*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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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:**  | May 16, 2022 |
| **Subject:** | Commissioner's Self-Evaluation for SY 2021-22 |

**Introduction**

For the 2021-22 school year, I directed Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) leadership and staff to focus on two overarching priorities:

1. **Recover,** which addressed needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including ongoing COVID-19 health and safety guidance and real-time assistance, as well as academic and social-emotional supports for students; and
2. **Reimagine,** which framed our continued implementation of initiatives intended to transform education across the Commonwealth.

In support of these aims, I identified key goals and objectives for school year 2021-22. The text highlighted in gray below outlines the goals I set forth in October 2021. Below each section, I have summarized DESE’s progress in these areas for your review.

The work outlined below represents the hard work and dedication of the DESE cabinet leadership team and staff. Once again, many DESE teams had to simultaneously support COVID-related activities in addition to advancing the longer-term, strategic work of the agency.

I am particularly pleased that the work below has taken place within the context of a newly reorganized DESE leadership structure, in which teams are successfully collaborating to advance agency-wide priorities. This includes cross-team efforts to better align technical assistance and supports to districts with our deeper learning efforts, produce an innovative assessment that reflects deeper learning in science, and use data capabilities to strategically inform work on our priority areas.

**I. Recover: Support districts, schools, and students to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 while reinforcing DESE’s commitment to evidence-based programs**

**1. COVID-19 supports to districts and schools.** We will continue targeted COVID-19 response efforts this year, including the following:

* **Maintain the DESE Rapid Response Help Center** to provide districts and schools with COVID-19 operational support and assistance with implementing health and safety guidance, mask requirements, testing and quarantine protocols, and strategies to keep as many students attending school in-person as possible;
	+ The Department maintained the Rapid Response Help Center during the 2021-22 school year. Districts and schools can call the Help Center during the day and in the evenings seven days a week to get help with questions about COVID-19 policies, guidance, operational support, and troubleshooting.
	+ The Department also continued to provide several COVID-19 response email inboxes where individuals could contact DESE with COVID-19 related issues and concerns. Parents and families were encouraged to email the COVID19K12ParentInfo@mass.gov inbox, and any stakeholder could email the reopeningk12@mass.gov inbox.
* **Provide access to a comprehensive COVID-19 testing program** to districts and schools across the Commonwealth, including “Test and Stay” testing for close contacts of a COVID-19 positive individual, diagnostic testing, and pooled testing;
	+ The Department, in collaboration with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), continued our [COVID-19 statewide testing](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/testing/default.html) program for all interested districts and schools, including private schools.
		- In August 2021, EOHHS entered into a contract with CIC Health to provide our statewide, no-cost COVID-19 testing program. In our [DESE/DPH COVID-19 Guidance for Districts and Schools: Fall 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/fall-2021-covid19-guide/), we strongly encouraged districts and schools to maintain a robust plan for COVID-19 testing in schools, including symptomatic testing, “Test and Stay,” and pooled testing.
		- To support the implementation of testing and as part of this comprehensive testing program, schools and districts were provided with additional staff to serve as onsite sample collectors and program coordinators. They were also provided with training, software associated with testing, transportation of completed tests from the school to the laboratory, and technical assistance.
		- Over 2,300 districts and schools opted into implementing at least one of the testing options, and approximately 700,000 students, educators, and staff gave consent to be tested.
	+ The Department’s groundbreaking “Test and Stay” program allowed for asymptomatic in-school close contacts to remain in school with five days of daily screening testing. Districts and schools implementing “Test and Stay” saved more than 700,000 cumulative school days over the course of implementation.
	+ On January 18, 2022, DESE and EOHHS announced an update to the COVID-19 testing program. Based on data from the “Test and Stay” program that demonstrated a secondary transmission rate (i.e., transmission to close contacts) of only 2.9 percent, districts and schools were encouraged to discontinue “Test and Stay” and contact tracing and increase their focus on identifying symptomatic individuals. To enable this shift, districts and schools that elected to make this change were provided with rapid antigen at-home tests that could be used on a weekly basis. To date, more than 440,000 students, educators, and staff have opted into testing at-home on a weekly basis.
* In addition to the statewide COVID-19 testing program and to support the safe return to school after the winter and February breaks, DESE, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), provided at-home antigen tests for all school staff at no cost to schools and districts. Approximately 200,000 tests were distributed in late December 2021, and an additional 36,000 tests were distributed in February 2022 to staff not participating in the statewide testing program.
* To support effective and ongoing communication with districts and schools implementing the testing program, members of my team hosted regular webinars to provide updates and information about COVID-19 testing in schools. The webinars were recorded and posted on DESE’s website. In addition, the team created additional [resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/testing/default.html), including template letters for families translated into multiple languages, guidance documents, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help districts and schools with implementation. Lastly, a COVID-19 testing inbox (k12covid19testing@mass.gov) was monitored daily to provide timely technical assistance and answers to questions.
* **Continue to collect and report COVID-19 case data and issue updates to statewide COVID-19 health and safety guidance and requirements** as appropriate in collaboration with public health agencies and DESE’s medical advisors;
	+ The Department continued to publish [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 districts and schools reported. Regular communication structures and weekly meetings continued throughout the year with medical advisors (including infectious disease physicians and pediatricians), public health experts, the Governor’s COVID-19 Command Center, EOHHS, and DPH. Together with these experts and informed by emerging national and international research and guidance, we issued frequent [updates to our guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html) as well as multiple installments of [frequently asked questions (FAQs)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/default.html)
	+ With support from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board), DESE implemented a mask requirement for all students at the start of the 2021-2022 school year.
		- Beginning October 15, 2021, if a school demonstrated a vaccination rate of 80 percent or more of all students and staff in the school through an attestation form submitted to DESE, then the mask requirement was no longer in effect for that school building. Between October 1, 2021 and February 8, 2022, DESE received a total of 77 requests to lift the mask requirement. All requests were responded to between October 7, 2021 and February 22, 2022. Of the 77 requests, DESE approved 72 and denied 2, and 3 schools withdrew their request.
		- After consultation with medical experts and state health officials, I lifted the statewide mask requirement for schools effective February 28, 2022.
* **Continue ongoing two-way communication with school and district leaders and other key stakeholders** to provide effective support for safe and healthy learning.
	+ Throughout the school year, I have held regular calls with all superintendents and was reachable on an individual basis by phone. In addition, key DESE staff were also in frequent contact with superintendents to provide real-time support and troubleshooting.
	+ At my direction, DESE offices have continued to provide ongoing pandemic-related support and guidance to district leaders. For example, the special education team held regular meetings for special education leaders. The meetings were recorded and posted on DESE’s website. Based on questions and concerns raised by special education leaders, parents, advocates, and attorneys, the office developed special education-specific [guidance documents, parent letters, and FAQs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html) and sought extensive stakeholder input on the development of those resources prior to their release.
	+ I also held frequent meetings with stakeholder groups, including the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, and the state 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.html).
* **The Department provided additional COVID-19 supports to districts this year, including bolstering bus driver and COVID-19 testing capacity through the Massachusetts Army National Guard and providing face masks to districts and schools.**
	+ Beginning last summer, I directed DESE staff to support districts in addressing the bus driver shortage, which became a critical issue across the nation this school year.
		- In July and August 2021, I worked with superintendents, the Department of Transportation, and the State Police to expedite driver applications for school pupil transport (7D) certificates and commercial driver’s licenses (CDL) and engaged in collaborative recruitment outreach.
		- As the extent of the driver shortage became clear, DESE worked with the Governor’s office (including the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, the Executive Office of Education (EOE), and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security) to enlist the Massachusetts Army National Guard (MANG) in a mission to help transport students to and from school. Over 230 MANG members participated in “Operation Children First,” in which soldiers were trained and obtained their 7D certificate.
		- Over 14,000 students were picked up and/or dropped off by MANG drivers across 3,000 school bus routes in 13 communities.
		- As part of this mission, the Registry of Motor Vehicles developed a 7D Spanish training module and scheduled Saturday training classes for potential bus drivers. These efforts provided increased access to certification to increase the statewide bus driver pipeline.
		- During the winter Omicron surge, I requested that the Governor call on MANG to support COVID-19 testing for schools and districts. Throughout the fall and winter, MANG members were trained to perform COVID-19 swab tests and conducted 54,775 tests in 14 districts, expanding testing capacity as a key part of the state’s comprehensive COVID-19 response.
	+ The Department also collaborated with MEMA to support mask distribution to schools and students:
		- MEMA and MANG supported DESE’s efforts to distribute 6 million masks to public and private school staff and 1,361,500 masks to all public-school students.

