*****Massachusetts Board of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Katherine Craven  *Chair* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| To: | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| From: | James Morton, Chair of the Committee on Commissioner’s Performance Review |
| Date: | June 29, 2020 |
| Subject: | Performance Review of Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley for FY2020 |

Each year, the Chair of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education establishes a committee to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner. For reviewing Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley’s second year of performance in FY2020, the Commissioner’s Performance Review Committee (the “Committee”) consists of James Morton (Committee Chair and Board Vice-Chair), Katherine Craven (Board Chair), and Amanda Fernández (Member of the Board).

This FY2020 performance evaluation is structured around four dimensions:

* Facilitate student growth and achievement (25%)
* Management and operations (25%)
* External relations and communication (30%)
* Board support and effective interactions (20%)

Attachment A (starting on page 17) includes a detailed description of the performance criteria used to evaluate these dimensions of the Commissioner’s work. The Committee made several updates to last year’s performance criteria, including dropping items that were particular to FY2019, adding specific references to diversifying the educator workforce and improving the Department’s communications for families, and adding a component about supporting remote teaching to maximize student learning during the COVID-19 emergency school closures.

In acknowledgement of the unprecedented circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, for the FY2020 evaluation the Committee has adjusted the weights of two performance criteria from what they were in FY2019. Specifically, for this year, *facilitate student growth and achievement* is set at 25% rather than 30%, and *external relations and communication* is set at 30% rather than 25%. The Committee intends to adjust these weights back to 30% and 25%, respectively, in FY2021.

The Commissioner presented his goals and objectives for FY2020 to the Board in September 2019, and we have seen considerable progress on key initiatives. Since March 2020, however, the Commissioner has, of necessity, been focused on the Department’s response to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on students and schools. Consequently, the Committee has considered both the planned and unplanned aspects of the Commissioner’s work this year.

The Committee gathered data from various sources, including the Commissioner’s self-evaluation dated May 21, 2020 and input from other members of the Board, the Commissioner’s leadership team, receivers in Lawrence, Holyoke, and Southbridge, and several external stakeholders and constituents.

This memorandum highlights some of the accomplishments of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) under Commissioner Riley’s leadership during FY2020. Starting on page 13, it also reviews the Commissioner’s performance based upon the criteria and goals, identifies challenges and opportunities, and makes recommendations to the Board in relation to his performance. Many of the highlights set forth below are described in more detail in Commissioner Riley’s self-evaluation, as well as the Board’s observations and conclusions.

**Restatement of Commissioner’s Goals for FY2020**

Restated below are the agreed upon goals and objectives established by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to guide Commissioner Riley and the agency during FY2020:

1. **Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning**: Launch the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning network with an initial cohort of schools and districts selected by January. Kaleidoscope is designed to provide participants with flexibility and support to foster and scale deeper learning models that improve learning for all students. Within Kaleidoscope:

* 1. Create a working group to review and evaluate performance tasks and to identify 25-50 engaging, high-quality student performance tasks that are aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. These will be implemented by Kaleidoscope schools and published on the deeper learning online platform.
  2. Engage participants in rigorous professional development focused on creating deeper learning environments. The professional development will include face-to-face convenings throughout the school year and summer, school-based coaching, and ongoing feedback.
  3. Collaborate with districts and schools within Kaleidoscope to develop and pilot innovative performance-based assessment models that measure student achievement, engagement, and skill development aligned to deeper learning.

