



Safe and Supportive Schools Commission – Eleventh Annual Report

This report provides updates and recommendations related to safe and supportive schools. The report is submitted pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws (G.L.) [Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014](#), An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence. This Act was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014 (House Bill 4376). Provisions within this Act relating to safe and supportive schools are codified through [Chapter 69, Section 1P](#) (G.L. c. 69, § 1P).
May 2026

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

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Table of Contents

- Introduction..... 1
- Recommendations3
- Commission Activities Undertaken in 20258
- Department Activities Related to G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f) 11
- APPENDIX A: Commission Members 13
- APPENDIX B: Legislative Charge for the Commission 15
- APPENDIX C: Commission 2025 Meeting Topics..... 17

Introduction

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

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

This report presents recommendations to the Legislature informed by Commission discussions during and prior to 2025, along with an overview of the Commission's 2025 activities and the efforts of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) related to the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and its state-funded grant program. It also includes highlights from an analysis of grantee action plans supported by a contract with the Collaborative for Educational Services.

The Commission's work aligns closely with the Healey-Driscoll Administration's [Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate](#) initiative and with Governor Healey and Attorney General Campbell's [September 2025 guidance](#) reaffirming Massachusetts' commitment to equal access to education. It also helps advance the Department's *Educational Vision*² (*EdVision*), which aspires to ensure that all students, particularly those from historically underserved communities, have equitable opportunities to thrive in affirming, culturally and linguistically sustaining environments that foster belonging, deeper learning, and high expectations with targeted support.

Strategic Objective 1 of the EdVision focuses on supporting the whole student, and echoes the Commission's charge by promoting healthy, supportive, and joyful learning

¹ The full legislative charge and links to the full text of the statute can be found in *Appendix B: Legislative Charge for the Commission*.

² More details on the EdVision can be found on <https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/>.

environments in partnership with districts and schools. Achieving this vision requires coherence across state and local systems to ensure alignment with District Improvement Plans, Student Opportunity Act Plans, and School Improvement Plans, including those addressing safe and supportive schools. Leadership transitions at all levels can bring changes in funding, policy, and practice, along with uncertainty as well as opportunities for students, families, and educators. At all times, it is critical for educational leaders to support the mental health and well-being of students and staff while helping address inequities tied to race, income, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other marginalized identities and backgrounds. Advancing the EdVision requires coherent, collaborative efforts across the Commonwealth to create antiracist, inclusive, and equitable learning environments that affirm and support every student.

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

Aligned with the framework, the tool is designed to prompt collaborative reflection and actions between and among educators, families, students, and community partners. These efforts can help create supportive school-wide environments that avoid the use of punitive approaches while recognizing the inextricable connections between students' social, emotional, and educational needs. The tool is also organized by the aforementioned implementation levers, and can help prompt schools to identify and address urgent local, district, and/or school-wide priorities related to creating safe and supportive school cultures.⁴ To date, since June 2010, all versions of the tool have been used by approximately 390 schools in 160 districts, including grantees and other

³ The framework and tool are available through <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/> and through <http://www.sassma.org/>, and an overview can be found on <https://sassma.org/documents/SaSSFrameworkAndSRT.pdf>.

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

districts. Moreover, since January 2021, approximately 127 schools in 64 districts have used the current version of the tool.

The Commission will continue to learn from the work of schools that have utilized the prior and current versions of the tool. In addition, data provided by grantees, along with other statewide data and presentations, will inform future recommendations to the Legislature.

Recommendations

Through this eleventh annual report, the Commission respectfully offers two recommendations, along with a reminder of a recommendation made in prior years, to members of the Massachusetts Legislature and state policymakers more broadly. These recommendations highlight initiatives that are helping to make schools more safe and supportive as well as ideas for areas that can be further strengthened.

As currently **defined in [statute](#)** (*G.L., c.69, §.1P; emphasis added*):

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

(i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and

(ii) integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students’ behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children’s mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.”

As described above, the goal is for schools to create safe and supportive whole-school cultures where all students feel a sense of safety, connection, and belonging so all students can learn and achieve at high levels. This year’s report includes two recommendations to help the Commonwealth continue to strive towards that goal:

- 1) State budget funding through the Department to local communities and districts to advance safe and supportive schools’ work; and**

- 2) **State budget funding that supports and strengthens schools' ability to access and deliver services that are clinically, culturally, developmentally, and linguistically appropriate.**

Additionally, the Commission **offers a reminder of a previous recommendation to consider legislative changes** that can help advance safe and supportive school goals.

The recommendations presented below are designed to inform efforts in Massachusetts for fiscal year 2027 (FY2027) and beyond to help schools become safer and more supportive. The content is grounded in Commission meeting discussions and includes examples of ways the Legislature and policymakers can consider supporting the recommendation goals. Examples of Department initiatives related to these topics, many of which have been discussed with the Commission over time, are included in the *Department Activities* section of the report.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 1:
Continue to Support Efforts to Advance Safe and Supportive School Goals as Funded through the Safe and Supportive Schools Line-Item and Other Complementary Line Items

The Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (hereinafter, the Commission) is very appreciative that Governor Healey included funding for Safe and Supportive Schools initiative efforts in her prior budget proposals, and for the Legislature's continued support over the past decade (since FY2014).

