*****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 18, 2021 |
| Subject: | Performance Review of Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley for FY2021 |

Each year, the Chair of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) establishes a committee to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner and present its report and recommendation to the full Board. For reviewing Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley’s third year of performance in FY2021, the Commissioner’s Performance Review Committee (Committee) consists of James Morton, Committee Chair and Board Vice-Chair; Katherine Craven, Board Chair; and Board members Amanda Fernández and Matt Hills.

The Committee held four meetings, on March 11, April 16, May 24, and June 9, 2021. Members participated remotely per Governor Baker’s Emergency Order of March 12, 2020 and the meetings were livestreamed. The Committee discussed data it had gathered from various sources, including the Commissioner’s goals and objectives for 2020-2021 dated October 15, 2020; the Commissioner’s 2020-2021 self-evaluation dated April 13, 2021 (see Attachment 1 for both documents); and input from other members of the Board, the Commissioner’s leadership team, receivers in Lawrence, Holyoke, and Southbridge, and external stakeholders and constituents.

In previous years, the Committee organized its evaluation (and calculated its ratings on a 1-through-5 scale ranging from Unsatisfactory to Outstanding) around four criteria and metrics:

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

Because of the extraordinary circumstances and leadership challenges presented in FY2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee decided to adopt a *holistic* approach to the Commissioner’s FY2021 performance evaluation, rather than using the criteria and metrics above. Using the holistic approach, the Committee’s overall evaluation report and recommendation to the Board is as follows:

1. Commissioner Riley provided strong and effective leadership to the field throughout this pandemic year, guiding with a steady hand during an uncertain time. He was extraordinarily accessible to stakeholders and attentive to the needs of students, families, and educators. He communicated frequently and extensively with districts and schools, the medical community, and other executive branch entities including the Governor’s COVID-19 Command Center, Executive Office of Education, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and Department of Public Health. The Commissioner’s active listening and communication, strong work ethic, and experience as a seasoned school and district leader were widely appreciated and proved to be great assets during this crisis.
2. Along with attending to the needs of students and schools during the COVID-19 emergency, Commissioner Riley and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) made progress in FY2021 on initiatives that are central to our mission to advance educational equity and address opportunity gaps. Key areas include diversifying the educator workforce; strengthening teaching and learning through initiatives such as the Mass Literacy Guide, CURATE for high-quality instructional materials, and the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning to promote deeper learning; and focusing attention on students’ social-emotional health.
3. After Commissioner Riley’s intense and highly effective focus in FY2021 on guiding schools, districts, and other constituents through the pandemic, the Committee encourages him to develop his priorities and strategic plan for the coming year or years. The plan should include some objective, measurable goals and any organizational changes that could leverage the considerable strength of the Department and its leadership team, a team he has continued to build and empower during his tenure.
4. As the adverse impact of COVID-19 on student learning becomes clearer, Commissioner Riley is encouraged to rely upon his demonstrated skills and talents to solicit input from all constituents to reimagine education in the Commonwealth and create opportunities for deeper learning and academic success for all students.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This school year presented extraordinary challenges, which Commissioner Riley met with great skill and determination, aided by a highly capable senior leadership team. He and DESE attended first and foremost to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. He listened extensively, engaged the Board and stakeholders, made hard decisions, and provided thoughtful, comprehensive guidance, support, and resources to mitigate the pandemic’s negative impact on students and schools. At the same time, the Commissioner and his team at DESE also continued to carry out core functions and made significant progress on critical agency priorities. Details are set forth in the Commissioner’s 2020-21 self-evaluation, which the Committee incorporates into this memorandum as Attachment 1.

In our judgment, Commissioner Riley has earned an overall rating of4.75 on a 5-point scalefor his accomplishments in FY2021.

It has been an unprecedented year and Commissioner Riley and his DESE team have been called upon to provide unprecedented leadership. We, as the Performance Review Committee and as members of the Board, are proud of DESE’s many accomplishments, as well as its unwavering commitment to advancing teaching and learning in the face of the historic challenges posed by COVID-19. It is equally clear that the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning will require continued inquiry and leadership from Commissioner Riley, his DESE team, all stakeholders and constituents, and this Board. The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated troubling achievement and opportunity gaps that persist in Massachusetts. 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 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 students of the Commonwealth, and his commitment to helping all students to succeed in school and in life.

Attachment:

Commissioner’s self-evaluation, April 13, 2021 (includes Commissioner’s goals and objectives for 2020-2021, October 15, 2020)

*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | April 13, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | 2020-21 Self-Evaluation |

**Introduction**

We knew as we headed into this school year that it would present unique and unprecedented challenges. We knew we would need to maintain a dual focus throughout the year – attend first and foremost to the crisis at hand, but also maintain the momentum we had built over the past two years on critical agency priorities. Thanks to the tireless work of our team at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) and the exceptional commitment of key agency leaders, we have been able to fulfill both sets of responsibilities during an incredibly challenging year.

As it became clear that the pandemic would be with us over the course of the academic year, we needed to establish new ways of working, both within and outside of DESE. Key DESE leaders and staff stepped outside of their traditional roles to support the urgent work at all levels of the organization. We established more frequent communication channels with districts and schools. We also developed new ways of working with the medical community and other executive branch entities, including the Governor’s COVID-19 Command Center, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), and the Department of Public Health (DPH), as we collaborated on health and safety policies, COVID-19 testing, and reopening plans. Throughout, our goal has been to support districts and schools with strong guidance, make necessary adjustments in statewide policies and requirements in consultation with our medical advisors, and ensure local accountability for sound decision-making based on scientific evidence and students’ best interests.

At the same time, core DESE functions and priority initiatives have continued throughout the year, at times in a modified form. This included work in refining and preparing to release the updated Individualized Education Program (IEP) template, launching the Mass Literacy Guide, continuing deeper learning professional development through the [Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/), building our innovative science assessment, and engaging in robust agency-wide anti-racism training and development of an equity planning tool.

**Progress Update on Commissioner’s Goals and Objectives for 2020-2021[[1]](#footnote-1)**

***Goal 1: COVID-19 Response and Support for Districts and Schools***

As noted, our primary goal for the year was to effectively support districts and schools to provide quality learning experiences throughout the pandemic.

