# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:**  | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | May 15, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Communication and Literacy Skills MTEL and a new Framework for Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Communication and Literacy Skills  |

This memorandum provides an update about work underway at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department/DESE) to develop a Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Communication and Literacy Skills (CLS2) Framework that will guide future revisions to the Communication and Literacy Skills Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL). At the May Board meeting, I will be sharing more information about this important new initiative to update the Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL for the first time since 2009.

This work carries forward DESE’s [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/), which is anchored in our commitment to high-quality teaching and learning in the Commonwealth. We are working to promote teaching and learning that is antiracist, inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural; that values and affirms each and every student and their families; and that creates equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved. One key component is to continue to foster a diverse and effective educator workforce.

**DESE’s Licensure Assessment Portfolio: Background and Context**

The MTELs are a statutory requirement for licensure. Educators are required to “…pass a test established by the board which shall consist of two parts: (A) a writing section which shall demonstrate the communication and literacy skills necessary for effective instruction and improved communication between school and parents; and (B) the subject matter knowledge for the certificate…” (M.G.L. ch.71, §38G).

The MTEL is predictive of educator effectiveness. In a 2020 study, the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) found that MTEL scores are positive and statistically significant predictors of teachers’ in-service performance ratings and contributions to student test scores (i.e., value added) once the teachers enter the workforce. These findings are consistent for educators of color.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The MTEL Is Also a licensure requirement that, because of differential pass rates by race and ethnicity, may be contributing to the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic teachers in the workforce.

With this context in mind – the MTEL licensure requirement, the predictive validity of the MTEL, and our commitment to cultivating a more effective and diverse workforce – we continue to work to ensure that the Commonwealth’s educator licensure assessment program is centering both *access* and *equity* in design and administration.

DESE is investing significant resources to expand equity and access in its licensure assessment program, which you can learn more about in [Attachment B](#_Attachment_B:_Access).  For purposes of this update, we are pleased to share information about the development of a new framework for the Communications and Literacy (CLST) MTEL.

**A Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Communication & Literacy Skills Framework and Updates to the Communication & Literacy Skills MTEL**

Since the inception of the Communications and Literacy Skills (CLST) MTEL, the guiding framework has been the English Language Arts and Literacy curriculum framework, with aligned test objectives and items focused primarily on reading and writing skills. While reading and writing skills are critical for educators, this interpretation of communication and literacy skills needs to be broadened to include the culturally and linguistically sustaining communication and literacy skills educators need to communicate effectively with students and parents. As a result, DESE, in partnership with Throughline Learning, has developed a draft Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Communication and Literacy Skills (CLS2) Framework to guide future redevelopment of the CLST MTEL.

The CLS2 Framework reflects culturally and linguistically sustaining practices already embedded in the Department’s guidance and expectations, including the [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/default.html),[*Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts,*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf) the [Standards of Effective Practice](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/standards/default.html), the [Professional Standards for Teachers](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/teachers-guide/), and the [Educator Evaluation Rubrics](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/rubrics/updates/). Collectively, these guidelines, standards, and resources reinforce and deepen expectations related to culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in education throughout the Commonwealth.

The Department has also engaged with over 160 stakeholders in developing the CLS2 Framework, including Department staff across multiple offices, the Principal and Teacher Advisory Councils, the Educational Personnel Advisory Council, the English Language Learners/Bilingual Education Advisory Council, families, family engagement coordinators, educator preparation staff and faculty, representatives from the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and other district and school staff.

The CLS2 Framework represents the communication and literacy skills that pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade academically licensed educators need for effective instruction and improved communication between school and parents, as required by state law – and it honors cultural and linguistic diversity along with foundational literacy skills. Our work on this key initiative advances our Educational Vision so that all students, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, will have equitable opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades, supported by culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices that enable them to thrive.

The Department will release the CLS2 Framework for public comment this summer, then finalize it in the fall. Revisions to the CLST MTEL in accordance with this framework will begin in SY2024-25 and are estimated to take 2-3 years.

Please see [Attachment A](#_Attachment_A:_DRAFT) for the draft CSL2 Framework.

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## Attachment A: DRAFT CLS2 Framework

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**A Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining**

**Communication and Literacy Skills (CLS2) Framework**

**Background and Context**

In September 2023, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released an [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/default.html) outlining the goals of public education in Massachusetts. In the Learning Experience section of the vision, it states:

“All students in Massachusetts, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, will have equitable opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades. Culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices will support students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations with targeted support.”

