of Dr. Dana Ansel’s study “State of Gifted Education in Massachusetts,” mandated by the Massachusetts Legislature and commissioned by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Furthermore, Commissioner Riley in his memo from August 2019 to the MA Legislature acknowledged the work needed for G&T students in the Commonwealth.

A diverse body of members – ranging from students to professors to entrepreneurs to public and private school educators to parent advocates, varied in socio-economic background, in race, in age, in gender, in sexuality, in exposure to the field of Gifted & Talented – came together to form the Council. The Council was charged with three distinct tasks by BESE:

* Define giftedness and measures to assess giftedness
* Determine most effective ways to collect data on gifted students
* Consider best practices of other states and districts

An overarching charge was to keep an equity focused lens given the disparities in the outcomes for low-income, Black, Brown, rural, and other systemically disadvantaged students.

# Work of the Council

The overall Council agenda, and charge was led by Dr. Victoria Greer, Superintendent of Sharon Public Schools (Chair) and Dr. Katharina Elbert, Board Member, Massachusetts Association of Gifted Education (Co-Chair). In December 2020, Dr. Victoria Greer stepped down from her role on the Council, and Ms. Meenakshi Bharath, former Chair of Hopkinton School Committee and Commissioner, Asian American Commission of Massachusetts, was appointed as Chair. Craig Waterman and Dr. Ventura Rodriguez served as DESE Liaisons and worked as part of the Leadership Team. 2020 was a year of much challenge across the globe, yet this Council of highly competent volunteers met regularly via Zoom, formed five sub-committees, and two working groups, and worked tirelessly to research, review, and deliberate the services Gifted & Talented students need in the Commonwealth.

The five sub-committees and two working groups formed were:

* **Goals & Timelines Subcommittee** (Led by Mr. Tyrone Mowatt, Founder, EdInquiry and Former Chair, Gifted & Talented Education Advisory Council; and Ms. Courtney Perdios, Quincy Public Schools Committee Member)
* **Giftedness Definition Subcommittee** (Led by Dr. MaryGrace Stewart, President, Massachusetts Association of Gifted Education and Founder of IDEAL4Gifted; Dr. Victoria Greer, Superintendent, Sharon Public Schools; and Mr. Takeru “TK” Nagayoshi, 2020 Teacher of the Year and English Literature Teacher at New Bedford High School)
* **Education Models Sub-Committee** (Led by SAGE School Educator and DEI Coordinator, Mr. Lance Sun and Ms. Meenakshi Bharath, former Chair of Hopkinton School Committee and Commissioner, Asian American Commission of Massachusetts)
* **Teacher and Parent Training Sub-Committee** (Led by Waltham Public Schools Challenge Program Lead, Ms. Heny Taraz)
* **Gifted Information Session Sub-Committee** (Led by Student Leader, Ms. Yaileen Moscat, Abbott Academy, Lawrence)
* **Data Collection Working Group** (Led by Prof. Betsy McCoach, University of Connecticut; and Mr. Tyrone Mowatt, Founder, EdInquiry and Former Chair, Gifted & Talented Education Advisory Council)
* **Raising Awareness Working Group** (Led by Waltham Public Schools Challenge Program Lead, Ms. Heny Taraz; and Ms. Yaileen Moscat, Student Leader, Abbott Academy, Lawrence)

The Council took on the work of identifying its own inherent bias, and is working to seek Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training. This work is being led by Ms. Myriam Skolnick, Principal, Faucey Elementary School, Springfield. The Council also worked through meeting norms to ensure equitable access and inclusion of all member voices.

The Council acknowledged the work done, and recommendations made for G&T students by previous Councils from 2009 through 2015. Two former members, Mr. Tyrone Mowatt (Former Council Chairperson), and Ms. Donna Astion, G&T Educator and Teacher Union Lead, Berkshire Hills Regional School District, are part of the new Council, providing continuation of Council knowledge.

Recognizing the workload taken on by the Council, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez formalized a bid process to on-board an independent vendor to support the work of the Council. In March 2021, Mr. Eric Calvert and Dr. Susan Corwith, Center for Talent Development (CTD), Northwestern University, were on-boarded. As the sub-committee recommendations were thoroughly deliberated and voted on by the Council, the sub-committees were wound down, with the exception of the “Raising Awareness” working group. All remaining work was handed over to the CTD Team to work through with DESE members, and for the Council to transition to an advisory role.

The Council welcomed public input, having received inquiries on its work via emails, and made room through the Public Comment section during Council meetings.