**1 (a) Establish the DESE Rapid Response Help Center**

We launched the Help Center at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. The Help Center has been co-led by Anne Marie Stronach, a new hire this fall who came with extensive district operations experience, and Rob Curtin, associate commissioner for data and accountability. The Help Center provides a central hub through which districts and schools report COVID-19 positive cases in schools to DESE and receive support from DESE. Among other things, DESE staff respond to key questions related to COVID-19 guidance and help troubleshoot challenges. In addition to the two key leadership roles, four DESE staff were redeployed full-time to support the Help Center, and eight additional staff from throughout DESE contribute to this work on a part-time basis.

Beginning on September 24, 2020 and continuing to the present, DESE has shared [weekly data](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/positive-cases/) on the number of positive COVID-19 cases in school buildings based on the information the Help Center collects. On the support side, Help Center staff have helped district and school leaders navigate COVID-19 protocols and scenarios and manage challenging situations, provided a connection to DPH mobile testing units, supported districts as they switched instructional models, and helped them implement other guidance. This conduit for questions also helped us understand when we needed to update or clarify written guidance.

**1 (b) Issue updates to health and safety guidance and expand health and safety measures, including access to COVID-19 testing**

We established regular communication structures and weekly meetings with medical advisors (including infectious diseases physicians and pediatricians), public health experts, the Governor’s COVID-19 Command Center, EOHHS, and DPH. We also monitored the growing body of national and international guidance and emerging research. In consultation with these individuals and groups, we issued frequent [updates to our guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html) as well as numerous installments of [frequently asked questions (FAQs)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/) based on the medical community’s evolving understanding of the virus.

Implementing a [robust COVID-19 testing program](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/pooled-testing/) has been a key part of our expanded health and safety support. In late fall 2020, DESE, in collaboration with DPH, introduced COVID-19 testing as an additional mitigation strategy.

* In the first phase, DESE announced that districts could request a state-sponsored [mobile testing unit](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/mobile-testing-unit/) if a potential cluster of COVID-19 was identified and transmission appeared to have occurred within school.
* In early November 2020, DESE announced a phased rollout of the [Abbott BinaxNOW antigen testing](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/BinaxNOW/) for districts and schools for use with symptomatic individuals. To date, 229 districts and schools are participating in this initiative.
* On January 8, 2021, DESE and EOHHS introduced surveillance testing using a [pooled testing](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/pooled-testing/) approach in the school setting as an additional mitigation strategy, the first program of its kind nationwide. Pooled testing involves mixing several test samples together in a "batch" or "pool" and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test for detection of COVID-19. Participating districts and schools received the test kits, support from a testing service provider, and the testing software to track results, all at no cost to them, through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. To date, participating schools have tested 31,518 pools with a pool positivity rate of 0.77 percent. More than 1,000 schools are enrolled in the COVID-19 pooled testing initiative, and more than 343,000 students, educators, and staff are eligible to be tested on a weekly basis.

**1 (c) Encourage districts to align their learning model (full-time in-person, hybrid, or remote) to COVID-19 health metrics and prioritize in-person learning whenever it is safe to do so**

The Department published two rounds of guidance for districts on interpreting state public health COVID-19 metrics in school settings, based on metrics established by the COVID-19 Command Center, EOHHS, and DPH. We also initiated inquiries with districts that were using learning models that were not aligned to the health metrics. After that initial inquiry, most districts adjusted their learning models to align with DESE guidance. We pursued full audits of two districts that remained unaligned after these initial inquiries. Later in the school year, we updated the health metrics guidance to align it with the statewide color-coded system and encouraged districts already open for some form of in-person learning to remain open, based on findings that school settings were rarely a source of COVID-19 transmission. Following this guidance, we sent further inquiries to three large districts that had not prioritized in-person learning for high needs students, prompting these districts to return more high needs students to in-person school.

**1 (d) Promote student learning time requirements, recognizing that instructional time is an essential resource for students**

With support from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE monitored and made adjustments to student learning time (SLT) requirements at multiple points during the pandemic. We initially required districts to develop plans for remote, hybrid, and full-time learning models, all of which counted towards student learning time at the start of the school year. To understand how districts had implemented the SLT requirements across the three learning models, DESE began a detailed data collection effort in November. We collected the data across all districts at four grade levels (1, 4, 7, and 10) and ultimately published a user-friendly [online dashboard](https://public.tableau.com/profile/massachusettsdese#!/vizhome/StudentLearningTimeDashboard/SLT) with this data.

In reviewing the SLT data, we noted that the majority of districts were offering an appropriate amount of “live” instruction (defined as in-person or remote synchronous instruction), while the levels offered to students in some districts were far lower. At the same time, we heard concerns from mental health experts about a growing mental health crisis involving students. To ensure frequent contact with teachers and peers, we determined that it was critical to establish minimum guidelines for live instruction. We brought new emergency [regulations](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2020-12/) to the Board in December 2020, which voted to amend the SLT regulations to include these minimum thresholds. For remote models, the new regulations require some synchronous instruction each day and 40 hours of synchronous instruction over a two-week period. For hybrid models, the new regulations require a live check-in every day and 35 hours of live instruction (in-person or remote synchronous) over a two-week period. These regulations went into effect on January 19, 2021 and were validated through another SLT data collection in February with updated data posted on the dashboard in early March.

With mounting evidence that in-person schooling has resulted in little if any in-school transmission, and supported by declining key COVID-19 indicators statewide, at the [March 2021 Board meeting](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2021-03/), I recommended that the Board further amend the SLT regulations to bring more students back to full-time, in-person school by giving me the authority to determine when remote and hybrid plans would no longer count for SLT hours. The Department published [related guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/in-person-learning-guide.docx) the following week, including a required return to in-person timeline for elementary and middle school students – April 5 and April 28, respectively – with the high school timeline to be announced in April. As of April 5, 930 elementary schools with over 300,000 students began offering access to full-time, in-person instruction five days a week. All elementary schools will be offering full in-person instruction by May 3, and all middle schools will be offering full in-person instruction by May 10.

Both times that the Board amended the SLT regulations, we allowed districts to request waivers so that we could appropriately accommodate extenuating circumstances.