1. **Evidence-based practices**: Build further capacity to implement innovative and evidence-based practices, particularly in schools and districts identified for state assistance. These practices include:
   1. **Diversifying the educator workforce**: Closely monitor the practices and performance of districts receiving the first and second rounds of the educator diversification pilot grant. Determine which initiatives resulted in strong recruitment and retention of educators of color. In coordination with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Educator Diversification Committee, publicize these results and make recommendations for future diversification efforts. Continue the commissioner’s college visits and recruitment campaigns to reach more prospective educators, with a focus on educators of color.
   2. **Early literacy**: Build on the success of the early literacy pilot with Tufts University and the Somerville Public Schools, operate a second early literacy summer program, and launch a new initiative to research, codify and promote evidence-based strategies in early literacy.
   3. **CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers (CURATE):** Publicize the CURATE reports within districts and schools to increase awareness of this new resource, laying the groundwork for more districts to adopt and effectively use high-quality curricula aligned to Massachusetts state standards.
   4. **Acceleration Academies**: Launch a statewide application and grant opportunity to expand the number of districts running high-quality Acceleration Academies this year. This vacation learning program, which provides extra support to students targeted to their specific needs, has proven successful in Lawrence and other districts.
   5. **Early College**: Hold the first Early College statewide convening, create data dashboards to support data monitoring for program quality and improvement, and expand the number of designated Early College programs.
2. **Action-oriented research for educational equity**: In collaboration with various state agencies, DESE will pursue the U.S. Education Department Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant to support data alignment across agencies from pre-school to the workforce. This collaboration will help leverage our data systems to improve educational practices, with a focus on identifying and disseminating promising and successful practices to promote equity.
3. **DESE effectiveness as a partner to schools**: Conduct an operational audit of the agency to assess strengths and weaknesses and propose a plan for improvement with an emphasis on providing flexibilities and support to schools and districts.
4. **Individualized education program (IEP) improvement**: Revise the IEP template and process, keeping students at the center by strengthening family engagement, providing professional development and improved resources, increasing collaboration, and streamlining processes*.*  DESE will implement a pilot version of the new process during the 2019-20 school year and seek stakeholder engagement on new IEP resources.
5. **Collaboration across school and district models:** Provide incentives to districts and schools to work together to ensure access to high-quality educational programming for all students. This includes collaboration between districts, charters, and vocational schools, as well as regionalization strategies.
6. **Low-performing districts:**  Identify districts with high concentrations of schools performing in the bottom 10 percent of the state’s accountability system. Over the next one to two years, DESE will selectively conduct district reviews to assess the strengths and challenges of these districts and recommend supports and interventions as needed.

**FY2020 Highlights – Progress to Goals**

***Goal 1: Launching the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning***

DESE launched its inaugural cohort of the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning in FY2020, with the goal of engaging and supporting participants to create deeper learning environments. The Kaleidoscope team, formed in fall 2019, was led by Senior Associate Commissioner Komal Bhasin and a small group of DESE staff and new hires to the agency.

**1.a) Deeper learning task development**

A major charge of the Kaleidoscope team was the creation of a deeper learning “task gallery.” In this effort, the Kaleidoscope team launched an advisory council of partners and community stakeholders to provide input and guidance for educators on creating and identifying deeper learning tasks. This group met in January and February 2020; other meetings were delayed during the stay-at-home order, with plans to resume the working group in fall 2020 in person or remotely to examine exemplar tasks. Schools began to curate and adjust tasks for inclusion in the gallery for a projected March 2020 convening, but this work was also delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will resume in the fall and winter of 2020-21.

In the meantime, Kaleidoscope team members continue to cultivate tasks and resources for the gallery, with a recent focus on identifying resources and templates that may be useful in a remote learning environment. A new deeper learning online platform is on track to be launched in early summer 2020. Additionally, in the fall of 2020, DESE will launch the “Deeper Learning Ambassador Fellowship,” an opportunity for teachers statewide – including those teaching in schools that are not participating in Kaleidoscope – to engage in professional learning on deeper learning and contribute tasks to the gallery.

**1.b) Kaleidoscope professional development**

Since December 2019, the 21 schools in the inaugural cohort of Kaleidoscope have participated in one site visit by Kaleidoscope staff to each of the schools and two professional learning convenings. Schools have also received follow-up phone calls and emails related to development of deeper learning summer planning grants. The professional learning provided by Kaleidoscope has been highly rated by participants. Other convenings are anticipated, with a focus on remote learning and addressing learning gaps caused by the COVID-19 school closures.

**1.c) Innovative assessment pilot aligned to deeper learning**

DESE has launched an initiative to develop and pilot a new form of innovative assessment that will use performance tasks to measure students’ deeper learning in science. In April 2020, Massachusetts became the first state approved by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2021 Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority, which provides flexibility to pilot an innovative assessment in a small group of schools. DESE has also received private funding to support this work and hopes to secure additional funding to support implementation of innovative assessments.

A representative cohort of 22 schools have been identified for the initial pilot of the new science assessment’s performance tasks in May 2021, with roughly half of the participating schools also in the Kaleidoscope cohort. DESE launched an RFP for a vendor to support DESE staff in developing performance tasks for the innovative assessment aligned to the Kaleidoscope vision for deeper learning, and hopes to select a vendor for this work in the coming weeks.

***Goal 2: Building Further Capacity to Support Evidence-Based Practices:***

Through the Center for Strategic Initiatives, led by Senior Associate Commissioner Ventura Rodriguez, with support from the centers for Instructional Support, District Support, and Educational Options, DESE has continued to build out and enhance a set of program initiatives that will improve student outcomes, with an emphasis on students who attend the schools and districts that require support and intervention. This effort is supported and evidenced by the following:

**2.a) Diversifying the educator workforce**:

In FY2020, DESE issued over $1.75 million in grants to 20 school districts for the second year of the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program. Through these grants, the pilot program provides:

* Financial incentives such as loan payment reimbursement, relocation assistance, and signing bonuses to support local school district recruitment efforts.
* Tuition assistance to support enrollment into and completion of an approved educator preparation program.
* Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) preparation support and MTEL examination fees.

