



Safe and Supportive Schools Commission – Ninth Annual Report

This report provides updates and recommendations related to safe and supportive schools. The report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014, An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence. This Act was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014 (House Bill 4376). Provisions within this Act relating to safe and supportive schools are codified as Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 69, Section 1P (G.L. c. 69, § 1P).

APRIL 2024

This report was prepared with assistance from the staff at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Please note that this report does not reflect the policy recommendations of DESE or the Executive Office of Education, though staff members serve on the Commission and provide technical support to the Commission as well.



Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1
Recommendations..... 3
Commission Activities Undertaken in 2023 11
Department Activities Related to G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f) 16
APPENDIX A: Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Members 20
APPENDIX B: Legislative Charge for the Commission..... 22

Introduction

The Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (Commission) respectfully submits this Report to the Governor and Legislature: *Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Ninth Annual Report*. This report is part of the [Commission's responsibilities](#), pursuant to Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014, [An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence](#), which was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014. Provisions within this Act relating to safe and supportive schools are codified as Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 69, section 1P (G.L. c. 69, § 1P), the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework](#) law.

“...The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission’s activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31. The commission shall submit such annual report to the governor and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee on education, the chairs of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, and the house and senate committees on ways and means...”¹

This report includes recommendations to the Legislature (*Recommendations* section) informed by Commission discussions during 2023 and prior years, as well as an overview of Commission activities during 2023 (*Commission Activities Undertaken in 2023* section), and highlights from Department Activities in 2023 related to the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework law and associated state funded grant program (*Department Activities* section). Also included in the recommendations section are examples of efforts made possible through legislative assistance with safe and supportive schools and complementary initiatives. Furthermore, the *Commission Activities* section includes highlights from Commission discussions related to what else can be helpful at the local, and state agency and professional educational associations levels to further advance safe and supportive school goals.

One such example of what is currently helpful in furthering safe and supportive schools goals is the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) *Educational Vision* which describes DESE’s vision for elementary and secondary public education and adult basic education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Pertinent to the Commission’s work, the DESE *Educational Vision* ([EdVision](#)) states, in part, the following:

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 affirmative environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations with targeted support.

Strategic Objective 1 of DESE’s *EdVision* is aligned with the charge of the Commission by focusing on the whole student. This objective highlights the partnership that DESE has with districts, schools, and other entities “to cultivate systems to support the whole student and foster

¹ The full legislative charge and links to the full text of the statute can be found in Appendix B of this report.

joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.” It is critical to have this alignment not only with the state, local school districts, and other agencies and professional organizations, but it is also important to have coherence within each school district beginning with District Improvement Plans and Student Opportunity Act Plans aligning with School Improvement Plans and safe and supportive schools action plans, and professional educator professional practice and student learning goals. To that end, one of our recommendations to the legislature will focus on suggested changes to related laws to improve that coherence.

As we move forward from the pandemic, it is critical to focus our time, energy, and resources in addressing the mental health and well-being of students and adults in our public schools and educational collaboratives across the Commonwealth.² Furthermore, we need to eliminate the opportunity gaps and inequities associated with race/ethnicity, income level, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other marginalized identities and backgrounds that have resulted in many students further facing food insecurities, homelessness, substance abuse, bullying, harassment, suicidal ideation, grief, and other traumatic experiences. Now more than ever, it is essential to realize the DESE *EdVision* where DESE, districts, schools, educators, and other entities work in coherence and collaboration “to promote teaching and learning that is antiracist, inclusive, multi-lingual, 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 are underserved.”

Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool: One of the key resources that are used by school districts to create equitable opportunities and experiences for all students is the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool. First developed and piloted during the 2008-2011 Behavioral Health and Public Schools Task Force, the most recently updated version of the framework and tool³ was completed in 2021. The Department’s Safe and Supportive Schools grantees (see *Department Activities* section for more details) are required to use the tool with participating schools, and the online resources are available for use voluntarily by all school districts. The goal of the framework is to provide a structure and a guiding resource to help each school develop school-wide action plans (either through, or aligned with, their school improvement plans), that help efficiently align and integrate initiatives in a way that fits with the school’s (and district’s) own culture and locally identified priorities. The framework’s topic areas, known as [implementation levers](#), address the following areas of school operations: *leadership and culture; family and community engagement; professional learning opportunities; access to resources and services; teaching and learning that fosters safe and supportive environments; and policies and procedures.*

Aligned with the framework, the tool is designed to prompt collaborative reflection and actions between and among educators, parents, students, and community partners. These efforts can help create supportive school-wide environments that avoid the use of punitive approaches while recognizing the inextricable connections between students’ social, emotional, and educational

² When schools and districts are referenced in this report, generally this includes charter schools, regional schools, vocational technical schools, educational collaboratives, and virtual schools.

³ The online Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Tool are available through <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/> and through <http://www.sassma.org/>.

needs. The tool is also organized by the aforementioned implementation levers, and can help prompt schools to identify and address urgent local, district, and/or school-wide priorities related to creating safe and supportive school cultures.⁴ To date, the tool (all versions combined) has been used by approximately 310 schools in 140 districts in the past 12.5 years, since June 2010. This number includes FY2014-FY2024 Safe and Supportive Schools grantees, at least one-third of Gateway Cities districts,⁵ five demonstration schools that work on trauma sensitivity through the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative,⁶ and others. In the past 2.5 years (since January 2021), approximately 61 schools in 38 districts have used the current version of the tool.

The Commission will continue to learn from the work of schools that have utilized the prior and current versions of the tool. Several grantees have presented at Commission and DESE Board meetings. Information has been gleaned by reviewing data and feedback, and information from those using the current version will inform recommendations on further refinements to the framework and tool, and on the feasibility of statewide implementation of the framework. In addition, the data provided by grantees, along with other statewide data and presentations will inform future recommendations to the Legislature. More details are provided in the *Commission Activities Undertaken in 2023* section below.