**1 (e) Conduct reviews and audits, where appropriate, to identify best practices and assess the quality of remote and hybrid learning models**

The Department has been checking in on districts throughout the year, first in the fall regarding alignment to the public health metrics, then in early winter with SLT requirements, and continuing through the spring to monitor for compliance with the full-time return to in-person instruction. The Department sent letters throughout the year to districts that were not in compliance or where we had received complaints from the community. In the large majority of cases, districts self-corrected, and no audits were necessary. As noted above, two audits did take place early in the year for alignment with health metrics.

In addition, DESE’s Problem Resolution System (PRS) has provided extensive support to both districts and parents navigating the implementation of SLT requirements to promote compliance with expectations. Problem Resolution System staff have managed a year-to-date complaint volume that is almost 50 percent higher than the prior year due to the impacts of COVID-19.

In terms of best practices, DESE supported districts with the following opportunities:

* The Department contracted with LearnLaunch in the summer of 2020 to align the organization’s [Building Blocks for Equitable Remote Learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/remote-learning/?section=resources#view-list) with evolving DESE guidance and policies, deliver nearly 70 workshops on relevant and timely topics related to remote and hybrid learning, and provide nine multi-part deeper support sessions for targeted districts. The LearnLaunch partnership has been effective at delivering real-time support to schools and districts this year and has helped identify emerging practices from the field.
  + Over 250 districts have participated in the Building Blocks offerings, representing over 800,000 students.
  + The average participant rating of the workshop offerings is 8.6/10
  + Identified [Relationship Mapping](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/remote-learning/relationship-mapping.pdf) as an emerging promising practice, which DESE profiled and promoted.
* The Department partnered with Education Resource Strategies (ERS) to provide multiple technical assistance opportunities around staffing and scheduling in remote and hybrid models.
  + In July, ERS provided two webinars on best practices in staffing and scheduling considerations for various grade configurations.
  + In November, they organized a learning cohort for 10 districts

**1(f) Continue ongoing two-way communication with superintendents and other key stakeholders to assess COVID-19 implementation efforts and determine additional areas where DESE can provide support**

Throughout the school year, I have held regular calls with superintendents and was routinely reachable by phone or text message. Outside of these calls, several key DESE staff were also in frequent, informal contact with superintendents to provide real-time support and troubleshooting.

In addition, at my direction, many DESE offices have provided ongoing support and guidance to district leaders throughout the pandemic. For example, the special education team held regular meetings for special education leaders. The meetings were recorded and posted on DESE’s website. Based upon questions and concerns raised by special education leaders, parents, advocates, and attorneys, the office developed [guidance documents, parent letters, and FAQs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html), and they sought extensive stakeholder input on the development of those resources prior to their release.

I also held frequent meetings with stakeholder groups, including the various associations (the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, and the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association) and the teachers’ unions, participated in legislative meetings and hearings, met with public health officials and agencies, and convened groups of medical advisors and public health experts to advise on the development of necessary [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/in-person-learning-guide.docx).

To help districts staff learning environments during the 2020-21 school year, DESE offered several flexibilities, including [the Emergency License](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/licensure/emergency-license.html) established in June 2020. Since June, we have issued approximately 7,500 emergency licenses (approximately 1,800 of those recipients have been hired) and saw the licenses go to a more diverse group of people than the pool of people earning other types of educator licenses. [Other flexibilities](https://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=26200) include increasing the time licensed teachers can teach “out of field,” increasing the time an individual can be considered a long-term substitute, and making it easier for districts to receive a hardship waiver. The Department also outlined ways districts could [leverage student teachers](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/student-teachers-advisory.pdf), connected with the MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) to create a [database partnership for substitute teachers](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-2-22-21-board-to-meet-gsa-student-leadership-council-info-session-on-expanding-stem-ap-access?e=583fc2bc03#helpfinding), and created the [High School Senior Internship Education Project](http://www.massconnecting.org/default.asp?entity_id=516).

***Goal 2: Support to Students and Families to Address Opportunity Gaps:***

**2 (a) Acceleration Academies**:

As a critical component of our support for unfinished learning, DESE is in the process of creating a grant opportunity to provide funding to districts for in-person summer Acceleration Academies. All districts will be eligible to receive funding to serve roughly 10 percent of students in target grades (early literacy for rising K-2 students, math for students rising to grades 3, 4, 8, and 10). The summer Academies will provide students with one week (20+ hours) of high-quality instruction in one subject area.

During the 2020-2021 school year, six districts were also eligible to receive Acceleration Academy funding to implement in-person Academies during the April vacation week. Of the six eligible districts, three districts (the Springfield Empowerment Zone, New Bedford Public Schools, and Holyoke Public Schools) applied for and were awarded funding. In total, a little over $500,000 was distributed to these three districts.

**2 (b) Improved Special Education Outcomes:**

The Department continues to engage in comprehensive stakeholder engagement focusing on the [IEP Improvement Project](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/ImproveIEP/). Currently, 222 stakeholders representing over 65 schools and districts and 28 organizations have been collaborating to provide recommendations to DESE on the new guidance materials and tools so that the final versions of those resources are helpful to schools and families in promoting effective service delivery and better results for students with disabilities. Additionally, DESE continues to develop all aspects of a new IEP to provide robust guidance on the full IEP process, including identification, referral, eligibility, and IEP development. Thirty-five schools representing 19 districts are participating in this process as part of the early adopter cohort. The experiences of the early adopters will help inform further expansion of the new IEP and to assist in finalizing the guidance and tools during the 2021-2022 school year.