**2. Implementation of the** [**Acceleration Roadmap**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/roadmap/), a tool released to districts and schools last school year that outlines critical practices to accelerate learning for all students. The three priorities of the Roadmap are: 1) fostering a sense of belonging and partnership among students and families (including robust social-emotional supports for students), 2) continuously monitoring students’ understanding, and 3) ensuring strong grade-appropriate instruction with just-in-time scaffolds when they are needed. This year, DESE will reach over 200 districts and schools with tiered support for implementation, including:

* **Monthly content-specific workshops for instructional leaders**, published workshop recordings, and associated resources;
* **Targeted coaching and implementation** **support for 15 districts** that requested more in-depth support; and
* **Planning and delivering a learning acceleration training program for school and district leaders in the spring of 2022** to support implementation planning for school year 2022-23.
* The Department successfully provided over 230 districts and schools with tiered support for implementation of strategies identified in the Acceleration Roadmap this school year. Through collaborative efforts involving DESE teams across the agency, the Department is also offering a planning institute this spring and additional Roadmap-related supports for the upcoming school year.
	+ In partnership with TNTP, DESE offered well-attended, monthly, content-specific workshops for instructional leaders to deepen their understanding of the Acceleration Roadmap and support implementation of key strategies. These workshops received positive feedback from participants, with 100 percent of survey respondents stating that they “strongly agree” or “agree” that the PD sessions were engaging.
	+ Through the Learning Acceleration Network (LAN), DESE offered targeted coaching and implementation support on the Acceleration Roadmap for 15 additional districts that requested more in-depth assistance. Ten of these districts also received additional job-embedded coaching on topics covered in the sessions. Collectively, the districts participating in the LAN serve about 14 percent of the state’s student population.
		- All districts participating in the LAN are currently on track to meet identified goals of the program. Ninety-five percent of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” that the PD sessions were engaging, and 94 percent of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” that the PD sessions were a helpful use of time. Additionally, participants highlighted their appreciation for:
			* Having protected time to collaborate, calibrate, and build capacity within their teams and with other districts across the state.
			* The practical application of tools and frameworks. These included the classroom observation tool for math and ELA, video analyses, consultancy protocols, and change management frameworks.
		- Participants in job-embedded coaching noted that they appreciated the customized support and affirmed that job-embedded coaching is responsive to their unique needs as a district.
	+ In late April and May 2022, DESE is offering an Instructional Prioritization Institute to support districts with effective planning for SY 2022-23.
		- Department staff from the Statewide System of Support, the Office of Language Acquisition, the Kaleidoscope Collective, and the Office of Educational Technology have worked collaboratively to ensure work done at the Institute aligns with other ongoing DESE initiatives and requirements (e.g., school improvement planning, targeted assistance for schools and districts identified in the accountability system, and establishing conditions for deeper learning).
		- The Department has begun to expand access to Acceleration Roadmap-related programming for SY 2022-23, with LAN and job-embedded support offerings outlined in the [Targeted Program Catalog](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/default.html) released in April 2022.

**3. Accelerated learning opportunities.** The Department will continue to promote accelerated learning opportunities, including:

* **Continuing Acceleration Academies focused on mathematics.** Acceleration Academies take place over school vacations and provide significant doses of high-quality instruction in mathematics and English language arts targeted to students’ specific educational needs. This school year, the academies will focus mainly on mathematics, and all schools and districts will be eligible to apply for implementation funding and support. The Department will also support academies in identified schools within the Boston Public Schools as part of DESE’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BPS.
* In SY 2021-22, DESE offered four Acceleration Academy grant opportunities totaling $11.625 million in awarded funds, which provided thousands of students across the Commonwealth with the opportunity to accelerate their learning in mathematics and ELA. Brief descriptions of each program follow.

**Summer Acceleration Academies Grant**

* + A total of $4.3 million was awarded to 88 districts for programs in the summer of 2021. The Summer Acceleration Academies focused on early literacy for rising kindergarten through second grade students and on math for rising third, fourth, eighth, and tenth graders.
	+ Approximately 2,500 students attended an Early Literacy Academy, and approximately 2,300 attended a Math Academy.
	+ Department staff developed a Summer Acceleration Academy Guidebook to assist districts in program planning and implementation. A member of the Strategic Initiatives team also provided direct implementation support to districts and schools as needed.

**Acceleration Academies Grant**

* + A total of $875,000 was awarded to four districts (Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford) and the Springfield Empowerment Zone. The districts hosted ELA-focused Acceleration Academies in February 2022 and math-focused Acceleration Academies in April 2022. Both Academies served students in grades 3-12.
	+ Approximately 2,100 students attended the February ELA Acceleration Academies. Student participation data is still being collected for the April Math Acceleration Academies.
	+ A member of DESE’s Strategic Initiatives team provided program and logistical support to all five grant recipients. A member of DESE’s Out-of-School Time team also provided direct support to Holyoke Public Schools.