# Council Recommendations

The Council’s sub-committees submitted their recommendations to the full council in winter 2020-21, which through a rigorous deliberation process, were unanimously voted on by this diverse Council. The highlights of the recommendations are as follows:

**Through the work of the Goals & Timelines Sub-Committee, the full Council unanimously recommends:** That the Commonwealth publicly acknowledge the existence of gifted, academically advanced, and those capable of achieving beyond grade level and that these students exist in all of their school districts.

That the Commonwealth publicly acknowledge there are gifted, academically advanced, and Black, Brown, rural poor, and lower income students capable of learning beyond the grade level proportionally to all other communities. That the Commonwealth make a public commitment to educate these students in ways that provide them with opportunities to reach their full potential.

We strongly recommend that BESE require DESE to establish a Gifted & Talented Office. This G&T Office will regularly work with districts and with the GTAC, follow up on GTAC’s recommendations, and lead the state in the field of gifted education including in ways that are based on the findings of the GT Report. In the short term, no later than June 2021, we recommend that DESE identify a team of individuals, already working at DESE, who can be trained in the specific needs (academic, social emotional, etc.) of academically advanced, gifted, underachieving, and those who are capable of achieving beyond grade level.

**Through the work of the Teacher and Parent Training Sub-Committee, the full Council unanimously recommends**: In order to attain equity for Gifted, Talented, and Academically Advanced children, all stakeholders (including families, teachers, school staff, and administrators) must acknowledge the Gifted and Talented student’s academic and social-emotional needs. A statewide comprehensive framework must be created for all schools and for families as stated below:

* **Support Parents and Guardians:** Provide rich and informative website with information about Gifted, Talented, and Academically Advanced children; provide a comprehensive guide to their path in the public school educational system; hire personnel to connect with families.
* **Educate teachers and administrators:** Given that Gifted, Talented, and Academically Advanced students are historically underserved in Massachusetts, the council recommends that the highest office holders in the state, as well as in every district, strongly encourage and provide incentives for educators to seek training and professional development. Provide and implement pre-service training on G&T/academically advanced students and ways to support them academically, socially, and emotionally
* **Build a community**: Acknowledge that Gifted, Talented, and Academically Advanced children deserve **equitable education** and social-emotional support and interventions to reach their full potential.

**Through the work of the Education Models Sub-Committee, the full Council unanimously recommends**: Upon examining private, public, and charter school gifted and talented models in- and out-of-state, it was found that:

A disparity in representation based on race and income in many programs across the nation, caused by systemic disadvantages and biases prevents equal access. A lack of comprehensive statewide policies for serving the state’s gifted and talented students in Massachusetts public schools is contributing to such inequity. While some Massachusetts charter schools profess a focus on academic rigor and excellence, they do not appear to provide gifted and talented services and are not an accessible option for all. Private schools that fill the gifted and talented education void come with significant access barriers, both financial and geographical.

When implementing these recommendations, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education needs to **bear an anti-racism lens, and build policies that address and build accountability** related to economic, cultural, geographical, and other disparities that impact equitable access to programming in districts across the State.

* **A state-wide Acceleration Policy** is developed and implemented, to provide a path for advanced students to be instructed in curriculum matched to their learning readiness, allowing them to experience learning growth. This policy needs to include practices which ensure equitable access and implementation, for all student populations including special education students and EL.
* An Individual Learner Assessment is applied that finds each student’s strengths AND areas needing support, both academically, developmentally, and social-emotionally, from earliest grades on, and that leads to instruction and services provided at the indicated levels (**Individual Learner Plan**), **on a continuum preK-12**.

The full Council recommendations are attached for reference. It is to be noted that the **Giftedness Definitions Sub-Committee** developed its **conceptual definition** over several months, discussed drafts of operational definition, and handed the same over to the CTD Team to take the work forward. The Council is looking forward to its role in an advisory capacity in the upcoming year. The Council eagerly looks forward to implementation of its thoroughly deliberated recommendations in the Commonwealth to serve Gifted & Talented students.

# Council Details

**Council Members:** Meena Bharath (Chair); Dr. Katharina Elbert (Co-chair); Kenya Guerra; Prof. Betsy McCoach; Yaileen Moscat; Tyrone Mowatt; Takeru Nagayoshi; Dr. Marty O’Shea; Courtney Perdios; Magalie Pinney; Donna Potter Astion; Dr. MaryGrace Stewart; Lance Sun; Heny Taraz; Myriam Ulloa-Skolnick

**DESE Members**: Jackie Gantzer, Craig Waterman, Shay Edmonds, Sylvia Lam, Thomas Zorich, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez (Senior Associate Commissioner)

# Council Meeting Dates in 2020-2021

March 6, 2020, June 15, 2020, July 6, 2020, August 20, 2020, September 24, 2020, October 22, 2020, November 19, 2020, December 17, 2020, January 21, 2021, February 25, 2021, March 18, 2021, April 15, 2021, May 20, 2021, and June 17, 2021.

