

# **FY22 Evidence-Based Program Areas**

Descriptions of program areas identified by DESE

to support the creation of three-year, evidence-based plans

required by the Student Opportunity Act

**Jeffrey C. Riley**

**Commissioner**

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FY22 SOA Evidence-based Program Areas

**Enhanced Core Instruction**

1. Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers (SOA categories D, F, and G)
2. Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)
3. Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education (I)
4. Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)
5. Expanded access to career-technical education, including “After Dark” district-vocational partnerships and innovation pathways reflecting local labor market priorities (I)
6. Culturally responsive teaching and other strategies that create equitable and culturally responsive learning environments for students. (D, E, and F)
7. Expanded learning time for all students in the form of a longer school day or school year (A,B, D, and E)

**Targeted Student Supports**

1. Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and E)
2. English Learner Education programs, including dual language (DL) and transitional bilingual education (TBE)  (D, E, and F)
3. Acceleration Academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners (A and E)
4. Dropout prevention and recovery programs (I)

**Talent Development**

1. Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention (D and H)
2. Leadership pipeline development programs for schools (D and E)
3. Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions (D and E)
4. Increasing opportunities for educators and support staff to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, utilizing district and school teaming structures (B and E)

**Conditions for Student Success**

1. Expanding capacity to address social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health needs of students and families (C, D and E)
2. Increasing opportunities for all students to engage in arts, enrichment, world languages, athletics, and elective courses. (D and B)
3. Developing effective family/school partnerships (E)
4. Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wraparound services (C)
5. Labor-management partnerships to improve student performance (E)
6. Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J)

## Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers

Research has repeatedly shown that children who attend high-quality preschool programs reap short-term (e.g., better performance in kindergarten) and long-term (e.g., decreased likelihood to create a crime) benefits ([Meloy, Gardner, & Darling-Hammond, 2019](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/untangling-evidence-preschool-effectiveness-report" \t "_blank)). Preschool benefits all children but has an outsized impact on historically marginalized student groups ([Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, & Nores, 2016](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NIEER-AchievementGaps-report.pdf)). A recent summary of a meta-analysis on the impact of early childhood programs on outcomes for children ([National Institute for Early Education Research, 2017](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Getting-the-Facts-Right-on-Pre-K-1.pdf)) showed that:

* cognitive gains from preschool programs were larger when programs focused on intentional and individualized teaching and small group learning;
* on average, effects did not disappear and remained substantial; and
* long-term gains are found in achievement and in social-emotional development, less grade repetition, and increased high school graduation rates.

As noted in the research above, high-quality preschool programs can produce sustained and significant long-term benefits, especially when they have been designed appropriately to meet the developmental needs of young children. To design high quality pre-K opportunities, plans could include the following elements.

***High-Quality Program Components***

**Hire an Early Childhood Consultant/Coordinator.**Districts could use funds to hire an early childhood consultant/coordinator with experience and expertise in working with young children and their families. This position can assist in the development of a community wide vision and strategic plan for providing high quality early learning opportunities for young children. Plans could include strategies for increased access to high quality, full-day preschool programs as well as alignment with Kindergarten through 3rd grade experiences to ensure sustained growth and development over time.

**Build Partnerships with Community-Based Preschool Programs.**In an effort to move towards expanded access to high quality preschool programs, districts can use funds to dedicate staff time to building relationships with community partners and/or to build or enhance an early childhood advisory council to inform the community’s vision for this work and implementation plan.

**Select a Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum and Instructional Model.**The district could engage teachers and principals, the early childhood advisory council, or an existing committee to identify curricular options for the program.

**Ensure Early Student Success.**Based on the science of how young children learn, data should be gathered through authentic learning opportunities (e.g., observations) where children have opportunities to show educators what they know and are able to do through their conversations, actions, demonstrations, etc.

**Provide Professional Development.**The provision of professional development and coaching for public school and community-based educators and administrators is an important evidence-based practice to ensure that services and supports delivered are high quality, implemented with fidelity and lead to improved outcomes for young children.

**Engage in a Quality Improvement System and/or an Accreditation Process.**Improved and sustained outcomes for young children is linked to the delivery of high-quality learning opportunities. Plans could include opportunities for the public and community-based preschool programs to work together to pursue quality improvement efforts, such as the Department of Early Education and Care’s (EEC) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and/or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation, to validate the quality of learning environments for all children and to communicate to families the importance of having access to high-quality opportunities for their children.

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## 2. Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades

Researchers believe that it is possible for over 90 percent of children to become skillful readers, if they receive appropriate instruction and support ([Castles, Rastle, and Nation, 2018](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1529100618772271); [Foorman, 2001](http://www.fcrr.org/publications/publicationspdffiles/critical_elements.pdf" \t "_blank)). Providing such instruction to meet the needs of all diverse learners in a school requires a suite of instructional practices that enable teachers to provide high-quality, differentiated and culturally responsive instruction. These practices include: adoption of high-quality instructional materials, use of valid assessments, provision of targeted interventions to students who need them, and ongoing professional development and learning for teachers.

***Investing in High-Quality Program Components***

**Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Learning**

* Curricular materials. A comprehensive approach to early literacy is supported by high-quality literacy core curricular materials that have evidence (e.g., demonstrating that they are aligned to standards and to research-based reading instruction ([Kane et al., 2016](https://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/teaching-higher-report.pdf), [National Reading Panel, 2000)](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf).  High-quality instructional materials are identified by [CURATE](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/) and [EdReports](https://www.edreports.org/?gclid=CjwKCAiA98TxBRBtEiwAVRLqu3cSImzjuB7Mt2lLZigSLf1aKoMHS7gLzKPpUcWLVpqyVP9NIxQMDhoCZZYQAvD_BwE).
* Teachers should be provided professional development on the curricular materials being used ([Blazar et al, 2019](https://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/cepr-curriculum-report_learning-by-the-book.pdf)). The [Professional Learning Partner Guide](https://plpartnerguide.org/) is a directory of providers offering PD on high-quality curricular materials.
* A valid and reliable early literacy screening assessment is necessary to identify students at risk for reading difficulties, so that students receive the support they need ([Fuchs, Fuchs, and Compton, 2012](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/25c07c_034c6994661d4b6ea7d52023def55bce.pdf)). DESE reviews early literacy screening assessments and lists those which meet review criteria [here](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/screening-assessments.html).
* When data indicates that a student is not making adequate reading progress, appropriately trained staff should provide research-based interventions that match the student’s learning needs ([Gersten et. al., 2009](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf" \t "_blank)). Evidence-based intervention materials and training for staff to implement those interventions can be an effective investment.
* Teachers can best meet the needs of all students when they are knowledgeable about literacy acquisition, culturally responsive practice, and evidence-based instructional practices. Numerous DESE-approved professional development providers offer courses and workshops on these topics.
* Finally, research clearly points to the need for strong content-area learning (in subjects such as science, history/social science, and the arts), as these content areas support the knowledge development that is the backbone of reading and writing ability (see [Knowledge Matters](http://knowledgematterscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/KMC-Announcement-re-2018-NAEP-v2.pdf) for detailed research citations). Thus, a comprehensive approach to early literacy will include adoption of strong content-area curriculum and training for teachers.

**Staffing**

Schools may need to hire additional qualified staff and/or engage in new partnerships to support students’ literacy success. This may include:

* Addition of licensed Reading Specialists or other professional staff to provide targeted instruction
* Creation of a supplemental tutoring program to support students’ accelerated literacy learning
* Addition of building-based literacy coach positions to support the professional learning of educators

***Implementation Considerations***

Given the many components of evidence-based early literacy described above, implementing a research-based approach to early literacy takes careful planning and monitoring over multiple years. It is helpful for a school to establish a school-based Literacy Leadership Team (or sub-team as part of a larger Instructional Leadership Team) to lead this work. Schools can consider creating a stipended role for Literacy Leadership Team members. Professional learning for school leaders can also help them to plan and lead the implementation of a comprehensive, evidence-based, early literacy program during that time span.