**Math Acceleration Academies Grant**

* + A total of $5.7 million was awarded to 46 districts through the SY 2021-22 Math Acceleration Academies Grant, serving students in grades 3-12.
	+ Approximately 3,500 students attended the February 2022 Math Acceleration Academies. Student participation data is still being collected for the April Math Academies.
	+ Department staff developed a Math Acceleration Academy Guidebook to assist districts in program planning and implementation. A member of DESE’s Strategic Initiatives team also hosted several webinars focused on setting instructional expectations and on student recruitment and selection. Direct implementation support was also provided as needed.

**Kaleidoscope Cohort Two Acceleration Academies**

* + $750,000 was awarded to Boston Public Schools to support program implementation at BPS Region 1 schools. The BPS Region 1 Acceleration Academies focused on ELA in February 2022 and math in April. The Academies served students in elementary, middle, and high school.
	+ Approximately 720 students attended the February ELA Academies. Student participation data is not yet available for the April Math Academies.
	+ The Department’s Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning team developed and led professional development for teachers selected to teach in the BPS Region 1 Acceleration Academies. A member of DESE’s Strategic Initiatives team also provided logistical support to BPS Region 1 staff.
* **Further expanding the Biggest Winner Math Challenge program,** a summer-long program for students identified as gifted and talented, with a focus on those in Gateway Cities;
* In SY 2021-22, DESE awarded Ed Inquiry a grant totaling over $1.3 million to develop the Biggest Winner Math Challenge program, a culturally affirming, engaging, rigorous online learning community for middle school students who have advanced ability or interest in mathematics. In partnership with DESE, Ed Inquiry developed an identification system to create student eligibility lists for the Gateway Cities and shared these lists with Gateway City schools and districts.
* During the summer of 2021, approximately 500 students participated in the initial pilot year of the Biggest Winner Math Challenge program.
* Ed Inquiry will bring this program to full capacity for the summer of 2022, serving 2,500 students.
* **Continuing the Acceleration to College program,** which provides recent high school graduates access to credit-bearing math and English courses at no cost to them as they prepare for college.
	+ In summer 2021, 11 community colleges ran transition programs for students in the class of 2021 who graduated with the modified competency determination, to assist in their transition to full-time community college students in the fall.
	+ For the summer of 2022, the eligibility pool is open to the graduating classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022, with $420,000 allocated for this program this year.

**4.** **ESSER funding and guidance to districts and schools.** The Department will issue funding applications and guidance to promote effective use of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds and distribute funds to districts and schools in a timely fashion. Guidance will continue to focus on using relief funds to support evidence-based programs, and this will be further reinforced in this year’s Student Opportunity Act (SOA) plan amendment process.

* All ESSER I, II, and III applications from all Massachusetts districts have been approved, and all districts have full access to their allocated ESSER funding.
* The Department completed the review of all district ESSER III (or “ARP ESSER”) grant applications in winter 2022. The ESSER III award represents the largest ever infusion of federal education funds into the Commonwealth (approximately $1.65 billion over more than two years). The Department aligned the evidence-based programmatic content offered in the ESSER III application with the program areas identified in DESE’s Student Opportunity Act guidance.
* Many districts intend to use a portion of their ESSER III grant funds to improve air quality in school buildings by repairing or replacing HVAC systems. This is new territory for schools and districts, as ESSER is the first federal grant that districts are allowed to use for building improvements. To support districts in this work, DESE contracted with HVAC experts to help districts navigate federal procurement guidelines for construction and remodeling projects.

**5. Improved IEP guidance to support students with disabilities.** The Department aims to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by revising the current IEP (Individualized Education Program) guidance, developing new data-driven, student-centered IEP forms, and identifying resources to support successful implementation of the IEP process. This includes:

* Developing new referral, evaluation, and eligibility guidance;
* Revising the IEP Process Guide;
* Revising “A Parent’s Guide to Special Education;”
* Creating an online learning tool that provides guidance and resources on the IEP process;
* Engaging the early adopters to identify best practices, strategies, and resources to support the IEP process; and
* Convening stakeholder groups to create opportunities for families, school district staff, and community organizations to inform the development of guidance and resources.
* Through the IEP Improvement Project, DESE continues to work towards updating all aspects of the IEP process, from initial student referral for evaluation through the development and implementation of the IEP itself.
* In fall 2021, DESE released the “Referral, Evaluation, and Eligibility Guide.” This guidance replaces previous guidance and is posted to the Special Education IEP Improvement Project [webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/ImproveIEP/default.html) as a [digital learning tool](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/ImproveIEP/guidance-rlo/index.html#/). This tool provides schools and districts with information they need about special education referral, evaluation, and eligibility in a format that is easy to navigate.
	+ As a next step, the “Referral, Evaluation, and Eligibility Guide” will also be made available in a printable version that will be translated into multiple languages during SY 2022-23. Additionally, strategies for schools, districts, and families will be added to the guide to support effective implementation.
* On April 28, 2022, DESE released the new draft IEP form for stakeholder feedback on the Special Education IEP Improvement Project [webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/ImproveIEP/default.html). The new draft IEP form:
	+ - Uses student- and family-friendly language;
		- Establishes a data-driven and student-centered process to guide IEP development;
		- Takes a strength-based approach to developing student supports;
		- Focuses on promoting the Least Restrictive Environment;
		- Provides a comprehensive plan for service delivery;
		- Focuses on transition planning more directly in the IEP process; and
		- Uses a streamlined format (decreases length, improves usability, simplifies language, and eliminates redundancy).
	+ An extensive list of stakeholders received notification of the release of the draft IEP form, and DESE staff have begun presentations to various stakeholder groups to solicit their input. Department staff will incorporate feedback from stakeholders over the next several months.
	+ At the start of the 2022-23 school year, schools and districts that have volunteered to be “early adopters” of the new IEP form will receive training on the new form, implement the form on a pilot basis during IEP meetings, and provide DESE with timely feedback. The early adopters represent a wide variety of schools and districts from across the Commonwealth.
	+ Looking ahead, DESE aims to finalize the IEP form by winter 2023 and provide statewide training on the new form before the end of SY 2022-23. The early adopter cohort will continue to work with DESE in identifying best practices, strategies, and resources to support the IEP process and inform the development of DESE trainings and other resources to promote successful implementation.
	+ The Department will revise other documents, including the IEP Process Guide and “A Parent’s Guide to Special Education,” in SY 2022-23 to align with the new IEP forms and related information.

