

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the 2025–26 school year! We hope you had a restorative summer and are entering the new year with a renewed sense of purpose and possibility.

At DESE’s Office of Educator Effectiveness, we are proud to partner with you in ensuring that every student in the Commonwealth has access to high-quality, culturally responsive, and equity-driven educators. Our efforts this year continue to be grounded in the [Massachusetts Standards for Effective Practice](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/standards/default.html),the foundation for educator preparation, professional growth and evaluation statewide based on our [shared vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/) of success for all students.

As we move forward into the school year, we are excited to share some of our key priorities:

**🎉 Celebrating Excellence: 2025 Teacher of the Year**

We are thrilled to honor our 2025 Teacher of the Year, [Luisa Sparrow](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/stoy/#stoy), whose commitment to creating an inclusive and empowering classroom for students with disabilities exemplifies the very heart of the Standards of Effective Practice. Ms. Sparrow reminds us of the profound impact that skilled, caring educators have on our students’ lives – and that every student deserves to be seen, challenged, and inspired.

We look forward to announcing our 2026 Teacher of the Year soon, as well as beginning the nomination and application process for the 2027 Teacher of the Year later this winter.

*Learn more about the Teacher of the Year program and other initiatives to recognize* [***aMAzing Educators***](https://www.doe.mass.edu/aMAzingEducators/)*.*

**🔧 Strengthening the Pipeline: Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs**

To address ongoing educator shortages and create more accessible pathways into the profession for diverse and effective educators, we have launched the state’s first **Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP)**. RTAP offers a new pathway to earning an Initial license in Massachusetts, integrating on-the-job training with academic coursework while employed full-time, allowing participants to earn while they learn.

*Learn more about* [***RTAP***](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/teacher-apprenticeship/default.html)***.***

**🌱 Supporting New Educators: Updated Induction & Mentoring Resources**

The first years of teaching are formative. That’s why we’ve updated our **Induction and Mentoring Guidelines** and released new **resources and tools** to support schools and districts in building strong, sustainable programs grounded in culturally responsive practice and the Standards of Effective Practice, including a Handbook for Teacher Induction and Mentoring. Our goal is to ensure that every new teacher receives the guidance, feedback, and community they need to thrive.

*Explore the* [***induction and mentoring guidance and resources***](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/default.html)*.*

**📘 Expanding Clarity: New Model Rubrics for Supporting and Evaluating Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)**

Specialized instructional support personnel are vital to student success. Building on the success of the recently released model rubric for teachers which is grounded in evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, we are now piloting **new model rubrics** that honor the unique roles of **school counselors, social workers/adjustment counselors, psychologists, nurses, librarians, and speech-language pathologists**. These tools are designed to support meaningful feedback, growth, and collaboration across teams. These role-specific rubrics will be refined based on feedback during the pilot and finalized for the 2026-2027 school year.

*Learn more about* [***updates to the Model Rubrics for Educator Evaluation***](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/rubrics/updates/)*.*

**🤝 Leading for Equity: Culturally Responsive Leadership Development**

Effective leadership is culturally responsive leadership. We are deepening our investment in **culturally and linguistically sustaining leadership development programs** that build the capacity of school and district leaders to lead with equity, empathy, and excellence. From the [Aspiring Principal Fellowship](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/aspiring-principals.html) to the Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Leadership Network and forthcoming updates to the [Guidebook for Inclusive Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/)*,* we are committed to supporting leaders in fostering inclusive and high-performing learning environments.

**📊 Investing in Data-Driven Solutions: Our Research Portfolio**

A strong educator workforce starts with strong data. Our **research and evaluation portfolio** is focused on uncovering trends, barriers, and opportunities in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse and effective educators, with a particular focus on high-need fields such as special education. We look forward to sharing insights from this work throughout the year and using what we learn to inform policy, practice, and partnership at every level.

**Advancing Early Literacy: Strengthening K-12 and Educator Preparation Partnerships**

We continue to support the [Early Literacy Consortium](https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2025/0726/), a funding opportunity to support deeper partnerships between PK–12 schools and educator preparation providers who are committed to advancing evidence-based early literacy instruction. [Seven regional consortia](https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-awards-800000-in-early-literacy-grants-for-college-and-k-12-school-partnerships) have been awarded the grant and are developing programming, professional development, and/or strategic planning to improve literacy practices in their classrooms and programs of study.

Visit [Educator Preparation in Massachusetts](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/) to learn more about current initiatives to strengthen preparation in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and ensure all teachers are prepared in evidence-based early literacy.

Thank you for the work you do every day in your schools and classrooms. Please don’t hesitate to reach out, engage with our resources, and share your feedback.

With appreciation,

**The K-12 Educator Effectiveness Team**

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