

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Members of the Board of Higher Education  
**From:** Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner and Noe Ortega, Commissioner  
**Date:** June 18, 2024  
**Subject:** DESE/DHE Efforts to Strengthen and Diversify the Educator Workforce

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This is a written update in advance of the June 20, 2024, Joint Board Meeting for members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education, focused on our collective work to cultivate a more effective and diverse educator workforce in Massachusetts. Updates related to relevant initiatives, programs, and policies across the following areas are included:

- [Pipeline Initiatives](#)
- [Preparation & Licensure](#)
- [Supporting Schools & Districts to Advance Diversity](#)
- [Data Collection & Reporting](#)

### Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 2023, the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released an updated [Educational Vision](#) along with Strategic Objectives to guide DESE in service of this new vision using our Racial Equity Decision-making Tool (REDT) to support the process and to ensure the vision is grounded in DESE's core values. The Educational Vision reflects evidence-based best practices that advance diverse, equitable, and inclusive schools. Since the launch of the vision, DESE has been working to ensure all workstreams align to the vision and objectives.

- Strategic Objective 1 focuses on cultivating systems to support the whole student and foster joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.
- Strategic Objective 2 focuses on promoting deeper learning so that all students engage in grade-level work that is real-world, relevant, and interactive.
- Strategic Objective 3 focuses on developing and sustaining a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators.

In partnership with the Department of Higher Education (DHE), this memo describes efforts aligned with Strategic Objective 3 and our collective commitment to strengthen and

diversify the workforce, to ensure that all schools are culturally responsive and operating continuous cycles of improvement, and to cultivate effective, culturally, and linguistically sustaining teaching and leadership practices in schools and classrooms throughout the Commonwealth.

## Pipeline Initiatives

### Leadership Development

#### Influence 100

Research shows that [Black, Hispanic and Latino students have better academic outcomes](#), are better represented in gifted programs and experience a more supportive school culture when their districts are led by those who look like them. Currently, 7 percent of Massachusetts school superintendents are people of color, while 44 percent of the students served by public school districts are people of color. In FY2020, DESE launched Influence 100 to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of superintendents in Massachusetts, create more culturally responsive districts and leaders across the Commonwealth, and promote better outcomes for students. Participating districts select rising leaders to participate in a 2-year fellowship to prepare for superintendent roles through monthly training and ongoing support, with a particular focus on equity. Districts and school committees with participating fellows also agree to participate in professional development and technical assistance with DESE to enhance their strategic planning for equity. Now in its fifth year (FY2024), Influence 100 comprises 41 fellows from 19 districts: 79 percent are people of color, 44 percent are current school leaders, and 66 percent are central office leaders. A combination of grant funds and targeted assistance funds support professional development, stipend to participating fellows, and continue a multi-year third party evaluation of the initiative with the UMASS Donahue Institute (UMDI). State & grant funding: \$336,500 (FY24). <https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/influence100.html>

#### New Superintendents Induction Program (NSIP)

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have formed an innovative partnership to develop strong district leadership and, by extension, enhance district capacity to support school improvement. The New Superintendents Induction Program (NSIP) supports cohorts of new superintendents through an induction process built on a framework of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind critical to effective school district leadership.

In 2023, MASS and DESE expanded the program's curriculum to include a culturally responsive leadership strain which seeks to build skills in superintendents to understand what effective schools look like when they are serving all students well. New superintendents deepen their understanding of the culture and climate that is needed in schools to ensure marginalized students are successful, as well as developing staff to embrace diversity of the students and BIPOC staff being hired.

Approximately 50% of current superintendents in Massachusetts are current or recent NSIP graduates. The cost of the program is over \$500,000 a year. DESE contributes \$200,000 to the program; the rest of the funds come from the BARR Foundation, MASS, and payments from the superintendents' districts.

### **BIPOC Leaders Conference and Affinity Space**

In FY 2024, DESE established a yearly BIPOC leadership conference to provide BIPOC leaders with a safe space to talk about their experience, share advice on how to navigate the current political landscape, and tend to their social-emotional needs. Turnover rates for superintendents of color are skyrocketing, and leaders in general have faced major difficulties in moving diversity and equity forward. It is important to create a safe space for BIPOC leaders to learn and seek affirmation for their work. DESE anticipates supporting this conference twice a year starting in FY 25. State funding: \$60K (FY24).

### **Aspiring Principals Fellowship**

In Summer 2024, DESE will launch the first Aspiring Principals Fellowship. Modeled after Influence 100 in an effort to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of school leaders in Massachusetts, this one-year fellowship will support a cohort of aspiring principals to deepen their culturally responsive leadership skills through robust mentoring and aligned professional development, and position graduates to apply for provisional licensure at the conclusion of the fellowship. State funding: \$225K (FY24).