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## 3. Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education

Nationally, Early College programs have been shown to improve high school graduation, college enrollment and persistence, and degree attainment rates. In particular, these models can significantly narrow – or even close – opportunity gaps for traditionally underserved students, including those from low-income backgrounds and students of color ([Song and Zeiser, 2019](https://www.air.org/resource/early-college-continued-success-longer-term-impact-early-college-high-schools)). By providing high school students the opportunity to experience and complete college-level academic coursework while they receive individualized support, early college programs make earning a college credential more attainable and affordable for all students.

***High-Quality Program Components***

Massachusetts has established an Early College designation to recognize high-quality implementation of Early College models. The Designation Criteria are anchored in five guiding principles, described below.In 2019, the Rennie Center released an [Early College Blueprint](https://www.renniecenter.org/research/reports/early-college-blueprint-guide-getting-started-early-college-massachusetts), an evidence-based guide for Massachusetts Early College programs working to achieve state designation.  Since then **NS4ED**, the technical assistance provider for MA Designated Early College programs has developed [a resource site](https://www.maearlycollege.com/) for current and potential Early College partnerships in the Commonwealth which provides additional resources and opportunities to engage in professional development related to developing and sustaining a Designated Early College partnership.  The two- part Designation application is typically distributed in late spring with programs learning whether they have been approved by early spring of the following year.

**Guiding Principle 1: Equitable Access**

Prioritize students underrepresented in higher education enrollment and completion in recruitment and enrollment plans. Districts should remove barriers to participation by ensuring tuition-free participation, open enrollment without regard to prior academic performance, multiple entry points for students, and scalability.

**Guiding Principle 2: Guided Academic Pathways**

Structure programs around clear and detailed student academic pathways from secondary and post-secondary education with regard to coursework, sequencing, and experiences beyond the classroom. Students should have the opportunity to earn at least 12 college credits, gain exposure to high-demand fields, have authentic and rigorous postsecondary experiences, and experience learning on a college campus.

**Guiding Principle 3: Robust Student Support**

Incorporate sufficient wraparound services to promote academic success and completion, taking into consideration the needs of diverse populations of students. This may include, but is not limited to, hiring additional guidance staff, incorporating [MyCAP](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/mycap/) (My Career and Academic Plan) to support students in planning, and a thoughtful orientation process to acclimate students to the program’s systems, expectations, and resources.

**Guiding Principle 4: Connections to Career**

Expose students to a variety of career opportunities, including greater depth in careers relevant to their selected pathway. This could include, but is not limited to, targeted workforce and career skills development, career counseling, and elements of experiential and workplace learning.

**Guiding Principle 5: High-Quality and Deep Partnerships**

Partner with at least one institution of higher education, and perhaps one or more employer. Partnerships should ensure the program includes memoranda of understanding detailing the nature of governance, budget, sustainability, scheduling, respective responsibilities, and performance measures.

***Implementation Considerations***

When establishing a new Early College program, districts should be thoughtful and strategic around essential conditions for success. These include:

* Creating a shared vision and strategic plan that has been vetted with key stakeholders, and clearly establishes a deep partnership between a K-12 school and an institution of higher education.
* A plan to build staff capacity to execute the Early College program
* Redesigning schedules to ensure that students can participate in Early College during their regularly scheduled school day.
* All college courses and accompanying costs will be offered free to students and their families.
* College courses offered as part of Early College will fullfill MassCore, HS graduation requirements and MassTransfer.

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## 4. Supporting educators to implement high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum (E and F)

Access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials is a critical component of the student learning experience, with growing evidence that curricular materials matter particularly for those students experiencing opportunity and performance gaps. A recent study of student assignments revealed that students spent the bulk of their time in school completing assignments that were not grade-appropriate, the result of materials that were not standards-aligned and expectations that were too low. The report observes: “Students spent more than 500 hours per school year on assignments that weren’t appropriate for their grade and with instruction that didn’t ask enough of them—the equivalent of six months of wasted class time in each core subject” ([TNTP, 2018](https://tntp.org/publications/view/student-experiences/the-opportunity-myth)).  In classrooms where students were given curricular materials and assignments that were appropriate for their grade, students gained nearly two months of additional learning compared to their peers ([TNTP, 2018](https://tntp.org/publications/view/student-experiences/the-opportunity-myth)).

Additional evidence suggests that providing teachers with access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials can prompt improvement in student outcomes, including effects that are: 1) comparable to over half a year of additional learning ([Kane et al., 2016](https://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/teaching-higher-report.pdf)); 2) about 1.5 times the difference between an average teacher and one at the 75th percentile ([Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0410_curriculum_chingos_whitehurst.pdf" \t "_blank)), and 3) greater than the difference between a new teacher and one with three years of experience ([Kane, 2016](https://www.brookings.edu/research/never-judge-a-book-by-its-cover-use-student-achievement-instead/)). With the body of evidence ever growing, it is imperative to ensure all students have access to grade-appropriate, standards-aligned curriculum.

***Implementation Considerations***

**Curricular Landscape Analysis**

District leaders should begin by [assessing their curriculum landscape](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-assessing-curriculum.pdf) to arrive at an appropriate course of action for their local needs and context. For instance, some districts may first need to adopt high-quality curricular materials, while others might focus on establishing professional learning structures for teachers to spend time with peers unpacking and implementing  previously adopted high-quality materials skillfully

**Curriculum Selection and Adoption**

The curriculum selection process should heavily rely upon the definitions of “high quality” as set forth by DESE’s CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers ([CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/)) initiative. The CURATE project convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials, then publishes their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult. Through CURATE, schools and districts can confidently make a curriculum selection that lays a foundation of great curricular materials in every classroom, so that teachers can focus on making those materials work for the students they know best. Districts that are unsure if their current curricula are high-quality should also consult CURATE or EdReports, and will find the [CURATE rubrics](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/resources.html) useful for analyzing materials’ strengths and gaps.   
   
It is also highly recommended that districts utilize an inclusive, systematized [curriculum adoption process](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-eval-select.docx) that engages multiple stakeholders in the investigation and evaluation of potential instructional materials. DESE provides the [Evaluating and Selecting High Quality Instructional Materials Network](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/default.html) to support in this decision-making process, which combines differentiated sessions with personalized support to engage district teams in a guided and individualized rigorous curriculum adoption process.   
 

**Coherence and Professional Learning**

Once high-quality curricular materials are in place, districts should ensure [coherence across grades and subject areas](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-ensuring-coherence.pdf) and give teachers ample opportunity to engage in professional learning linked to their materials. To improve teaching and advance student learning requires weaving teachers’ professional learning together with the curriculum that students engage with every day ([Wiener & Pimentel, 2017](https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/04/Practice-What-You-Teach.pdf)). Examples like Louisiana show that linking high-quality curricular materials to teacher professional learning can be a winning and scalable combination ([Pondiscio, 2017](http://educationnext.org/louisiana-threads-the-needle-ed-reform-launching-coherent-curriculum-local-control/" \t "_blank)).

As professional development is being considered, it is important to keep the pillars of racial equity and [culturally responsive teaching and learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-responsive/default.html) at the forefront of priorities. To that end, DESE has compiled a list of vetted, recommended providers through the [Professional Learning Partner Guide](https://plpartnerguide.org/).

