# DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSISTANCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

**2016-2017 Annual Report**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 15-member Advisory Council on District and School Accountability and Assistance (AAAC) advises the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Commonwealth’s School and District Accountability and Assistance system. The Council reviews and advises the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) and the Board on the policies and practices of the Center for District Support. In the 2016-2017 year, the Council provided feedback related to district and school accountability measures and assistance strategies.

**II. 2016-2017 WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

Overview

The work of the Council reflectedthe Department’s focus on the design of a revised system of district and school accountability and assistance. The Council also identified considerations relative to state accountability regulations.

Activities:

The Council met four times in SY 2016-2017. Topics of discussion included:

* Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
  + New federal requirements related to district and school accountability
  + Development of the Massachusetts ESSA state plan
* Technical amendments to state accountability regulations
  + Clarification regarding turnaround plan timelines
  + Limitation of certain provisions for the 2016-2017 school year
* Assistance strategies
  + Potential changes to the state’s model for district and school assistance

**III. COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**ESSA State Plan:** The Council offered input on the indicators that the Department proposed to include in the redesigned district and school accountability system, as well as the process for making district and school accountability determinations. Discussions related to this topic occurred over several meetings as part of the Department’s ongoing stakeholder engagement process required by ESSA. Ideas presented included the following:

* avoid over-complicating the system by including too many measures and comparisons;
* avoid using accountability indicators that might further implicit biases; and
* categorize districts and schools using meaningful descriptors instead of numbers.

Council discussions related to ESSA will continue into the 2017-2018 school year and will likely focus on state plan feedback from the U.S. Department of Education and further development of the state’s accountability system.

**Technical Amendments to State Accountability Regulations:** The Council reviewed and discussed two proposed amendments to the Board’s regulations, *603 CMR 2.00: Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools* during the 2016-2017 year. The first amendment made explicit that existing turnaround plans in a Level 4 school or district remain in effect until the statutory process to develop a new, modified, or renewed turnaround plan is completed, or the school or district is no longer designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming. The Council did not offer any specific changes to the regulatory language, but suggested that the Department consider local implications and related support for exiting schools and their districts.

The second amendment allowed the Department to refrain from placing certain schools into Levels 1-3 at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, and to reset the accountability baseline for schools administering the 2017 Next-Generation MCAS. There were no stated objections from the Council related to the proposed plan to reset the accountability baseline for grades 3-8; however, a few members of the Council noted two related objections. The first objection was to the use of student participation rates in accountability determinations, suggesting that that the Department refrain from placing any school into Level 3 based on assessment participation rates. The second objection was to the calculation of the participation rate, suggesting that the Department calculate participation rates using the number of students available for testing (excluding those students who refuse to participate in testing), instead of using enrollment data. No specific changes were made to the proposed regulatory language, but these objections were [shared with the Board](http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/fy2017/2017-04/item3.html) before the Board’s final vote in April 2017 to adopt the amendments.

**Assistance Strategies:** The Council offered initial feedback on the redesign of district and school assistance strategies. While the redesign work is in its early stages, the Council identified a number of important considerations relative to school improvement efforts. In particular, the Council noted that school turnaround practices are quality school practices that are applicable broadly and should not be associated solely with turnaround. The Council also recommended that the Department collaborate with the higher education community and other education organizations as the redesign work proceeds, and consider support for both small and large districts with varying needs and challenges.

**IV. COUNCIL DETAILS**

**Department Administrator:** Dr. Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner

**Department Liaison:** Erica Gonzales, Center for District Support

**Chairperson:** Meg Mayo-Brown, Superintendent, Barnstable Public Schools

**Members of the 2016-2017 Advisory Council:**

Valerie Annear, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, East Longmeadow Public

Schools

Erica Brown, Chief of Policy and Practice, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association

Ethan Cancell, Executive Director, Assessment, Accountability, Technology and Student

Data Research, Brockton Public Schools

Hardin Coleman, Dean and Professor of Counseling and Human Development, Boston

University School of Education and Member, Boston School Committee

John D’Auria, President, Teachers21

Jason DeFalco, Chief Academic Officer, New Bedford Public Schools

Samuel DePina, Administrator of Operations, Boston Public Schools

Ranjini Govender, Executive Director, Stand for Children Massachusetts (April – June 2017)

David Krane, Principal, McCarthy-Towne School (Acton-Boxborough Regional School District)

Meg Mayo-Brown, Superintendent, Barnstable Public Schools

Kathryn McDermott, Professor of Education and Public Policy, University of

Massachusetts Amherst

Paul Schlichtman, Member, Arlington School Committee

Mary Skipper, Superintendent, Somerville Public Schools

Elizabeth Shevlin Tripathi, Education Policy Specialist, Massachusetts Teachers Association

Jacob Waah, President, Victory Home Healthcare, Inc.

Jason Williams, Executive Director, Stand for Children Massachusetts (October 2016 – January

2017)

**Council Meeting Dates:** October 26, 2016; January 20, 2017; April 12, 2017; June 1, 2017