As the vision articulates, it is imperative that educators understand and are prepared to be skillful in culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices to support students across Massachusetts. In alignment with this vision, DESE is revising or developing a number of resources to ensure that educators are well-supported to understand and demonstrate these practices. One such resource is the newly developed standalone Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Communication and Literacy Skills (CLS2) Framework that will guide the redevelopment of the Communication and Literacy Skills (CLST) Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL).

State law on educator licensure requires educators to pass “a test established by the board which shall consist of two parts: (A) a writing section which shall demonstrate the communication and literacy skills necessary for effective instruction and improved communication between school and parents; and (B) the subject matter knowledge for the certificate…” ([MGL Ch. 71, Sec. 38G](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section38G)). Since the requirement for the MTEL was established, the CLST MTEL has served as the mechanism for educators to demonstrate that they have the communication and literacy skills outlined in part (A) of the statute.

Historically, the framework guiding the CLST MTEL has been the English Language Arts and Literacy framework, which means that the test focuses on reading and writing literacy skills. While research has found that MTEL scores are positive and statistically significant predictors of teachers’ in-service performance ratings and contributions to student test score (i.e., value added) once the teachers enter the workforce[[2]](#footnote-3), pass rate gaps persist based on racial demographics and the primary language of test takers. In addition, the current limited focus on reading and writing on the CLST MTEL does not realize the potential for and importance of including culturally and linguistically sustaining communication skills educators need to communicate well with students and families. The new CLS2 Framework is still grounded in essential communication and literacy skills educators need for effective instruction and also includes the culturally and linguistically sustaining communication skills necessary to build district and school culture and a sense of student belonging.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Developed with Throughline Learning, the CLS2 Framework includes input and feedback from educators and other stakeholders across Massachusetts. The image below shows the groups DESE engaged with in developing the CLS2 Framework.

**CLS2 Framework**

**Education Personnel Advisory Council**

**Families**

**Principal and Teacher Advisory Councils**

**English Learner/Bilingual Education Board Advisory Council**

**Family Engagement Coordinator Network**

**Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

**Educator Preparation Staff and Faculty**

**Educator Preparation Candidates**

***pending***

**What is the CLS2 Framework?**

 The CLS2 Framework represents the communication and literacy skills that pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade academically licensed educators need for effective instruction and improved communication between school and parents, as required by state law, including culturally and linguistically sustaining communication skills and foundational literacy skills in alignment with DESE’s Educational Vision.



This framework signals what is important with respect to culturally and linguistically sustaining communication and literacy skills, and will inform the development of the CLST MTEL test. The test that will be designed from this framework will be accessible to educators at the earliest stages of entry to the workforce. As such, neither the CLS2 Framework nor the CLST MTEL include pedagogical skills, as those are developed through other aspects of a candidate’s preparation process and throughout their career.

The CLS2 Framework is one of a number of resources that have been developed by DESE to support the implementation of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices. Licensed educators interested in learning more about how to expand their culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and skills can review the [Related Resources](#_Related_Resources).

##### Related Resources

* [Educational Vision (mass.edu)​](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/default.html)
* [Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices - Center for Instructional Support (mass.edu)​](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-sustaining/default.html)
* [Draft-district-standards-indicators.docx (live.com)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Faccountability%2Fdistrict-review%2Fdraft-district-standards-indicators.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
* [STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts​](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf)
* [Toolkit Home (google.com)](https://sites.google.com/view/family-communication-toolkit/home)
* [Standards of Effective Practice - Educator Effectiveness (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/standards/default.html)
* [Educator Evaluation - Educator Effectiveness (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/default.html)
* [Principal Induction and Mentoring - Educator Effectiveness (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/principal.html)
* [Updates to the Professional Standards for Teachers and Candidate Assessment of Performance - Educator Preparation (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/teachers-guide/)
* [Culturally Responsive Teaching Video Library - Educator Effectiveness (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/prof-learning/crt-videos/)
* [Culturally Responsive look-fors.docx (live.com)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/look-fors.docx)

**How to Engage with the CLS2 Framework**

The CLS2 Framework is divided into four domains with corresponding competencies. The four domains are Communicating with Learners, Communicating with Families and Caregivers, Communicating with Colleagues and External Stakeholders, and Literacy. Several competencies are repeated purposefully and thematically across domains to ensure that educators consider them in different contexts.