**2 (c) English learners**

We created and posted “what-to-look-for” tools for districts to self-assess their progress in meeting the goals stated in the four pillars of the [Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/blueprint.docx), and created three professional learning modules on implementing the Blueprint. In addition, DESE supported English learners in several other ways:

* We created [guidance on how families can support children during remote learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/ele/family-guidance/). Translations of this document in multiple languages were also posted.
* We set up online [English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) training modules](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/families/elpac/). The online training modules provide guidance for both parents and educators to develop and sustain effective ELPACs that promote the academic success of all English learners and former English learners. These trainings are based on the DESE Guidance for English Learner Parent Advisory Councils (August 2018). They include two modules for districts and schools and three for English learner parents/guardians. The parent/guardian modules are available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.
* In February, DESE held an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) Leadership Convening, with 245 parents and educators participating via Zoom. Attendees were able to hear presentations and breakout sessions interpreted into one of seven languages. The two-day convening provided ELPAC parent leaders an opportunity to learn together and connect with parents from districts across the Commonwealth. The Department partnered with the Federation for Children with Special Needs and the Department of Early Education and Care to develop the program.
* DESE also recently held Part II of its English Learner Dropout Prevention Convening. Department staff led the convening in collaboration with West Ed. Guest speakers included Gastón Institute Director Lorna Rivera and former and current Boston and Brockton students. At the convening, West Ed provided highlights from its research study and key findings and promising practices for English learner dropout prevention. The key findings will be linked to DESE’s English learner Blueprint self-assessment tools.

**2 (d) Interpretation and translation services**

We helped districts and schools access interpretation services through two resources:

* **Telephonic interpretation**: Through a contract with Lionbridge, Inc., districts have access to on-demand and as-needed interpretation services in over 380 languages. Each participating district was allocated a portion of funds to use toward this contract to support ongoing engagement with families.
* **Interpreter and Translator in Education Workshop Series**: Through the Translation Center of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, districts and schools were invited to send up to three bilingual district employees to an Interpreter and Translator in Education Workshop Series. This seven-module training course provided an educational and professional setting for staff to learn more about the procedures and standards of effective interpretation and translation.

**2 (e) Districts requiring assistance**

The Department has continued to provide targeted assistance to districts with schools performing in the bottom 10 percent, as well as resources, including grants for improvement.

In addition, DESE has shifted significant resources to supporting districts with current needs, such as supporting the social-emotional learning and mental health of students during the pandemic. For example, our [Multi-Tiered System of Support academy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/prof-dev/) provided support to schools and districts during the pandemic, holding virtual sessions tailored to the current situation. Our teams have also helped districts focus on evidence-based strategies to address learning loss during spring and summer.

Targeted assistance teams are also directly supporting identified districts as partners, aiding in planning wherever helpful, connecting districts to DESE resources, and connecting districts to each other to share creative solutions. Our staff has focused on balancing support and accountability. The Department has provided districts with flexibilities on timelines and adaptive resource use, while continuing to maintain a focus on the students who have historically been least well served, keeping students at the center of our efforts.

Following last year’s [district review in Brockton](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/nolevel/2020-0044.docx), our team has been working in partnership with the district to coordinate efforts to improve outcomes for students. After establishing an MOU to identify priorities stemming from the review, DESE has funded a strategic planning partner for Brockton and coaching support for the district’s executive leadership team. Each of these supports is in place and is accelerating, with the intent to continue into the 2021-2022 school year. The Department continues to provide direct support for Brockton through the regional assistance teams.

The Department continues to work with Boston on the priorities outlined in our [MOU](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-release-dese-to-support-bps-in-a-new-model-for-improvement-91984?e=fbf1e6819a). For information about the Kaleidoscope Collaborative initiative described in the MOU, please see section 4a below. The Department is also preparing to release a grant to Boston, aligned to the MOU priorities, to support local implementation.

***Goal 3: Evidence-based Policies and Practices to Strengthen Teaching and Learning***

**3 (a) Diversifying the educator workforce**

**Guidebook of promising practices from diversification pilot grant**

* In fall 2020, DESE released ["Promising Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Practices for a Diverse Massachusetts Workforce."](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/guidebook.html) The Guidebook is intended to support school and district leaders as they design and implement teacher diversification strategies in service of student achievement and equitable outcomes for students. The Guidebook proposes four key steps to build and implement a talent diversification strategy.
* The Department has partnered with TNTP since the beginning of the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant. Through this partnership, TNTP has supported school districts as they design and implement teacher diversification strategies ranging from facilitating training around identity and bias to collaborating on updated recruitment and selection models. The Guidebook reflects the collective lessons that have emerged from the work of these districts, guided by national experts, research, and best practices.

**Refine and continue the educator diversification grant program**

* Since FY19, DESE has issued approximately $6 million in grant funds to support local school district efforts to strengthen and diversify existing teacher recruitment and retention programs. The grant has provided financial support and incentives such as tuition for approved educator preparation programs, MTEL preparation, signing bonuses, relocation assistance, and loan reimbursement. Additionally, the grant has supported the development of education-specific pathways for high school students. The Department will issue another RFP in FY22 which will have an enhanced focus on the high school pipeline.

**Continue programs to support diversification of the administrator and educator workforce and promote culturally responsive teaching to improve outcomes for students**

* **Influence 100**: Cohort II of the [Influence 100](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/influence100.html) program launched in fall 2019 with 21 fellows. In total, the program currently supports 41 fellows in cohorts I and II.
  + As we work towards our goal of increasing the number of superintendents of color in Massachusetts, we are beginning to see the impact of the fellowship on new leadership appointments at the district level. One fellow has been promoted to acting superintendent/receiver, two fellows have been promoted to assistant superintendent, two fellows have been promoted to other senior leadership positions, and several fellows have been invited to interview for superintendent openings.
  + In the summer of 2020, we launched an external research partnership with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) that will continue through June 2022. The overarching purpose of the research is to provide DESE with formative information about the experiences of fellows and districts participating in Influence 100.
  + In addition to supporting our future superintendents of color, DESE has been working with MASS and MASC to identify ways in which we can support current superintendents of color. This work has begun with supporting and facilitating a monthly convening of current Massachusetts superintendents of color.
* **InSPIRED Initiative:** We launched the third cohort of the [InSPIRED Initiative](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/inspired/) this fall. The program connects current educators with DESE to help cultivate, support, and retain a culturally responsive and diverse educator workforce in Massachusetts schools. The Initiative features two components:
  + **The Statewide Affinity Network**, which helps educators of color to network, engage in dialogue about their experiences, and explore professional development opportunities and/or action that makes for a more equitable experience in their schools.
  + **The InSPIRED Fellowship**, which is an opportunity for current educators to leverage their backgrounds and personal connections to communicate stories and calls to action to current and prospective educational leaders.