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/aspiring-principals.html>

### **Teacher Development**

#### **The InSPIRED Initiative**

The InSPIRED Initiative connects current educators with DESE to help cultivate, support, and retain a culturally responsive and diverse educator workforce in MA schools. The Initiative promotes education as a meaningful, rewarding career pathway and elevates the voices and brilliance of educators of color. The Initiative consists of two communities: the Statewide Affinity Network, which aims to create a safe space for educators of color to network, engage in dialogue about their authentic experiences, and explore professional development opportunities and/or action that makes for a more equitable experience in their schools; and the InSPIRED Fellowship, which is a selective opportunity for current educators who leverage their backgrounds and personal connections to communicate stories and calls to action to current and prospective educational leaders, helping them understand the impact of BIPOC on PK–12 students. Learn more here:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/inspired/>. State funding: \$100K (FY24).

#### **MA's First Registered Teacher Apprenticeship**

In FY 2024, DESE allocated \$450,000 to establish the Commonwealth's first registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) in partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Workforce Development. These initial funds are supporting the development of statewide standards for a teacher apprenticeship model and a competitive grant program for the first cohort of pilot districts. In 2025, we plan to launch registered teacher

apprenticeships in three to four pilot sites through robust partnerships between teacher preparation providers and K12 schools and districts. The long-term goals of the RTAP are to establish a sustainable route into teaching through a job-embedded pathway to licensure at no cost to candidates, and to increase the diversity of the teacher pipeline. State funding: \$450K (FY24). Anticipated future state funding: \$3 million (FY25).

#### Diversifying the Educator Workforce Grant

In FY23, DESE launched the [Massachusetts Public K–12 Educator Diversification](#) Grant program, through which it provided \$1,750,000 to non-profit organizations and institutions of higher education to deepen or expand efforts to recruit and develop a more diverse educator workforce. Grant recipients use the funds to enhance or expand existing programs and partnerships, or to develop new partnerships with MA public schools and districts to increase the recruitment and retention of effective racial and ethnically diverse educators. Some exemplars from the grant awardee pool include Stonehill College, Teach Western Mass, UMASS Lowell, and the Boston Plan for Excellence. In FY24, the grant was renamed [Diversifying the Educator Workforce Grant](#) with \$1,463,000 in state funding.

#### Paraprofessional Pipeline Grant

Launched in 2005, the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant provided by DHE awards financial assistance to paraprofessionals in Massachusetts public schools planning to become certified full-time teachers. Over the first seven years, this grant has supported over 530 paraprofessionals transitioning to lead classroom roles. In FY22, 39 percent of applicants identified as people of color. State funding has ranged from \$302K to \$540K per year, with individual awards ranging from \$4,000-\$7,500 annually. More information is available here: <https://www.mass.edu/osfa/programs/teacherprep.asp>.

#### Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program

The Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program seeks to address the teacher shortage in Massachusetts and support individuals with scholarship assistance of up to \$25,000 per year toward their college education. Students attending a public university are eligible to apply. Scholarship recipients commit to teach in a Massachusetts K-12 school one year for each year they receive the scholarship. For school year 2023-2024, The DHE received 381 applications across the state universities and UMASS campuses. Thus far, the DHE has awarded \$2,575,746 to 141 students. Individual students received scholarship awards in amounts that ranged from \$2,613 to \$25,000, and the average award is \$18,268 per student.

#### Educators Loan Repayment Program

The Educator Loan Repayment Assistance Program is designed to assist educators with the repayment of education loans acquired to support their college expenses. The program prioritizes the recruitment and retention of a racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce consistent with chapter 132 of the acts of 2019 to diversify the educator workforce. The program application will be available through mid-summer and the first payments out of this program will be disbursed in August 2024.

Applicants must be currently part of the educator workforce in a public school in Massachusetts and are eligible to receive up to \$7,500 towards their outstanding loan debt.

### MassTeach

The Department of Higher Education received a \$1.5M National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Scholarship grant in 2018 called MassTeach. The goal of MassTeach is to exclusively recruit students from seven of the fifteen community colleges who are interested in transferring to one of six partnering universities to become a STEM teacher. In return for receiving a scholarship of \$30,000, MassTeach scholars commit to teaching in a high needs district for four years. Beyond the scholarship funds, students highly value the intense advising, case management, and participating in cohort meetings with other STEM education students from across the Commonwealth. To date, the program has graduated eight teachers, all of whom will be in the classroom in the classroom in Fall 2024. An additional eight will be in the process of earning their baccalaureate degree in a STEM field and their secondary education license. The seven community college partners include Berkshire Community College, Bristol Community College, Holyoke Community College, Massasoit Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, and Springfield Technical Community College. The six university partners that are able to offer scholarships include Bridgewater State University, Fitchburg State University, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Westfield State University, and Worcester State University.