***Additional Resources***

Important definitions in assessing curricular materials:

* **Curricular materials** are resources teachers use to orchestrate sequences of student learning experiences: lesson and unit plans, texts in various formats, and more.
* **High-quality** means exhibiting a coherent sequence of target skills and understandings, evidence of impact if available, and other characteristics such as inclusive design and usability. DESE strongly recommends using a third-party, research based organization such as [EdReports](https://www.edreports.org/) to provide evaluations on quality objectively, or to use our internal, Massachusetts specific initiative, [CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/default.html). Some factors in quality are non-negotiable, while others vary by context: for example, cultural relevance to a school’s student population or compatibility with its technology infrastructure.
* **Standards-aligned** refers to when materials and instruction match the content and cognitive demand of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in a particular subject and grade level (and therefore also relates to coherence within and across grades). [CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/default.html) convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers specifically to analyze this component of curricular excellence.

**For more information, please contact** Craig Waterman, Associate Director of Instructional Policy;

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## 5. Expanded access to career-technical education, including “After Dark” district-vocational partnerships and innovation pathways reflecting local labor market priorities

Research demonstrates the positive impact of career/vocational education on student outcomes ([Dougherty 2014](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2014/03EdLines-CTEimpact.docx)), and the demand for career-technical education exceeds capacity at many vocational schools. Districts are encouraged to explore partnerships with employers and with each other that expand opportunities for students and provide mutual benefits to district and school partners. Career and Technical Education encompasses all experiences students have to develop interest and readiness for postsecondary careers from exploring potential industries of work to immersive learning and preparation for specific career fields. MA has various state programming to support Career and Technical Education, including:

* *Exploration experiences such as* [*Connecting Activities*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/connect/default.html) *and Innovation Pathways;*
* *Immersion experiences such as* [*Chapter 74*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/programs/default.html) *and* [*Chapter 74 Partnership Programs, also known as “After Dark”*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/afterdark/default.html)*,*
* *Student support systems such as* [*MYCAP – Career and Academic Plans*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/mycap/default.html)*;*
* *and* [*other resources available for review on DESE's website.*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/)

***Program Example: After Dark***

After Dark programs involve unique collaborations between vocational schools with established Chapter 74 programs and facilities and traditional high schools where students are seeking Chapter 74 career/vocational technical training. DESE program approval usually results in additional Chapter 70 state aid to support the sustainability of such After Dark programs.

As one example of how the model could be implemented, traditional high school students within a school district would take a reduced course load at their local high school and begin their school day later in the morning. After traditional academic classes from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., students would take a bus to the local vocational school, where they would be enrolled in Chapter 74 vocational programming for the rest of their school day from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. This would provide an opportunity for traditional high school students to gain access to vocational courses, and also provides an opportunity for vocational schools to reach additional students when their facilities might typically be vacant.

***High-Quality After Dark Program Components***

Key After Dark program features include:

* Altered schedule for participating students: Core academics at local high school and 900+ total hours of Chapter 74 instruction at technical school
* Alignment with regional workforce development priorities or other evidenced labor market demand
* MOU between districts for fiscal and programmatic components
* Consultation with the CTE school’s Program Advisory Committee
* Qualified instructional personnel
* Equitable admissions criteria

***Program Example: Innovation Pathways***

Innovation Pathways are structures within high schools that are designed to connect student learning to a broadly-defined industry sector that is in demand in the regional and state economy. Schools leverage strong partnerships with employers to provide students career awareness and work-based learning activities. Students participate in a series of courses and experiences relevant to achieving industry-recognized credentials. Participation in this kind of pathway can lead students to opportunities for meaningful careers in that industry sector upon the completion of required postsecondary education and training.

***High-Quality Innovation Pathways Program Components***

Key Innovation Pathway program features include:

* Equitable Access: Prioritizing students underrepresented in higher education and   
  high skill/high demand industries
* Guided Academic Pathways: At least two technical courses and two college-level courses
* Enhanced Student Supports: Wraparound services to promote success and completion
* Connection to Career: Exposure to targeted pathway opportunities intended to lead to a career and a 100-hour internship or capstone with related quality indicators
* Effective Partnerships: At least one public secondary school and/or district, a MassHire board, and at least one employer from the relevant industry that guides program development and implementation

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## 6. Culturally responsive teaching and other strategies that create equitable and culturally responsive learning environments for students.

Culturally responsive and sustaining districts, schools, and classrooms are those in which administrators and educators view culture and identity as assets. In practice, they intentionally support students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges to deepen their learning, build their understanding and respect for other cultures, and address systemic inequities.

We know from the research and evidence base—and from students and families—that when educators are responsive to students’ cultures and identities, students will have stronger relationships with educators, better learning experiences, higher self-esteem, better academic attitudes, and better academic. outcomes. (Dee & Penner, 2016, Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Gay, 2010, 2006; Hollins, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995.

***Implementation Considerations***

**Equity audits and self-assessments**

An in-depth equity audit or self-assessment is a valuable process for taking stock of the ways and extent to which a district or school is currently delivering a culturally responsive learning experience to its students. Using an equity lens, districts and schools use data to reflect upon: current policies, organizational and administrative structures, district and school climate, the classroom experiences of students, learning experiences and outcomes for different student groups. This process lays the groundwork for planning next steps, whether it be planning for professional learning, making changes to disciplinary practices and policies, or other areas identified as areas for growth and improvement.

**Professional learning**

District and school staff at all levels will need to deeply engage in a combination of technical and adaptive work to create culturally responsive learning environments for students, families, and staff.

* Technical work includes learning the skills, tools, and language to skillfully implement culturally responsive teaching and leading practices.
* Adaptive work includes ongoing learning and self-reflection. For example, educators must be aware of their own biases and how they impact the adults and students in the school community. Further, educators should embrace an asset-based mindset and make an explicit commitment to sustaining the cultural identity of students, families, and communities, while proactively investigating and working to address barriers and challenges students may face.

**Engage students, families, and a wide range of community groups as full partners**

Authentically engage students, families, and community partners as active participants in ongoing efforts to build and sustain culturally responsive districts and schools. There are numerous entry points for developing authentic engagement, including but not limited to: the vision development process, having a voice in selecting approaches and strategies, and interpreting data on implementation progress and outcomes.

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## 7. Expanded Learning Time (ELT) in the form of a longer school day or year to accelerate learning in collaborative, enriching, and culturally responsive learning environments that promote and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

There is a body of research supporting the efficacy of Expanded Learning Time (ELT) in [accelerating student achievement](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013124513495275) and closing gaps. In particular, the research points to ELT as a valuable resource to better serve student groups, including [economically disadvantaged students and students of color](https://www.air.org/project/boston-public-schools-study-expanded-learning-time). Studies show that, “[ELT is especially beneficial for students from low-income families, students of color, and students who are academically behind](https://restart-reinvent.learningpolicyinstitute.org/provide-expanded-learning-time)” as it provides access to academic support, engaging enrichment opportunities, and high quality instruction by teachers who regularly participate in meaningful collaboration.

As we have learned in over a decade of funding the expanded day model through Massachusetts state funding, successful implementation of additional time relies on a balanced and embedded allocation of expanded time which includes all or components of core academics (including academic support and acceleration), teacher collaboration and professional development, and enrichment opportunities informed by student voice.

***High-Quality Instructional Time***

Instructional time in an ELT model should be empowered with [high-quality curriculum](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/) and [instructional materials](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/), draw on [Deeper Learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/overview.html) practices, be [culturally responsive,](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-responsive/) and delivered in [inclusive](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ldrp.12011) and [safe and supportive learning environments](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/). Additional time for core content should be well planned and engaging for all students. Instruction should be delivered by highly effective teachers who have ample common planning time and participate regularly in meaningful professional development.