# Subcommittee meeting dates in 2020-2021

*Goals and Timelines*: July 24, 2020, July 31, 2020, August 7, 2020, August 14, 2020, August 18, 2020, August 20, 2020; *Teacher and Parent Training*: July 24, 2020, August 14, 2020, September 4, 2020, October 9, 2020, November 6, 2020, November 12, 2020; *Gifted Information Session*: July 28, 2020, August 7, 2020, August 18, 2020, September 8, 2020, October 12, 2020, October 15, 2020, October 20, 2020; *Definition of Giftedness*: July 31, 2020, August 12, 2020, August 18, 2020, August 31, 2020, September 18, 2020, December 18, 2020, January 31, 2021, March 7, 2021; *Educational Models*: September 1, 2020, September 29, 2020, October 13, 2020, November 16, 2020, December 8, 2020, January 5, 2021, January 26, 2021, February 9, 2021, February 17, 2021, March 16, 2021

# Working group meeting dates in 2020-2021

*Raising Awareness in MA:* January 20, 2021; March 9, 2021; April 27, 2021; May 20, 2021

*Data Collection Working Group:* February-April 2021

**Parent and Community Education and Involvement Advisory Council**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Parent and Community Education and Involvement Advisory Council (PCEIAC) advises the Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on matters pertaining to the development of family and community engagement in education. Its function is to help inform and advise the Department on policy issues that relate to the enhancement of the educational opportunities, experiences, and outcomes of Massachusetts students.

**II. 2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

The PCEIAC conducted four online meetings. Meetings generally consisted of a presentation and a feedback/input session featuring representatives from DESE offices and/or family engagement professionals. The meetings and major topics covered at each were:

October 2020 meeting:

* Revisions to the Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals
* Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) stakeholder engagement

January 2021 meeting:

* DESE Family Portal
* Communication updates from the Commissioner’s Office

March 2021 meeting:

* Presentation by the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)
* Presentation by the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning (KCL)

May 2021 meeting

* Recommendations for use of ESSER III funds
* Presentation by New Bedford Family Institute for Student Success (FISS) Project and Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) staff

**III. COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council offered recommendations on several of the above topics as follows:

* Regarding revisions to the Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals, examples of comments by members include:
	+ Appreciation for the Fundamentals, particularly the focus on equity.
	+ A comment that the mastering level of implementation shows a higher level of expectations than it used to.
	+ A suggestion that the Department consider developing a list of consultants who could help with implementation.
	+ A comment that the Fundamentals can be used as a tool to involve families and communities and hold leaders accountable.
	+ A suggestion that additional resources may be needed because some districts/schools may think families don’t want to be involved.
* Regarding the DESE Family Portal, examples of suggestions provided by members include:
	+ Using short sentences; icons; links to learning standards; boxes at the bottom to make it clean and easy to navigate
	+ Reducing text; adding a welcome note on the landing page; making CVTE language more user friendly; adding information about private special education schools; shortening the introductory paragraph; considering the addition of a list of parent support resources (e.g., mental health) and a chat app for live interaction and help; highlighting how/where families can click for translations
	+ Sharing information in other languages; asking districts and community partners, including libraries, to post links to the portal; including the portal link in take home information for families; promoting the portal in social media and apps like [Parent Square](https://www.parentsquare.com/features/)
* Regarding the use of ESSER III funds, examples of suggestions provided by members include:
	+ Keeping families, along with students and schools, front and center. Including them in processes.
	+ Making a coordinated effort to build infrastructure and include community organizations.
	+ Allowing for some unrestricted funding other than funding for programming.
	+ Helping students focus on long-term workforce development and next steps after school (e.g., FAFSA).
	+ Creating learning pods and supporting surround care models similar to the Surround Care Collaboration in Boston. (See [Higher Ground](https://www.higherground-boston.org/) for more information.)
	+ Having students say what they need and what helps/works for them.
	+ Planning for a menu of tiered supports for every student where some supports are universal and others are targeted and individualized for students who need more support.