**6. Improved resources for supporting English learners.** The Department will:

* **Continue to promote the use of the** [**Interactive Blueprint**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/) **for English Learner Success**, with a focus on making it user-friendly for districts and developing a clear and cohesive approach to district support for English learners. Specifically, DESE will:
	+ - **Complete the Blueprint implementation pilot** started last year with teams from Holyoke, Lawrence, Southbridge, and Brockton and synthesize lessons learned from the pilot;
* The Department completed the Blueprint implementation pilot in the three original districts (Lawrence, Southbridge, and Holyoke) and gathered feedback from the district teams on the processes and tools they used during this work.
* The Department continued the second phase of the pilot in Brockton, which is culminating in June 2022.
	+ The Brockton implementation of the Blueprint was purposefully integrated into their district-wide strategic planning process, providing a strong example of how the Blueprint can support a systemic approach to centering the needs of English learners (ELs) in broader visioning and action planning.
* The Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA), in collaboration with district educators, shared key lessons from the work described above – and from other districts that have been using the Blueprint – at its April EL Directors’ Network meeting. The Office of Language Acquisition will also share these findings at the MATSOL (Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages) conference at the end of May.
* **Improve and streamline DESE’s school- and district-facing supports for English learners** by engaging key DESE offices, including the Statewide System of Support, Kaleidoscope, and Digital Learning and Technology, in cross-office planning;
* The OLA team has been collaborating across DESE offices to streamline school- and district-facing supports for ELs and to model the shared responsibility for EL student success that is essential at all levels of the system. The Office of Language Acquisition has collaborated with the Statewide Systems of Support, Kaleidoscope, and Digital Learning and Technology teams to ensure alignment and coherence among DESE’s tools and documents and to make certain that the needs of ELs are prioritized. Office of Language Acquisition team members are also supporting initiatives to streamline DESE’s Tiered Focused Monitoring efforts.
* The Office of Language Acquisition has convened a Practitioner Advisory Group made up of EL educators and administrators from across the state to provide regular feedback and enhance DESE’s role of “State as partner.”
* **Finalize a suite of tools to accompany the Blueprint** ("what-to-look-for" tools and professional learning modules) and make them available to all districts across the state.
* The [ELE Vision & Blueprint page](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/default.html) on the DESE website now includes links to a variety of resources for schools, including [Quick Reference Guides (QRGs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/dashboard.html)) aligned to each Pillar and Building Block of the Blueprint Dashboard as well as a suite of tools to support districts with planning and professional learning based on the Blueprint.
	+ These tools include two self-paced modules, which were piloted in and revised based on feedback from Lawrence, Holyoke, Southbridge, and Brockton. [Module 1](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/plan/module-1/index.html#/) is an Introduction to the Blueprint for English Learner Success, and [Module 2](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/plan/module-2/index.html) teaches participants how to engage in self-assessment with the Blueprint.
		- For each of these self-paced modules that educators complete, they can earn 15 professional development points (PDPs) toward the Sheltered English Immersion re-licensure requirements.
		- Additionally, DESE has developed [Blueprint Self-Assessment (or “look-for”) Tools](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/plan/default.html) that educators and administrators can use at the classroom, school, district, and state levels to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in their practice. These self-assessments, along with a variety of initial implementation resources and related tools, can help educator teams dig deeper into high-leverage areas for improvement and collaboratively develop action plans that center EL success.

**7. Early literacy.** The Department will:

* **Provide implementation support for the Mass Literacy Guide**, a statewide effort to empower educators with evidence-based practices for literacy, including an online course that any Massachusetts educator can take for free, and other resources;
* The Department continued and extended support for schools and districts to adopt evidence-based early literacy approaches. Despite the ongoing pandemic, there has been strong interest and engagement from educators across the state in these early literacy focused supports, which included:
	+ Bringing educators together for collaborative learning. The Department convened yearlong learning networks for district and school literacy leaders, for school-based literacy coaches and reading specialists, and for district/community teams working on selecting new instructional materials. The Department served approximately 750 educators in collaborative learning networks focused on literacy this school year. In each case, participants received ongoing training and support from DESE specialists and external experts to hone their early literacy knowledge and bring new resources and practices back to their schools.
	+ Preparing to launch Appleseeds, the Massachusetts curriculum for foundational reading skills. Starting in summer 2022, DESE will make a package of high-quality, open-source foundational literacy skills materials available to Massachusetts educators for free.
		- “Appleseeds: Evidence-Based Foundational Skills for Massachusetts” provides a systematic, explicit, and equitable approach to teaching foundational skills in the early grades. It has been vetted by Massachusetts educators and content experts, and a data summary is [available here](https://tntp.org/assets/misc/Appleseeds_curriculum_review_data_summary.pdf). Appleseeds is based upon a curricular resource developed by the Tennessee Department of Education called the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement (TNFSCS).
		- To independently verify quality, DESE engaged teachers across Massachusetts to pilot the materials in their kindergarten, first grade, or second grade classrooms. Throughout the school year, teachers implemented the materials, participated in professional learning and coaching opportunities, and provided formal and informal feedback. External experts also reviewed the materials to verify quality.
		- In April 2022, DESE determined that the TNFSCS materials met quality standards for Massachusetts, updated and rebranded the materials, and is currently preparing to make them available in summer 2022.
	+ Providing high-quality professional development in early literacy knowledge and instructional practices directly to educators statewide, through the Open Access Professional Learning (OAPL) program.
		- Under the OAPL program, DESE vetted and selected several high-quality early literacy professional development providers that offer professional learning aligned with Mass Literacy. Through OAPL, DESE has connected over 2,000 preK-3 educators in Massachusetts with coursework in evidence-based early literacy.
		- The courses are offered in a range of options, including asynchronous or live and in-person or online. Educators in districts identified as requiring assistance in the state accountability system were given priority to enroll in the courses. This program has met with tremendous demand from educators, with most courses filling up within 48 hours of opening. In response to the demand, DESE is planning to expand the OAPL program and offer additional course opportunities to educators over the summer.
* **Continue grant programs** with significant investments in early literacy, including:
	+ **Growing Literacy Across Massachusetts (GLEAM**), an intensive district and school literacy program funded by a five-year, $19.98 million federal grant to support literacy in grades preK-12 and expand preschool literacy. The program is helping eight districts serving grades K-5 and ten districts serving grades 6-12 implement sustainable improvements in literacy, including rigorous curricula, professional development, and access to high-quality preschool.
	+ **Early Grades Literacy grant**, an effort to increase student proficiency in reading, writing, and effective communication in the early grades through extensive professional development and onsite coaching in evidence-based practices. Twelve districts and sixteen schools are participating.
	+ This year, DESE continued its commitment to grant programs with significant investments in early literacy, including:
		- **Accelerating Literacy Learning with High-Quality Instructional Materials**, which is providing nearly $9 million in state and federal funds for districts to replace outdated literacy programs with high-quality instructional materials in line with the Mass Literacy Guide and CURATE expectations. This grant garnered substantial interest, with 75 local educational agencies applying and over 60 receiving funding. These districts and charter schools will use the Accelerating Literacy funds to purchase high-quality instructional materials that have been highly rated by EdReports and/or CURATE and to support educator professional development based on the new materials.
		- **Growing Literacy Across Massachusetts (GLEAM)**, through which districts receive grants to build and strengthen a [multi-tiered system of support](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/) for ELA/literacy, as well as expanded access to high-quality preschool.
			* In SY 2021-22, nine districts received GLEAM funding for preschool, and eight received funding for K-5. These 17 districts are participating in a range of intensive activities to strengthen their multi-tiered systems of support, including building a cross-school literacy leadership team, selecting and implementing new curricular materials and/or approved early literacy screening assessments, and extensive professional development for leaders and teachers.
		- **Early Grades Literacy** grant, which funds an intensive professional development and coaching program serving 16 schools. Through this longstanding program, participating schools receive professional development from an expert consultant throughout the year, as well as access to presentations from national early literacy experts.
* **Coordinate up to $8.5 million in statewide early literacy tutoring** as part of the Governor’s coronavirus relief support (from the federal Governor’s Emergency Education Relief fund), as a continuation from 2020-21
	+ This year, DESE partnered with Springboard Collaborative, The Literacy Lab, Catapult, and Tufts University to offer vetted tutoring services to districts at no cost to them. Districts that were interested in these services entered into a partnership with one of DESE’s selected tutoring providers and matched students in grades K-3 to tutoring services. Approximately 4,000 students will have received high-quality literacy tutoring by the end of this school year under this program.
* **Build and implement a strategy for educator preparation** to align with the principles of evidence-based early literacy instruction outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide.
	+ The Department’s goal is that by SY 2024-25, all Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities teacher candidates in Massachusetts are prepared, through coursework and opportunities for practice and high-quality feedback, in evidence-based early literacy as outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide. To reach this goal, the multi-year initiative began this year with the following steps:
		- Convening a group of stakeholders, including educator preparation administrators, faculty, and preK-3 educators, to articulate new expectations for all relevant licensure programs, so that all teacher candidates have access to information about literacy and language acquisition that is based in current evidence;
		- Creating new resources and supports for literacy program improvements in educator preparation programs, including opt-in reviews to provide programs with formative feedback;
		- Updating and expanding licensure assessments aligned to Mass Literacy and the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, and identifying alternative assessments for Foundations of Reading through the three-year Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL)-Alternative Assessment Pilot; and
		- Providing new resources to help educator preparation programs align candidate training with evidence-based practices, including an early literacy observation form that program supervisors can use when observing teacher candidates in their practicum teaching experience.