The CLS2 Framework codifies the culturally and linguistically sustaining communication and literacy skills necessary for educators, and is part of a continuum of opportunities to demonstrate preparedness as illustrated below:



The CLS2 Framework represents a functional level of knowledge. Therefore, we use terms like **“understandings”** rather than **“demonstrations”** when referring to culturally and linguistically sustaining communication skills. Candidates may not yet be able to or have had the opportunity to demonstrate fluency in culturally and linguistically sustaining communication; in fact, they may still need practice with these skills. However, they should be able to recognize critical culturally and linguistically sustaining communication skills, while also demonstrating the necessary literacy skills to support that communication.

In addition to the domains and competencies, the CLS2 Framework includes a Glossary of key terms and references. The Glossary terms are meant to provide the intended meanings of words that may have specific meanings when used in an educational setting.

**CLS2 Framework**

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| Domain | Practice |
| Communicating with Learners | * Educators communicate **high expectations** for and **growth mindset** about all students
* Educators understand the importance of communicating **assets\*** of students and families
* Educators understand the importance of **engaging** students by communicating their own authentic excitement and using language that honors students’ cultures, values, and interests
* Educators can communicate **clearly** in multiple formats with an understanding of developmental, cultural, and linguistic considerations for each audience
* Educators understand the importance of communicating that students are **safe and respected** through language, tone, and demeanor
* Educators understand the importance of seeking and sharing asset-based\*, specific, and supportive **feedback** for improvement
* Educators understand the importance of using and teaching relevant and empowering **academic\* and content-specific\* language** while honoring and integrating diverse linguistic expressions\*
* Educators understand the ways in which idioms, proverbs, and colloquialisms communicate culture explicitly/ implicitly and support students to understand and communicate **intended meanings**
* Educators understand the importance of leveraging **active listening, empathy, and inquiry** to work through various situations that could impact relationships
* Educators understand the importance of honoring **multiple ways/modalities of communicating and demonstrating** knowledge.
* Educators understand the importance of **advocating** for students, including through difficult conversations in order to challenge inequitable practices to promote a **healthy, just and safe** academic environment for all
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| Communicating with Families and Caregivers | * Educators **welcome and empower** families’ as important members of the school community
* Educators communicate **high expectations** for and **growth mindset** about all students
* Educators understand the importance of **clear**, **family-friendly**, **proactive,** and **two-way\*** communication across multiple formats with attention to **accessibility**, **honoring linguistic preferences,** and **demonstrating responsiveness** to needs and concerns
* Educators understand the importance of communicating students’ and families’ **assets\*** in all spaces
* Educators have communication strategies to **build authentic relationships** with families grounded in understandings of their preferences and priorities
* Educators understand the importance of leveraging **active listening, empathy, and inquiry** to nurture relationships
* Educators have communication strategies for including families in **decision-making**
* Educators understand the importance of seeking family **feedback** to ensure **equitable learning** conditions for all students
* Educators have strategies to communicate students’ **strengths and needs** to families in accessible ways across multiple formats
* Educators can use strategies to communicate to families how they can **support** their children’s **social-emotional and/or academic development** in ways that are accessible to families and aligned to families’ goals for their children
* Educators understand the importance of **advocating** for families/caregivers, including through difficult conversations in order to challenge inequitable practices\* to promote a **healthy, just, and safe** academic environment for all
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| Communicating with Colleagues and External Stakeholders | * Educators understand the importance of communicating students’ and families’ **assets\***
* Educators understand the importance of communicating and **collaborating** with colleagues to support students’ effectively by sharing responsibility for students’ learning, **planning** effectively, and building on one another’s **expertise**
* Educators can communicate **opportunities** and **challenges** through an asset-based\* lens
* Educators have strategies to communicate students’ **progress across** multiple formats with all relevant stakeholders\*
* Educators communicate **high expectations** for and **growth mindset** about all students
* Educators **use constructive, solutions-oriented language** that builds healthy school climate and a culture of improvement
* Educators understand the importance of **advocating** for students and families/caregivers, including through difficult conversations in order to challenge inequitable practices to promote a **healthy, just and safe** academic environment for all
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| Literacy | In service of the communications practices above, foundational English language literacy skills will include the following skills related to interpreting, understanding, analyzing, and evaluating information:* Educators can understand, summarize, and communicate **main ideas/ themes** and **details** from a variety of formats
* Educators can **cite evidence** from a variety of formats and make **logical inferences**
* Educators can demonstrate **critical reasoning skills** by identifying assumptions within arguments, differentiating between facts and opinions, and identifying a writer's objectivity or **bias**
* Educators can identify **points of view**, explain various perspectives, and can make **asset-based\* interpretations** across multiple formats
* Educators can **compare and contrast** ideas across multiple sources
* Educators have strategies to effectively **interpret\* meaning** and **tone** from a variety of culturally & linguistically diverse sources and formats
* Educators can explain how choices around language shape **meaning, tone, and interpretation**, especially as it relates to potential **misunderstandings** based on linguistic and/or cultural background of the audience
* Educators can **identify and evaluate arguments** across multiple formats
* Educators can **analyze and integrate** information across multiple formats