**IV. COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:**

Rachelle Engler Bennett, Associate Commissioner, Student and Family Support

**Department Liaison**:

Kathy Rodriguez, Adult and Community Learning Services

**Co-chairs:**

Adanma K. Ude; Christine V. Tangishaka

**Members:**

| **Name** | **Title** | **Institution** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Clayton Connor | Finance and Administration Director | Westover Job Corps Center |
| Yvonne Endara | English Language Education Director | Malden Public Schools |
| Sharita Fauche | Substance Abuse Coordinator | Department of Children and FamiliesC-PLAN Member |
| Roberta E. Hantgan | Director | Hantgan Associates |
| Kathleen Jones | President & CEO | TTT Mentor Program |
| Eva Kelly | Director of Enrollment and Family Engagement | Fitchburg Public Schools |
| Garland Kimmer | Director of International Development | Double E Company |
| Jessica Lander | Author and Journalist, Teacher | Lowell High School |
| Jacqueline E. Lipson | Vice President, PreK-12 Education | Widmeyer Communications |
| Yahaira Lopez | Founder | Autism Sprinter, Inc.C-PLAN Member |
| Joselyn Marte | HiSET Advisor, Evening Facilitator | Lawrence Adult Learning Center |
| Lorette McWilliams | Professor | School Counseling Department,Assumption University |
| Theresa A. Melito-Conners, Ph.D. | Out-of-District Special Education Coordinator | Melrose Public Schools |
| Magda L. Rodriguez | Director of Programming | Families First Parenting Programs |
| Teresa A. Rodriguez | Director of Family Relations | Winsor School |
| Christine V. Tangishaka | Parent Member |   |
| Adanma K. Ude | Regional Director | New England Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship |

**Meetings:** October 26, 2020; January 25, 2021; March 15, 2021; and May 17, 2021

**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

This school year, the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges within the Council’s collective memories; the wholesale closure of the public schools of our world, our nation and the state of Massachusetts has led to the collective struggle to find appropriate solutions to safely reopen the Commonwealth’s public schools for students who need the academic, social and emotional supports that school can provide students when they are met by a caring staff each day. Although RIAC shares the constant concern about student equity and access to the best programs within the Commonwealth’s public schools regardless of the race, gender and socioeconomic status of the students, most could not imagine a time when schools would close and children would learn from their homes with disparate support for students who were already socioeconomically disadvantaged. Through the loss of the stability that the Commonwealth’s schools provide, students, families, community leaders, teachers, principals, superintendents, school committee members, DESE staff and the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education collectively faced a time of uncertainty unparalleled since the attacks of 9/11 which left us all vulnerable in ways that were unimaginable. The devastating effect of the Covid-19 pandemic affected each of us and children certainly suffered the most.

RIAC is deeply concerned about the academic, social and emotional growth of all children, and in particular, children who have been historically marginalized. RIAC is equally concerned about the Commonwealth’s educators and their professional, social and emotional responses to the pandemic. In fact, a recent Boston Globe article stated that an unintended consequence of the year-long pandemic may be the decision of some teachers of color to leave the public schools of the Commonwealth. RIAC has been tasked with the review of administrator and teacher diversity by the Commissioner and it appears that this responsibility has just become even more important and necessary than in the past.

The Great Divide series in the Boston Globe has done an admirable job of keeping the community that is dedicated to school equity aware of the plight of children who may have found virtual school difficult through the loss of contact with their schools, their teachers and their friends. The Great Divide also explained the predicament of children and families who did not have full access to the internet; and most importantly, these journalists chronicled the experiences of children who lost precious family and friends to sickness and death. These children faced the fear that too often overshadows us all when an achievable solution is not imminent and we cannot assure those we love and care about that life will once again become normal.

Commissioners across this nation have had to grapple with school issues for which they could not be adequately prepared and RIAC acknowledges the hard work of the Commissioner and DESE staff during the pandemic as decisions were made about how schooling would be achieved at a distance. The Commissioner acknowledged that historically marginalized children would once again suffer the inequities that have shaped too large a portion of their school lives and in response, DESE provided a truncated MCAS testing situation that was less stressful to students but could still provide the student accountability necessary to ensure that educational losses could be documented and addressed.

At the same time, the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education incorporated inclusionary practices that should realize higher rates of attendance for students of color and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged in the Commonwealth’s vocational schools. Historic inequity was also documented within the work of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Director of Equity Initiatives, Kendall Wilson-Flippin, made the following observations in 2020 concerning Covid’s disparate and specific effects upon the nation’s Black citizens and their children**:**

Covid – 19 has shone a light on the unequivocable impacts on the racial, social, health and economic well-being of persons who are recipients of the education system we build, as well as those who serve to ensure it is equitable for all. At this moment, following the deaths of too many black citizens, the injustices within the society we live in, and the ensuing call for racial justice has shown how much more lies ahead to dismantle institutional racism. The world is reminded of the reality racism creates: society imprisons people of color with stereotypes, barriers, and division on the basis of nothing but race. It underscores the imperative that we at CCSSO lead the tough work of addressing these issues for our country’s children.