**8. Districts requiring assistance**. The Department will:

* **Continue to provide targeted assistance** to districts performing in the bottom 10 percent of the state’s accountability system, with a focus on strategies outlined in the Acceleration Roadmap;
	+ The Department has continued to provide targeted assistance, grants, and resources to districts that have schools performing in the lowest 10 percent statewide. The Acceleration Roadmap has provided a focused set of strategies for targeted assistance efforts this year, with emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging and providing access to grade-appropriate instruction.
	+ Key offerings for the upcoming SY 2022-23 have been organized around the Roadmap priorities and made accessible to districts via a [program catalog](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/default.html). Regional assistance teams have been particularly focused on supporting districts with:
		- Implementing evidence-based strategies to address learning loss, with a primary focus on adoption and culturally responsive implementation of high-quality instructional materials;
		- Addressing the social-emotional learning and mental health of students;
		- Building the capacity of instructional leadership teams; and
		- Planning strategically at the school- and district-level.
	+ Following the 2021 [district review in Brockton](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/nolevel/2020-0044.docx), DESE’s regional assistance team has been working in partnership with the district on efforts to improve outcomes for students. After establishing an MOU to identify priorities stemming from the review, DESE funded a strategic planning partner for Brockton and coaching support for the district’s executive leadership team. Each of these supports has continued through 2021-22 school year.
	+ The Brockton School Committee approved a five-year strategic plan that identified priorities to provide high-quality curriculum, expand the inclusion of students with disabilities, and redesign instruction for multilingual learners.
* **Continue the partnership with Boston Public Schools in the areas outlined in the MOU** signed in spring 2020, with a focus on: 1) monitoring district progress on student achievement and operational indicators, and 2) implementing Kaleidoscope professional development, Acceleration Academies, and Early College programming in identified schools.
	+ The Department continues to collaborate with Boston Public Schools (BPS) on the priorities outlined in the 2020 BPS/DESE MOU.
		- Department staff have continued to assess and support the district’s progress towards upgrading essential facilities, such as student bathrooms.
		- Department staff have consulted with district leaders on the district’s diversity recruitment and retention initiatives.
		- (Information about the Kaleidoscope Collective initiative described in the MOU is included later in this document.)
		- In response to the long-term goal of establishing a performance management framework for the district, DESE has collaborated with BPS to create both a landscape analysis of the current state of school-level autonomies and a theory of action for the use of the framework, and DESE has entered a multi-year contract with a partner organization to guide the work ahead.
		- The Department also released a $2 million grant to Boston, aligned to the MOU priorities, to support local implementation.
	+ In spring 2022, DESE conducted a Follow-up District Review of BPS, and the results of the review will be shared with the Board and BPS in May. The review will provide updates on the district’s progress to date in relation to DESE’s [District Standards and Indicators](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf).