Recommendations

Through this ninth annual report, the Commission respectfully offers three recommendations to members of the Massachusetts Legislature and state policymakers more broadly. These recommendations highlight what areas are currently furthering the work of safe and supportive schools in the Commonwealth and ideas for areas that can be strengthened. As currently defined in the statute,

Safe and supportive schools foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment that:

- *enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate the emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and*
- *integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and*

⁴ Per G.L., c. 69, § 1P(d), "The self-assessment tool created by the department consistent with the recommendations of the behavioral health and public school task force created under said section 19 of said chapter 321 shall be organized according to the elements of the framework established under subsection (b), and (if adopted pursuant to c. 69§1P(c)), shall be used by schools to: (i) assess the school's capacity to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments for all students; (ii) identify areas where additional school-based action, efforts, guidance and support are needed to create and maintain safe and supportive school environments; and (iii) create action plans to address the areas of need identified by the assessment."

⁵ Forman, Ben; Bourvier, Sonia, and Citino, Christina (September 2015). "[Building Community-Wide Social and Emotional Support Systems in Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Assessing Progress from the Perspective of Local Educators](#)," MassInc and the UMass Donahue Institute.

⁶ The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative is a collaboration between Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/>.

homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.

These recommendations focus on **1) State budget funding through DESE to local communities and districts to advance Safe and Supportive Schools work; 2) State budget funding through other (non-DESE) entities to advance Safe and Supportive Schools work; and 3) Consideration of legislative changes that can help advance Safe and Supportive Schools goals.**

The recommendations presented below are designed to inform efforts in Massachusetts for fiscal year 2025 (FY2025) and beyond that can help schools become safer and more supportive. The content is grounded in Commission meeting discussions and includes examples of ways the Legislature and policymakers can consider supporting the recommendation goals. Examples of Department initiatives related to these topics, many of which have been discussed with the Commission over time, are included in the *Department Activities* section of the report.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 1: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT EFFORTS FUNDED THROUGH THE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS LINE-ITEM AND OTHER COMPLEMENTARY LINE ITEMS TO ADVANCE THE WORK

The Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (Commission) recommends continuing to support efforts funded by the Safe and Supportive Schools line item ([7061-9612](#)) and other complementary line items through the fiscal year 2025 (FY2025) budget. It will be important for funds to continue to support efforts as described below, with at least the current funding level for line item 7061-9612, as well as through other available and appropriate funding sources.

The Commission is very appreciative that Governor Healey included funding for Safe and Supportive Schools initiative efforts in H. 1 and for the Legislature’s continued support over the past decade (since FY2014).

The 7061-9612 line item and other complementary line items with aligned goals can collectively help further efforts that strengthen safe and supportive learning environments and available services, through the type of work described in the *Department Activities* section of this report, and can help further goals associated with all three Commission recommendations. These activities, when done collectively and strategically, will foster a greater sense of belonging for all students and strengthen the academic, physical, and psychological safety in our school cultures.

Furthermore, work supported by the Safe and Supportive Schools line item 7061-9612 and other complementary initiatives can help advance the Department’s Educational Vision ([EdVision](#)) and associated strategic objectives. For example, through the “Whole Student” focused Strategic Objective #1 of DESE’s EdVision, “DESE partners with districts, schools, and programs to cultivate systems to support the **whole student** and foster **joyful, healthy, and supportive** learning environments so that all students feel **valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.**”

Priority strategies for communities wanting to build capacity related to Strategic Objective 1 include the following:

- **Integrated Services for Student Wellbeing:** Utilize a system for integrating services and aligning initiatives that promote students' behavioral and mental health and wellness (e.g., bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, foster care and homeless youth education, and inclusion of students with disabilities)
- **Enhanced Support for SEL and Mental Health:** Expand capacity to address social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health needs of students and families (e.g., build knowledge and skills of current staff, add specialized support staff, partner with community-based providers)
- **Positive School Environments:** Create school environments that include high-quality facilities, healthy meals, physical activity, and positive youth development activities for all students
- **Effective Student Support System:** Implement key systems to build an effective approach to MTSS (e.g., using data to identify students' strengths and needs, matching students with appropriate supports, and monitoring progress)
- **Comprehensive Tiered Supports:** Provide a comprehensive set of tiered supports for all learners across all three domains - academic, social/emotional, and behavioral - that are culturally sustaining and universally designed
- **Diverse Approaches to Meaningful Communication:** Train all staff on the utilization of multiple strategies and tools to engage with families in meaningful two-way communication
- **Families as Valued Partners:** Create opportunities and systems for families to effectively participate as partners in authentic decision-making, with supports as needed

These above referenced strategies are aligned with the Safe and Supportive Schools [Essential Elements](#) that undergird work supported by the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection tool. These Essential Elements include:

Supporting All Students; Deepening Understanding, Advancing Equity, Exemplifying Cultural Responsiveness; and Reflecting and Adapting.

Ongoing funding and support from the Legislature can continue to further advance initiatives related directly to safe and supportive schools, as well as initiatives that are interwoven with the goals of safe and supportive schools such as Early Learning, Rethinking Discipline, Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health, MTSS, Social Emotional and Behavioral Supports and Interventions, and Family Engagement.

On March 7, 2023, high school students working with the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) [Students Speak](#) project participated in a legislative briefing, [Students Speak: Rebuilding Community in our Schools](#) at the Massachusetts State House. Students spoke eloquently about the urgency for schools to focus on rebuilding a sense of community and fostering positive student-teacher relationships, as well as about the critical need for schools to include students in discussions about how to address the barriers that students are experiencing as they try to re-engage in learning. Examples of what students shared are below and woven throughout the recommendations.