### Elementary and Secondary Associate-to-Bachelor's Degree Pathways

The DHE has collaborated with community college and university faculty from the public higher education institutions to establish Associate-to-Bachelor's (A2B) degree pathways across the Commonwealth. These pathways ensure that students can begin their college experience at any community college and transfer to any Massachusetts public institution of higher education and have the coursework in their major be accepted for credit. This strategy alleviates the need for individual articulation agreements and takes the guesswork out of transfer for students and advisors. The DHE has worked with faculty, as well as DESE staff, to establish A2B pathways in elementary education and secondary education. This is critical for increasing teacher diversity because it creates a clear academic pathway for students enrolled in community college, which is the most diverse segment of higher education, to become teachers. Secondly, it also signals to community college students that this is a viable career pathway for them that is not obvious in absence of a pathway. The A2B pathway provides an opportunity for introductory education courses to be redesigned and now include a social justice and racial equity focus. This course should be broadly appealing to any student interested in how the education system has reinforced national policies that favor some populations and disadvantages others, and it potentially can be used as a recruitment tool for students of color to consider going into education because the content seems more relevant through this redesign. The maps are in development and should be ready for posting in Academic Year 2024-2025.

## Preparation and Licensure

### Preparation

#### Updated Guidelines for Educator Preparation

In September 2023, DESE released new [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/program-approval/), which set forth the standards for educator preparation that lead to endorsement for licensure in the Commonwealth. These updated Guidelines reinforce expectations for evidence-based instructional practices in individual licensure programs aligned with DESE's Educational Vision and grounded in anti-racist and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, such that MA educators are prepared to support ALL students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations with targeted support. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/program-approval/>

### Licensure

#### Emergency Licensure

In Spring 2020, DESE began issuing emergency licenses in order to mitigate the impact of state- and nation-wide closures of licensure testing sites on the educator pipeline. The emergency license allowed individuals who had not yet completed standard licensure requirements to enter the workforce. Under the emergency license, individuals could functionally begin teaching with just a bachelor's degree, though they must eventually complete traditional requirements once their emergency licenses expire.

The emergency license played a key role in mitigating COVID-induced workforce shortages while simultaneously contributing to the diversity of the workforce. Emergency licenses were first issued for the 2020-2021 school year and stopped being issued on November 7, 2023. In the school year 2021-2022, at least 27% of teachers hired on an emergency license identified as people of color, newly hired teachers with emergency licenses were likely to be teachers of color than new hires with initial and provisional licenses, and survey data indicates that they want to remain in the profession.

There are currently over four thousand teachers employed on an emergency license. These licenses expire on different schedules, depending on the field and the issuing date (see [our website for details](#)). To assist emergency license holders advance their license, DESE has invested significantly in understanding their unique needs and developing targeted supports and resources. See additional detail below.

*Research & Data.* In 2020, DESE commissioned a three-year evaluation of the emergency license. [Year 1](#), [Year 2](#), and [Year 3](#) reports are now available. This evaluation has informed targeted supports to emergency license holders and will inform future licensure policy. Based on the evaluations, we know the following about emergency license holders:

- The emergency license performed as designed and allowed educators who experienced pandemic-related licensure barriers to access the profession.

- Emergency license holders are more ethnoracially diverse than other license holders and are working in our highest-need schools.
- Emergency licensed educators are employed, retained, and intend to stay at similar rates to other novice educators.
- Emergency license holders from 2020 with prior educator preparation and/or classroom experience appear to be as effective as other newly hired teachers.
- More recent emergency licensed teachers have less prior classroom experience and less prior prep experience.
- Overall, students of emergency licensed teachers are performing significantly lower in Math and Science, and non-test student outcomes (discipline rates, absences) are also trending in a negative direction in comparison to students of traditionally prepared and licensed novice teachers.
- Overall, emergency licensed teacher evaluation ratings are significantly lower than those of traditionally prepared and licensed novice teachers.
- Emergency licensed teachers of color are converting to permanent licensure at much lower rates than white emergency licensed teachers.
- Emergency licensed educators experience novel licensure challenges that will require targeted supports.

*Supports.* DESE has invested over \$2.6 million of state and federal funds to support emergency license holders transition to a permanent license.