As of March 2020, over 515 individuals have received financial support and assistance from their districts through these funds. Based on analysis of district-reported data, it is anticipated that grant funds will result in approximately 180 new initially licensed teachers by August 2021.

In February 2020**,** DESE began the process of selecting a research partner to study the impact of the diversification pilot program and identify promising strategies to scale up. As a result of COVID-19, the selection process has been paused and will resume in the fall.

The Board’s Educator Diversification Committee met three times this school year (a fourth meeting was postponed due to the COVID-19 emergency) to review and provide guidance on components of DESE’s strategy to diversify the educator workforce. These meetings included consideration of alternatives to MTEL; an overview of the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program; and review of proposed financial incentives to diversify the educator workforce.

Under the Commissioner’s leadership, DESE launched a number of strategies designed to increase educator diversity, including Influence 100, the Diversity Network, and the InSPIRED Fellowship Program. These programs show great promise.

**2.b) Advancing early literacy**

DESE’s Center for Instructional Support took major steps in FY2020 to further codify evidence-based strategies in early literacy to support strong instruction in schools and districts. Specifically, DESE:

* Produced a literacy strategic plan, [“An Excellent Education in ELA and Literacy for ALL,”](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/literacy-humanities.html) with input from a wide range of educator groups and more than 100 individuals, including district curriculum directors and teachers.
* Began developing specific guidance on teaching early literacy based on evidence. DESE convened an advisory group of 10 national and international literacy researchers, as well as numerous Massachusetts-based organizations, to assist in this work.
* Reviewed and [approved seven early literacy screening assessments.](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/screening-assessments.html) DESE implemented an early literacy screening assessment pilot with nine districts to gather information about on-the-ground use of assessments and plans to issue a report and recommendations in summer 2020.
* Awarded approximately $900,000 in early literacy grants to 35 districts and charter schools to engage in early literacy professional development and program improvement.
* Recruited and selected 45 “literacy champions,” teachers and educator preparation program faculty who are invested in evidence-based early literacy, to develop guidance, support plans, and curate high-quality resources.
* Tufts University Early Literacy Summer Program: DESE has been in discussions with Tufts University about running another early literacy summer program to train teachers. The launch date is unclear due to the impact of COVID-19.

**2.c) Increasing the scope and impact of CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers (CURATE):**

DESE’s Center for Instructional Support convened panels of CURATE teacher fellows in fall 2019 and spring 2020 to conduct 18 reviews of curricular materials, up from 15 reviews in 2018-19, as listed below. Reports from these reviews are in process and will be posted to DESE’s website during the summer of 2020:

* 2 products for grades K-2 English language arts (ELA).
* 5 products for grades 3-5 ELA.
* 5 products for grades 6-8 ELA.
* 3 products for grades K-5 math.
* 3 products for high school math.

In addition, DESE annotated the CURATE rubrics our teacher fellows use to rate the curricular materials in English language arts and literacy, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering using feedback from fellows. DESE promoted these rubrics as tools for districts organizing local curriculum adoption processes and those evaluating their current materials.

DESE also supported districts and schools with curriculum adoption and professional development to support high-quality implementation of adopted curricula, by:

* Partnering with EdReports to facilitate networks to support adoption of high-quality instructional materials. Twenty-two districts participated.
* Conducting implementation networks for Illustrative Math and EL Education, two high-quality curricula, to support district use, and implementing a “Making the Most of Wonders Network” to supplement and strengthen the materials for districts using the “Wonders” curriculum.
  + Illustrative Math Implementation Network: 12 schools from 10 districts.
  + EL Education Implementation Network: 11 schools from 4 districts.
  + Making the Most of Wonders Network: 21 schools from 14 districts.

**2.d) Growing the Acceleration Academies program**

During the 2019-20 school year, four districts – Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, and New Bedford – were selected to receive nearly $650,000 in grant funding and direct technical assistance from DESE to implement Acceleration Academies.

During the February Acceleration Academies which took place over the February school vacation week, 209 educators across the 4 districts taught over 1,800 students. Students received 20 to 25 hours of targeted ELA instruction and attended daily enrichment classes. A second Acceleration Academy focused on math and science was scheduled to take place over the April school vacation week but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two-hundred and nine teachers had been selected to teach in the April Acceleration Academies, which would have provided over 1,800 students with additional math and science support.