Although RIAC supports the commentary about Covid’s devastating effects upon Black families, RIAC would expand this definition to include others who have experienced tremendous loss and that would include, but would not be limited to, children of Hispanic descent, children who are Asian, children who are Native American, socio-economically disadvantaged children, and children who might be considered privileged but whose enhanced status failed to protect them from the devastation of Covid. It is in this spirit that RIAC offers the following recommendations for the Commissioner’s review:

1. **The Subcommittee on Family Engagement acknowledges that the goal to increase the engagement of underrepresented families and communities in school meetings and activities may be compromised by a fundamental distrust of schools, but that innovative initiatives that support disenfranchised communities and families can overcome past issues or concerns.**

The collection and monitoring of demographic data on family participation should measure the effectiveness of outreach which may include but not be limited to the following strategies by school leaders: 1) the identification of new meeting locations that may be more welcoming; 2) the creation ofpartnerships and approaches that will increase the quality of family and community engagement; and 3) the provision of new opportunities that will engage all families in work that will shape school policies and practices that will benefit their children’s academic, social and emotional growth processes.

1. **The Subcommittee on Teacher Hiring acknowledges that recruitment, hiring and retention of teachers is a district-based process that is protected by the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act; concurrently, RIAC supports the Commissioner’s goal to reach parity in the superintendent, principal and teacher categories**.

RIAC believes that the following supports from DESE will increase staff diversity and strategies may include but are not limited to 1) alternative forms of certification in collaboration with area colleges which could be based upon New York’s Hunter College teacher certification program where graduates are certified and provided employment when they graduate, 2) improved and extended administrator and teacher mentoring programs, 3) the support for increased teacher diversity through the encouragement of the Executive Directors of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and 4) the creation and funding of several culturally responsive school districts, based upon the DESE-supported Massachusetts Experimental School System, that could support authentic culturally competent educational strategies and practices through a diverse school board, diverse staff, a diverse student population and a diverse parent group coupled with a college component which could provide the opportunity to train current and future administrators and teachers in culturally responsive school practices.[[2]](#footnote-3)

1. **The Subcommittee on College Partnerships and Engagement acknowledges that there is a need for DESE to expand efforts that will enhance the value of the teaching profession for students of color while they are in high school and during the early years of their college experience.**

High school principals have noted that DESE’s Abigail Adams Scholarship does not provide sufficient funding for college attendance and some publicly funded colleges and universities are not funded to provide dual enrollment for high school students. RIAC believes that the replication of programs such as the “Posse Foundation” and the Urban Scholars Program at Boston University could expand the role of public and private colleges in the realization of a more diverse educator work force.

RIAC also believes that DESE could encourage college students to consider a career in education through partnerships with teacher preparation programs which could provide opportunities for college students to earn college credit by providing educational supports for urban public school students whose education has been disrupted by Covid. Partnerships between DESE’s Educator Preparation unit and the teacher preparation programs could result in the creation and implementation of a program that could provide all students, and in particular students of color, the opportunity to work with urban children. A successful program could lead more students of color to consider careers in teaching.

**The Subcommittee on Funding for Pipeline Programs** has similarly proposed the need for DESE to continue to provide the funding and innovative programming that will support the Commissioner’s diversity goals through the intentional retention of staff of color and the increase of Administrators and Teachers of Color in the Commonwealth’s public schools. As stated earlier, the pandemic may lead to decreased numbers of teachers of color as they reconsider their commitment to employment within the Commonwealth’s public schools. To address this concern, there may be a need to use a portion of the Covid funds to research this dilemma and propose new strategies and innovative programs that will both retain the current cadre of teachers of color and grow the present diversity in staffing in the Commonwealth’s public schools.

1. **Decades of school inequity and the interrupted learning of too many disadvantaged students this past school year has demonstrated the need for the recreation and the implementation of an Equity Bureau at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The staff of the Equity Bureau should reflect the cultural diversity found within the Commonwealth and staff should have authentic culturally inclusive school equity experiences.**

RIAC acknowledges that the Commissioner created and implemented the Center for Strategic Initiatives to respond to RIAC’s request for an Equity Bureau, and RIAC applauds the culturally responsive training that has been provided by this unit. However, a review of the past work of DESE’s Equity Bureau in the 1990s reveals that the Equity Unit had the authority and the culturally responsive skills to ensure equity and the provision and monitoring of culturally responsive practices both within DESE and within individual school districts. RIAC posits that a division devoted solely to school equity staffed by culturally responsive experts is still needed today.