- MTEL Voucher program – DESE has issued over 2,000 MTEL vouchers to emergency license holders who were working on an emergency license in the 2022-23 school year.
- Emergency License Educator Preparation Partnership Grant – In FY23, DESE issued \$1.3 million of ESSER funds to ten educator preparation programs to support the implementation and/or expansion of licensure pathway/pipeline programs that are designed to support emergency licensed educators advance to a Provisional or Initial license.
- Regional Licensure Assistance Centers – In Spring 2024, DESE launched five Regional Licensure Assistance Centers to support to emergency license holders working in Massachusetts schools. Regional centers will support emergency license holders to convert their emergency licenses to more permanent licenses through August 2025. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/regional-centers/default.html>

## MTEL Alternative Assessment Pilot

Beginning in October 2020, following approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE began implementation of a pilot of alternative licensure assessments. Through this pilot, DESE seeks to be more inclusive in its approach to identifying strong educators in the state, particularly those who are systematically marginalized, by identifying and piloting alternative mechanisms for assessing knowledge and skills while continuing to hold a high bar for all educators. In 2022, the Board voted to extend the pilot through June 30, 2025 to ensure a robust and multi-year set of data to inform the recommendation of a permanent regulatory change.

*Approved Alternatives.* To date, DESE has approved over 30 alternative assessments and subtests, including five Communication and Literacy Skills tests (CLST) and 18 subject matter tests (two more rolling out in late January). The 18 subject matter alternative assessments include the following:

- [MTEL-Flex](#): MTEL-Flex provides an assessment option for MTEL candidates whose score on select MTEL test fields is very close to the passing score (within one standard error of measurement of passing). Candidates who meet the eligibility requirements may submit an MTEL-Flex assessment rather than retaking the full MTEL test. For MTEL-Flex, candidates provide an analysis of an MTEL test objective to demonstrate the depth of their subject matter knowledge.
- [Educator Preparation Subject Matter Knowledge Attestation](#): Sponsoring Organizations may attest to educator preparation candidates' subject matter knowledge in alignment with the required subject matter MTEs. Sponsoring Organizations design their Subject Matter Attestations based on [Department issued Guidelines](#).
- [Additional Approved Subject Matter Knowledge Alternatives](#): DESE has approved two additional alternative assessments from Educational Testing Service (ETS) with specific eligibility requirements.

*Research and Evaluation.* DESE has invested \$500,000 to conduct an evaluation of the alternative assessments. DESE's evaluation vendor, AIR's National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER), has delivered three reports to the Board, most recently in [October 2023](#). The following findings are available:

- Educator candidates who passed the CLST Alternatives were more likely to be Black (7%) or Hispanic (11%) than candidates passing the traditional CLST (4% and 6%, respectively).
- Educator candidates working in Massachusetts public schools on emergency licenses were more likely to take the CLST alternatives. In addition, survey responses indicate that the alternative tests may disproportionately draw teachers attending out-of-state programs or those considering licensure in other states.
- Candidates taking alternatives struggled with the traditional MTEL: 42% of participants had previously failed the CLST. In addition, 67% of survey respondents reported the requirement was a barrier to licensure,



and 85% reported that test difficulty was somewhat or very important in their decision to take an alternative.

- Teacher candidates who passed the MTEL-Flex were slightly more likely to be Black (4%) or Hispanic (7%) than candidates passing the traditional MTEL (3% and 6%, respectively).
- Over the last 18 months, the MTEL-Flex has become the most popular method of retaking the MTEL subject tests among eligible candidates.
- The number of participants in the program attestation option approximately doubled over the last year. Participants are more likely to be employed in teaching roles on emergency licenses than other teachers attending their programs. They are also more racially diverse.

DESE will use the data and results included in the evaluation to inform the recommendation for the acceptance of alternative assessments to the MTEL beyond 6/30/25. More information is available here: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/alt-assess/default.html>.

## Supporting Schools & Districts to Advance Diversity

### Grants

#### Teacher Diversification Grant Program

DESE established the [Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant](#) in FY19 to support districts in recruiting diverse educators through high school teacher pathways, loan repayment, tuition reimbursement, and sign-on bonuses. We have remained adaptive and attentive to both research and feedback from participants to ensure funding is having the desired impact. The funding areas expanded to include MTEL voucher distribution to novice teachers, teacher retainment bonuses, and efforts to create a more culturally responsive and inclusive school environment for everyone.

Since the inception of the grant, it has distributed over \$14.5 million in state funds to more than ninety districts. More information is available here:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/pilot-grant.html>.