**II. Reimagine education in the Commonwealth through transformative initiatives**

**1. Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning.** The Department will continue the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning, which is designed to foster and expand deeper learning instructional models that improve teaching and learning for all students. Within Kaleidoscope:

* **Launch work with Kaleidoscope Cohort 2 within the Boston Public Schools**. Provide deeper learning professional development and implementation support for 15 BPS schools identified through the 2020 memorandum of understanding
	+ Consistent with the work outlined in DESE’s MOU with BPS, DESE’s Kaleidoscope team has worked with 15 schools in BPS to provide regular professional learning sessions for educators and school leaders, support for Acceleration Academies, and Early College assistance in two high schools.
	+ Starting in summer 2021, an opt-in group of teachers from each of the 15 schools has served on pilot advisory teams and receives monthly professional development, engages directly with Kaleidoscope to implement deeper learning tasks in their classrooms, and supports planning for school-wide implementation in the 2022-23 school year.
	+ The Department’s Kaleidoscope team has also run monthly professional development sessions for the principals of the 15 schools, with a focus on understanding deeper learning (fall 2021) and strategic planning for SY 2022-23 (winter/spring 2022).
	+ The Kaleidoscope team has also met regularly with the regional superintendent who oversees the 15 schools and other key district staff to align our Kaleidoscope protocols to academic visioning work taking place within the district and to support strategic planning for SY 2022-23.
	+ The Kaleidoscope team also provided technical assistance and grant funding to support Acceleration Academies in the 15 identified schools during February and April 2022, serving nearly 2,000 students over the two vacation weeks.
	+ Kaleidoscope also provided the two high schools in the 15-school cohort with Early College program support in the form of grant funding and technical assistance, including coaching towards identified goals from an experienced partner.
* **Launch a third cohort of the Kaleidoscope Collective, open to districts statewide, in spring 2022.**
	+ The Department’s Kaleidoscope team has opened applications for districts to participate in a third Kaleidoscope cohort: a network of educators and administrators interested in enhancing existing high-quality instructional materials to support deeper learning. In partnership with Kaleidoscope, school and district teams will engage in professional learning and work within their teams to:
		- Establish and/or refine a clear instructional vision that advances deeper learning,
		- Examine classroom practices that advance deeper learning for all learners, and
		- Establish and/or refine strong examples of lessons and units that foster deeper learning.
	+ As the Kaleidoscope initiative expands, the Kaleidoscope team has begun working with other DESE offices (including the Statewide System of Supports, OLA, and the Office of Educational Technology), to ensure program units are working together to put schools and districts on a path towards deeper learning.

**2. Innovative science assessment.** The Department will:

* **Expand the number of schools participating in the innovative science assessment pilot** from approximately 20 to approximately 100 in grades 5 and 8 (about 5,000 students per grade) using DESE’s federally approved plan for the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority;
	+ In SY 2021-22, the innovative science assessment pilot successfully expanded to nearly 100 schools, with 5,000 students in each of grades 5 and 8 taking this innovative, interactive science test as part of their end-of-year testing.
	+ The pilot assessment is designed around a central performance task and features three important innovations:
		- Interactive simulations that enable students to conduct investigations or test engineering solutions,
		- Test questions that are linked together in a storyline focused on a meaningful science or engineering problem, and
		- Test content that features diverse student and adult characters collaborating and using science practices.
	+ Assessment tasks are designed with input from two teacher committees, one made up of science teachers who provide expertise and feedback on the science content and one focused on identifying and addressing potential issues of bias or sensitivity in the test. Within DESE, the team designing tasks includes staff from the Kaleidoscope Collective to help apply ideas of deeper learning, from the Center for Instructional Support to provide science content expertise, and from Student Assessment to apply best practices in assessment design.
* **Continue to refine the science assessment performance tasks** based on initial results and findings from the first year of the pilot, with continued alignment to the Kaleidoscope deeper learning initiative;
	+ In this second year of the pilot, the design of the test and tasks was informed by data from the first pilot conducted in SY 2020-21, with approximately 1,000 students in each of grades 5 and 8. Staff examined student performance on the first pilot to verify that all student groups were able to demonstrate their science knowledge on the assessment. Staff also made improvements to the testing experience based on feedback from student survey results, from 1:1 usability labs with students, and from experts on the needs of English learners and students with disabilities.
	+ The second-year pilot includes a short tutorial video at the start of the assessment to familiarize students with the interactive simulations and help them learn how to use these new, innovative features.
* **Provide professional development to teachers involved in the pilot** to support them in implementing deeper learning instructional practices in science.
	+ This year, teachers in the pilot schools took part in four days of professional development throughout the year on effective science instructional practices aligned to the assessment, so that more students have opportunities for deeper learning in science. Next year, the pilot will be repeated with a similar number of students, with the goal of expanding the test to statewide use by spring 2025.

**3. Early College.** In addition to continued designation of new Early College programs, DESE will:

* **Expand high-quality programs through competitive grant opportunities and technical assistance** for districts and schools interested in:
	+ Significantly increasing the scale of current programs or
	+ Establishing school-wide Early College programs that are accessible to all students within a school;
	+ As of spring 2021, 3,893 students in 35 high schools in Massachusetts were participating in Early College programs, and Massachusetts had 23 designated Early College programs in operation. As of spring 2022, those numbers have increased to 4,332 students, 40 high schools, and 31 designated Early College programs in operation.
	+ In SY 2021-22, DESE launched three grant programs to support the expansion of Early College programs.
		- Expansion Grants: These competitive targeted grants provide resources to currently Designated Early College programs to significantly increase the scale of their programs and the number of underrepresented students accessing postsecondary education in Massachusetts. Nine awardees have committed to expand the current scale of their program significantly and thoughtfully, which will result in an additional 2,000 students in Designated Early College programs statewide.
		- Full School Impact Grants: These competitive grants support a high school and college partnership to design and develop an impactful, large scale (a minimum of 400 students at full scale), “full school” immersive Early College program model. This model would enable participating students to earn a minimum of 30 college credits before graduating from high school. Five potential Early College partnerships were selected to receive this grant. By SY 2023-24, the programs under this grant are expected to increase the overall number of students enrolled in Early College programs by at least 2,000 students.
		- Incubator Planning Grants: The Department has launched a final grant opportunity designed to support new, innovative Early College models that could significantly increase the number of underrepresented students served in the Commonwealth.
			* Applicants are expected to take novel approaches to Early College programming, including innovative course delivery methods, use of technology, and student supports, in service of broadening equitable access to students. The Department expects to award these grants by the end of the 2021-22 school year.
* **Further promote Early College educator pathways** to encourage a diverse pipeline of high school students to seek roles in education.
	+ The Department continues to coordinate with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the field to support guided academic pathways for Early College students considering a career in education. Many programs have pathways with a general education or liberal arts foundation which can be applied if students choose to pursue postsecondary degrees in education.
	+ As of spring 2022, at least 12 programs have created explicit education pathways with the intent to expose hundreds of students, specifically historically underrepresented students, to academic and professional opportunities in teaching and education administration.
* **Support further innovation through the Fifth Year Early College Promise Program**, a pilot program in which students receive an additional year of Early College programming while remaining enrolled in high school and graduate with an associate’s degree.
	+ Early College Promise is a pilot program in which students receive an additional year of Early College programming while remaining enrolled in high school and graduate with an associate’s degree. The Department (in partnership with DHE) continues to support the implementation of this pilot initiative.
		- Currently, five districts and six higher education institutions are participating in the pilot, serving just over 100 students.
		- The pilot is expected to expand to seven district partnerships with seven higher education institutions serving approximately 200 students in SY 2022-23. Preliminary data for the initial cohorts of students will be available next year.