***High-Quality Common Planning Time Components***

Districts should consider a number of practices when incorporating or enhancing [common planning time](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1063553) in schools in order to [improve student outcomes](https://www.academia.edu/17182667/Teacher_Collaboration_and_Student_Achievement). These include, but are not limited to:

* Principal support to ensure common planning time is a school-wide priority, and that it receives necessary resources (including dedicated time, space, and materials);
* Clearly constructed group expectations and processes that teachers use to facilitate common planning time and work toward a common vision and goals;
* Facilitated data analysis complemented with data-driven discussion and planning to ensure informed action planning;
* Supporting a culture of professional learning and promoting trust among teachers, providing time for teacher teams to build relationships, establish routines, and develop a productive work cycle that results in positive student outcomes.

***High-Quality Enrichment Program Components***

In order for enrichment opportunities to provide the most benefit to students, districts should consider the following components when implementing:

* Providing a variety of programming options (such as arts, athletics, academic-based courses, and community service) that appeal to student interest and need;
* Allowing for student choice in the development and design of enrichment courses;
* Aligning all programs to standards to ensure students experience developmentally appropriate, rigorous, and coherent instruction; and
* Embedding all programming as part of the regular school day.

***Sustainable Funding Considerations for ELT***

Adding time for all students through a longer school day that embeds each of these three components can be challenging and expensive. Over the last decade, funding through state line item [7061-9412](https://budget.digital.mass.gov/summary/fy21/enacted/education/education-k-12/70619412) has been allocated through a $1,300 per pupil calculation to a select group of schools as a performance-based grant. As teacher contractual costs have increased, the funding calculation has not kept up, and the majority of the funds are allocated to teacher salaries without fully absorbing other costs. However, given the research supporting ELT as well as the [impact that COVID-19 has had on education](https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf), the urgency around the need for additional time, even in an abbreviated form, is pronounced.

With the influx of state dollars through the [Student Opportunity Act](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2019/Chapter132) (SOA) and new Chapter 70 school funding calculations, along with that of federal dollars through the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund, the possibilities for [funding an equitable approach to education through ELT is promising](https://edtrust.org/resource/covid-19-education-equity-guide-expanding-learning-time/).

Additional funding could support ELT in a variety of ways, which may include:

* Hiring additional staff (including specialists) to enable the school schedule to accommodate common planning time while other staff delivers student-informed enrichment programming;
* Engaging staff in robust professional development and common planning time and/or participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLC);
* Building a well-rounded staff-base that is aligned with student need (e.g. counselors, health workers, interventionists, etc.);
* Allocating funds to staff stipends for the additional time;
* Procuring high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and providing commensurate professional development for teachers.
* Providing extended opportunities for student learning, such as Acceleration Academies (see Evidence Based Program Example 8), intervention, tutoring, and acceleration.

**For more information:** Moira Connelly, Coordinator for Expanded Learning Time, [Moira.Connelly@mass.gov](mailto:Moira.Connelly@mass.gov); 781-338-3525

## 8. Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners

In inclusive settings, educators representing general education, special education, and English learner education work closely together to create instructional plans that are rigorous and purposeful and meet the needs of all students. The goal of this collaboration is to intentionally design, develop, and deliver instruction and supports matched to student needs. Inclusion is supported by inclusive practice, focused on universal design, with an emphasis on access and equity within the academic, social/emotional, and behavioral domains.

While evidence on the effectiveness of inclusion remains an emerging area of study, key studies indicate certain positive outcomes associated with this model of instruction. For example, [Schifter (2016)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290977914_Using_Survival_Analysis_to_Understand_Graduation_of_Students_With_Disabilities" \t "_blank) found that students with disabilities who were fully included were more likely to graduate from high school than similar students who were educated in self-contained settings. Schifter emphasizes the importance of this finding since students with disabilities who earn a high school diploma tend to experience greater rates of employment and college admission than those who do not. Moreover, researchers such as [Alquraini and Gut (2012)](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c515/5cd5d067f075b9092e73bae03173dab3306a.pdf?_ga=2.25945853.1309893711.1580948025-852132544.1580948025" \t "_blank) have documented the positive impact inclusion can have on student academic learning, communication, and socialization.

Intentionally designed [instructional practices](http://pubs.cec.sped.org/p6255/) in inclusive classrooms is vital in order to ensure that inclusion is effective for all learners. For example, [Le Paz and Sherman (2013)](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ldrp.12011) showed that when a cohort of students who are English learners (some with disabilities) in inclusive settings were taught specific writing strategies, those students were able to incorporate those strategies and improve the overall quality of their writing. This emphasizes the need for explicit, systematic instruction within general education settings to ensure the success of all students.

***High-Quality Program Components***

**Developed or Expanded Co-Teaching Model**

Co-teaching is an evidence-based model that exemplifies the key tenants of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) by leveraging the power of collaboration to best serve students. Efforts to promote a successful co-teaching model in the inclusive classroom may entail: providing time for co-teachers to build rapport and establish [equal roles and responsibilities](https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&=&context=education_ETD_masters&=&sei-redir=1&referer=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.bing.com%252Fsearch%253Fq%253DSuccessful%252520Co-Teaching%252520strategies%252520research%2526qs%253Dn%2526form%253DQBRE%2526sp%253D-1%2526pq%253Dsuccessful%252520co-teaching%252520strategies%252520research%2526sc%253D1-42%2526sk%253D%2526cvid%253D9E1A4C43E3C443229EE3F82E387C0D5C#search=%22Successful%20Co-Teaching%20strategies%20research%22); implementing staffing models for co-teaching; providing professional development on effective co-teaching; on-going district oversight and support; and adjusting schedules to enable regular collaboration time.

**Accommodations and Adaptations**

Educators may benefit from being supplied with customized and adapted curriculum materials in order to provide a wide variety of students full access to grade level content and standards. Educators likely need time to plan for instructional accommodations and adaptations so they can be delivered seamlessly within the inclusive classroom.

**Targeted Instructional Strategies**

The evidence base for specific instructional strategies, such as universal design for learning, explicit instruction, and cooperative learning continues to grow, and teams of teachers representing general education, special education and English learner education should jointly engage in professional development to gain an understanding of those strategies. Professional development related to instructional strategies that promote inclusion should be incorporated into coaching, team-based goal setting, and progress monitoring.

**Assistive Technology**

When many students with disabilities are provided with appropriate forms of assistive technology and aided and augmentative communication, their access to general education settings increases substantively. School may need support in purchasing technical devices as well as investing in professional learning opportunities so that all team members, including parents, can confidently use and implement these highly effective learning solutions.

**Collaboration among Educators and Paraprofessionals**

Paraprofessionals are highly engaged in supporting students in inclusive settings and can improve the quality of their supports when provided opportunities to collaborate with educators and other service providers. In many cases, extending their hours or creating scheduling solutions may be necessary for this collaboration to occur.

**For more info:**Susan Fischer, Access and Equity Associate; [Susan.Fischer@mass.gov](mailto:Susan.Fischer@mass.gov)

## 9. English Learner Education Programs (ELE), including dual language programs and transitional bilingual education programs

Bilingual education is an umbrella term for many types of programs, including dual language programs and transitional bilingual education programs, in which students receive instruction in two languages as well as Sheltered English Immersion. Well-designed, asset-based bilingual programs allow students to master academic content in two languages, while becoming bilingual, biliterate, and multiculturally competent. A growing research and evidence base suggests that bilingual education programs lead to increased academic outcomes for all students (native English speakers, native speakers of other languages, and English Learners), and can lead to improved exit rates from EL status. (Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. 2017; Valentino & Reardon, 2015; Gómez, 2013; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010; Marian, Shook, & Schroeder, 2013).  Dual language programs are considered *additive models*, because they keep developing and building upon a student’s native language while adding a second one; transitional bilingual education programs are considered subtractive models, because native language instruction for English learners is gradually phased out of instruction as English proficiency increases.