Cross-cutting Communication Skills\** Educators can **select effective formats of communication** for accessibility and relationship management
* Educators can communicate **main ideas and details** clearly across multiple formats with considerations made to accessibility
* Educators can construct and communicate an **argument** and **evidence** in an accessible way across multiple formats
* Educators can convey and **organize** **complex ideas** clearly and concisely\*
* Educators can **adapt** **communication** based on audience and revise to prevent misinterpretations
* Educators can **construct and revise language** for (warm, collaborative, curious) tone
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**Glossary**

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| **Word/Phrase** | **Intended Meaning** |
| Academic v content-specific language 2, 5, 6, 15 | *Academic language* refers to interdisciplinary language that empowers students to understand and use words and phrases that support access to grade-level content. This includes language structures, learning verbs (i.e., analyzing or evaluating), etc. This does not mean academic jargon for the sake of academic jargon that doesn’t contribute to students’ academic success. This also does not discount cultural expressions. Students should be able to understand and leverage language with intentionality in a way that honors diverse linguistic expressions. Teaching academic language is supportive to all students and, when scaffolded, supports students to carry the cognitive load of content more effectively.For example:* Supporting students to understand their task. What does it mean to explain v analyze?
* Supporting students to understand and use the language of critical thinking skills (reasoning, argumentation, etc.)
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| *Content-specific (or discipline specific) language* supports students to understand and use vocabulary relevant to particular disciplines with the intention of empowering students to leverage language and concepts in meaningful and relevant ways.For example:* Math: using language of “functions” in a way that supports students to understand the relevance and meaningful applications of the term (as opposed to mere algorithmic language that instructs students to “just solve for y,” for example)
* Health: when a student complains of a “tummy ache,” a nurse or health teacher may support the student to understand specifically what might be hurting by debriefing the experience using language that empowers the student to use more precise language (consider impact of interactions with health systems over a person’s lifetime)
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| ScenarioA student in a math class learning about linear equations. She is given an equation in slope-intercept form and asked to explain what a value represents in a complete sentence using the context of a word problem involving babysitting with a starting fee of $10, plus $5/hour. She uses colloquial phrases to explain the context around the starting fee and correctly uses the term “y-intercept”. The teacher affirms her understanding of the context (thereby affirming her linguistic expressions) as well as her correct use of the math term (content-specific/ discipline-specific language). As a follow up, the teacher now asks the student to compare two rates and make an argument for which rate would earn the babysitter more money for five hours of work. The student again includes some colloquial language in her answer and correctly uses content-specific language as well as academic language to compare the two equations, evaluate, and make an argument. The teacher, once again, affirms three aspects of her answer (along with her habits of success): her understanding of the context in a way that is clearly relevant to her experiences, her use of content-specific language in her explanation, and her use of academic language in her explanation of her argument for which rate will earn her the most money.  |
| Active listening | *Active listening* refers to listening to understand with empathy and inquiry. This could look like paying attention without interrupting, restating or reflecting back what one heard or inferred, and asking questions for deeper understanding. |
| Assets“Communicating Assets” | Django Paris and Sami Alim illustrate the importance of*asset-based*approaches to ensure students’ cultural and linguistic traditions are honored and sustained in school spaces. In our communication with all stakeholders, it is important that we honor and build on assets to make schooling experiences more relevant, meaningful, and effective and to transform schools into examples of equitable and inclusive environments where all cultures are honored and affirmed. Graphic showing the differences between "Deficit Approaches," "Difference Approaches," and "Asset-based Approaches" |
| Authentic relationships | *Authentic relationships* are those in which we can show up as ourselves, we allow others to show up as themselves, and we see, acknowledge, affirm, and honor one another’s identities and values. We truly see and honor the humanity in one another and our relationships are built from this place of holistic regard.  |
| Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy13 | Django Paris and Sami Alim describe *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* *as* a way of teaching that honors and nurtures students’ and communities’ cultural ways of being. This approach leverages existing schema and funds of knowledge to facilitate learning (or engagement for families/communities) and intentionally facilitates space for identities and traditions to evolve in order to build equity and inclusivity in policies and practices across a system. |
| Concise3  | While different cultures have different ways of expressing ideas, when sharing written communication with families, it is helpful to be *concise* by providing information clearly and in few words, using bullets, headings, and other strategies for concision and clarity. |
| Diverse linguistic expressions | Linguistic expressions are the words, phrases, and sentences we produce as language users. *Diverse linguistic expressions* are an asset that should be honored as part of nurturing a culture of belonging and that can be built-upon to make learning more relevant and meaningful. |
| Inequitable Practices | Systemic inequities translate into our schools in various ways, perpetuating harm for everyone, particularly communities that have been historically oppressed. Equitable practices are those that ensure that every student gets what they need, whereas *inequitable practices* are those that perpetuate gaps in access, experiences, and outcomes. |
| Interpreted | Interpretation in this tool refers to understanding the linguistic meaning of a word or phrase, the intended meaning or connotation as expressed, and the reference points that may be relevant to fully understanding the word/phrase.  |
| Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogy16 17 | Linguistically sustaining practices (Lucas, 2010) promote multilingualism as an asset and honor the linguistic resources students bring to the classroom.In order to build linguistically sustaining learning environments, educators must get to know their students by understanding their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Linguistically sustaining practices (Lucas, 2010) rely on a research-based understanding of how students acquire language, including but not limited to an understanding of language acquisition as a socially-mediated process; of distinguishing conversational proficiency from academic proficiency; of the impact of an affective filter on learning; and of the importance of utilizing language skills in one's home language when learning a second language.Leveraging their understanding of their students and the process of language acquisition, educators unpack the language expectations embedded in classroom tasks and design scaffolds and explicit language instruction that provide all students access to rigorous content. Language is taught through content, and language is used and developed in many ways in a classroom: "to interpret and present different perspectives, build awareness of relationships, and affirm their identities (WIDA Guiding Principles of Language development, citing Cummins, 2001; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; May, 2013, Nieto, 2010)." |
| Multiple formats | It is important for educators to develop comfortability communicating across *multiple formats* based on the accessibility considerations and preferences of the audience. This includes considerations regarding different abilities, cultural and linguistic preferences, and facilitating efficiency and ease. Families may prefer written or oral communication, WhatsApp or SMS, etc. For example, with respect to accessibility that attends to accessibility needs for families who are deaf or hard of hearing, communication should be based on family’s preferences and may include video messages by phone or uploaded to Google Classroom with ASL interpretation, or it might include text messaging or email. Similarly, families may prefer WhatsApp to SMS. |
| Stakeholder | *Stakeholder* refers to any individual who is invested in functions of the school community. This includes but is not limited to families, members of community organizations, students’ social workers, etc. The parameters and specifics of communicating with external stakeholders (members not employed within the school) should be defined within school/district policy.  |
| Two-way communication10 | When communicating with families, it is important to ensure that dialogue goes in both directions (*two-way communication*). Partnerships should be collaborative and interactive. Families have deep funds of knowledge that should be honored as experts, leaders, and supporters of their children’s learning.  |

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## Attachment B: Access and Equity Initiatives in MA’s Educator Licensure Assessment Portfolio

Informed by statewide candidate survey data, focus groups, and robust research on Massachusetts licensure assessments , the Department has made significant investments to improve access to, and equity within, educator licensure assessments.

While several projects in the assessment equity portfolio emerged recently to support emergency licensed educators in accessing and passing the MTELs, our learnings from and investments in these initiatives are already positioning us to support aspiring educators with profiles similar to emergency licensed teachers (e.g., paraprofessionals, educators on waivers) to access the profession.

The Department has also recently entered into a new, 5-year contract with Evaluation Systems Group (ES) of Pearson for MTEL administration and development. The new contract features changes that advance both access and equity within the MTEL program, several of which are highlighted below.