**4. Diversifying the educator workforce**. The Department will:

* **Provide approximately $3 million in funding through the educator diversification grant program** to continue helping districts and schools enhance diversification efforts;
	+ As of December 2021, DESE has awarded a total of $9 million to support district and school educator diversification efforts. In SY 2021-22, grant funding supported school districts, charter schools, vocational technical education schools, approved private special education schools, and education collaboratives. As in past years, grant funds provide financial support and incentives such as: tuition assistance, MTEL preparation and examination vouchers, signing bonuses, relocation assistance, and loan repayment reimbursement. In addition, grant funds also support the development of education pathways for high school students.
		- As of SY 2021-22, 163 eligible individuals received tuition assistance for enrollment into approved educator preparation programs, 300 MTEL preparation vouchers were provided to districts, and 372 MTEL examination vouchers were purchased by districts.
	+ A review of educator demographic data confirms an increase in the percentage of educators of color recruited in Massachusetts schools (11.7 percent in SY 2020-21 as compared to 10.4 percent in SY 2018-19) and retained in the profession.
	+ State legislation (Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021) allocated $10 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to DESE to support educator diversification efforts. The Department will use the funds to support the development of new or expanded programs focused on recruiting and retaining black, indigenous, Latinx, and Asian educators; immigrants; refugees; and other educators from diverse backgrounds.
		- In SY 2022-23, grant funds will be used to build licensure pathway/pipeline programs to support Emergency licensed educators to advance to a Provisional or Initial educator license.
		- Additionally, in SY 2022-23, DESE plans to invite non-profits, state universities, and other providers to apply for funding to support programs to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the Massachusetts educator workforce.
* **Implement a yearlong professional learning community** **for approximately 100 districts and schools** to support teacher diversification efforts;
	+ In SY 2021-22, DESE launched the teacher diversification professional learning community. The learning community is comprised of 100 traditional public school districts, charter schools, vocational technical schools, approved private special education schools, and education collaboratives.
	+ This professional learning community provides support and enhances school and district understanding of the components needed to develop and implement a comprehensive talent diversification strategy (recruitment, selection, and retention) centered on cultural proficiency. Approximately 400 attendees participate in the monthly learning series.
* **Continue pilots of Massachusetts Tests of Educator Licensure (MTEL) assessment alternatives** and evaluation of the pilots;
	+ As of April 2022, DESE has approved [12 alternative assessments](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/alt-assess/default.html) for educator licensure, including five alternatives to the Communications and Literacy MTEL and seven alternatives to subject matter knowledge MTELs. Fitchburg State University’s Foundations of Reading alternative assessment was also recently approved.
	+ The Department also launched [MTEL-Flex](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/alt-assess/mtel-flex.html) in February 2022, an assessment option for MTEL candidates whose score on select MTEL test fields is very close to the passing score (within one standard error of measurement of passing). Candidates who meet the eligibility requirements have the opportunity to submit an MTEL-Flex assessment rather than retaking the full MTEL test. MTEL-Flex is available for six different MTEL fields.
	+ A three-year external evaluation of the MTEL-Alternative Assessment Pilot is underway in partnership with the [National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER)](https://www.air.org/centers/national-center-analysis-longitudinal-data-education-research-calder) and American Institutes for Research (AIR). The Department and CALDER plan to present an update to the Board in fall 2022.
		- The evaluators plan to link cohorts of teachers participating in the pilot alternatives to Massachusetts data on student and teacher outcomes, as well as additional data from structured interviews and survey responses.
		- Relevant metrics include prospective educators’ program completion, licensure, and employment, as well as measures of teaching effectiveness derived from student outcomes and performance evaluations.
* **Establish partnerships with community-oriented home ownership non-profits** like the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA) and others to strengthen recruitment efforts;
	+ In summer 2021, DESE adopted a policy for identifying home mortgage assistance programs to promote a more diverse and culturally responsive educator workforce. Under this policy, DESE identifies non-profit entities that provide home ownership resources, such as workshops and mortgages, to low-to-moderate-income prospective and newly hired teachers and administrators seeking to purchase homes in low-to-moderate-income communities.
	+ Once a non-profit is approved, DESE will help publicize the availability of these resources for educators. The Department will not be involved in any business dealings or other interactions between an educator and the non-profit entity.
* **Continue the Influence 100 fellowship** to support diversification of the administrator workforce.
	+ Currently in Year 3, Influence 100 has engaged 60 aspiring superintendents (Influence 100 fellows) from across 26 districts in the two-year leadership development program.
	+ In June 2021, the first cohort of 24 fellows completed the program; 96 percent identify as people of color. During their time in the program, seven had advanced to higher levels of leadership in districts and schools, including one who is now serving as a superintendent in Massachusetts.
	+ In the current academic year, 36 fellows are participating across two cohorts and 19 districts; 78 percent identify as people of color. This summer, DESE will select the next cohort of Influence 100 districts and fellows (Cohort 4).
	+ The Department continues to partner with The Leadership Academy on the design and implementation of the curriculum for fellows, which centers equity and racial equity. This year, DESE expanded support for district leadership teams in the Influence 100 network with quarterly District Leader Sessions designed to build leaders’ capacity to create more equitable and culturally responsive districts. These network convenings include superintendents and their leadership teams, fellows, and school committee members.
	+ The Department also continues to partner with the UMass Donahue Institute to conduct a third-party evaluation of the Influence100 five-year pilot phase. Key findings from the Year One Report released in August 2021 include:
		- 92 percent of Cohort 1 Fellows completed the program and reported positive impacts on their equity mindset, sense of personal efficacy as equity-focused leaders, knowledge and understanding of the superintendent role, and connection to peers in the program.
		- 25 percent of Cohort 1 Fellows have advanced to new leadership positions.
		- Cohort 1 districts (on average) increased the number of equity-focused practices they developed or changed.
	+ As an indicator that the overall landscape of the superintendency is shifting in Massachusetts, in the current school year, there are 22 superintendents of color, up from 12 in 2019.