**2.e) Expanding Early College sites and the support infrastructure for designees**

As of fall 2019, over 2,000 students were enrolled in the 17 designated Early College programs. These partnerships involve 34 high schools and 10 of the 15 community colleges, as well as five of the nine state universities. Five of the seven Workforce Investment Regions are represented by the partnerships, as are 13 of 27 Gateway Cities.

With the support of the Smith Family Foundation, a Harvard Strategic Data Fellow was placed at DESE this fall to help monitor data on Early College program quality and improvement. The work to create data dashboards for Early College partnerships began in fall 2019, and the first iteration of dashboards has been completed.

DESE held its first statewide convening for Early College designees, as well as those interested in obtaining the designation, in fall 2019. Twenty-two programs applied for the designation; DESE anticipates that most will achieve the designation over the next year.

**Goal 3: Securing a ~$3.5 Million Federal SLDS Grant to Support Evidence-Based Policy Making**

In late 2019, DESE applied for the next round of U.S. Education Department Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grants and was awarded, in March 2020, a four-year, $3.48 million SLDS grant. With these funds, DESE seeks to advance from our solid foundation of data access to a strong focus on data action to promote equitable outcomes for all students. To accomplish this, the grant will focus on creating alignment around the most pressing equity-focused research priorities, increasing access to relevant data and research, and supporting educators and other practitioners to change their practices to effectively promote equity.

**Goal 4: Improving DESE’s Effectiveness as a Partner to Districts and Schools**

Commissioner Riley sought to improve DESE’s effectiveness as a partner to districts and schools, assessing whether its spending aligns with its vision. He also collaborated closely with DESE leaders and staff on several specific projects to fulfill DESE’s commitment in *Our Way Forward* as state partner, including working with external partners and DESE staff to design user-friendly plan templates, as well as a short form (2 pages) and long form (6 pages) for districts to address the requirements of the Student Opportunity Act.

**Goal 5: Improving the Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

The IEP Improvement Project focused on three critical components: (1) resources and tools; (2) stakeholder engagement, and (3) professional development.

In January 2020, DESE’s Office of Special Education Planning and Policy released a new version of the guidance for schools and districts on the initial stages of the IEP process entitled “[Is Special Education the Right Service](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/docs.html)?”This resource guides schools and districts through referral, evaluation, and eligibility decisions for special education.

In order to move to the next stage in the special education process, IEP development and implementation, DESE’s Office of Special Education Planning and Policy offered the opportunity to local education agencies (LEAs) across the state to become “early adopters” of the new IEP. More than 20 applied. Although the period of extended school closures has delayed the launch of the early adopter districts, work with these districts will begin in earnest in fall 2020.

The final component of the IEP Improvement Project is professional development, so that the planning associated with a new IEP can be matched with improved special education practices at the classroom level. The early adopters will engage in these new professional development opportunities as early in the new school year as possible.

**Goal 6: Promoting Collaborative Models Across Schools and Districts**

DESE continues to encourage collaboration among districts, charter schools, and vocational schools, including the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Partnershipprograms. The initial CTE pilot started with four vocational programs: two at Greater Lawrence Technical School in advanced manufacturing and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning and two at Essex North Shore Technical School in advanced manufacturing and construction craft laborers.

Program expansion is proposed, with six districts applying for approval to start 24 new programs in high-demand sectors. Partnering districts are working collaboratively to recruit students for a fall start date. Existing programs are also continuing to provide educational experiences for students through remote learning and trade-specific online learning platforms.

To date, 15 districts have been granted CTE Partnership Planning grants (totaling over $370,000), which support collaborative planning among local partners to increase student seats and access to CTE pathways and programs, particularly for underserved populations. Of these 15 planning grant recipients, six have also been granted CTE Partnership Implementation grants (totaling nearly $550,000), which help programs establish and implement program models and action plans to fully launch programs aligned to current labor market data.

In addition, DESE supports the Berkshire County Educational Task Force and its work to develop plans and gain support for regionalization, in order to provide a strong educational experience for all students in Berkshire County. DESE awarded a $50,000 grant to the task force this year and is looking into opportunities to provide additional funds to support regionalization efforts in the coming years.

**Goal 7: Creating Opportunities for Focused Improvement in Low-Performing Districts**

DESE’s Office of District Reviews and Monitoring conducted district reviews of the Boston and Brockton public school systems in the 2019-20 school year. These two districts account for more than a quarter of the lowest performing 10 percent of schools in the state and had over 23,000 students enrolled in these schools at the time of identification. In connection with the Boston district review report, DESE and the Boston Public Schools executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on March 10, 2020, focused on improving teaching and learning, educator diversity and effectiveness, equitable access to student supports, support of students with disabilities, transportation, and facilities. The results of the Brockton Public Schools district review will be released later this year.