“Supporting relationships, self-regulation, and well-being is the way to reduce fights and create safe schools.” - April (student)

“It’s important to feel safe in a place that you learn; to know that you are protected when you’re in this environment for almost your entire teenage life.” - Adam (student)

EXAMPLES OF EFFORTS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT OF SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS AND COMPLEMENTARY INITIATIVES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Grant opportunities for school districts and collaboratives to advance safe and supportive schools initiatives including, but not limited to using the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool **to create and implement action plans and to mentor other communities** across the Commonwealth; as well as to support homeless education; hate crimes prevention; emergency management planning; addressing student cell phone use; improving ventilation and air quality in public school buildings; supporting SEL, Behavioral and Mental Health, and Wellness; and caring for students with special health care needs.
- Safe and Supportive Schools Grant program **evaluation** efforts.
- Safe and Supportive Schools grant program, professional development (PD), and Commission **coordination and administrative support**.
- Content updates and other **improvements to the online Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool**.
- Strengthening **School-Family Partnerships, a family engagement roadmap** for practitioners and families in health, human services, and education.
- School **Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health** dedicated to supporting and advancing wellness efforts for Massachusetts students, schools, and communities.
- Nutrition **programs** for school districts, childcare centers, family day care homes, and adult health programs.
- Massachusetts **Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)** data used to provide accurate estimates of the prevalence of risk behaviors that threaten the health and safety of young people in the Commonwealth.
- Mental Health Law **Rethinking Discipline Expectations for Schools/Districts** providing updated expectations for school and district leaders related to student discipline associated with the 2022 mental health law (G.L. c. 71, §37H^{3/4}).
- **Professional learning for administrators and other educators** related to safe and supportive learning environments including, but not limited to Youth Mental Health First Aid, Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, Educational stability for highly mobile students, Rethinking Discipline Initiative, METCO, Systemic Integrated Student Support, SEL/Mental Health, and caring for students with chronic health conditions and disabilities.

"If we have gender neutral bathrooms, students will feel safer to express their gender identity." - Careliz (student)

"Substitutes should be people who are fit for a given class so they can teach what they know. If not, students will struggle, and their grades will go down." - Marielys (student)

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 2: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT STATEWIDE EFFORTS THROUGH OTHER ENTITIES (BEYOND DESE) TO ADVANCE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS RELATED WORK

The Commission recommends that policymakers continue to support and promote other statewide efforts to advance safe and supportive schools related work. This includes supporting efforts across the Commonwealth that increase a focus on helping children with physical, behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs and their families with integrated behavioral health services and a comprehensive, community-based system of care.

According to the [National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University](#), a system of care is a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health and other challenges and their families, that is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs, in order to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life. Effective systems of care ensure availability and access to a broad, flexible array of effective, evidence-informed, community-based services and supports for children and their families that addresses their physical, emotional, social, and educational needs, including traditional and nontraditional services as well as informal and natural supports. By providing effective systems of care in the community *combined with* support provided during the school day, all children will have the ability to come to school ready to learn.

The Commission recommends continued support for agencies and state initiatives that provide and help strengthen effective systems of care.

EXAMPLES OF EFFORTS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT OF OTHER ENTITIES (BEYOND DESE) INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- [School Health Services](#) is in the Department of Public Health's (DPH) Bureau of Community Health and Prevention. This unit is comprised of professional staff who collaborate with other DPH programs, the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention, and DESE to provide ongoing school health service systems development and technical assistance to the Commonwealth's public school districts and nonpublic schools. School Health Services collects school health data, manages medication administration in the school setting, distributes safety and injury prevention resources for schools and families, and provides resources for school health personnel. This unit also manages the Comprehensive School Health Services (CSHS) grant, [School-based Telebehavioral Health \(TBH\) Project](#), and [School-Based Health Centers](#). Additionally, the DPH Bureau of Substance Use and Addiction

Services (BCHAP) provides guidance and training on the state's [Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment \(SBIRT\) in Schools](#) initiative, related to [MGL Chapter 71, Section 97](#) that requires verbal substance use health screenings in public schools.

- [Children's Behavioral Health Initiative \(CBHI\)](#) - Under the direction of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, CBHI helps MassHealth children with behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs and their families with integrated behavioral health services and a comprehensive, community-based system of care.
- [Massachusetts Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform](#) - Under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform helps people in Massachusetts get the mental health and substance abuse care they need, when and where they need it. They provide a behavioral health help line, community behavioral health centers, behavioral health urgent care, and a 988 suicide and crisis lifeline.
- [Family Resource Centers](#) - Family Resource Centers are supported by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Department of Children and Families. There is a family resource center in each of the 14 Massachusetts counties which provides parent education programs, youth and parent support groups, early childhood services, information and referral, education support, and cultural events. They provide Mass 2-1-1 information and referral lines that provide free, confidential information to individuals and families seeking child and elder care, emergency food and shelter, substance abuse treatment, and educational and vocational assistance.
- [Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth](#) - The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth is an independent state agency that advises others in state government on effective policies, programs, and resources for LGBTQ youth. This Commission also produces the Safe Schools Program with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide training and technical assistance to schools across the state, organizes the statewide network of Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), and works to make schools safer for all students.
- [Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children Project \(BIRCh\)](#) - The BIRCh project out of University of Massachusetts Boston and supported by the Boston Children's Hospital Collaboration for Community Health Fund provides professional development and resources for schools and strengthens the coordination of behavioral health supports provided by school and community agencies.
- [Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma](#) - The Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma out of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, for Health Consulting, and Office of the Child Advocate, supports the work of child-serving organizations and professionals across the Commonwealth. They provide training, resources, assessment and coaching, innovative practices, and school trauma intervention.