Please see access- and equity-oriented projects from the educator licensure assessment portfolio below.

**ACCESS**

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| **Expanded Access to the MTEL**   | The MTEL program includes **universal accessibility features** for all MTEL candidates, including those offered through specific accommodations for the MTELs and approved alternatives.* Accommodations are provided on a case-by-case basis depending on the candidate's documented needs and the specific test being taken.
	+ Over 87% of alternative arrangements requests were approved in 2023; of the remaining requests, 11% provided incomplete documentation for approval. Only 2% were denied because the request would have altered the content the test was designed to measure.
* Twenty-six tests are available via **online proctoring** for candidates who opt to test in that modality.
* **Extra time** has been available for educators whose first language is not English since 2020.
* Per a new 5-year, no-cost contract with the Department, Evaluation Systems Group (ES) of Pearson will also be providing the following **new accessibility features**:
* Fee reductions for the Communication and Literacy Skills and General Curriculum subtests
* 3,000 vouchers for candidates enrolled in educator preparation programs
* Educator Learning Courses to support content attainment
* Additional online interactive practice tests
 |
| **5-Year Alternative Assessment Regulatory Pilot (2020-2025)**  | A key strategy in diversifying the workforce, the 5-year alternative assessment regulatory pilot expands access to the teaching profession by allowing prospective teachers to demonstrate their capacities in different ways while maintaining high standards for literacy skills and content knowledge.Over 30 alternative assessments and sub-tests have been approved since the regulatory pilot was authorized by the Board in [October of 2020](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2021/2020-10/item6.docx). These include:   * + 5 approved alternatives to the Communication and Literacy Skills (CLST) MTEL​
	+ 9 approved educator preparation attestation assessments​
	+ 10 MTEL-Flex assessments​
	+ 2 additional approved alternatives​

Research partners presented [initial key findings](https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2024/2023-10/item5.1-mtel-alternatives-year2.pdf) to the Board in October 2023. The next update to the Board is scheduled in fall 2024.   |
| **MTEL Voucher Program for Emergency Licensed Educators**  | In 2023, the Department distributed over 2,500 vouchers to emergency licensed educators[[3]](#footnote-4), with plans to distribute additional vouchers over the next year. Additional vouchers will also be made available through Regional Licensure Assistance Centers and continued teacher diversification grant programming.  |
| **MTEL Preparation**  | DESE continues to expand access to MTEL test preparation resources, including:  * **Effective Test Prep -** DESE partners with two test prep providers and provides test prep vouchers for candidates to enroll in courses offered by these vendors.
	+ University Instructors
	+ Cambridge College
* **Free MTEL Test Prep**​ - DESE is developing four freely available, online test preparation courses for candidates in high-incidence tests.
	+ The new [ESL MTEL Test Prep Course​](https://www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/instruction/mtelprep/index.html#/) is now available.
	+ Test prep courses for Foundations of Reading, General Curriculum, and Early Childhood MTELs are scheduled to become available in the fall of 2024.

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| **Regional Licensure Assistance Centers** | In spring 2024, DESE launched five Regional Licensure Assistance Centers to provide targeted, comprehensive licensure support to emergency licensed educators and teachers on waivers. Regional Licensure Assistance Centers are providing MTEL prep support, distributing vouchers for both preparation coursework and assessments, and providing individualized coaching and guidance on available MTEL alternatives to educators across the Commonwealth.  |

**EQUITY**

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| --- | --- |
| **CLS2 Framework** | Please see the description of this project in the primary memo.  |
| **Test Development Process**  | Equity in the test development process is a priority for the Department in the MTEL program. The following equity-driven commitments are centered in the new, 5-year MTEL contract with Evaluation Systems Group (ES) of Pearson:* Updated bias training for test developers to align to a racial equity decision-making tool;
* Exploring new modalities and structures for testing, and
* Exploring personalization or candidate choice in testing.