***Program Examples and Implementation Supports***

The matrix below outlines some key features that distinguish the three types of bilingual education programs supported by the department; there are further variations within each of these models.  Click the link for each type of program for additional information on defining the different types of programs, as well as implementation readiness checklists and planning and implementation tools. The [Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/default.html) describes DESE’s vision for English Learner Education—detailing the four pillars of success in which the vision is grounded (i.e., *School Culture, Access to Educators, Opportunity and Support, and a Plan for Future Success)* and the practical building blocks classrooms, schools, districts, and the state can use to support success.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ELE Program Features** \* | [Dual Language](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/programs/dle.html) Programs | [Transitional Bilingual Education](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/programs/tbe.html) | [Sheltered English Immersion](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/programs/sei.html) |
| **Program goal** | Promote bilingualism, biliteracy, cross-cultural competency, and high levels of academic achievement | General education curriculum is learned through two languages until the student is able to learn in English-only setting. | English learners are educated in a two-component program model: 1) Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) in English and English as a Second Language (ESL) to develop literacy and proficiency in English |
| **Student groups served** | *Two-way immersion programs:*  50% from one language group (native language speakers & ELs) + 50% native English speakers  *One-way immersion programs:* 100% Students from the same language group | English learners who speak a common home language; students often come from diverse backgrounds | English learners |
| **Proportion of time students receive instruction in each language** | Varies by program, see examples in guidance provided in the link above | Length of time student receives content instruction in native language varies by student, depending on English language proficiency and grade levels | English learners’ native languages may be used informally, but not routinely in instructional settings |
| **Duration of program** | 6 years or more for all students enrolled in the dual language program | Programs can start or end at any grade level, according to individual student performance patterns and needs and district policy. | Programs may start at any age or grade, and last as long as necessary, according to individual student performance patterns and needs. |

\**English as a Second Language is a required component of all English Language Education programs*

**For more info:**Allison Balter, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner and Director of the Office of Language Acquisition; [Allison.E.Balter@mass.gov](mailto:Allison.E.Balter@mass.gov); 781-338-3511

## 10. Acceleration Academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners

Acceleration Academies and summer learning are opportunities to increase student learning time outside of the traditional academic school year. These programs can provide students with targeted supports to master grade level standards and further accelerate advanced learners.

A study that focused more generally on the turnaround efforts in Lawrence, “[Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence from Lawrence, Massachusetts](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/schueler/files/schuelergoodmandeming_lps_eepa_2017.pdf)”, specifically highlighted the Acceleration Academies as a strategy that had a significant impact on student achievement, as measured by MCAS. A study of the program in Springfield, “[Making the Most of School Vacation](https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/edfp_a_00269)”, also showed positive effects on student outcomes.

***High-Quality Acceleration Academy Program Components***

Acceleration Academies are week-long academic programs designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons. The Acceleration Academies take place during the February and April vacation weeks and run for the entire week (five days). Each Acceleration Academy focuses on a specific content area (English language arts in February and math and science in April) and students who attend an Acceleration Academy receive the equivalent of an extra month of learning in one week. Acceleration Academy teachers are selected through a rigorous application process that focuses on their ability to positively impact student learning and achievement. The combination of additional highly-focused instructional time led by highly effective teachers has resulted in positive student outcomes in several districts that have implemented the Acceleration Academy model with fidelity.

Key features of the Acceleration Academies model include:

* Classes are taught by highly effective teachers.
* Teachers have the autonomy to tap into their expertise and develop curricula that meet the specific needs of their students.
* Core content teachers teach the same group of students throughout the week.
* Students receive at least four hours of core content instruction in the same subject area each day for the entire week.
* Class sizes are small (10-12 students).

***High-Quality Summer Learning Program Components***

High-quality summer programs provide students additional opportunities to master grade level standards and accelerate their learning. Research has shown these programs to have positive outcomes for students who attend compared to their peers who do not attend. According to a multi-year study commissioned by the [Rand Corporation](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1120.html) that focused on summer learning programs in five urban districts, the following guidelines improve the effectiveness of summer programs:

* Offer programs for at least five weeks.
* Create schedules that protect instructional time.
* Track and maximize attendance rates.
* Invest in instructional quality.
* Minimize costs by considering probable no-show and attendance rates.

**For more info:**

**Acceleration Academies:** Thomas Zorich, Dir. of Strategic Initiatives**;** [thomas.zorich@doe.mass.edu](mailto:thomas.zorich@doe.mass.edu)**;** 781-338-3528 **Summer Learning:** Allison Smith, Education and Data Specialist**;** [asmith@doe.mass.edu](mailto:asmith@doe.mass.edu)**;** 781-338-3232

## 11. Dropout prevention and recovery programs

***Implementation Considerations***

Several evidence-based practices provide opportunities for schools to serve students who have already dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out of high school. Districts and schools should look at well-targeted holistic practices to support students and use a well-defined cycle of inquiry using the [Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/ewis/) to help identify students at-risk of not meeting critical educational outcomes.

***Program Examples***

**Adult Advocates for Student Support**

As outlined in a 2016 [summary brief](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/massgrad/eval-reports/2016-sumbrief-adultadvocates.docx) of the MassGrad initiative by the UMass Donahue Institute, districts could hire dedicated, professional staff to work with at-risk students to improve student outcomes through support, prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts at the local level. The adult may be responsible for addressing chronic absence, academic and social needs, communication with families through channels including home visits, advocating for the student, and supporting college and career preparation. This work may include “re-engagement” centers specifically designed to recover students who have dropped out and to steer students who are far off track to re-engage in their own education. These centers can also connect students and their families to wraparound supports and community resources.

**Alternative Pathways**

Districts could develop new programs or schools that create smaller, more tailored environments to address the specific needs of certain populations of students and provide [alternative pathways](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/massgrad/eval-reports/2015-sumbrief-altpathways.docx) to a high school diploma. These environments often promote strong connections between students and staff members, while also allowing for more programming flexibility.

**Expanded School Year/Structured Learning Time and Summer Transition Programs**

Districts could create opportunities designed to support and develop academic skills, accelerate learning, or help students earn credits toward graduation in a structured program that is run beyond the school day or in the summer.  These expanded learning time opportunities may also provide enrichment and socio-emotional supports to increase school engagement and prepare students for academic success. Summer transition programs for students moving from middle to high school can provide a bridge toward what can often be a more complex environment. More detailed information about these programs can be found in this 2015 [MassGrad summary brief](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/massgrad/eval-reports/2015-sumbrief-expansion.docx), also produced by the UMass Donahue Institute

**For more info:** Lisa Harney, Dropout Prevention & Recovery Specialist; [lharney@doe.mass.edu](mailto:lharney@doe.mass.edu); 781-338-3903

## 12. Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention

A growing body of educational research demonstrates the positive impacts of teachers of color on short- and long-term academic outcomes of students of color. Specifically, the research finds that having a single teacher of color can boost academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment for students of color ([Gershenson et al., 2017](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2940620" \t "_blank); [Cherng and Halpin, 2016](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0013189X16671718" \t "_blank)). In addition, the research ([Griffin and Tackie, 2016](https://1k9gl1yevnfp2lpq1dhrqe17-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ThroughOurEyes.pdf), [Carver-Thomas, 2018](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-report), [Dixon, et al., 2019](https://teachplus.org/sites/default/files/downloads/teachers_of_color_retention_.pdf)) also demonstrates the importance and need to develop inclusive school environments for students and staff to support the retention of a diverse teacher workforce. The research indicates that inclusive school environments include characteristics such as:

* Shared or collective decision-making
* Opportunities for growth and development such as mentorship programs and access to professional development
* Cultivation of relationships with students and families to strengthen the school community

In light of these findings, recruiting and retaining a diverse and effective educator workforce is a promising strategy for districts and school leaders to pursue in service of increased academic and social and emotional outcomes for students.