"Making positive change is a team effort. If students want to make something happen, it's important to involve everyone. It requires all of us." - Heba (student)

"One of my biggest passions in life is helping people feel included and valued." - Justice (student)

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 3: STRENGTHEN SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS WORK THROUGH LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

The Commission recommends that policymakers continue to help advance efforts to make schools more safe and supportive, by considering ways to strengthen current statutes related to safe and supportive schools to reflect specific inclusion of student groups, a greater emphasis on mental and behavioral health services, and furthering equity, equitable practices, and social justice. Moreover, we respectfully recommend that the Legislature consider examining other statutes related to school improvement plans, district improvement plans, and student opportunity act (SOA) plans to strengthen their relationship to each other in advancing goals related to safe and supportive schools.

The Commission applauds the work that the Legislature in coordination with the Governor's office has done since 2014 in advancing safe and supportive schools work in our schools and districts. Through the *Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence, Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law, Mental Health Law, Student Opportunity Act*, and other related statutes, Massachusetts is a leader in the country in advancing this important work. As a critical next step, the Commission is recommending consideration of changes to current statutes to reflect the work that has happened in the last 10 years in this area, and to better prepare our students for success in and beyond school.

We respectfully submit that the changes could be realized through considering legislative amendments to update, strengthen, and advance the safe and supportive schools work that is currently underway in our public schools and school districts, including charter schools and vocational technical schools, and educational collaboratives. These changes could help make our schools safer and more supportive for *all students*.

The Commission acknowledges and appreciates that many efforts are already underway in schools and districts across the Commonwealth to help advance safe and supportive school goals and experiences for students, families, staff and community partners. School and district leaders currently have the ability to advance equitable, safe and supportive school goals – for example, by coordinating school and district plans and strategies that help further anti-racist and LGBTQ+ inclusive teaching and learning environments.

These recommended changes for consideration are intended to help fortify and make explicit expectations related to advancing equitable, safe and supportive learning environments, and to increase coherence and integrate strategic planning efforts with whole school and whole district approaches in mind. Moreover, by creating greater alignment between District Improvement Plans, School Improvement Plans, and Educator Goals, school districts can use their resources in a more strategic and focused way to help accomplish their overall mission and vision.

Recommendations for consideration:

Under [MGL Chapter 69, Section 1P](#) (Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law)

- Strengthen the language of the law to help ensure the needs of all students are met in safe and supportive learning environments, by more explicitly including groups of students such as

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students,⁷ religious and ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, students with chronic health conditions, English Learners (EL), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA+) students, homeless students, economically disadvantaged students, students affected by substance use and misuse any student who requires additional academic and/or social emotional support, and other students who have been historically underserved (along with an understanding that students' multiple identities and experiences of bias and discrimination can intersect in compounding ways).

- Increase the emphasis on the integration of services and initiatives that contribute to safe and supportive learning environments. Examples of such services and initiatives include, but are not limited to efforts that promote:
 - students' academic success, behavioral and mental health, and physical health;
 - social emotional learning, equity and social justice, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, relationship building, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative justice and other alternatives to exclusionary practice; and
 - inclusion of students with disabilities, students with chronic health conditions, and students who require other accommodations, and supports for EL students, students in foster care, and students with housing instability.
- Expand the definition of safe and supportive schools to explicitly include equity, equitable practices, and social justice.
- Connect the Safe and Supportive Schools law ([MGL Chapter 69 Section 1P](#)) with the School Council law ([Chapter 71, Section 59C](#)) and District Improvement Plan/Student Opportunity Act laws (MGL Chapter 69, [Section 1S](#) and [Section 1I](#)) to align the action planning process in the Safe and Supportive Schools law with school improvement plans, district improvement plans, and Student Opportunity Act plans.
- Expand examples of indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies set forth in school and district improvement plans to include student and staff school climate and safety data.
- Strengthen reference to clinically appropriate services to explicitly include mental health and behavioral health services.
- Expand the charge of the Commission to include identifying and recommending best practices to increase student voice and engagement in schools, to explicitly support current and future Commission work in this realm.

Under [MGL Chapter 71, Section 59C](#): School Councils: members, meetings, duties

- Strengthen the role of school councils to assist in the behavioral and social emotional needs of students, by explicitly noting that the school council shall assist with the identification of

⁷ The term BIPOC is used to refer to all people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, which can include Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, multiracial students, and more.

needs and associated recommendations related to students' behavioral and social emotional needs (in addition to their educational needs). Reference the Safe and Supportive Schools law and definition to make a purposeful connection and make clear that school improvement plans are expected to include components that further goals that help schools be more safe and supportive, as defined by the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework law.

Under **MGL Chapter 69, Section 1I**: Performances of public school districts and individual public schools; evaluation system; assessment instruments; reports

- Reference the Safe and Supportive Schools law and definition to make a purposeful connection and make clear that district improvement plans are expected to include a description of how the district is implementing goals related to safe and supportive schools as defined in the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework law.

For specific recommendations, the Legislature may wish to consult with the leadership of organizations represented on the Commission.

Please note that as is customary, the DESE Commission Co-Chair (the DESE Commissioner's designee), as well as the Secretary of Education's member designee, abstained from voting on Recommendation 3, to remain neutral on proposed changes to state law in this context.

*"We get a lot of education about racist slurs, but nothing about homophobic or transphobic slurs."
-Nelly (student)*

*"It's important for me to learn in an environment that prioritizes cultural diversity and inclusion."
-Jaliyah (student)*

Commission Activities Undertaken in 2023

In 2023, the Commission focused primarily on the two [responsibilities](#)⁸ shown below, *as well as consultation with others and the drafting of this annual report outlining Commission activities and appropriate recommendations.*

- Identifying and recommending evidence-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environment, and
- Examining and recommending approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e), with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

⁸ A full list of the Commission charges noted in the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law](#) (G.L., c.69, § .1P) can be found on the Commission's web page: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/commission.html#responsibilities>.

