# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:** | January 21, 2025 |
| **Subject:** | Early Literacy Tutoring |

This memorandum provides background to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding high-dosage early literacy tutoring coordinated by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

DESE has coordinated delivery of early literacy tutoring to students across the state since 2020. Initially funded by Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds under the federal CARES Act in the first year of the pandemic, DESE selected a small group of vetted tutoring vendors through an open procurement. DESE then matched tutoring providers with school districts and other local education agencies (LEAs) interested in receiving tutoring services and paid the tutoring providers directly. DESE has continued to use this model, utilizing federal ESSER funds more recently, and applying ongoing operational and programmatic improvements including a yearly program evaluation.

[Research conducted by AIR](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2023/11early-literacy-tutoring-study.pdf) in districts participating in the DESE program found positive impacts on participating students. During the 2023-24 school year, over 6,800 students received early literacy tutoring through DESE’s program. In the current school year, approximately 1,075 students will receive tutoring through DESE’s program in 19 schools and districts, at a cost of approximately $1,612,500. If funding is available in FY26, DESE aims to support schools and districts in expanding early literacy high-dosage tutoring, focusing on first-grade students.

Outside of the DESE-sponsored program, additional Massachusetts districts have provided early literacy tutoring using local or ESSER funds. The Boston-based One8 Foundation has also supported early literacy tutoring.

At the January 28, 2025 Board meeting, researchers from Johns Hopkins University will describe their [recent study on high-dosage tutoring in Massachusetts](https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/items/051a05b4-2637-45f5-93fd-1806da538eac) and invite questions from the Board.  The research team studied a One8 Foundation-sponsored initiative that provided one-to-one virtual literacy tutoring for first-grade students in 13 districts. Along with the researchers and Ed Lambert, Executive Director of the MA Business Alliance for Education, DESE staff members Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner of Instructional Support, Katherine Tarca, Director of Literacy & Humanities, and Linda Sewnarine, Assistant Director of Literacy, will be available to answer questions.