ES notes the following in their proposal:"We believe that the importance of our work to further equity extends beyond macro-level impact to affirmation of the lived experiences of prospective diverse educators that interact with our services (see Petchauer, 2012). This holistic perspective serves to expand our notion of equity beyond test domain definition, assessment design, item development, and committee reviews to include interactions with our customer service team, the presentation of assessment-related materials (e.g., preparation resources), score reports, and website design. Centering equity in all aspects of our work means that we will not compromise on the development and implementation of equitable practices and that we will keep pace with the evolution of equity work worldwide."  In addition to the new MTEL contract, DESE has convened a new MTEL Technical Advisory Committee comprised of members focused on equity in assessment design. Members will be making recommendations to further center equity in the test development process.[[4]](#footnote-5)  |
| **Revisions to the Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL)**  | The Department is working with ES to update the Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL) to align it to the revised Guidelines for Administrative Leaders and incorporate the anti-racist leadership competencies. In addition to the stakeholders engagement conducted during the revisions to the [Guidelines for Administrative Leaders](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/leadership-guide.pdf), ES and the Department continue to engage with stakeholders, including principals, assistant principals, educator preparation faculty, instructional coaches, and teachers throughout the PAL revisions process. Revised PAL Tasks will launch for registration and submission in fall 2025.  |

**RELATED RESEARCH**

The Department has a robust educator effectiveness research and evaluation portfolio that informs its licensure assessment and preparation policy. DESE grounds its assessment equity portfolio in evidence-based decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing research and evaluation.

Led by our evaluation partner, National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER), American Institutes for Research, the following three research studies evaluating the MTEL program and assessment equity portfolio are underway:

* *MTEL Voucher Evaluation* – This study provides information on how candidates are accessing vouchers across providers (DESE, educator preparation programs, districts, or other organizations), distribution and usage rate, pass rates and licensure status for those who receive vouchers, and demographic characteristics of voucher recipients and users. The results of this study will be used to inform DESE’s voucher strategy in the future.
* *Institution of Education Sciences MTEL* – This study is exploring the relationship between candidate scores on various MTEL tests and the likelihood to enter the teacher workforce in Massachusetts; the relationships between MTEL scores and student achievement, teacher summative ratings, and teacher retention; and the extent to which relationships between MTEL scores and teacher and student outcomes can be correlated to differential weights on particular MTEL objectives, subareas, or sections. The results will inform future MTEL test development processes.
* *Alternative assessment regulatory pilot* – This study is assessing candidate participation in and pass rate data for the alternative assessments; licensure and career progression for candidates who access alternative assessments; and the impact on student achievement by candidates who become classroom teachers after engaging with the alternative assessments. The results of this study will be used to inform recommendations regarding alternative assessments to the MTEL beyond the regulatory pilot period. As noted above, the Board will receive an update on this study in fall 2024.

1. [James Cowan](https://caldercenter.org/experts/james-cowan), [Dan Goldhaber](https://caldercenter.org/experts/dan-goldhaber), Zeyu Jin, [Roddy Theobald](https://caldercenter.org/experts/roddy-theobald) (2020). Teacher Licensure Tests: Barrier or Predictive Tool?. CALDER Working Paper No. 245-1020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [James Cowan](https://caldercenter.org/experts/james-cowan), [Dan Goldhaber](https://caldercenter.org/experts/dan-goldhaber), Zeyu Jin, [Roddy Theobald](https://caldercenter.org/experts/roddy-theobald) (2020). Teacher Licensure Tests: Barrier or Predictive Tool?. CALDER Working Paper No. 245-1020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. A 2019 study found that candidates of color were less likely to retake the MTEL than white candidates, even when very close to passing the test. DESE’s voucher distribution program is designed to encourage and support candidates in re-attempting the test. The data also supports the development of the MTEL-Flex, which allows candidates to submit the MTEL-Flex instead of reattempting the full test.

Melanie Rucinski, Joshua Goodman (2019). [Racial Diversity in the Teacher Pipeline: Evidence from Massachusetts](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Taubman/RIGB/Policy%20Brief%20-%20Racial%20Diversity%20in%20Teacher%20Pipeline%20-%20Feb%202023.pdf). Harvard Kennedy School Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston Policy Brief. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Technical Advisory Committee members include:

	* Dr. Jade Caines Lee – Head of the Equity and Assessment Competencies Hub (TEACH) within the University of Kansas Center for Learner Agency Research and Action (CLARA).
	* Dr. Juan D’Brot - Senior Associate at the Center for Assessment team.
	* Dr. Michael Russell - Professor in the Department of Measurement, Evaluation, Statistics & Assessment at Boston College's Lynch School of Education and Human Development.
	* Dr. Mark Shermis - Principal and Consultant with Performance Assessment Analytics, LLC. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)