The historical inequitable school experiences of students of color, the continued lack of the full engagement of families and communities of color and the limited encouragement some school administrators may experience when they support the creation and implementation of culturally responsive practices and policy development by those who hire them and are responsible for their professional advancement demonstrates that an Equity Bureau is needed at DESE to address structural racism within the Commonwealth’s public schools. This year, a RIAC member shared the real-life experience of a school leader’s threatened dismissal when equity efforts which are supported by the Commissioner were not embraced by the local school committee. RIAC acknowledges that the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 gives the school committee unmitigated authority to recruit, hire, evaluate, and retain the superintendent of schools and RIAC is concerned that such unchecked authority could result in decreased diversity efforts in this case. This school leader’s professional experience of an elected school committee’s non-support for the Commissioner’s equity mandates demonstrates the need for the Chief Diversity Officer position that was recommended by the School Chiefs in 2017 in their document, “Leading the Way” along with the hire of Equity Specialists to carry out equity within DESE and the school districts.

It is certain that if superintendents and principals are to carry out the Commissioner’s diversity initiatives and goals, they must have consistent support from DESE staff who are culturally competent and skilled in the art of the development and implementation of culturally responsive education and practices. RIAC posits that this role cannot be adequately fulfilled by a consultant pool that are not DESE staff; there is a need to develop a cadre of DESE staff who can convey equity information to superintendents and school committees with authority.[[3]](#footnote-4) In turn, Equity Coordinators must have the full support of the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as they monitor and assess equity in school districts across the Commonwealth; such a system of equity already exists within the Hawaii Department of Education and a review of that program may provide insight. To ensure equity in the Commonwealth’s schools, RIAC supports DESE in the following efforts:

1. Increase teacher diversity through trainings and conversations with school committee members and school superintendents.
2. Provide professional development to school committees and superintendents to review DESE’s Superintendent’s Rubric and the Principal Rubric. Both rubrics mandate culturally responsive policy development and practices in relation to the staff, students and families who are served by the Commonwealth’s public-school districts.
3. Provide assistance to school committees and school superintendents to develop the skills necessary to recruit, hire, retain, promote and support administrators and teachers of color.
4. Provide assistance to school committees and school superintendents to create and implement culturally responsive policy and practices that will enhance the educational outcomes of historically marginalized students, and
5. Support and monitor school district progress towards staff diversity, teacher preparation, mentoring programs and the academic, social and emotional outcomes of all students in general and historically marginalized students in particular.

In conclusion, RIAC will continue to fulfill the work of the Commissioner’s charge to enhance the educational improvement of all students in general, and historically marginalized students in particular, and the increased diversity of staff in the Commonwealth’s public schools. Covid has not yet been eradicated and RIAC remains concerned that a large proportion of disadvantaged students in too many urban school districts have now returned to older school buildings that may be less safe. RIAC remains concerned and that interrupted learning of the past school year will continue to affect historically marginalized children disproportionately. RIAC has offered the above-mentioned recommendations in the hopes that their submission will assist the Commissioner in his attempt to equalize educational offerings to all students regardless of race or class, and in his goal to increase staff diversity within the Commonwealth’s public schools.

**Department Administrator:** Shay Edmond

**Co-Chairs:** Dr. Kahris McLaughlin and William Newell

**Secretary:** Dr. Michael Morris

**Members of the 2020-2021:** Gloria Buffonge, Charlotte Clarke, Dr. Raul Fernandez, Barbara Fields, Christina Horner, Cleonie Mainvielle, Dr. Kenann McKenzie, Christine Murray, LaTonia Naylor, John Ritz, Dr. Jessica Samuel

**Council Meeting Dates:**October 13, 2020; December 1, 2020; February 2, 2021; March 2, 2021; May 4, 2021; June 1, 2021

**SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSISTANCE**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

**INTRODUCTION**

The 15-member Advisory Council on School and District Accountability and Assistance (AAAC) advises the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Commonwealth’s District and School Accountability and Assistance system. The Council reviews and advises the Department and the Board on the policies and practices of the Center for District Support. In the 2020-2021 school year, the Council provided feedback on the district and school accountability system and related supports in light of the COVID-19 health emergency. The Council also discussed equity, cultural responsiveness, and the inclusion of student agency in the Department’s assistance efforts.

**2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

Overview:

The work of the Council centered around the state and federal flexibilities related to district and school accountability reporting following the 2020-2021 school year. These flexibilities were available and necessary because of the cancellation of the spring 2020 MCAS assessments and school closures due to the pandemic. The Council also discussed the assistance and resources that districts and schools need most as they navigate teaching and learning in in-person, remote, and hybrid models, and what might be necessary once the pandemic has ended.