***High-Impact Program Examples***

Teacher diversification strategies implemented by districts should be thoughtful, high-impact strategies informed by the district’s data (qualitative and quantitative) related to teacher recruitment and retention efforts. Examples of such strategies include, but are not limited to:

* Development or enhancement of an education-specific pathway for local high school students
* Financial assistance to district graduates, college graduates, paraprofessionals with bachelor’s degrees, and/or provisionally licensed teachers to support enrollment in approved educator preparation programs
* Financial incentives such as signing bonuses, relocation assistance, and/or loan repayment reimbursement to support teacher recruitment efforts

***Implementation Consideration***

The Department’s Guidebook on [Promising, Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies for a Diverse Massachusetts Teacher Workforce](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/guidebook.html) is a process guide for district and school leadership teams seeking to develop and implement a talent diversification strategy. The guidebook proposes four (4) key steps to support the development of a long-term talent diversification strategy:

1. **Understand why teacher racial and ethnic diversity matters to your students and district:** Naming your 'why' and aligning commitments, communications, practices, and policies to reflect that 'why' is key to building a coherent approach to building a more diverse workforce.
2. **Audit your current talent management processes, understand the experience of your stakeholders, and set goals:** Investing in a data-driven review of the current practices across the talent cycle will support both the understanding of gaps and barriers in the current practices and inform strategic short- and long-term efforts.
3. **Adjust your talent practices:** Armed with a clear understanding of the gaps in current practices, changes can immediately begin across areas of recruitment, selection, and retention.
4. **Create a long-term diversification strategy:** Building on learnings from the first three steps, create a long-term strategy of continuous improvement that elevates the role of diversification in the district's commitment to equity, integrating ongoing work toward a more inclusive, culturally sustaining culture across all talent practices.

**For more info:**Center for Strategic Initiatives, [CSI@mass.gov](mailto:CSI@mass.gov)

## 13. Leadership pipeline development programs for schools

More than half of Massachusetts principal hires are filled by first-year principals ([Barr Foundation, 2019](https://www.barrfoundation.org/blog/strengthen-school-leadership-massachusetts-report)); just over a third of our principals were assistant principals before assuming the principal role ([Austin et al, 2019](https://caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/CALDER%20WP%20213-0119-1.pdf)). According to these resources, Massachusetts is a national outlier relative to these two trends and it impacts administrator efficacy in the role. Massachusetts administrators are also predominantly white; statewide, just 12 percent of principals identify as black/Latinx/Asian/indigenous/mixed-race. Building leadership pipelines will lead to a more experienced and diverse pool of candidates for open principal roles.

Implementation of instructional leadership routines are a key strategy recommended in the [Acceleration Roadmap](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/roadmap/), a guide outlining the Department of Education’s priority areas and action steps for accelerating student learning in the 2021-22 academic year, because instructional leadership at the school level has a positive impact on student achievement.Principals create the conditions for learning within their buildings, whether in attracting and retaining effective teachers ([Grissom, 2011](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/fbfb/e9a11dbb70024657844d4dc3aebe17518d67.pdf?_ga=2.134315574.639089327.1581054794-1593048182.1581054794)), or in spreading effective teaching practices ([Manna, 2015](https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Developing-Excellent-School-Principals.pdf)). Additionally, as is evidenced throughout our understanding of [highly effective turnaround practices](http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/reports.html), shared leadership and teacher empowerment are critical to improving student outcomes. We know teachers can improve their practice and impact student learning, particularly when a collaborative and supportive environment is in place ([Kraft & Papay, 2014](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mkraft/files/kraft_papay_-_prof_env_teacher_development_eepa_full.pdf)). Well-designed teacher professional learning and coaching at the building level can drive this improvement.

***High-Quality Program Components***

Districts have the opportunity to build, improve and retain a pipeline of future principals by:

* Creating specific roles and/or structures that allows leaders-in-training the time and space to apply skills, improve practice, and add instructional leadership capacity to the building, and
* Providing high-quality training and support for individuals in these roles.

It is important to note that these two elements must work in conjunction; increased staffing must also be accompanied by training those in these roles.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Suggested Roles/Structures** | **Brief Description** |
| Principal Manager/Supervisor | Individual who provides direct support and coaching to a cadre of developing principals within a district. Individuals should be trained to serve in this role specifically. |
| Principal, Principal-in-residence, Assistant Principal, Dean of Curriculum & Instruction | An identified individual from within the school whose primary responsibilities involve providing direct coaching and instructional support for a team of teachers or instructional leaders within the building. |
| Instructional Coach/Lead Teacher/ Content Lead | Exemplary teacher with release time to provide coaching/instructional support to teachers, under the leadership of the principal or instructional leader. |

***Implementation Considerations***

Districts should consider the following criteria for selecting training for these leaders:

**Concrete Skills Focus:**Programs should providetraining in evidence-based practices that drive positive outcomes for students, which include but are not limited to: reviewing and selecting high-quality instructional materials;  supporting teachers to effectively use instructional materials; using data to facilitate and drive improvement in student learning; providing teachers with meaningful observation and feedback; improving teacher pedagogical content knowledge; leading student and staff culture; and implementing culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Demonstrated Impact**: The program should incorporate multiple measures of effectiveness for program participants and publicize its impact on participants, as well as on students in its program completers’ schools

**Diversity and Equity:**The program should attract, enroll, and graduate a diverse cohort of leaders that is well-prepared to support the students that the district serves.

**For more info**: Komal Bhasin, Chief Schools Officer; [Komal.Bhasin@mass.gov](mailto:Komal.Bhasin@mass.gov); 781-338-3516

## 14. Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions

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As a focus of the Student Opportunity Act, districts may implement strategies to recruit and retain educators and/or administrators in hard to fill positions and in schools needing support and assistance. Research shows that teachers have a significant impact on student’s academic performance ([Stronge & Hindman, 2003](http://www.esc4.net/Assets/hiring-the-best-teachers.pdf" \t "_blank)), and in high-poverty districts, a myriad of research supports that high-performing teachers have a greater impact on student outcomes ([Sass et al., 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0094119012000216)). However, research also suggests that high-needs districts have a harder time recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers. According to a DESE-commissioned policy brief on [Teacher Equity Gaps  (Cowan, Goldhaber, and Theobald, 2017),](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED589944.pdf) the average low-income student has a teacher who generates 1.7 fewer weeks of learning in mathematics and 3.6 fewer weeks of learning in English language arts per year than teachers assigned to non-low-income students. Therefore, districts may elect to focus on creating the conditions and systems that place the most effective teachers with students who need and will benefit from them most.

***Program Examples: Recruitment Strategies***

Districts and schools need to be strategic when recruiting for hard-to-staff schools and positions. Using data from historical recruitment strategies will help districts and schools better understand what has worked in the past and where they could increase particularly effective efforts. Some strategies to consider in this process include:

**Building Comprehensive Pipelines**

* Investing in student teacher and other pre-service pipeline programs and the addition of teaching assistant positions to classrooms as a method of training new educators
* Establishing partnerships with higher education institutions and other teacher preparation programs

**Creating an Effective Recruitment Strategy**

* Engaging in an honest culture and climate analysis to identify district and school strengths, as well as areas that might impede educator recruitment
* Targeting recruitment materials and activities towards effective and diverse teachers and leaders, with an emphasis on mission and cultural alignment
* Providing incentives for highly qualified teachers in schools requiring assistance or intervention
* Using best practice selection processes and accelerating hiring timelines for high-quality candidates

***Program Examples: Retention Strategies***

Increasing retention of highly-effective teachers and leaders not only compounds their positive impact on students, but reduces the operational and financial strain of continuously recruiting and training new educators. While districts and schools should use data and educator feedback to understand their specific opportunities and challenges, they could also consider the following strategies to promote teacher retention:

* Creating and maintaining a positive student and adult culture;
* Establishing induction, mentoring, and feedback programs for teachers;
* Providing ongoing opportunities for relevant, embedded professional development;
* Creating career pathways for teachers to work towards teacher leadership or school leadership opportunities; and
* Tailoring efforts to retain educators who are particularly effective based on their individual needs.