**Pilot alternative assessments of educators’ content knowledge,** to evaluate possible alternatives to the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL).

* In October 2020, the Board [approved](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2020-10/item6.docx) a pilot (through June 2024) for alternative assessments for licensure, and there are currently three pilot alternative assessments underway. We have also allocated funding to support an evaluation of the pilot.
* The [three approved alternatives](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2020/2020-01/item3.docx) are moving forward and are at [different phases of implementation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=26384), including:
  + **Communication and Literacy Skills (CLST) MTEL Alternative**: In February 2021, DESE solicited bids from providers who offer assessments aligned to the CLST. As a result, we have selected two vendors that will offer seven different alternatives to the CLST. The Department will determine Massachusetts' cut scores for the assessments from the selected providers. We expect to accept results from these new providers in the late spring.
  + **Subject Matter MTEL Alternative**:

We approved a pilot for Massachusetts-approved sponsoring organizations (educator preparation programs) to attest to educator preparation candidates' subject matter knowledge in alignment with the required subject matter MTELs. We released guidelines in February to support sponsoring organizations in this work.

* + - We also approved a pilot for an alternative to the [Performance Review Program for Initial Licensure (PRPIL)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/prpil.html) that is focused on the assessment of subject matter knowledge. The Department released an RFR in February to solicit bids from providers who already offer, or who will design, rigorous alternative assessments aligned to the subject matter knowledge MTELs. We received proposals from two vendors that included several different alternative assessments to the subject matter MTEL. The Department expects to begin accepting results from approved providers in the late spring.

**3 (b) Early literacy**

* **Mass Literacy Guide:**
  + The Department released the [Mass Literacy Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/), a compilation of evidence-based information and resources for literacy in grades preK-3, in October 2020, and we have had over 80,000 visits to the site where the guide is posted online.
  + The Department has offered 10 webinars designed to raise awareness of and inform educators about Mass Literacy, serving over 1,000 educators live and more asynchronously.
  + The Department is intensively supporting school and district leaders to learn about and implement evidence-based literacy practices through the Literacy Leaders Network.
  + The Department initiated the development of an open-access Mass Literacy online course for Massachusetts educators.
* **Early literacy tutoring:** 
  + The Department selected and onboarded four highly qualified tutoring providers who are providing intensive literacy tutoring to early elementary students, primarily living in high-needs communities, across the state. We continue to recruit and onboard additional providers to expand this program to serve more students this summer and into next school year.
* **Intensive district and school literacy support program**:
  + The Department was awarded the federal Comprehensive State Literacy Development Grant and initiated the [GLEAM](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/gleam/) (Growing Literacy Equity Across Massachusetts) program, which will support deep and lasting improvements to schools' multitiered system of support for literacy.
  + The Department has awarded over $200,000 in collaboration and preparation grants to 37 districts to initiate planning for GLEAM.
  + An RFP is currently available to districts to join GLEAM and gain access to both funding and intensive support for two to three years.
* **Dyslexia Guidelines.** In April 2021, DESE released the [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/dyslexia-guidelines.pdf). The guidelines were co-developed by DESE and the Department of Early Education and Care to implement specific requirements of An Act Relative to Students with Dyslexia, [Chapter 272 of the Acts of 2018](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2018/Chapter272). These new guidelines include recommendations for screening strategies and effective interventions. The Department will widely disseminate this new guidance document to educators and administrators this spring and provide more extensive professional learning opportunities for them during school year 2021-22.

**3 (c) Increased access to STEM coursework**

The Department successfully launched the STEM Advanced Placement (AP) Access Expansion Opportunity program in partnership with VHS Learning, prioritizing high schools that have not had the capacity or resources to offer STEM AP subjects and which enroll Black, Latino, and/or economically disadvantaged students at rates above the state average. Specifically, the new program will serve schools in which low numbers of students engage in STEM AP courses despite demonstrating appropriate skill levels as measured by their MCAS math or science performance.

* In February 2021, DESE began consulting with 98 eligible schools to see whether they intended to enroll students in the first iteration of the program with coursework set to begin in September 2021 as a complement to existing initiatives.
* We are on track to complete student enrollment for up to 1,500 students in the seven priority STEM AP courses by the end of April 2021. The UMass Donahue Institute will evaluate the five-year program.
* While the program did not start as a pandemic response initiative, DESE is creating a community of practice among participating schools to share best practices in online learning that schools have adapted during the last school year. The program is the first step for a potential broader project to develop a statewide Advanced Course Network (across all subjects) as a longer-term, sustainable strategy to increase advanced course access for students who have been historically underserved. It would complement existing strategies such as Early College.

**3 (d) Early College**

With the Early College Joint Committee’s recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, work shifted from developing performance benchmarks to providing additional support to the current designated programs. This included additional grant opportunities to expand support for students, instituting an enrollment tracker to fund tuition credits during the semester in which they were taken, meeting bi-weekly with the network, and building out a resource site for programs.

In addition, each Early College partnership has been given the opportunity to meet with Early College staff to analyze individual program data and design interventions to help mitigate challenges that students are facing during the pandemic.

**3 (e) High-quality instructional materials and professional development**

* **Clarifying curricular expectations for educator preparation programs**:
  + In support of the state's commitment to building evidence-based early literacy practices, a team from DESE's Center for Instructional Support, in partnership with external leaders and stakeholders, is participating in a multistate learning community, A Path Forward in Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction*.* Sponsored by leaders from the Barksdale Reading Institute, the Belk Foundation, and the Hunt Institute, this six-state cohort is exploring ways to ensure that teacher preparation, licensure, and program approval are aligned to evidence-based literacy practices, such as those articulated in [Mass Literacy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/).
* **CURATE (Curriculum Ratings by Teachers):** 
  + Currently, 10 programs are on the [CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/) master service agreement based on their overall rating of “meets expectations.” This master service agreement helps streamline school districts’ procurement of high-quality instructional materials.
  + In fall 2020, CURATE convened three panels of Massachusetts educators to evaluate and rate curricular materials in K-5 English language arts/literacy, K-5 math, and 6-8 math. These panels will result in the publication of 11 CURATE reports in early spring 2021. Ten of the 11 programs received an overall rating of “meets expectations,” and one program received an overall rating of “partially meets expectations.” Any product receiving an overall rating of “meets” or “partially meets” expectations is considered high-quality.
  + In spring 2021, DESE convened an additional three CURATE panels in K-5 English language arts/literacy, 6-8 English language arts/literacy, and 9-12 math. Publication of nine reports is expected in late summer 2021.
  + This spring, we are beginning to plan how to support districts in selecting high-quality professional development aligned to curriculum implementation.