Additionally, woven throughout meetings and topics was student and family voice/engagement and advancing racial/ethnic equity, and equity related to gender identity and sexual orientation.

Below is a summary of activities conducted during this ninth year of the Commission. **Seven Commission meetings were convened in 2023**, including a two-part summer retreat. All meetings occurred virtually per the [extension to the open meeting law](#). Each meeting covered topics related to at least one of the aforementioned areas of focus. Each meeting included one or two spotlight presentations from school staff or students, Commission members, Department staff, or others with insight into the topics at hand. Meetings also generally included time for brief Department updates; as well as time for discussion in small groups to help inform annual recommendations, and for members and participants to share about reactions to the presentations as well as related challenges and successes and available resources. Below is a list of spotlight presentations and discussions.

- **February 6, 2023**

- Context Setting and focus areas for the 2023 Commission Year, *with DESE's Rethinking Discipline and Safe and Supportive Schools Specialist, Stacy Cabral.*
- Presentation and Discussion with Collaborative for Educational Services (CES), Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS) Grant Evaluator, on [summary themes](#) from prior SaSS grant evaluations and 2023 upcoming analysis of SaSS action plan and School Improvements Plans, *with Catherine Brooks and Kate Lytton from CES.*

- **March 29, 2023**

- [Students Speak](#) 2023 Legislative Briefing Highlights, *with Harvard Law Clinic (HLC) students Kristen Walker and Emily Johnson, along with Brian Dezurick, Bobby Isbell, Alexia Leclercq, Raquel Maldonado Navarro, and Sheila Panyam; and Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) team members Michael Gregory, Marissa del Rosario, Anne Eisner, and Alex Jaramillo).*
- Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for LGBTQ Youth presented by the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, *with Commission Member Alex Nugent and co-panelists Landon Callahan, Andrea Fiorillo, Ev Gilbert, and Cas Martin.*

- **May 15, 2023**

- Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS) Grant Evaluation (Collaborative for Educational Services) Update on work related to Integration of SaSS Action Planning *with School/District Improvement Plans with Catherine Brooks and Kate Lytton from CES.*
- Safe and Supportive Schools Grantee Experiences using the tool and creating and implementing action plans *with Director of Curriculum and Technology Angela Crofford-Bik from Manchester Essex Regional School District; Director of Curriculum Deanna Lablanc from Gateway Regional School District; and Superintendent Anne McKenzie and District SEL and MTSS Coach Michelle Wojtowicz from Hadley Public Schools.*

- **Summer two-part retreat**
PART ONE, July 19, 2023

- Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS) FY2023 Grant Evaluation (Collaborative for Educational Services) – An analysis of alignment between SaSS school-wide action plans and school improvement plans, including the [Safe and Supportive Schools \(SASS\) Grant Program Fiscal Year 2023 Evaluation Executive Summary](#) with Catherine Brooks and Kate Lytton from CES.
- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Racial, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion ([REDI](#)) Initiative Update with Co-Chair John Doherty.

PART TWO, August 7, 2023

- A brief history of the shaping of the “Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law” Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 section 1P, and subsequent initiatives with Commission member Marissa del Rosario from The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) and Anne Eisner, TLPI Director
- A brief update on [DESE’s Educational Vision and Catalog of Aligned Supports](#), highlighting the three strategic objectives with Co-Chair Rachelle Engler Bennett.
- A conversation to revisit, 10 years after the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law was passed, what is meant by safe and supportive schools – in order to inform our current and upcoming efforts and recommendations with Emily Ullman from the Department’s Office of Effective Partnership and Impact.

- **October 4, 2023**

- How Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data can inform SaSS learning environments, including for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students with the Department’s Chiniqua Milligan along with Longmeadow Public Schools’ Substance Use Response Coordinator Shelly Warren.
- Discussion on potential recommendations for this year’s annual report to the Legislature related to safe and supportive learning environments based on prior Commission meetings and conversations with Commission members with Co-Chair John Doherty.

NOTE: Beyond what is reflected in the Recommendations section, the Commission discussed additional current resources and efforts in the state that help further safe and supportive schools. Examples included:

I. LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL:

- Data informed practices, such as disaggregating discipline and attendance data, and using YRBS and VOCAL student data to inform curriculum and supports for students, including a focus on students of color and LGBTQ+ students.
- Leadership that prioritizes safe and supportive teaching and learning environments.
- Aligning educator evaluation goals with safe and supportive school goals as well as other school and district strategic plans.

- Strong family-school partnerships and two-way communication between school staff and families.
- School and community partnerships with mental health providers.

II. STATE AGENCY AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS LEVELS:

- Family and student voice informing reforms, policies and practices.
 - Professional development offered to school staff across roles on aligned topics and strategies that support health, wellbeing and safe and supportive learning environments.
 - Networking opportunities and sharing of promising practices.
 - Efforts that support accountability with flexibility.
 - Tracking impact of work - and what conditions leads to what - directly and indirectly
 - Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Racial, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion ([REDI](#)) Initiative.
 - School Based Medicaid Program (SBMP).
 - Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC).
 - Other Associations focusing on Safe and Supportive Schools and equity related goals (e.g., Massachusetts Associations of School Committees, Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers, Nurses, Special Education Administrators, Teachers, Administrators, etc.).
 - Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth professional development offerings, including the School Mental Health Institute.
- **December 4, 2023**
 - Discussion, deliberation and voting on the substance of recommendations to include in the 2023 annual report to the legislature.
 - Discussion of the [professional development offerings document](#) to post on the Commission's webpage, and to update when additional information is shared with the Co-Chairs. The chart shows examples of information about FY2024 safe and supportive schools related to PD for school staff, that is sponsored by organizations represented by SaSS Commission members, as well as some additional publicly supported PD in this arena. This effort was agreed upon as one feasible effort this year related to the Commission focus areas associated with this charge: Identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments
 - Preliminary discussion about Commission focus areas for 2024, to be continued and confirmed early in 2024.