***Implementation Considerations: Equitable Distribution***

While recruiting and retaining a higher number of high-quality educators itself is an important goal, districts and schools should each consider ways to reconfigure school- and district-wide teacher assignments to account for the greatest student needs. In some cases, strategically and responsibly reassigning teachers may result in improved student experience and outcomes, as well as reduced recruitment challenges. The Department’s [Student Learning Experience Report](http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/equitableaccess/resources/) in Edwin provides districts with data in this area.

**For more info:**Erica Champagne, Effective Practices Director, [Erica.Champagne@mass.gov](mailto:Erica.Champagne@mass.gov);

781-338-3521

## 15. Increasing opportunities for educators and support staff to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, utilizing district and school teaming structures (B and E)

Description coming soon.

For more information: Karen Johnston, Regional System of Support Coordinator; 781-338-3539

## 16. Expanding capacity to address social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health needs of students and families (C, D and E)

Research shows that early intervention for children and youth with mental or behavioral health needs can prevent more serious problems in young adulthood and beyond. Providing services (both remedial and preventive) for children in or through schools can address a number of these barriers and may be less expensive than alternative delivery models.1 For example statistically significant positive effects of counseling were recorded on multiple fronts among third graders, including student learning, student social-emotional skills, teacher perceptions of school climate, and teacher attendance. Some evidence also suggested early counseling had long-term benefits on student behavior through high school ([Reback 2010](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pam.20528" \t "_blank)). Moreover, a research study on counselors in Massachusetts ([Mulhern 2020](http://papers.cmulhern.com/Counselors_Mulhern.pdf)) found that improving access to effective college counseling may influence high school graduation rates, college attendance, and college graduation rates, and may be a promising way to help students overcome challenges related to low socioeconomic status.

***Program Examples***

Strategies to support this domain include hiring additional and diverse specialized support personnel staff (e.g., school guidance and adjustment counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers), and/or establishing community partnerships to provide these services. Based on district and school need, this can take many forms, including but not limited to:

* Embedded staff in the school to coordinate supports and services for students, leveraging school staff as well as community-based partners (e.g., for services and enrichment opportunities at school or in the community);
* Strengthened inter-disciplinary student support teams comprising school staff and community partners (e.g., licensed community-based health providers who offer services to students at school) that meet regularly and make decisions using school and community level data to support academic success and students’ mental/physical health and wellbeing;
* Arranging for external wraparound services to be provided at school, for example, through on-site dental clinics, or school-based health centers;
* Community-based behavioral and mental health service providers who can offer services to students and guidance to staff, at school and/or in a community setting, during in-school or out-of-school time;
* Engaging community partners (especially those that have developed strong relationships with students’ families) to help inform and build the capacity of classroom educators as well as specialized instructional support personnel (counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.) to implement equitable learning environments that facilitate culturally responsive and sustaining development; and
* Working with community-based organizations and school staff to create and coordinate structured programs that support students who are out of school for mental or behavioral health reasons to transition back into school.
* Creating opportunities for students and families to lead efforts that inform and strengthen student support services and programming.

***Additional Resources***

Additionally, to improve the degree to which all staff are supporting students’ holistic needs (across interrelated domains such as academic, social, emotional, behavioral, physical, etc.), it is helpful to provide training and leadership backing that fosters [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf) and [Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/), and that furthers the development of comprehensive school mental health systems, such as the model promoted by the [National Center for School Mental Health](http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Foundations-of-School-Mental-Health/Advancing-Comprehensive-School-Mental-Health-Systems--Guidance-from-the-Field/).

**For more info:**Kristen McKinnon, Assistant Director, Student and Family Support; [Kristen.A.McKinnon@mass.gov](mailto:Kristen.A.McKinnon@mass.gov); 781-338-6306

## 17. Increasing opportunities for all students to engage in arts, enrichment, world languages, athletics, and elective courses. (D and B)

Description coming soon.

For more information: Karen Johnston, Regional System of Support Coordinator; 781-338-3539

## Developing Effective Family/School Partnerships

Family engagement is crucial for healthy growth of children and youth in all domains of health and development. Research indicates that quality family engagement can have a lasting effect on a child’s social-emotional and physical health, school readiness, academic achievement, and later success in life (e.g. Smith, Robbins, Stagman, & Mahur, 2013; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013; Henderson, & Mapp, 2003). The positive effects of family engagement last all the way through the K–12 years and beyond (e.g. El Nokali, Bachman, & VotrubaDrzal, 2010; Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2013; Jeynes, 2016). Students with more engaged parents have higher academic achievement and miss fewer days of school (e.g. Hayes, 2012). Family engagement improves child-teacher relationships (Dearing, Kreider, & Weiss, 2008) and helps smooth child and family transitions to kindergarten (Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012). Family engagement is also associated with positive outcomes at higher grades, such as higher graduation rates (Michaels & Ferrara 2005).

***High*-*Quality Program Components***

Developing effective family/school partnerships is a key mechanism for increasing family engagement in schools. [Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement In Massachusetts](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf) elaborates upon the following key elements of strong family/school partnerships: *Building Positive Relationships* *with Families; Promoting Family Well-Being; Promoting Pathways for Partnerships with Families. Supporting Child and Youth Development, Learning, Health and Well-Being. Strengthening Capacity for Family Engagement.* Some key program components one would expect to see in districts and schools with strong family-school partnerships that effectively address these elements include:

* Environments that are intentionally designed to be welcoming for families *(e.g., signage, parent center, interpreters and translated materials)*
* Hiring staff *(e.g., administrators, instructional and support staff, bus drivers, custodians)* with diverse backgrounds that reflect cultures in the community is prioritized.
* Multiple communication strategies and tools *(e..g, face-to-face meetings, What’sApp, Classroom Dojo, Zoom conferences)* are utilized to engage with families in ways that are work best for them.
* Family from diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds are trained to serve as ambassadors /cultural brokers to help other families become more engaged in schools
* The district and schools develop and implement an intentional, comprehensive approach to: enhancing families’ understanding of teaching and learning goals; capacity to effectively engage with the district and school; and transitions between school levels and post-secondary transitions.
* Well-developed parent-teacher home-visiting programs.
* Families are encouraged to participate as partners in meaningful decision-making at the district and school level and, as needed, are provided with supports to participate effectively and actively.
* All district and school staff are engaged in ongoing professional development on effective family engagement that: addresses skills and knowledge, developing trusting relationships, addresses beliefs and values, and reflects the cultures and values of families in the community.
* A strong focus on routinely collecting formal and informal data from families and students *(e.g., annual school climate surveys, focus groups)* to identify issues and concerns. Families are engaged in interpreting those data, which are used to drive continuous improvement.
* Developing robust partnerships with community organizations and agencies and connecting families with them.

The district and school develop a multilingual family portal webpage using family-friendly language to provide information on the resources available in the school and community.

**For more info contact:** Olga Lopez, Family Engagement Specialist, [Olga.Lopez@mass.gov](mailto:Olga.Lopez@mass.gov), 781-338-6315

## 19. Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wraparound services (C)

As noted in the Commissioner’s “[Our Way Forward](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2019/2019-06/item2.docx)” report, “systems of integrated student supports” can help leverage students’ strengths and interests, and address their needs in ways that enable them to more effectively “engage in the type of critical thinking and deeper learning to which our schools and education systems aspire.”[[1]](#footnote-2) In most cases, schools alone cannot deliver these experiences for all students. Instead, schools and districts can work to develop strong school-community partnerships to support wraparound services and enrichment experiences for all students. These experiences may take place school or community settings, during the school day or during out-of-school time.