**3 (f) Action-oriented research for educational equity**

The Department took key steps this year to establish the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems-funded Statewide Research and Data Hub that will focus on integrating key data across the education agencies. The goal is to make it easier for educators in the field, researchers, and the general public to access critical data and information and inform how policy and program decisions can influence students’ long-term outcomes. This year, we:

* Hired an executive director for the Research and Data Hub and began interviews for new cross-agency analyst positions enabled by the grant. The executive director is now beginning stakeholder outreach, including to school and district leaders, education agency leaders and staff, researchers, and family/community groups.
* Began multi-year planning for the longitudinal data system, based on review of best-practice models in other states and review of current practices in Massachusetts, with a vision and roadmap for this work to be developed later this school year in collaboration with stakeholders.

As an early example of the data and policy work we hope this Hub will further enable, DESE partnered with the Department of Higher Education and academic researchers to study the decline in FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion rates due to COVID-19. We developed an awareness-raising campaign for guidance counselors to help with FAFSA completion and provided a [FAFSA Completion Opportunity Grant](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-2-16-21-esser-ii-rfp-fafsa-grant-emergency-licenses#fafsacomple) of $535,000 to 50 priority high schools with highest number of economically disadvantaged students. We will continue to monitor FAFSA completion rates in the coming months to assess the impact of these efforts.

***Goal 4: Advancing Deeper Learning and Innovative Assessments***

**4 (a) Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning**

**Kaleidoscope performance tasks**

* We are on track to have an initial set of model performance [tasks](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/tasks.html) published on DESE’s Kaleidoscope website this summer. Over 50 tasks have been crafted by teachers in the Kaleidoscope cohort for use in their classrooms, and these tasks are in the final stages of refinement and formatting for public posting.
* The public task gallery is intended to be used as an instructional tool for modeling deeper learning and orienting educators and other stakeholders to the key elements of deeper learning: purpose (How is this aligned to standards, and why is this relevant for students?), problem (What is the key issue to solve?), and product (What will students create coming out of this learning experience?).

**Intensive coaching on deeper learning for the Kaleidoscope school cohort**

* We have continued our intensive work with the [Kaleidoscope cohort](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/), including regular coaching meetings with individual school teams and convening the entire cohort every other month for two full days of professional development. We have consistently received very positive feedback and met our goal of over 85 percent of participants giving the workshops the highest possible rating each time. Through work with the cohort, we have developed protocols that school teams and instructional leaders can use to design and implement deeper learning tasks with their schools, including a “task adjustment” protocol, a “task facilitation” protocol, and a “looking at student work” protocol. All of these protocols include an “equity pause” that ensures educators are explicitly designing tasks that are accessible and responsive to the needs of all learners and aligned to culturally sustaining pedagogical practices. We continue to adjust these protocols based on feedback from the cohort.
* One of the things we have been attentive to as we work with our cohort of schools is understanding the conditions that must be in place in a school for successful implementation of deeper learning (for example: positive school climate, multi-tiered systems of support, existence of strong curricular materials, and structures for instructional leadership and systems of coaching). As our work moves forward to impact more schools, we are beginning to organize these building blocks into an explicit pathway for schools to take as they consider adopting deeper learning.

**Monthly statewide trainings accessible to all educators across the state**

* We designed a [three-part sequence of 90-minute trainings](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-3-8-21-board-recap-school-staff-eligible-for-vaccine-3-8-mcas-postponed?e=583fc2bc03#kaleidoscope) that makes deeper learning accessible to a broad audience of educators and district staff and have offered these professional development sessions monthly over Zoom multiple times throughout the school year. The modules cover elements of a deeper learning task (purpose, problem, and product) and how to integrate an equity pause into task development to ensure the task is designed for and accessible to all learners. Approximately 80 participants have attended each session, with some sessions’ attendance reaching over 150 participants, and DESE has received very consistent positive feedback on the sessions’ value to educators.

**Preparation for launch of Boston Kaleidoscope cohort**:

* Consistent with the work outlined in DESE’s MOU with Boston Public Schools, we are holding monthly professional development sessions for the principals of the 15 schools identified for the Boston Kaleidoscope cohort. We are also meeting regularly with the instructional superintendent and other key district staff to align our Kaleidoscope protocols with BPS’s instructional vision.
* Additional work is taking place to engage educators, families, and the broader community in the 15 schools, including utilizing BPS’s racial equity planning tool and school-based equity roundtables.
* Beginning in fall 2021, an opt-in group of teachers from each school in the cohort will serve on pilot advisory teams, engage directly with the Kaleidoscope to implement deeper learning tasks in their classrooms, and support planning for school-wide implementation the following year.

**4 (b) Innovative Science Assessment**

The Department’s innovative science assessment work aligned to deeper learning has proceeded on track, with the pilot assessment slated to take place later this school year with 20+ schools demographically representative of the Commonwealth’s students. This work is managed through a cross-functional team at DESE that includes representation from Student Assessment Services, Planning and Research, the Center for Instructional Support (science content lead), and Kaleidoscope. We also have vendors engaged in developing the assessment protypes, including experts on science content, innovative science simulation, and reliable testing platform development. Among other actions this year, DESE has:

* Developed eight prototype performance tasks centered on engaging scientific phenomena, including simulations that allow students to conduct investigations, make observations, and engage in other science and engineering practices. The performance tasks feature representation of students and science experts engaged in the "practice of science," with a wide range of diverse characters to help all students see themselves as scientists.
* Conducted prototyping trials with 600 students demographically representative of the Commonwealth as a whole to gather initial feedback on design and usability of the tasks and simulation tools.
* Reviewed the tasks with a panel of 30 expert teachers for rigor, scientific accuracy, standards alignment, relevance to diverse student populations, and bias and sensitivity.
* Scheduled the first pilot of the assessment tasks to take place in early June with over 20 schools.