**Information on Additional Key Initiatives**

In addition to progress related to the Commissioner’s formal goals for FY2020, the Commissioner and DESE made progress on several other ongoing initiatives:

**Developing Regulations, Guidance, and Evidence-Based Plan Templates for the Student Opportunity Act**

In November 2019, Governor Baker signed into law the Student Opportunity Act (SOA). Part of the SOA requires each district, vocational technical school, and charter school in the state to submit a three-year, evidence-based plan to DESE for reducing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups. The Board adopted regulations on district plans and DESE developed guidance and evidence-based templates for districts to submit their initial plans by the statutory deadline of April 1, 2020. Under the authority granted by special legislation in light of the COVID-19 school closures, the Commissioner has extended the due date for the district plans.

**Establishing an Advisory Committee to Make Recommendations on the Competency Determination Achievement Levels**

In the late fall/early winter of 2019-20, Commissioner Riley formed an advisory committee on the competency determination (CD), chaired by Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, former president of Bridgewater State University and former Board member. Members of the advisory committee include current Board member Marty West, as well as over a dozen other representatives from K-12 and higher education. The committee is charged with recommending to the Commissioner what level of achievement students will need to demonstrate on the next-generation high school MCAS tests in order to earn their CD and be eligible to graduate from high school.

The committee met twice, in February and March 2020, before its activities were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commissioner expects to reconvene the committee next school year, continue the work, and bring a recommendation to the Board on the CD requirements for future classes.

**Supporting Districts and Schools in Implementing Curriculum Frameworks**

This year, DESE’s Center for Instructional Support provided over 40 instructional support content-specific networks and workshops, both in-person and online. These offerings are designed to support and advance teaching and learning grounded in the curriculum frameworks.

**Revising the DESE Website and Communication Strategies to Increase Accessibility for Families and Communities**

DESE traditionally communicates primarily with district and school leaders, and desires to communicate more effectively with classroom teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Before the Commissioner’s arrival, DESE had begun a major transition in its communication strategy, identifying additional stakeholder groups essential to building understanding of, and support for, our K-12 system. The Commissioner has approved a three-pronged approach to expanding DESE’s reach and effort to deepen its relationships with students’ families: (1) improving ease of access to our website, including enhanced translation capabilities; (2) expanding communications via new media outlets; and (3) investing in two-way communication strategies to ensure that DESE solicits and receives input from families via social media channels, direct mail, and community/school visits.

**Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Commissioner reports, and we have observed, that the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, has been a significant component of his work and that of the Department. Under his leadership, DESE developed a four-phase response to the crisis, with the primary focus being the health, well-being, and safety of students and teachers. In developing and carrying out said response, DESE has worked closely with the Governor’s Office, Executive Office of Education, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Health, and many others.

The Commissioner has also been in regular communication with representatives from the major education associations, including the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts School Administrators’ Association, the teacher unions (MTA and AFT-MA), the State PTA, the State Student Advisory Council, and other stakeholders regarding DESE’s ongoing work to address COVID-19 questions and concerns, and has kept the Board informed.

The four phases are as follows:

**Phase I:** During the first week of school closures, DESE prioritized student and staff safety, nutrition, and other foundational needs. DESE helped districts set up over 1,300 meal distribution centers; launched a working group to assess and expand technology and internet access; secured a partnership with WGBH to provide academic programming for all students, particularly those without access to technology; and encouraged districts to continue to pay their hourly staff and vendors, such as special education providers.

**Phase II:** On March 26, in parallel with the Governor’s announcement that school closures were extended until at least May 4, DESE released initial state guidance on remote learning. That guidance was built in close collaboration with stakeholders and partners. DESE established guiding principles and broad outlines of the Commonwealth’s remote learning strategy and addressed the most pressing questions facing districts and schools.

The guidance noted, among other things, that remote learning programs should include academics, enrichment, exercise, and regular connections with students. Teachers were encouraged to provide feedback on assignments, with the recommendation that grades be given as “credit/no credit.”

DESE’s guidance, resulting from its collaborative process, gained recognition from other state education agencies, as well as the MIT Teaching Systems Lab, which gave DESE the second highest score in the country for the strength of its guidance.

In this phase, DESE released guidance and resources for providers of special education services and supporting English learners; secured several federal and state waivers, including those allowing districts to more easily provide food for children and giving districts greater flexibility in carrying over dollars to spend next year; requested and received permission from the Governor to extend educator licenses for 90 days after the state of emergency ends; and applied for and received a waiver from the federal government, and secured necessary state legislation, to cancel MCAS testing for grades 3-10 this spring.