Commission member updates:

The Commission welcomed five new members, appointed by the organizations cited in the legislation authorizing the Commission that had vacancies in their member spots.

Starting with the February Meeting:

- **Alex Nugent**, Concord-Carlisle High School Class of 2024, and member of the GSA State Student Leadership Council Member, starting with the February 2023 meeting.
- **Kristin Campione**, Director of Student Services, Ayer Shirley Regional Schools - appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education ([ASE](#)), starting with the July 2023 meeting.

The Department and Commission are **extremely grateful for the generous and helpful contributions of the following two members** and wish them well with their other responsibilities and new endeavors:

- **Fabienne Eliacin**, Family Support Specialist, Parent Professional Advocacy League ([PPAL](#)) - appointed by PPAL, who served from October 2022 through October 2023.
- **John Salovardos**, Director of Pupil Services, Athol-Royalston Regional School District, appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education ([ASE](#)), who served on the Commission for nearly five years, from November 2019 through June 2023.

The Commission is thankful to all members for their time, contributions, insights, and dedication to efforts with and beyond the Commission that can help make schools safer and more supportive for all students. See Appendix A for a list of 2023 members.

Commission meetings are open to the public, and the Commission is also thankful to all **participating guests**, for their interest and willingness to attend meetings to learn and to contribute to the Commission's discussion when possible. Attendees who participated in at least three of the seven Commission meetings in 2023 included: L.Jane Ayers, John Crocker, Anne Eisner, Michael Gregory, Katherine Houle, Jariel Vergne, Kate Regal, and Joan Wasser Gish.

The Commission appreciates all **Department staff and consultants** who assisted with 2023 Commission efforts. In particular, the Commission thanks Stacy Cabral for co-planning and helping move forward all Commission work. Additional DESE colleagues who helped inform and support 2023 Commission meetings include, but are not limited to, Student and Family Support Office colleagues Chris Pond, Donna Traynham, Emily Taylor, Yi-Juin Liu, Kelly Meehan-Rooney, Kristen McKinnon, and Samantha Graham; and Office of Planning and Research colleagues Elana McDermott and Kendra Winner. Additionally, the Commission is thankful for the ongoing skilled work and thought partnership of the Collaborative for Educational Services (including but not limited to Catherine Brooks and Kate Lytton), through their DESE Safe and Supportive Schools grant evaluation related contract; and the Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students (including but not limited to Landon Callahan, Ev Gilbert, Cas Martin, Jeff Perrotti, Kimm Topping, and Jeff Wheeler), a collaborative effort between DESE and the Commission on LGBTQ Youth.

Department Activities Related to G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f)

The statute [G.L. c. 69, § 1P] outlines numerous roles for the Department to play to help further safe and supportive learning environments.⁹ Many of these are subject to appropriation and include but are not limited to: *providing administrative support to the Commission and offering grants, professional development, and technical assistance to schools and districts using the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Tool*. Highlights of Department efforts associated with these responsibilities are described below.

[Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Tool](#): The Framework and Self-Reflection Tool was most recently updated in 2021. Details on those updates can be found in the 7th Annual [Commission Report](#), and an [at-a-glance version](#) and the [Essential Elements](#) woven throughout outline key information about the resources. During 2022, several refinements and additional guidance components were made available through the tool reports and action planning sections of the online resource, to help strengthen grantees and other users' efforts to create action plans informed by self-reflection and data gathering prompted by using the tool. The Department continues to seek [feedback](#) on the updated versions and plans to make further refinements informed by this feedback over time.

[Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program](#): This grant program supports school and district team efforts to develop and implement action plans that organize, integrate, and sustain school and district-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments and coordinate and align student support initiatives. The program also funds efforts for school and district staff who have used the tool to provide support to other grantees; other districts interested in using the self-reflection tool; districts beginning to implement action plans created previously; the Department and Commission; and other stakeholders interested in safe and supportive schools.

The Department posted the FY2024 Safe and Supportive Schools **Competitive Grant** Request for Proposals (RFP) Fund Code [\(FC\) 335](#) in April 2023, and publicized the news in a number of ways such as through the April 24, 2023 [Commissioner's Weekly Update](#). Applications were due May 12, 2023 and [grantees](#) were announced September 20, 2023. In June 2023, the Safe and Supportive Schools **Continuation Grant**, [FC 337](#) RFP was made available to districts with competitive grant awards in the prior year, and grant applications were reviewed and approved on a rolling basis.

More than \$450,000 will support competitive and continuation grants in 2023 to develop and implement action plans and provide support to others and share promising practices that will help create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments. Twenty-one (21) entities (including 4 regional school districts, 2 regional technical vocational or agricultural high schools, 3 charter school districts, and 12 other school districts) were competitively [awarded](#) approximately \$200,000 to support efforts in 61 schools or programs. Additionally, twenty-two (22) districts were awarded more than \$250,000 through continuation grants, for use in approximately 44 schools or educational programs.