***Goal 5: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE or Department) Strategic Planning***

**5 (a) Commitment to anti-racism, including training, meeting with the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) committee, and district-level professional development.**

Beginning in October 2020, DESE staff and partners have engaged in 20 hours of anti-racism training with our partner, Overcoming Racism. The sessions have focused on introducing foundational concepts around racism and racial equity. During the April 2021 training session, staff were introduced to DESE’s Racial Equity Decision-Making Tool, which is intended to guide decision making to explicitly and intentionally center equity, particularly racial equity, in the design of programs, policies, and practices. The tool outlines a set of specific guiding questions to determine if existing and proposed initiatives, policies, budgetary allocations, programs, and practices are likely to advance equity, and to serve as a checkpoint in decision-making processes along the way. The sixth training session of this fiscal year is scheduled for May 2021.

In addition to the agency-wide training, DESE’s Center for Instructional Support, Statewide System of Support, and Kaleidoscope teams have begun training to ensure the teams are calibrated on the shared language, definition, and practices of culturally responsive pedagogy. Each workshop is followed by field days that allow each team to go more in-depth to put into practice the ideas and concepts described in the workshop and support DESE in developing external-facing instructional resources that promote cultural responsiveness in the field.

The Board has also engaged in two half-day training workshops with Overcoming Racism. The purpose of these workshops is to ground BESE members in foundational concepts about race, racism, and equity and to support the group as they continue with their work.

Beginning in August 2020, DESE’s Systems for Student Success Office launched two professional development academies to support school and district teams to improve racial equity through culturally responsive practices and by critically examining and enhancing their local pedagogy, policies, and systems. The first academy, Culturally Responsive Practice Leadership Academy (District Focus), aims to support district leadership in building internal local capacity to weave culturally responsive practices and a racial equity lens throughout their pedagogy, policies, structures, and systems. The second academy, Culturally Responsive Teaching Academy (School Focus), is focused on building school-level leadership, knowledge, and expertise in culturally responsive teaching.

In the fall of 2020, DESE’s DEI Committee presented a series of recommendations to DESE’s executive leadership team aimed at advancing anti-racism at the department. The recommendations for the core of an action plan currently being implemented across the agency include:

* Launching agency-supported racial affinity groups
* Developing a racial equity framework for use by DESE staff
* Examining hiring and promotion practices (in partnership with EOE HR)
* Including a racial equity goal in staff evaluations
* Developing a climate and culture assessment

**5 (b) Strategic plan**

More than ever, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a renewed focus on ensuring that our students who are experiencing opportunity gaps and unfinished learning receive the supports they need to be successful in future grade levels and post-graduation. Near-term, DESE has launched an engagement process with key stakeholders to craft an “Excellence Roadmap” to support districts and schools with concrete steps in this work over the next school year, along with summer 2021 acceleration opportunities through DESE’s academies program.

In addition, after a year largely focused on operational guidance, we will begin building out elements of a larger instructional vision for the Commonwealth that includes critical elements of supporting all students with excellent instruction – including high-quality instructional materials, best practices for school-level instructional leadership , and robust supports for English learners and students with disabilities – and culminates with deeper learning practices accessible to all students statewide. In the coming months, we will also realign DESE functions to support this vision.

We look forward to further engaging the Board on these critical academic-focused documents in preparation for strategic planning in future years.

**Appendix A**

**Commissioner’s Goals and Objectives for School Year 2020-2021**

**1. COVID-19 Response and Support for Districts and Schools**

Throughout the school year, we will continue supporting districts and schools to provide educational programs and services to students consistent with DESE’s COVID-19 related guidance, including guidance issued to date and supplemental guidance that may be required during the school year.

To support school reopening this fall, DESE issued over 200 pages of detailed guidance this summer and assisted districts with procuring safety supplies and equipment, partnering with online learning platform providers, partnering with no-cost vendors for diagnostic assessments, securing Chromebooks for remote learning, and ensuring access to mobile testing units to prevent in-school COVID-19 transmission, among other initiatives. This year, we will continue our emergency health and safety response efforts, including the following goals:

* **Establish the DESE Rapid Response Help Center** to support districts and schools with implementing health and safety guidance and COVID-19 response protocols in schools. Collect and report COVID-19 case data from districts, consistent with privacy protections, to help track statewide trends and support districts in making decisions that are in the best interests of students and staff.
* **Monitor the latest COVID-19 research and issue updates to health and safety guidance** as appropriate, in collaboration with DESE’s medical advisors, the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Governor’s COVID-19 Command Center. Continue to expand health and safety measures as appropriate and available, for instance through expanded access to COVID-19 testing.
* **Strongly encourage districts to align their learning model (full-time in-person, hybrid, or remote) to COVID-19 health metrics** published by DPH, with a focus on prioritizing in-person learning whenever it is safe to do so.
* **Promote student learning time requirements**, recognizing that instructional time is an essential resource for students. Provide guidance on how districts can meet these expectations using best practices across learning models, with accountability for required structured learning time, grading policies, and curricula aligned to state standards.
* **Conduct reviews and audits**, where appropriate, to identify best practices and assess the quality of remote and hybrid learning models. Promote effective practices and sound decision-making regarding which model districts are implementing within their schools.
* **Continue ongoing two-way communication** **with superintendents and other key stakeholders** to assess COVID-19 implementation efforts and determine additional areas where DESE can provide support.

**2. Support to Students and Families to Address Opportunity Gaps**

**Acceleration Academies**.

* Expand Acceleration Academies programming into the summer months with a large-scale Summer Academy in 2021 that will offer 3-4 consecutive weeks of high-quality instruction in mathematics and English language arts, targeted to students’ specific educational needs.
* Use diagnostic assessment data to identify students who need this acceleration opportunity to support them to master grade-level content and support readiness for the next grade level.
* Traditional Acceleration Academies programming will also continue in districts requiring assistance in February and April.