**Phase III**: With the Governor’s extension of school closures through the end of the school year, DESE published a second round of remote learning recommendations on April 24, entitled “Strengthening Our Remote Learning Experience.” This built on the initial guidance with a deeper focus on two areas:

* Further defining the recommended elements of a quality remote learning program, including a focus on teaching the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade level; and
* Encouraging districts to move all students towards successful engagement in remote learning, with a focus on addressing fundamental needs.

During this phase, DESE expected districts and schools to enhance and refine their remote learning plans; disseminated a survey to assess remote learning strategies, trends, promising practices, and challenges; and launched a grant application process for districts and schools to apply for funds under the federal CARES Act.

**Phase IV**: DESE is currently in Phase IV, planning for school re-entry. This phase includes: supporting districts with guidance on summer learning; creating a re-entry work group of health and education experts and stakeholders who will provide a “roadmap” for the safe reopening of schools; assessing district needs for personal protection equipment and technology; and assisting district in the development of re-entry plans. DESE released “Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance” on June 25, 2020, and further guidance is in process.

**Commissioner’s FY2020 Performance Evaluation**

1. **Facilitate Student Growth and Achievement** (25%)
2. Commissioner Riley’s leadership and focus on deeper learning is evidenced by DESE’s commitment of time, expertise and resources to the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning.  This work has the potential to reimagine public education by creating opportunities for deeper student learning; the development of innovative assessments; and enhanced professional development and learning.
3. The Commissioner’s focus on the diversification of educator workforce will promote student learning for all students, especially for students of color. As Marion Edelman, renown educator, says, “You can’t be what you can’t see.”  A diverse educator workforce has proven to provide students of color with additional hope and inspiration, and academic success.
4. Under the Commissioner’s leadership, DESE’s Center for Instructional Support codified evidence-based early literacy strategies in support of strong instruction and student success.
5. Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE) is another strategy advanced by DESE’s Center for Instructional Support to review curricular materials, along with annotated rubrics for teachers to use to rate and evaluate their local curricula.
6. Commissioner Riley’s support of Acceleration Academies, Early College, and Career and Technical Education Partnerships, along with the significant interest in expanding programs, has created many avenues for student success.
7. DESE’s work in connection with the IEP Improvement Project is commendable, as it endeavors to improve the IEP process so that students with disabilities can more easily access and transition out of special education services.
8. Commissioner Riley’s work to improve low-performing school districts is evidence of his commitment to making certain that all students have access to an education that meets of standards of excellence, equality, and equity.  We are proud of the work he and Superintendent Cassellius have embarked on to improve outcomes for students in BPS’s 33 lowest performing schools.

**Rating: The Commissioner delivered a Very Good performance in this area, receiving a rating of 4.2 out of 5.**

1. **Management and Operations** (25%)
2. During Commissioner Riley’s first year, he focused his attention on building relationships with community stakeholder and was recognized for his outreach and visibility. In year two, he has focused on building relationships with members of his leadership team and is making strides toward building a connected, engaged, and cohesive team.
3. Commissioner Riley continues to be an “out of the box” innovator and visionary who is focused on deeper learning, diversification of the educator workforce, the Achievement Gap, supporting struggling schools, professional development for educators, and engagement of stakeholders, especially parents.
4. The Commissioner has done an exceptional job of attracting, retaining, and promoting talent to effectuate his vision. He maintains effective and professional relationships with his leadership team.
5. As Commissioner Riley refines his vision, he is encouraged to more fully engage his leadership team in the refinement and implementation of the vision.
6. Commissioner Riley receives extremely high marks as an “engaged and thoughtful” listener who seeks input from others and is seeking that input with greater frequency.
7. Commissioner Riley and his leadership team continue to be committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural proficiency.
8. The Commissioner manages DESE’s budget consistent with its goals, objectives and mission and advocates for additional resources in support of the same.
9. Commissioner Riley has done an exceptional job of guiding, managing, and representing DESE’s responses to COVID-19.