Activities:

The Council met four times during the 2020-2021 school year. Topics of discussion included:

* District and school accountability system
	+ Federal flexibilities related to 2021 accountability reporting due to the COVID-19 health emergency
	+ An amendment to state accountability regulations to align with the state’s approved federal accountability waiver
* District and school assistance
	+ Department support for districts and schools in light of the COVID-19 health emergency
	+ Focusing on equity and cultural responsiveness in assistance
	+ Emphasizing student agency in the Department’s assistance efforts

**COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council offered specific input on the topics outlined above. Summaries and recommendations (where applicable) included the following:

**District and School Accountability System:** The Council has provided input and feedback on the design and implementation of the existing district and school accountability system over the course of the last few years. In light of the pandemic, the Council encouraged the Department to take full advantage of any flexibilities that the U.S. Department of Education might offer related to assessment and accountability in 2021. The Department applied for, and received, a waiver of certain federal accountability reporting requirements following the 2020-2021 school year. The Council also reviewed and supported the Department’s proposed amendment to state accountability regulations, which allowed the Department to refrain from issuing new district and school accountability determinations in fall 2021.

**District and School Assistance:** The Council discussed ways in which the Department can best support districts as they think about teaching and learning during and after the COVID-19 health emergency. They called for support related to recovery after the pandemic. Department staff introduced the *Academic Excellence Roadmap* to the Council as a set of tools to help districts focus on accelerating student learning next year, pull together the latest research, and make accessible and actionable tools that districts can use to implement and monitor progress.

The Council also discussed ways that the Department can more purposefully focus on equity and cultural responsiveness in their assistance work. Council members suggested that the Department make this a focus of all monitoring processes and encourage a review of systems and processes at all levels (e.g., district policies, planning, student assignment practices, etc.) and in all district types (e.g., rural, urban, and suburban).

The Council also provided feedback regarding ways in which the Department’s assistance activities related to accountability can prompt increased student voice and agency in schools and districts. Members encouraged the Department to align efforts with other statewide organizations that are prioritizing this work and to engage with students directly.

**COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:** Dr. Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Center for District Support

**Department Liaison:** Erica Gonzales, Accountability Coordinator

**Chairpersons:**

* Jason DeFalco, Superintendent, Blackstone-Millville Regional School District
* Mary Skipper, Superintendent, Somerville Public Schools

**Members:**[[4]](#footnote-5)

* Erica Brown, Chief of Policy and School Supports, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association
* Ethan Cancell, Executive Director of Assessment, Accountability, Technology, and Student Data Research, Brockton Public Schools
* Tiffani Curtis, School Supervisor, Holyoke Public Schools
* Jason DeFalco, Superintendent, Blackstone-Millville Regional School District
* Samuel DePina, Secondary Superintendent of School Operations and Safety, Boston Public Schools
* Heidi Driscoll, Academic Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical School District
* Sharita Fauche, Co-Director, Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network
* Tim Piwowar, Superintendent, Billerica Public Schools
* Jennifer Randall, Associate Professor of Research, Educational Measurement and Psychometrics and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, University of Massachusetts Amherst
* Bertha-Elena Rojas, Board of Directors and Chair of Advocacy Committee, Multistate Association for Bilingual Education
* Ron Sanborn, Principal, Charles Jaworek Elementary School, Marlborough Public Schools
* Paul Schlichtman, Past President, Massachusetts Association of School Committees
* Mary Skipper, Superintendent, Somerville Public Schools
* Nancy Urbschat, Business Owner, TSM Design

**Council Meeting Dates:** The Council met on four occasions: October 23, 2020; January 27, 2021; March 18, 2021; May 12, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, all four meetings took place virtually.

**2020-2021** **Vocational Technical Education Advisory Council**

**Annual Report**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The council advises the Board and the Commissioner on matters related to Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) across the Commonwealth. The focus for this year included equitable access to CVTE pathways, Department monitoring and support systems and processes for CVTE programs, and program quality and alignment to business and industry.

1. **2020-2021 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

DESE formed the VTE Advisory Council in October 2020, with 20 members from diverse roles, geographic, and demographic backgrounds. Given the high priority of the proposal and approval of new CVTE admissions regulations (along with supporting guidance), this work served as the primary focus of the council this year. Additional topics of discussion were monitoring processes and curriculum frameworks. The council reviewed, provided feedback, and otherwise advised the Department’s work in the following areas:

* The council normed with each other and developed an understanding of its priorities, asking guiding questions. (October)
* Council members engaged in a dialogue regarding the underlying root causes of enrollment disparities in CVTE schools, reviewed how current regulations potentially upheld those disparities, and offered suggestions as to how to strengthen admissions systems to better serve students seeking entry to CVTE schools. (November)
* The council dove more deeply into the information/awareness gap regarding students and families receiving information on CVTE pathways, and members offered suggestions as to how to make outreach/information sharing more equitable for communities across the Commonwealth. (January)
* Council members reviewed data compiled and analyzed by the Department regarding the awareness gap (proxy of applications by subgroup) and opportunity gap (proxy of offers of admission by subgroup) within CVTE, and they offered their unique perspectives on why these gaps might exist to better inform DESE’s regulatory change proposal. (March)
* The council heard updates from DESE staff regarding the merger of monitoring processes for schools offering CVTE programs, as well as the ongoing work of updating curriculum frameworks, and members posed questions to staff to help guide the work of these initiatives. Council members also had an opportunity to offer feedback on the CVTE Equitable Student Access guidelines DESE was drafting for the field to accompany the proposed regulatory changes regarding admissions. (June)
1. **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Council members provided, from their unique perspectives, feedback on all initiatives discussed above, which informed the Department’s further development and refinement of those initiatives, as well as next steps.

1. **COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:**

Elizabeth Bennett, Associate Commissioner for College, Career and Technical Education

**Department Liaison(s):**

Elizabeth Bennett, Associate Commissioner for College, Career and Technical Education

Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner for Educational Options

Timothy Moriarty, Special Advisor to the Senior Associate Commissioner for Educational Options

**Co-Chairs:** N/A

**Members of the 2020-2021 Council:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Last** | **First** | **Current Role** | **Organization** |
| Aguilar | Wendy | Bilingual Counselor / Medical Advocate | Pathways for Change |
| Custodio | Lord | Student (12th grade) | Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School |
| Dagesse | Derek | HVAC Instructor | Plymouth South High School |
| Douglas | Laura | President | Bristol Community College |
| Edouard-Vincent | Marice | Superintendent | Medford Public Schools |
| Farr | Kevin | Executive Director | Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators |
| Gangwisch-Marsh | Kim | Vocational School Counselor | Franklin County Technical School |
| Hackel | Nina | Owner | Dream Kitchens |
| Hathaway | Tim | President | Larkin/Hathaway, Inc. |
| Houle | Ernest | Superintendent-Director | Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School District |
| Jackson | Bradford | Superintendent-Director | Shawsheen Valley Technical High School |
| Langone | Joseph | Principal | Westfield Technical Academy |
| Loiseau | Marvin | Dean of Academic Affairs / Chief Academic Officer | Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology |
| Maguire | Karen | Director of Career Services | Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School |
| Manning | Gretchen | Deputy Director | Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges |
| Martin | Aliyana | Student (12th grade) | Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School |
| Megie-Maddrey | Natasha | Chief of Policy | Massachusetts Parents United |
| Montoute | LaVonia | Director of Career Pathways | EdVestors |
| Sands | Adele | Superintendent-Director | Bristol County Agricultural High School |
| Vargas | Abel | Executive Director | MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board |

**Council Meeting Dates:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date and Time** | **Location** |
| Monday, October 26, 2020, 3:30pm – 5:30pm | Zoom virtual meeting |
| Monday, November 30, 2020, 3:30pm – 5:30pm | Zoom virtual meeting |
| Monday, January 11, 2021, 3:30pm – 5:30pm | Zoom virtual meeting |
| Monday, March 1, 2021, 3:30pm – 5:30pm | Zoom virtual meeting |
| Monday, June 7, 2021, 3:30pm – 5:30pm | Zoom virtual meeting |

1. <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter379> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The DESE-supported Massachusetts Experimental School System was a successful culturally responsive school system in the 1970s that used the 1965 Racial Imbalance Act to bring students from isolated Boston and suburban school communities to attend school (K-12) in the African-American communities of Roxbury and Dorchester. The Career Opportunities Program prepared culturally competent and responsive teachers through college tuition and internships at the Massachusetts Experimental School System. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. There are historical examples of the best ways to achieve sustainable equity and that inclusive work must be intentional and monitored consistently. A review of the reasons that precipitated the creation of the NAACP to ensure access to civil liberties after the failed Reconstruction Period after the Civil War, the re-creation of Howard Law School which, through the leadership of African American Harvard-educated lawyer Charles Hamilton Houston, dedicated its legal acumen to ensure civil rights for African Americans after the Supreme Court’s 1896 Plessy decision enforced racial separation in public accommodations. DESE support of the creation of the Massachusetts Experimental School System is one such example of an intentional effort to equalize school offerings to a multicultural school population. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The Council seat reserved for union representation (American Federation of Teachers – Massachusetts or the Massachusetts Teachers Association) remained vacant in 2020-2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)