***High-Quality Program Components***

As noted in the Department’s [Guidance on Conditions and Habits of Successful Partnerships](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57f030b95016e13a6d42e810/t/5a4507fe8165f5bbbf8e2811/1514473474406/MA+ESE+Conditions+and+Habits+of+Successful+Partnerships+Guidance.pdf), some key conditions at the outset of a partnership, as well as ongoing habits throughout, can lay the foundation for a positive and successful partnership. Key conditions and habits for school-community partnerships are noted below, and more details and associated tools can be found in the previously linked guidance document.

**Alignment of Strategic Priority and Objectives** **(Condition)**

* The partner’s work directly aligns to the district’s strategic priorities.
* The partner’s work complements and is coordinated with the work of other district initiatives and/or partners.
* The partner and district work together to build district and school capacity for long-term impact.
* Stakeholders have a voice in the process of establishing readiness and creating an implementation plan.

**Appropriate and Sufficient Resources (Condition)**

* The district, partner, and school agree upon resources allocated.
* Sufficient financial resources, including a committed budget over time, are dedicated to services.
* Sufficient time is allocated for all staff members to complete the work.
* The partner organization and its personnel have experience in targeted programming and data to document successful implementation.
* Both the district and partner identify a point person with dedicated time to manage the project.

**Clear Metrics (Condition)**

* The district, partner, and school agree upon clear metrics for success (outputs/outcomes for students/adults).
* Metrics are created such that they are measurable, at minimum, on a quarterly basis.

**Communication, Progress Monitoring, and Collaboration (Habit)**

* The district, partner, and school adhere to a plan of, at minimum, monthly informal communication.
* The district and partner make an effort to communicate formally on a quarterly basis, and to identify a point person and a higher authority in each organization to attend progress reviews.
* There is an agreed-upon protocol for resolving conflict and a mechanism for dissolving the partnership, if needed.
* There is a solutions-oriented, flexible, and inventive process for continual improvement.

***Additional Resources***

Additional [tools and guidance documents](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Vn-J46TNZdlYP3zEZJsxfoWqcSGd3x2r) have been shared by the Department’s [Systems for Student Success](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/prof-dev/) Office. Moreover, complementary resources can be found in the Coalition for Community Schools and National Association of School Psychologists’ [Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593295.pdf), and in the Harvard Family Research Project’s [Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ost-ptnrsp-for-lrng-report.pdf).

**For more info:** Karyl Resnick, 21st Century Comm. Learning Ctr. Prog. Coord.; [kresnick@doe.mass.edu](mailto:kresnick@doe.mass.edu); 781-338-3515

## 20. Labor-management partnerships to improve student performance

Collaborative relationships between teachers’ union leaders and district and school administrators with an emphasis on instructional quality and students’ academic needs can lead to meaningful improvements in student performance. Often referred to as labor-management partnerships, these structured, collaborative alliances between district leaders, union leaders and teachers have encouragingly been found to be significantly linked to student performance and growth, even after accounting for school type and socioeconomic status.1

***High-Quality Program Components***

According to the Center for American Progress study linked above, successful joint labor-management partnerships frequently exhibit the following characteristics:

**Culture of Collaboration**

First, there exists a culture of collaboration whereby both union and schools and district leaders experience and report collaborative relationships that provide for mutual involvement. Leaders also note a shared sentiment of respect for teachers as professionals.

**Shared Governance & Management**

Second, union and management leaders establish a model of shared governance and management, characterized by clear systems for formal, joint planning and decision-making. These create ways by which union and district and school leaders can align on joint priorities for educators within the district and work together to advance those priorities.

**Fully Integrated Collaboration Focused on Student Performance**

Finally, in labor-management partnerships, collaboration goes beyond the top district and union leaders and is extended to the school and teacher level, where teachers and administrators work closely together to make decisions about how best to meet their students’ needs. Union members may lead or be involved in data teams, grade-level teams, and department teams. Members are also able to participate in decision-making processes around curriculum, instructional practice, and related areas.

***High-Quality Program Example***

Labor-management partnerships in Massachusetts have led to several innovative approaches to school improvement across the state. As reported by the Rennie Center, within the first two years of formulating joint labor-management practices between association leaders, district administrators and school committee members, joint labor-management teams were able to initiate many evidence-based practices, including:

* improving professional development systems,
* implementing educator evaluation practices, and
* planning for a dual language immersion school.

In each case, such initiatives become possible when labor-management partnerships were explicitly formed, and all members engaged in training and received consultation in improving collaboration and problem solving with a specific focus on teaching and learning ([Massachusetts Education Partnership, 2015](https://www.renniecenter.org/sites/default/files/media-icons/MEP_Research_FirstTwoYears.pdf)).

**For more info:**Russell Johnston, Deputy Commissioner; [Russell.Johnston@mass.gov](mailto:Russell.Johnston@mass.gov)**;**781-338-3564

## 21. Facilities Improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J)

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Students and teachers alike are impacted by the physical quality of the schools they attend and in which they work ([Filardo, Vincent, & Sullivan, 2019](https://kappanonline.org/how-crumbling-school-facilities-perpetuate-inequality-filardo-vincent-sullivan/)). For students, researchers have found correlations between poor physical and environmental conditions and weak student performance ([Earthman, 2002](https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5sw56439); [Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/807a/b7335c74f333f5b5b3ad153b39a2fad5dbdb.pdf); [U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf)). In addition, poor quality in the physical conditions of schools has been correlated with lower daily attendance and higher dropout rates ([Branham, 2004](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.00266.x)). Conversely, improved school facilities, such as those that have been rebuilt, refurbished or structurally improved, have shown to be associated with improved student achievement outcomes ([Lafortune & Schonholzer, 2017](https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Policy-Brief-Lafortune-Schoenholzer.pdf" \t "_blank)). For example, a recent working paper identified that improving air quality in classrooms through replacing air filters positively correlates with improvements in students' math and English language arts scores, and those improvements persisted into the next academic year ([Gilraine, 2020](https://www.edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai20-188.pdf" \t "_blank)).

Teachers are also impacted by the quality of school facilities. Educators who perceive their school working environment to be subpar report that they are less likely to remain in their current positions, demonstrating that poor school facilities can negatively impact teacher retention ([Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004](https://www.reynolds.k12.or.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/bond_projects/page/5596/school_facility_quality_and_teacher_retention.pdf)). Similar to the experiences of students, small physical modifications, such as improving air filtration systems, can lead to better outcomes for teachers, in this case improved reported rates of job satisfaction ([Batterman et al., 2017](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ina.12384)).

As described by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health, "the evidence is unambiguous -- the school building influences student health, thinking, and performance" ([Eitland et al., 2017](https://forhealth.org/Harvard.Schools_For_Health.Foundations_for_Student_Success.pdf" \t "_blank)). Choosing to use Student Opportunity Act resources to improve school facilities can be a sound and effective way to improve outcomes for students and educators alike.

Due to the unique natures and challenges of facilities within and across Massachusetts, districts wishing to use funding in this area will need to provide a description of their particular needs, as well as a justification for how improvements would support student learning experiences.

**For more info:**Matt Deninger, Chief Strategy and Research Officer; [Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov](mailto:Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov); 781-338-3117

1. #### Weiss, Elaine and Reville, Paul (2019). Broader, Bolder, Better: How Schools and Communities Help Students Overcome the Disadvantages of Poverty. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 4-5.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)