**Rating: The Commissioner delivered a Very Good performance in this area, receiving a rating of 4.3 out of 5.**

1. **External Relations and Communication** (30%)
2. The Commissioner maintains a modified “listening tour” as he continues to seek conversations with students, teachers, parents, stakeholders, civic and legislative leaders, foundations, non-profit and business leaders, teacher unions, associations representing educational leaders, and concerned citizens regarding a variety of K-12 public education issues.
3. Commissioner Riley also continues to execute a public awareness campaign that: (a) celebrates teachers and schools; (b) utilizes existing communication strategies to promote public education among various audiences; and (c) uses data to inform the campaign.
4. Commissioner Riley is seen as an informed and effective communicator who is consistent in his messaging and frequency of communications.
5. The Commissioner is praised by stakeholders as being personable, connected, and accessible, and as doing a great job of finding common ground among constituents.
6. Commissioner Riley is seen as a bridge-builder who is focused on making DESE an educational partner, as opposed to being solely focused on compliance. Stakeholders have noted a culture of collegiality on the part of DESE staff.
7. The Commissioner’s commitment to building a diverse, inclusive, and culturally competent educator workforce has received high marks. However, many stakeholders requested greater clarity on the meaning of deeper learning, and how deeper learning relates to the competency determination.
8. Commissioner Riley was acknowledged for his management of the COVID-19 crisis, and for his open recognition of the challenges it revealed, such as the need for resources and support in the areas of remote learning and emergency planning.

**Rating: The Commissioner delivered a Very Good performance in this area, receiving a rating of 4.8 out of 5.**

1. **Board Support/Effective Interactions** (20%)
2. The Commissioner works to keep Board members informed of DESE’s successes, challenges, and opportunities in timely fashion.
3. Commissioner Riley engages Board members in setting DESE’s strategic vision, priorities, and educational policies.
4. Commissioner Riley continues to assemble staff and resources for the purposes of increasing the Board’s understanding of the issues impacting student success, as well as the implications of decisions being made by the Board at its monthly meetings.
5. The Commissioner is encouraged to more fully enlist Board members as informed advocates, advisors, and partners in pursuit of DESE’s goals and objectives.
6. Commissioner Riley is great at acknowledging the input and support provided by Board members, as well as our work on committees and task forces.

**Rating: The Commissioner delivered a Very Good performance in this area, receiving a rating of 4.5 out of 5.**

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

Commissioner Riley laid out an ambitious agenda for FY2020 on which he and DESE made significant progress – and then in March 2020, our world changed. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on students and schools. The Commissioner’s active leadership, accessibility, engagement with stakeholders, and decision-making, particularly in these past four months, have been commendable. In our judgment, Commissioner Riley has earned an overall rating of **4.5,** based upon the criteria adopted by the Committee.

The current situation also shines a spotlight on the troubling achievement and opportunity gaps that persist in Massachusetts, despite the Commonwealth ranking high on so many education metrics. These gaps have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Addressing these gaps is central to the mission of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and we know it is Commissioner Riley’s strategic and personal imperative as well.

Based on the evaluation of his job performance, the Committee affirms its strong endorsement of the Commissioner and recommends that the Board do so as well.

The Committee on the Commissioner’s Performance Review thanks Commissioner Riley, the DESE staff, and the stakeholders who contributed to this evaluation. We are grateful to Commissioner Riley for his leadership, his dedicated service to the children of the Commonwealth, and his commitment to helping all students to succeed in school and in life.

**ATTACHMENT A**

**Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**2019-2020 Performance Criteria for**

**Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Background**

The mission of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is to strengthen the Commonwealth’s public education system so that every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, compete in the global economy, and understand the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, and in so doing, to close all proficiency gaps.

The Commissioner is the secretary to the Board, its chief executive officer, and the chief state school officer for elementary and secondary education. Mass. General Laws chapter 15, section 1F.

In support of the Board’s mission and the goal of preparing all students for success after high school, the Commissioner and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have adopted five [core strategies](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/StrategicPlan.docx):

1. Strengthen standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2. Promote educator development
3. Turn around the lowest-performing districts and schools
4. Use technology and data to support teaching and learning
5. Support students’ social/emotional health

The following performance criteria focus on the Commissioner’s roles, accountabilities, and goals and are organized in four categories: **facilitate student achievement and growth**, **management and operations**, **external relations and communication**, and **Board support**, all of which are important functions of the Commissioner. The criteria promote measurable outcomes that are realistic and attainable. The Board is recommending setting these function areas into priorities that will set the Commissioner’s work plan and distribution of his time and efforts.

Each category includes goals and objectives for 2019-2020 that the Commissioner set in his [September 20, 2019 memo](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2020/2019-09/item4.html) to the Board. In evaluating the Commissioner’s performance this year, the first part of the year, from July 2019 through February 2020, reflects the school year as expected. Beginning in March 2020, the Commissioner and Department staff were called to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and address the needs of students and schools during the public health emergency. The many unanticipated policy decisions and new work to support K-12 public schools and adult education programs from March-June 2020 will be considered in each function area.

