



## 2021 Annual Report to BESE | Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education



January 2022

Dear Board Members,

I write this letter in gratitude for your continued support of DESE, our districts, and most importantly, our students throughout the pandemic. That support has taken many forms, including listening to families and educators share their concerns, and voting on remote and in-person learning requirements, always with students' interests at the center. When you look back on the 2020-21 school year, I hope you are as proud as I am that we returned students to school, offering them initial steps toward normalcy and in-person support.

Our support of districts would not be possible without DESE's Rapid Response Help Center, through which staff members work around the clock to help districts address operational issues. We also would not be where we are without our statewide COVID-19 testing program which started with pooled testing last year and grew to include symptomatic testing and Test and Stay in the current school year. We remain committed to having as many students as possible learn safely in person.

I am proud of the work we are doing on other fronts as well. Our Acceleration Roadmap gave districts a framework to plan for the 2021-22 school year, in terms of student support, family engagement, and academic acceleration. The Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning has continued its work with its first cohort, began work with the Boston cohort, and created opportunities for educators throughout the state to participate in Kaleidoscope professional development opportunities. That commitment to deeper learning is also reflected in our ongoing work on an innovative middle school science assessment, which will enter a second pilot phase this year.

While the pandemic will continue to challenge us in the months ahead, I am optimistic that together, the Board and DESE will help our schools and students succeed.