**Improved special education outcomes:**

* Continue to develop all aspects of a new Individualized Education Program (IEP) to provide robust guidance on the full IEP process, including identification, referral, eligibility, and IEP development.
* Engage in comprehensive stakeholder engagement on new guidance materials and tools so that the final versions of those resources are helpful to schools and families in promoting effective service delivery and better results for students with disabilities.
* Engage up to 10 districts as early adopters of the new IEP process with an emphasis on advancing special educational instructional practices that improve student outcomes. The experiences of the early adopters will help to inform further expansion of the new IEP during school year 2021-2022.

**English learners:** Further disseminate and support the use of the Interactive Blueprint for English Learner Success, with a focus on providing high needs districts with tools, resources and coaching. Specifically, we will:

* Design “what-to-look-for” tools for districts to self-assess their progress in meeting the goals stated in the four pillars of the Blueprint.
* Develop three professional learning modules on implementing the Blueprint. DESE will work with three districts serving a high percentage of English learners to pilot the modules – Holyoke, Lawrence and Southbridge – and provide technical assistance and coaching to the districts to support improved teaching and learning of English learners.

**Interpretation and translation services**: Expand interpretation and translation services for parents who are not native English speakers in the 20 districts with the highest prevalence of students who are dually identified as English learners and students with disabilities.

**Districts requiring assistance:** Continue to provide targeted assistance to districts previously performing in the bottom 10 percent of the state’s accountability system, with a focus this year on the learning opportunities available to students during the pandemic. Launch partnership with Brockton Public Schools to support planning for district improvement and continue partnership with Boston Public Schools in the areas outlined in the MOU signed in spring 2020.

**3. Evidence-based Policies and Practices to Strengthen Teaching and Learning**

**Diversifying the educator workforce:**

* Publish a guidebook that synthesizes promising practices gleaned from the initial rounds of DESE’s educator diversification pilot grants focused on recruitment, selection, and retention of a diverse workforce in our schools.
* Refine and continue the educator diversification grant program to provide further assistance for districts and schools to enhance diversification efforts.
* Continue programs to support diversification of the administrator and educator workforce and promote culturally responsive teaching to improve outcomes for students. This includes the Influence 100 and InSPIRED fellowships and professional development through the Diversity Network – a cross-section of school districts, educator preparation programs, and non-profit organizations focused on educator diversification.
* Pending Board approval, pilot alternative assessments of educators’ content knowledge to evaluate possible alternatives to the MTEL assessment.

**Early literacy:**

* Publish the Mass Literacy Guide, a compilation of evidence-based information and resources for literacy in grades preK-3, and begin an intensive effort to promote evidence-based literacy instruction in districts and schools.
* Coordinate up to $8.5 million in early literacy tutoring for Massachusetts students as part of the Governor’s coronavirus relief support (GEER fund).
* Design and begin implementing a new intensive district and school literacy support program funded by a $19.98 million federal grant (awarded in September 2020) to support literacy in grades preK-12 over five years and expand literacy in pre-kindergarten.

**Increased access to STEM coursework:**

* Launch a multi-year initiative to support more students to participate and succeed in rigorous courses, pursue postsecondary education, and be well prepared to enter STEM (science, engineering, technology and mathematics) professions.
* Through a five-year, $9 million federal STEM Advanced Placement Access Expansion grant, we will focus on developing a statewide virtual platform and network to expand access to advanced STEM coursework for students who currently have less access, particularly students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities.
* This year, DESE will identify high schools where low numbers of students engage in AP STEM courses and begin to develop these statewide offerings so students can engage in the coursework at no additional cost to the student, family, or school district.

**Early college**

* In collaboration with the Early College Joint Committee, establish performance standards for what constitutes high-quality early college programming, expand high-quality programs through the designation process, and expand the number of early college designated sites offering 30+ credits.

**High-quality instructional materials and professional development:**

* Continue to produce and publicize the Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE) reports to enable more districts and schools to adopt and effectively use high-quality curricula.
* Clarify expectations for educator preparation programs so that candidates are effectively prepared to use curriculum skillfully.
* Provide resources to help districts select high-quality professional development.

**Action-oriented research for educational equity:**

* Leverage DESE’s 2020 receipt of the federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant award ($3.48 million over four years) to establish a Statewide Research Hub that will support data alignment and evidence-based research across agencies from pre-school to the workforce.

**4. Advancing Deeper Learning and Innovative Assessments**

**Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning:** Continue the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning network, which is designed to foster and expand deeper learning instructional models that improve teaching and learning for all students. Within Kaleidoscope,

* In collaboration with Kaleidoscope educators, complete development of the first 25–50 engaging, high-quality student performance tasks aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, including a subset of tasks for remote learning. Implement tasks in Kaleidoscope schools and publish them on DESE’s deeper learning online platform for more widespread access.
* Continue providing professional development for educators focused on creating deeper learning environments for the 21 Kaleidoscope schools through intensive coaching.
* Provide additional monthly statewide trainings accessible to all educators across the Commonwealth, as well as an extended professional learning series.

**Innovative Science Assessment:**

* Launch the development and pilot of an innovative science assessment in grades 5 and 8, using DESE’s federally approved plan for the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority and recently awarded federal Competitive Grant for State Assessments ($2.9 million over four years). The science assessment will include performance tasks aligned to Kaleidoscope’s deeper learning focus and will be piloted in over 20 schools, including Kaleidoscope schools and others.

**5. DESE Strategic Planning**

**Commitment to anti-racism**: Provide over 16 hours of required anti-racism training sessions and follow-up support facilitated by Overcoming Racism for all DESE staff, and hold regular meetings with DESE’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee to advance our agency-wide commitment to anti-racism and equity. To support districts and schools with anti-racism work, DESE will offer two professional development academies to support school and district teams to improve racial equity through culturally responsive practices and by critically examining and enhancing their local pedagogy, policies, and systems.

**Strategic plan**: Engage the Board and a broad array of stakeholders to build a multi-year strategic plan for the agency, drawing on the vision of *Our Way Forward*, student needs coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recommendations from an external research group on promising practices from across the U.S. and other countries. This work will begin in winter 2021.

Note: Commissioner Riley presented his goals and objectives for 2020-2021 to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in October 2020. His memo is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2020-10/> (item 5).

1. My goals and objectives for school year 2020-2021 are included as Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)