**Performance Criteria**

**Facilitate Student Achievement and Growth (25%)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Building on the successful development and implementation of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and in an effort to strengthen teaching and learning for all students, I will lead, support and engage the field in:

High-Quality Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:

* Launch the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning network with an initial cohort of schools and districts selected by January 2020. Create a working group to review and evaluate high-quality student performance tasks. Engage participants in rigorous professional development to promote Deeper Learning. Collaborate with districts and schools within Kaleidoscope to develop and pilot innovative performance-based assessment models.
* Continue supporting districts in implementing the curriculum frameworks, including the 2018 History/Social Science/Civics framework and the 2019 Arts framework.
* Publicize the CUrriculum RAtings by Teachers (CURATE) reports to districts and schools to increase awareness of this new resource, laying the groundwork for more districts to adopt and effectively use high-quality curricula aligned to Massachusetts state standards.
* Revise Department website and communication strategies to increase accessibility of content for families and communities.
* Establish an advisory committee to consider and make recommendations on the Competency Determination standard in relation to the next-generation MCAS tests.
* Pursue opportunities to pilot innovative approaches to student assessment, particularly in science.

School Programs and Services:

* Promote improvement of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process in special education, keeping students at the center by strengthening family engagement, providing professional development and improved resources, and increasing collaboration.
* Building on the success of the 2019 early literacy pilot, run a second early literacy summer program and launch a new initiative to research, codify, and promote evidence-based strategies in early literacy.
* Continue to develop early college opportunities by holding a statewide convening, creating data dashboards to support data monitoring for program quality and improvement, and expanding the number of early college designated sites.

Educator Workforce:

* Monitor the practices and performance of districts receiving the first and second rounds of the educator diversification pilot grant, and determine which initiatives resulted in strong recruitment and retention of educators of color.
* Diversify the educator workforce in coordination with the Board’s diversification committee, publicize results, and make recommendations for future diversification efforts.
* Continue college visits and recruitment campaigns to reach more prospective educators, with a focus on educators of color.

Collaboration and Support for Low-Performing Schools:

* Provide incentives to districts and schools to work together to ensure access to high-quality educational programming for all students.
* Build further capacity to implement innovative and evidence-based practices, particularly in schools and districts identified for state assistance.
* Identify districts with high concentrations of schools performing in the bottom 10 percent of the state’s accountability system, and conduct selected district reviews over two years to assess the strengths and challenges of these districts and recommend supports and interventions as needed.
* Launch a statewide application and grant opportunity to expand the number of districts running acceleration academies to provide extra support to students.

Provide Guidance that Supports Remote Teaching to Maximize Student Learning During COVID-19 Emergency School Closures

**Management and Operations (25%)**

* Lead the Department by setting the vision, approving the strategies, and establishing a culture that promotes the Board’s mission and makes substantial progress on the five core strategies listed above
* Conduct an operational audit of the agency to assess strengths and weaknesses and propose a plan for improvement with an emphasis on providing flexibilities and support to schools and districts.
* Manage within the parameters of DESE’s budget to achieve goals, including:
  + Ensure that DESE is structured, staffed, and aligned across all centers to meet its annual operational targets and stated goals, within the limitations of DESE’s budget and state hiring parameters

**External Relations and Communication (30%)[[2]](#footnote-2)**

* Manage relationships and communications to maximize alignment of external stakeholders (e.g., Legislature, Governor’s Office/EOE, MTA, AFT-MA, MASS, MASC, principals’ associations, business groups, foundations) with the Board’s overall priorities and goals and response to the COVID-19 health emergency.
* Engage and responsively communicate with the field, families, and students regarding major Board and Department initiatives including COVID-19 policy decisions.
* Improve website to make it more family friendly.
* Effectively lead the discussion and communications regarding Massachusetts educational policies and initiatives
* In collaboration with other state agencies, pursue the U.S. Education Department Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant to support data alignment across agencies from pre-school to the workforce.

**Board Support/Effective Interactions (20%)**

* Effectively interact with members of the Board
* Engage Board members in setting the strategic vision for DESE and discussing DESE priorities and local/national policy issues relevant to Massachusetts
* Keep the Board updated on subjects necessary for the Board to fulfill its role, including timely transmission of materials for meetings
* Receive feedback from Board members during annual performance review process

**Rating Structure**

• Outstanding = 5

• Very Good = 4

• Proficient = 3

• Needs Improvement = 2

* Unsatisfactory = 1

Updated by Committee on Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation: May 4, 2020

1. Facilitate Student Achievement and Growth (25%) – In acknowledgement of the unique situation under the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee has adjusted the weight of this criterion from 30% to 25%. The Committee intends to adjust this weight back to 30% in 2020-2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. External Relations and Communication(30%) – In acknowledgement of the unique situation under the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee has adjusted the weight of this criterion from 25% to 30%. The Committee intends to adjust this weight back to 25% in 2020-2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)