



May 16, 2025

Dear PK-12 School and District Administrators,

Preparing aspiring teachers to be effective on day one in the classroom is essential to our work together. In this letter, we share important information about educator preparation in Massachusetts and recently updated guidance from DESE that affects your work with teacher candidates in your schools and districts.

As many of you collaborate with educator preparation providers either through formal partnerships or as field placement sites for teacher candidates, we want you to be aware of these updates and any changes they may require from your school or district.

The following three documents contain relevant information for your work with teacher candidates:

1. [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval \(2023\)](#)
2. [Guidelines for the Professional Standards for Teachers \(PSTs\) \(2024\)](#)
3. [Guidelines for the Candidate Assessment of Performance \(CAP\) \(2024\)](#)

The sections below highlight relevant updates to your school or district's work with aspiring teachers.

Identifying High-Quality Supervising Practitioners

The quality of supervising practitioners is one of the most important factors in preparing effective teachers. In fact, working under a strong supervising practitioner during their student teaching assignment contributes directly to a new teacher's ability to be as effective as a second or third year teacher from day one in the classroom¹². It is for this reason that educator preparation providers are required to ensure that candidates are matched with supervising practitioners who:

- Have received a summative evaluation rating of proficient or higher in their most recent evaluation;
- Model evidence-based instructional practices;
- Effectively and equitably support candidates from all races, ethnicities, identity groups, and backgrounds; and
- Commit to meeting the program's expectations of the role.

¹ Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., Naito, N., & Theobald, R. (2020). Making the most of student teaching: The importance of mentors and scope for change. *Education Finance and Policy*, 15(3), 581–591

² Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., & Theobald, R. (2020). Effective like me? Does having a more productive mentor improve the productivity of mentees? *Labour Economics*, 63, 101792.

If the educator preparation provider finds that a supervising practitioner does not meet these expectations, the educator preparation provider must:

1. Attest that it has made attempts to find a supervising practitioner who fulfills all requirements of the role and is unable to do so; and
2. Commit to directly supporting the candidate with additional resources or guidance to address the gap(s).

Educator preparation providers may request support from PK-12 school and district personnel to attest to these qualifications for supervising practitioners, and we hope that you will work together to identify the strongest teachers for this important role. More information about supervising practitioner requirements is available in the [CAP Guidelines](#) and [Educator Preparation Program Approval Guidelines](#).

Access for Candidates and Program Supervisors

Educator preparation providers are also required to identify pre-practicum and practicum placements that expose candidates to a range of settings, including settings with:

- access to high-quality curricular materials;
- diversity of students (including racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic diversity, and diversity of ability);
- opportunities to integrate candidates into all components of the school community (e.g., staff meetings, professional development, family engagement opportunities); and
- anti-racist and culturally and linguistically sustaining school cultures.

Providing teacher candidates with experience in all areas of student support and school life is essential to an aspiring teacher's growth and development, as well as their readiness on day one of employment. Schools and districts are encouraged to consider experiences and settings that candidates might appropriately access during their field-based placement, weighing the importance of allowing candidates to practice accessing and using information.

Examples of information and events that are supportive of candidates' growth include:

- Curricular resources, including online resources;
- Online tools and subscriptions afforded to in-service educators;
- Student-specific differentiated intervention information (e.g. IEPs, FBAs) with proper consent; and
- Staff meetings, IEP meetings, professional development opportunities, and family engagement opportunities.

More information about field-based placement requirements is available in the [Educator Preparation Program Approval Guidelines](#).

During a candidate's performance assessment, or Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP), program supervisors from educator preparation providers will observe candidate lessons at least

twice. Schools and districts are encouraged to minimize barriers to program supervisors' access to candidates during performance assessments.

More information about program supervisor access during the practicum is available in the [CAP Guidelines](#).

Expectations Related to Collaborating with Families

As part of their preparation, teacher candidates must have opportunities to partner with families to support student learning. Specifically during their practicum, and while they are completing the [CAP](#), candidates work to demonstrate proficiency on the Essential Element III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being. This Essential Element requires that the candidate:

Partner with families to support students' learning and well-being by:

- Leveraging families' cultural and linguistic knowledge and expertise as assets.
- Engaging with families about what students are learning in the classroom and expectations for student success.
- Collaboratively identifying, and seeking family input on, strategies and resources for supporting student learning and growth in and out of school.

Demonstrating proficiency in this element requires that candidates engage directly with families in support of students' learning and well-being. It is important for schools and districts to support these interactions under the guidance and support of their supervising practitioner.

Some examples of how a candidate might demonstrate proficiency in this Element are:

- Conducting a family survey at the start of the year to learn about students' home languages, traditions, and learning preferences, and incorporating feedback from the surveys into class activities;
- Inviting families to present about parts of their heritage or traditions that overlap with relevant curricular units or topics;
- Participating in a meeting with a family; preparing and delivering a description of learning expectations in the classroom during the meeting;
- Sharing a monthly math challenge for families to solve together; and/or
- Working with families to create study schedules for major projects and tests.

More information on how candidates can demonstrate proficiency in the Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being Essential Element can be found in the [2025 Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being Quick Reference Guide](#).

We encourage school and district leadership to make decisions around candidate access to families with consideration to candidates' ability to demonstrate proficiency in this area, in service of the greater goal of preparing all educator candidates to well-serve all students.

Importance of Video Evidence of Virtual Observations

As part of CAP, educator preparation providers may use virtual observations of teacher candidates for two of the required observations. These virtual observations must meet the following parameters:

- The teacher candidate is audible (as appropriate) and visible throughout the observation;
- Students are audible (as appropriate) and visible when participating in full-class activities;
- Students working independently or in groups are visible during relevant portion(s) of the observation;
- Student work from individual or group activities is visible during relevant portion(s) of the observation; and
- The recording reflects the full observation; no components of instruction are cut or edited (except as necessary to remove students without permission to be recorded).

Video recordings of candidates are supportive of candidate growth for several reasons, including the ability to reflect on areas of strengths and weakness in an asynchronous environment and observing student actions from an angle not seen by the candidate. We encourage you to support this method of growth by facilitating appropriate consent from parents and guardians, and having clear agreements with the educator preparation provider about how videos will be used, whether they will be posted online, and for how long they will be retained.

Recorded classroom observations that are part of CAP must be retained by the educator preparation provider for at least three years in order to be available for viewing by DESE at the time of the educator preparation provider's Formal Review. If your school or district has restrictions around taking or retaining video recordings of students, we encourage you to work with the educator preparation provider in order to ensure that the needs of all parties are being met.

More information about virtual observations in CAP is available in the [CAP Guidelines](#).

DESE is grateful for your continued support of the next generation of Massachusetts teachers, and we appreciate your work on behalf of all students.

If you have any questions about any of the updates described or the expectations of schools and districts to support educator candidates, please reach out to us at educatorpreparation@mass.gov.

In Partnership,

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