Summary of Updates to the District Standards and Indicators

Last summer, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Office of District Reviews and Monitoring (ODRM) set out to update the *District Standards and Indicators*, a document that serves as the foundation of all [district reviews](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/default.html) and outlines how school districts can organize their systems to facilitate positive student outcomes and experiences. We structured our project using DESE’s Racial Equity Decision-Making Tool (REDT), which guides decision-making to explicitly and intentionally center equity, particularly racial equity. As a first step, we convened more than 30 DESE experts to serve on internal committees for each standard. Additional stakeholder engagement efforts include sharing the draft document with a broad range of external stakeholders, including but not limited to district and school leaders, stakeholder associations and organizations, advocacy groups, advisory councils, and the general public.

Once we have reviewed and incorporated their feedback, the ODRM team will focus on implementing the updated *District Standards and Indicators* in the 2024-25 school year.

District reviews are required by [state statute](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter15/Section55A), and the six standards on which we base these reviews are outlined in [state regulation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html?section=03) (Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management). The Department **is not proposing changes to the six standards.** Instead, we are proposing changes to the corresponding indicators and “look-fors” within each standard. A summary of the proposed changes to the [currently published *District Standards and Indicators*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf)is below:

* **Alignment with core DESE documents**: We have incorporated significant language from the [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/vision-supports.pdf) and the Center for District and School Partnerships’ [Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/coherence-guidebook.pdf) throughout the document. This version also includes an Appendix that links to core pieces of DESE guidance and resources (e.g. educator evaluation rubrics, Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, etc.).
* **Length**: The published version includes 21 indicators. The new draft currently includes 24 indicators.
* **Focus on racial equity**: We incorporated a greater equity lens in this draft to further communicate the importance of equitable practices and policies. We have attempted to weave this focus on equity throughout the document but would appreciate your insights around how to be even more explicit about districts’ responsibilities to serve all students, including and especially those who have been historically underserved.

Below is an overview of some of the proposed shifts evident in each of the standards:

**Leadership and Governance:** The Leadership and Governance standard now emphasizes leadership culture and the degree to which stakeholders hold themselves, and others, accountable for student outcomes and experiences. Furthermore, we have removed the Budget Development indicator to consolidate budgeting indicators and look-fors in the Financial and Asset Management standard.

**Curriculum and Instruction:** The Curriculum and Instruction standard emphasizes the use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials far more than the published version does. This aligns with DESE’s move toward promoting evidence-based, effective curricula. This standard now also includes an indicator on instructional leadership, which was previously missing from the *District Standards and Indicators*.

**Assessment:** The Assessment standard has a greater emphasis on data and data systems than it previously did. Additionally, this draft refers to the collection and analysis of multiple data points and types of data to build a comprehensive understanding of each individual student.

**Human Resources and Professional Development:** The Human Resources and Professional Development standard is more detailed than it previously was. This standard now includes a robust section on leveraging district systems to build and sustain a diverse educator workforce. Additionally, the professional development piece has expanded into systems of professional learning, including cycles of observation and feedback, curriculum-aligned professional development, and targeted supports for new educators.

**Student Support:** The Student Support standard now includes an indicator entitled “Health and Wellbeing,” which addresses physical and mental health education and services. This standard now also includes look-fors around wraparound support for vulnerable student populations including students living in foster care, newly arrived migrants, and unhoused students.

**Financial and Asset Management:** The Financial and Asset Management standard is now more specific and detailed about the many responsibilities the district business office oversees and carries out. The draft of this standard now includes an indicator on operations, which is not in the published version, and indicators around business office infrastructure, procurement and contracting, and accounting and reporting. By adding several new indicators to this standard (and reworking the existing ones), we have developed a far more robust standard.