Grant evaluation: Funded through the safe and supportive schools line item 7061-9612, the Department contracted with Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) for continued work on

⁹ For the entire list of Department responsibilities associated with G.L. c. 69, § 1P, see: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter284>.

an independent [evaluation of the grant program](#), to complement and extend efforts described in their 2018 and 2019 reports. In 2020-2021, CES was able to provide the Department with feedback on leadership support and district needs as well as a review of participation and feedback on professional development opportunities. Additionally, CES continued to assess grantee feedback regarding the use of the self-assessment tool (updated in 2021), and ways in which schools and districts are incorporating equity considerations into their grant planning and implementation efforts. During the 2022-2023 school year, CES interviewed grantees and worked with the Commission to learn more about district and school improvement plans and how schools and districts are working to align and incorporate their Safe and Supportive Schools action plans into other work in the school and district. The [Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program Fiscal Year 2023 Evaluation Executive Summary](#) and [Summary Themes](#) from five evaluation cycles were presented to the Commission during the 2023 summer retreat.

Professional development to support work related to safe and supportive schools: During 2023, the Department offered a series of professional development that included webinars and virtual networking meetings, similar to those described in last year's [Commission Report](#). The Department continued the contract with the [Equity Imperative](#), a portion of which is funded through the Safe and Supportive Schools line item 7061-9612, to provide in depth professional development pathways on topics related to equity and anti-racist practices in Student Leadership and Advocacy, Anti-Racists Advocates, and Transformative SEL. The pathway opportunities were publicized in Commissioner Weekly Updates, DESE newsletters, and on the Safe and Supportive Schools and Rethinking Discipline webpages. More than 300 people registered for three pathway sessions (each pathway consisting of three weekly 2-hour webinars).

The Equity Imperative is also continuing to offer a comprehensive online course for Safe and Supportive Schools grantees, [Rethinking Discipline](#) initiative participants, and others. Course themes include learning about:

- The racist history of our schools and society; and how that history can live within ourselves and requires a commitment toward racial equity and a development of equity-based interactions.
- The history of deficit thinking; and developing a structural lens to situate the root of racially delineated achievement outcomes and to create strategies to strengthen relationships.
- The ways that racism manifests and is perpetuated in the regular day-to-day routines in schools; and ways to interrupt this reality.
- The obstacles and roadblocks to leading equity work; and ways to best press forward on behalf of students and families.

Additional offerings for 2023-2024 can be found on the Safe and Supportive Schools and Rethinking Discipline [professional development calendar](#).

Department Safe and Supportive Schools Staffing: Funds from the safe and supportive schools line item also enable full-time staffing to support Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Tool related work. This staff work includes providing technical assistance and training to school districts; policy development and dissemination; project planning and implementation; grants and contract management; inter-agency collaboration; and coordination of and participation in information gathering efforts such as focus groups, and in research and evaluation activities.

Select Additional Department Efforts: The Department is engaged in a wide array of initiatives beyond those noted above that also help to strengthen safe and supportive learning environments. Examples include the following:

- **Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework**-Approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in September 2023 this updated curriculum framework is inclusive, medically accurate and developmentally and age-appropriate. It outlines standards for what a comprehensive and LGBTQ+ inclusive health and physical education program should include: mental and emotional health; personal safety; physical health and hygiene; healthy relationships; nutrition and balanced eating; physical activity and fitness; substance use and misuse; sexual health; and public, community, and environmental health.
- **Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework**-DESE is currently in the process of releasing newly updated model rubrics for school level administrators and teachers that integrate and strengthen culturally and linguistically sustaining practices within the Standards of Effective Teaching and Administrative Leadership. The rubric updates are grounded in DESE's educational vision for effective teaching and leadership, and reflect input from educators, students, and families across Massachusetts on antiracist, inclusive, and equitable practices that support *all students* to attain academic knowledge and skills, understand and value themselves and others, and engage with the world.
- **Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students**-The Safe Schools Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students is a joint initiative between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the [Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth](#). Founded in 1993 in response to concerns about LGBTQ youth suicides and other risk factors, the program now offers a range of services designed to help schools implement state laws impacting LGBTQ students, including the state's anti-bullying law, gender identity law, and student anti-discrimination law. The Safe Schools Program also manages the [Massachusetts Gender and Sexuality Alliance \(GSA\) Student Leadership Council](#).
- **Emergency Response Planning Support, including Medical and Behavioral Emergency Response Plans and School Behavioral Threat Assessment Initiatives**-Thanks to the support of the Massachusetts Legislature, [M.G.L. c. 69, § 8A](#), Medical and Behavioral Health Emergency Response Plans, was amended in 2022 to specify that emergency response plans, which are updated by school districts every three years, must now address behavioral health medical emergencies as well as medical emergencies and must include protocols for informing parents/guardians and reporting to DESE when schools contact police, EMT's, or other non-behavioral health personnel to respond to a behavioral health crisis. The Department has provided an updated [Model Medical and Behavioral Emergency Response Plan \(MERP\)](#) and trainings to support local plan updates. Additionally, the Department, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education's Readiness in Emergency Management in Schools (REMS) Center and others, has offered a series of trainings throughout the year on Developing Emergency Operations Plans and School Behavioral Threat Assessment. Moreover, the Department is using some available federal Bipartisan Safer Communities Act funds towards an Emergency Management Planning Grant ([Fund Code 212](#)).

Other examples include initiatives related to [building a diverse and culturally responsive workforce](#); [family engagement](#); [early learning](#); [MTSS](#) and [mental health and wellness](#); student surveys ([VOCAL](#) and [YRBS](#)); and an [FAQ](#) on Race, Racism, and Culturally Responsive Teaching in History and Social Science in MA. The Department also offers a [Hate Crimes Prevention grant](#) (Fund Code 794); and is collaborating with the Attorney General's Office, the Massachusetts Associations of Superintendents (MASS) and School Administrators (MSAA), and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) on a project aimed at [Addressing Hate in School Sports](#).