### Professional Development

#### Teacher Diversification Professional Learning Community

The [Teacher Diversification Professional Learning Community](#) (TDPLC) is a high-quality, talent diversification professional development series to support schools and districts in understanding the components needed to develop and implement a comprehensive talent diversification strategy (recruitment, selection, and retention) centered around cultural proficiency. For four years, in partnership with TNTP, DESE has led this professional development series to support participating districts with a new lens/mindset to identify and address technical and adaptive challenges both internally and systemically towards the recruitment and retention of diverse educators. State funding: \$1,429,031 (FY20-FY23)

In FY24, DESE launched a new RFQ to enhance the TDPLC and update DESE's "Promising Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies for a Diverse Massachusetts Workforce"

guidebook to include updated research best practices, updated research data, new resources, data obtained from TDPLC focus groups, and new case studies from TDPLC districts. William James College was awarded the initial contract for \$425,000 and will be eligible for two additional years of funding, totaling \$1.1 million in state funds over three years.

### Equity in Action

The Equity in Action initiative is a working group coalition of districts who are implementing real-time equity strategies and facing barriers to implementation. Through the Immunity to Change Model, district leadership teams begin a mindset transformation requiring them to recognize and overcome blind spots, unearth competing commitments, and free themselves of limiting assumptions. Through this work, district teams are able to tackle the adaptive challenges faced in the work. The program works in partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents where they host an additional two years of programming for district teams. In the second and third year, the teams use the Reimagine Integration: Diverse and Equitable Schools Project Assessment to cull out a strategy and gain allyship.

In FY23 and FY24, DESE dedicated \$250,000 each year to the project. The vendor for the project is Harvard University. The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents further supports this effort in the second and third year with additional funding from the BARR foundation. The project will continue into FY25.

### Tools and Resources

#### The Talent Guide

This online guide provides evidence-based information and resources to support districts in developing and sustaining a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/>

#### The Teacher Diversification Guidebook

This comprehensive guidebook supports district and school leaders to design and implement a teacher diversification strategy in service of achievement and equitable outcomes for students. A process guide for district and school leadership teams, this resource walks district teams through four key steps to building and implementing a talent diversification strategy, from *recruitment* and *selection* through *retaining* teachers of color to ensure that students and communities benefit from the sustained impact of more diversity at the front of the classroom. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/guidebook.html>

### Standards of Effective Practice

#### Updated Standards for Effective Practice that Advance Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Teaching and Leading

DESE has recently updated the Standards of Effective Teaching and Leading to integrate and strengthen culturally and linguistically sustaining practices across all four standards. The updates are grounded in DESE's Educational Vision for effective teaching and

leadership and reflect input from educators, students, and families across Massachusetts on antiracist, inclusive, and equitable practices that support all students to attain academic knowledge and skills, understand and value themselves and others, and engage with the world. In FY24, DESE supported 10 districts to pilot these revised standards through their educator evaluation processes, and providing calibration training and communities of practices to teachers and leaders.

An updated model rubric for classroom teacher evaluation, along with updated Professional Standards for Teachers (which guide pre-service expectations) will be released Summer 2024.

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/standards/default.html>

## Data Collection & Reporting

DESE's [School and District Profiles](#) continues to be one of the most robust and comprehensive data collection and reporting systems in the nation, with a particular commitment to making disaggregated data publicly available. Two new reports elevate this commitment: the Educator Data Dashboard and the Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub (E2C Hub).

### Educator Data Dashboard

Released in 2022 on DESE's Public Profiles website, the [Educator Data Dashboard](#) displays state and district level educator data by race and ethnicity across two reports. The Employed Educators Report provides the most recent three years of data for educators employed in MA schools by job classification, race, and ethnicity, including total educators, new hires, retention, experienced educators, and in-field data. The Educator Pipeline Report includes the most recent three years of enrollment and completion data in approved educator preparation programs, licensure data, and pass rates for the MA Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL).

### E2C Hub's State of Educator Racial Diversity: A Story

In 2024, DESE's Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub (E2C Hub) published a new data story on the [State of Educator Racial Diversity in Massachusetts](#). The story presents research on the benefits of a racially diverse educator workforce, shows trends and projections on student and teacher diversity in Massachusetts, explores the places along the teacher diversity pipeline where there are key losses in the pool of potential teachers of color, and highlights programs offered through DESE and DHE that could help increase educator diversity.

## Looking Ahead

As we continue our long-term commitment to further diversifying the educator pipeline and creating schools that are more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and effective, outside-the-box thinking will be needed. Creating school buildings and classrooms that welcome all no matter the color of the student, designation of their sex, or disability requires new skills and better training for teachers and leaders: We envision the creation of a better feedback

loop between K-12 leaders and educator preparation programs that ensures regular improvement when necessary. Supporting quality, diverse educator preparation is not a one-time event.