*****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:**  | June 21, 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Updated Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework for Public Comment |

This memorandum provides to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) an overview of the review process and a summary of proposed revisions to the [1999 Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/health/1999/1099.pdf) (1999 framework) since the last update to the Board in [June 2019](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2019/2019-06/item6.html) and outlines anticipated next steps, for discussion by the Board at the meeting on June 27, 2023.

**Enclosed with this memo is the draft revised framework, now named theComprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework (“framework”).** The framework outlines expectations for what students should know and be able to do and also includes other material, such as the vision and guiding principles designed to support effective instruction. This framework encourages all schools to implement educational programming and strategies that enhance students’ mental, emotional, and physical health, and recognizes the critical role of school climate and culture on student outcomes. The framework provides guidance and resources rather than describing all that can or should be taught. Schools and districts have discretion to determine how to implement the framework and the learning standards at the local level.

**I recommend that the Board vote to invite public comment on the draft framework.** After reviewing the comments and making further revisions as needed, I anticipate bringing the final revised standards back to the Board for a vote on adoption later this summer or fall. Implementation support for districts would follow.

**Framework Review Process and Priorities**

Beginning in June 2018, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) engaged with stakeholders to review the 1999 framework and discuss how to update it. The Department convened a review panel that included nearly 50 individuals with significant knowledge and expertise in the many areas of comprehensive health and physical education and who broadly represent various geographic regions, types of schools and districts, professional roles, and professional and community-based organizations.

The Department sought additional feedback on the draft from content experts in the field, including professionals with expertise in child development, colleagues from other state agencies that focus on public health and mental health, and experts in the field of racial equity and diversity. The Department also sought feedback from students.

Research, teaching, and learning in the fields of health education and physical education have changed significantly since the 1999 framework was adopted. The COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impacts on various groups will have lasting effects on the physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of our society. The proposed revised framework places increased focus on developing students’ social and emotional competencies and the skills needed to navigate ever-changing influences on students’ health and wellbeing. Considering disturbing trends related to student mental health, the revised framework includes an emphasis on key skills and content that promotes mental health and wellness, and helps students understand, identify, and seek help for mental health concerns in themselves or others.

The proposed framework:

* Highlights the importance of health and wellness as a critical component of a well-rounded education that promotes students' academic success and preparation for college, careers, and civic engagement;
* Is comprehensive, inclusive, medically accurate, and developmentally and age appropriate;
* Emphasizes skills needed to enhance health and avoid risk;
* Integrates various health-related topics (e.g., nutrition, substance use/misuse, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual health, personal safety, and physical activity) and highlights the transferability of skills across topics;
* Recognizes the contribution of physical education on overall student health and well-being. Specific attention has been given to align standards related to physical education with national standards;
* Recognizes the role of social justice and equity, including racial equity, as they relate to health behaviors;
* Aligns with current research and resources; and
* Aligns with the structure of other Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

**Anticipated Next Steps**

At the Board meeting on June 27, 2023, Associate Commissioner Rachelle Engler Bennett, Assistant Director of Student and Family Support Kristen McKinnon, Associate Commissioner Erin Hashimoto-Martell, school and district leaders, and other members of the project team will present an overview of the revised framework and respond to questions from the Board. I recommend that the Board vote to invite public comment on the draft revised framework. The Department will conduct the comment period via a public survey, which will be promoted through a variety of email communications, newsletters, webinars, and network meetings.

With the Board’s approval, the Department will review comments received during the public comment period and revise the draft framework as needed. We plan to present the final version to the Board later this summer or fall for further discussion and a vote on adoption.

Massachusetts educators are eager for this updated framework to guide their practice. The Department looks forward to additional input to further strengthen the new *Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework* and making the updated framework available for educators and students in the new school year.

**Enclosures:**

* Public Comment Draft of the Massachusetts *Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework*
* Organization and Scope of the Framework
* Motion to invite public comment