**5. Career/vocational technical education (CVTE) admissions.** The Department will provide continued support for implementation of the new CVTE admissions regulatory language that the Board adopted in June 2021, including:

* **Monitoring and addressing identified deficiencies in newly submitted admissions policies** to promote equity and access;
	+ The Department refined the Chapter 74 admissions/waitlist data collection and provided technical assistance and support to districts for the completion of the spring 2021 and fall 2021 waitlist/admissions data collection. Technical assistance office hours and sessions were held from July to September, with 19 districts participating.
	+ The Department will identify strengths and deficiencies in newly submitted CVTE program admissions policies with an analysis of the spring 2022 waitlist/admissions data collection.
		- To support districts in analyzing their data, DESE also continued to refine the Career Technical Education (CTE) Analysis and Review Tools ([CTE ART](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/vart.html)) and associated [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/guidance.docx).
	+ The Department will support districts with identified deficiencies and gaps in their data through the Office for College, Career and Technical Education (OCCTE) and the newly developed Quality Support System (QSS). This system includes school/program self-assessment, data-driven technical assistance, and school-to-school partnership and support.
	+ The Department will also make direct interventions in specific cases as appropriate.
* **Providing professional development and technical support** as districts develop processes to promote equitable access to CVTE exploratory programs and increase opportunities for all students to be admitted to their programs of choice.
	+ The [Career and Vocational Technical Equitable Access Grant](https://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=26444#:~:text=Fund%20Code%20106%20Career%20Vocational%20Technical%20Equitable%20Access%20Grant) supported districts in building capacity to address equity and access to CTE programs through three priorities: analyzing data, enhancing English learner recruitment and success, and building equitable structures. Twenty-five recipients of this grant participated in monthly technical assistance sessions and office hours.
	+ This work will continue with a continuation grant for current recipients and a new grant for districts or programs identified as needing targeted support. Grantees will include Chapter 74 programs and districts that have data indicating increased participation of English learners and students with disabilities and that will benefit from capacity building to better support the needs of these students. The Department will also continue to provide support for Chapter 74 districts that have lower enrollment of English learners and students with disabilities as compared to their sending communities. The Department is in the process of contracting with one or more professional development providers with expertise in supporting English learners and students with disabilities in CTE.
	+ The Department also launched the Secondary Options Family Engagement (SOFE) project to continue building awareness of CVTE among families whose preferred language is not English. The work is guided by the insights of families themselves and has included:
		- Soliciting feedback on DESE’s new family information resource, [Massachusetts School Finder](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/get_closest_orgs.aspx),
		- Conducting awareness activities and developing parent-friendly resources to support family and student decision making about options for high school, and
		- Creating a hotline to help parents and families navigate the decision-making process for high school.

**6. Action-oriented research for educational equity.** The Department will establish key components of the statewide research hub funded by DESE’s federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant award. To support data alignment and evidence-based research across agencies from preschool to the workforce, work this year will include:

* **Conducting demonstration projects** and engaging in action-oriented research studies in support of agency priorities;
* **Developing public-facing dashboards and reports on priority indicators**, such as educator workforce diversity and use of high-quality curriculum; and
* **Coordinating with EOE IT on improved data infrastructure** to support integrated and user-friendly data access.
* The Department has continued to lead collaborative efforts with EOE, DHE, the Department of Early Education and Care, and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to develop a Preschool-to-Workforce (P20W) Research and Data Hub.
* The goal of the P20W Data Hub is to help policymakers use data and research on long-term outcomes to determine which investments and initiatives contribute most to equity and to individuals’ learning, well-being, and outcomes. The Data Hub builds on the Commonwealth’s existing longitudinal data system by (1) expanding the scope to facilitate connections with data from multiple state agencies, and (2) making the data available to various audiences through a unified set of user-friendly tools at the appropriate level of access.
* **Demonstration projects:** This year, the P20W team has focused on high-value demonstration projects that use data across agencies in new and valuable ways. Some examples include:
	+ **Early College data improvements:** The P20W team is working to leverage data from DESE and DHE to develop a clear picture of Early College program outcomes and enhance connections between the two departments’ data systems to provide accurate, real-time data on the number of credits earned by Early College students.
	+ **State dashboard on College and Career Outcomes:** The P20W is developing a dashboard to monitor longitudinal outcomes related to college and career success of students.
	+ **Educator workforce diversity:** Several DESE teams are collaborating on data and research projects to guide the state's efforts on diversifying the educator workforce. The Department’s Data Services team created and published an [Educator Data Dashboard](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNGQ2NmM5ZGItZjgyNS00ZjEyLWEyYmMtZDBkZGQxMWJiMTFlIiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9) with district-by-district demographic data on current teachers, teacher retention, and new hires.
* **Strengthening cross-agency data systems:** The P20W team, in partnership with EOE’s information technology team, is beginning implementation of a data catalog. The catalog is a shared system across the education secretariat that will allow analysts and other agency staff to more easily find the data they need and increase agency analysts’ awareness of datasets available in other agencies, while protecting the security of the contents. The P20W team is also supporting governance and stewardship of cross-agency datasets, including new connections to follow students’ progress from early education into K-12.
* **Launching a P20W Hub website:** The P20W team has worked with data staff in each agency to design a Data Hub website that will be a one-stop destination for the public and agency staff to find the data they need. The initial version will launch in summer 2022, with more advanced features planned for future versions, including a custom data download tool.

**7. Implementation of DESE’s racial equity decision-making tool.** The Department will provide additional department-wide training on its racial equity decision-making tool and customized training and support to identified centers, offices, and staff.

* The Racial Equity Decision-Making Tool is an agency-wide tool intended to explicitly and intentionally center equity, particularly racial equity, in DESE staff discussions and decisions about programs and policies. 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.
* Several DESE offices have already begun to use the tool this year based on training provided last spring. For example, the Acceleration Roadmap was designed using this tool.
* This year, DESE has partnered with BlackPrint Inc. to support implementation of the tool through a set of professional learning activities beginning in May 2022 for DESE staff. The scope of work led by BlackPrint includes:
	+ Designing a set of training modules to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of the tool and strategies for implementing it with fidelity. The first module will be offered this spring and will be required for all staff. Additional modules will be offered for staff who are interested in deepening their understanding. All modules will be available as videos that staff can access asynchronously, which will also allow new staff to access the training as part of their onboarding.
	+ Providing individualized consultation and support to teams at DESE as they use the tool to develop a new or existing initiative.
	+ Providing a “train the trainer” opportunity for staff interested in serving as lead resources for implementation support across the agency. This will also build DESE’s internal capacity to sustain this work.

Despite another challenging year for the preK-12 education community in managing the impact of COVID-19, I am proud of the work we have accomplished together to support our districts and schools. We maintained strong infrastructure to support COVID-19 testing, transportation challenges, and PPE, and supported the academic and social-emotional needs of our students through the Acceleration Roadmap and targeted initiatives like Acceleration Academies and early literacy supports. At the same time, we continued to press forward on innovations and programs designed to reimagine education in the Commonwealth, including educator diversification, early college, deeper learning, and innovative assessment. While much work remains ahead, our collective efforts are enhancing equitable learning opportunities for the students of the Commonwealth.