Additionally, the Department's Educational Vision ([EdVision](#)), and [Catalog of Aligned Supports](#) show examples of initiatives that support the EdVision's strategic objectives, including the Whole Student one focused on cultivating systems to support the whole student and foster joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.

APPENDIX A: Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Members

Note: Commission members are appointed by entities as outlined in G.L., c.69, §.1P.

Agency / District / Role Represented (alphabetically listed)	2023 Member Name (pronouns)	Title
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-MA / MA Teachers Association (MTA)	Ulana Ainsworth (<i>she/Ella</i>)	K2 Inclusion, Roger Clap Elementary, Boston Public Schools
Community-based organization (CBO) representative that provides services as part of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), and that provides mental health services in schools	Beverly Williams (<i>she/her</i>)	Executive Vice President, Behavioral Health and Community Services, BAMSII (Brockton)
Former BHPS Taskforce Member and Tool Developer/Evaluator, Currently University of MA - Boston and Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children (BIRCh)	Melissa Pearrow	Executive Director, Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children (BIRCh) Project; Associate Professor in School of Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development; and School Psychology Program Director, UMass Boston; and MSPA Past President
MA Administrators for Special Education (ASE)	Kristin Campione (<i>she/her</i>)	Director of Student Services, Ayer-Shirley Regional School District
MA Advocates for Children (MAC)	Marissa del Rosario	Trauma-Sensitive Schools Specialist, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
MA Association of School Committees (MASC)	Ellen Holmes (<i>she/her</i>)	MASC Past President; and Former Member of the Ashburnham-Westminster Reg. School Committee
MA Association of School Superintendents (MASS)	John Doherty, Ed.D. (<i>he/him</i>)	Commission Co-Chair (Selected by Commission Members); MASS Professional Development Chair, Retired Superintendent, Reading Public Schools
MA Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers	Margie Daniels (<i>she/her</i>)	Social Worker, and Executive Director, Middlesex Partnerships for Youth
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)	Rachelle Engler Bennett (<i>she/her</i>)	Commission Co-Chair (DESE Designee); Associate Commissioner, Student and Family Support
MA Organization of Education Collaboratives (MOEC)	Susan Farrell	Central Mass Collaborative Executive Director
MA Recovery High School representative with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders	Michelle Lipinski (<i>she/her/hers</i>)	Principal, Northshore Recovery High School
MA School Administrators Association (MSAA)	Edverette Brewster	Leadership Coach, Lynch Leadership Academy, Boston College; and formerly Oliver W. Holmes PK-5 Innovation School Principal, Boston

MA School Counselors Association (MASCA)	Donna M. Brown	MASCA Immediate Past Executive Director
MA School Nurse Organization (MSNO)	Shayn A. Toulouse, DNP, MEd, RN, NCSN <i>(she/her/hers)</i>	Northeast Regional School Nurse Consultant at Haverhill Public Schools
MA School Psychologists Association (MSPA)	Andria Amador	Senior Dir., Behavioral Health Services, Boston Public Schools; and MSPA Past President
Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)	Fabienne Eliacin <i>(she/her)</i>	Family Support Specialist
Secretary of Education (EOE Designee)	Heidi Gold	Senior Policy Manager, MA Executive Office of Education (EOE)
State Student Advisory Council (SSAC)	Alex Nugent <i>(she/they)</i>	GSA Student Leadership Council Member, and Concord-Carlisle Regional High School '24

APPENDIX B: Legislative Charge for the Commission

Massachusetts General Laws, c. 69, § 1P(g): There shall be a safe and supportive schools commission to collaborate with and advise the department on the feasibility of state-wide implementation of the framework. The commission shall consist of 19 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education or a designee; 1 of whom shall be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school committee member appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school principal appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association; 1 of whom shall be a teacher appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a director of special education or a director of student support services appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education; 1 of whom shall be an executive director of an education collaborative appointed by the Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by The Massachusetts School Psychologists Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school social worker appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education, behavioral health and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc. appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a student appointed by the department of elementary and secondary education's student advisory council; and 3 members to be appointed by the secretary of education: 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force who participated in the development and statewide evaluation of the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force with experience implementing the framework; 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts recovery high schools with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders; and 1 of whom shall be a representative from a community-based organization that provides services as part of the children's behavioral health initiative and that provides mental health services in schools. The commission shall select a co-chair from among its appointees.

The commission shall: (i) investigate and make recommendations to the board on updating, improving and refining the framework and the self-assessment tool as appropriate; (ii) identify strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force; (iii) propose steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; (iv) identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments; (v) identify federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation of the framework; (vi) develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families, including families of children with behavioral health needs; and (vii) examine and recommend

model approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e), with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

The commission may collect and review data and feedback from schools as the schools complete the self-assessment tool and develop school action plans, and may convene stakeholders to facilitate solutions to challenges as such challenges arise during the implementation process. The commission may request from the department such information and assistance as may be necessary to complete its work.

The commission shall consult with and solicit input from various persons and groups, including, but not limited to: (i) the office of the child advocate; (ii) the department of early education and care; (iii) the department of children and families; (iv) the department of mental health; (v) the department of public health; (vi) the department of youth services; (vii) the department of developmental services; and (viii) any other parties or entities the commission deems appropriate.

The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission's activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31. The commission shall meet not fewer than 4 times annually. The commission shall submit such annual report to the governor and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee on education, the chairs of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, and the house and senate committees on ways and means. The first 3 annual reports shall include recommendations regarding: (i) federal funding sources that may support statewide implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework; (ii) training programs and professional development for school staff on creating safe and supportive learning environments; (iii) improving access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and (iv) addressing the administrative functions necessary to carry out the implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework.

NOTE: The full text of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter284) (G.L. c. 69, § 1P), within *An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence*, can be found on <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter284>.