The Commission recommends continuing to support efforts funded by the Safe and Supportive Schools line item ([7061-9612](#)) and other complementary line items through the FY2027 budget. It is important for funds to continue to support efforts with at least the current funding level for line item 7061-9612, as well as through other available and appropriate funding sources, including the establishment of consistent, sustained funding to ensure the long-term success of this work [e.g., the [7061-0028](#) and [7061-9650](#) Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health and Wellness and Supporting Healthy Alliances Reinforcing Education (SHARE) grant programs].

This work can help support goals outlined in the Department's Educational Vision ([EdVision](#)) and the Healey-Driscoll Administration's [Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate](#) initiative; as well as Governor Healey and Attorney General Campbell's [September 2025 guidance](#) affirming Massachusetts' commitment to equal access to education, as this work builds on the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law ([M.G.L. c. 76, § 5](#)) that, as [amended](#), prohibits discrimination in public schools based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, immigration or citizenship status, disability, or sexual orientation.

Specific **examples of efforts made possible through legislative support** of safe and supportive schools and complementary initiatives include:

- Grant opportunities,⁵ coordinated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (hereinafter, the Department) for school districts (including charter schools, career and technical education schools, and collaboratives serving students in public preschool through grade 12) to advance safe and supportive schools initiatives. These efforts can include, but not be limited to, using the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool **to create and implement action plans aligned with School and District Improvement and Student Opportunity Act plans, as well as mentor other communities** across the Commonwealth.

These grant opportunities can also help set the stage for participating communities to continue to utilize the framework and tool for ongoing, cyclical reflection and action planning, and for vision setting, bridge building, and supporting both broad and specific local goals that help students (and staff and families) from all identities and backgrounds experience safe and supportive learning environments.

- Safe and Supportive Schools grant program coordination, and the provision of **professional development (PD), technical assistance, and networking opportunities**⁶ for grantees to help strengthen equitable, safe, and supportive learning environments.
- Grant program **evaluation**⁷ efforts, and content updates and other **improvements to the online Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool.**
- **Commission coordination** and administrative support.

**COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 2:
Strengthen Schools' Ability to Access and Deliver Services that are
Clinically, Culturally, Developmentally, and Linguistically Appropriate**

The Commission recommends that policymakers continue to support funding and guidance that helps promote physical and mental health and wellness for schools' students, staff, and families. Such efforts can also help strengthen partnerships between schools, students, families, and community organizations and state resources. These partnerships can also leverage other state supported initiatives, such as [Family](#)

⁵ A total of 125 districts have participated in the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program since 2014, through 325 competitive and continuation grant awards to help communities create and implement action plans and serve as resources to other schools and inform Department and Commission work.

⁶ Examples of grantee offerings can be found on <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/grants/#pd>.

⁷ More information on evaluation can be found on <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/grants/#evaluation>.

[Resource Centers](#) (FRCs); the [School Based Medicaid Program](#) (SBMP); and supports mentioned in the [Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform](#) including but not limited to Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs), the Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL), and Behavioral Health Urgent Care; as well as state offices such as the [Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention](#) (OBHPP).

As part of this work, and in particular, the Commission recommends supporting efforts that help enhance and promote schools' and communities' ability to deliver (and students' ability to access) prevention and intervention services that are clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. This includes the importance of available supports for staff and families too, and recognizing the relationship between health, wellness, and student success.

Specific **examples of ways to help advance this work** include:

- Provide support through funding and guidance to **enable all school districts to utilize industry recommended staffing ratios⁸ and workloads for critical health, nursing, and wellness (including mental, behavioral, and physical health) staff in a school** in accordance with guidance from professional organizations. For example, to support school nurses, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) suggests using an updated, evidence-informed workload analysis approach to determine the appropriate workload that is safe and effective, and is reviewed at least annually by school nurses, administrators, board members, and other policymakers.

Guidance could be available from the Department, in consultation with other state agencies, schools, and community organizations; and funding could potentially be provided to and used by communities through new or existing competitive or non-competitive grant programs, chapter 70 funding, or other sources of funding. This funding could be used to help support **sustainable staffing models** that include adequate ratios, skill-building professional learning opportunities, and appropriate clinical supervision, as well as help districts plan hiring and staffing for upcoming years. Additionally, workforce diversification and pipeline program efforts are also important complementary needs, to increase the number of diverse and effectively trained and experienced candidates available to be hired and to create more equitable access across the Commonwealth to skilled staff that help advance student health, wellbeing, and success.

- It is also important to emphasize that simply adding staffing will not alone strengthen engagement and attendance through increased access to services. A **multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) approach with culturally and linguistically sustaining practices is necessary through appropriate clinical supervision and leadership to build systems of support that are**

⁸ More details on industry recommended ratio examples can be found in the [Additional Commission Documents](#) section of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Commission](#) webpage.

sustainable for the long-term success of our students.

- Support through funding and guidance to **provide professional development (PD), training (including sustainable train-the-trainer models) on evidence-based practices, and networking opportunities that help strengthen practices at individual, team, and systemic levels.**

Offerings will ideally help *all staff* to deepen their understanding and skills related to [culturally and linguistically sustaining practices](#),⁹ as well as mental and behavioral and social-emotional learning and physical health and wellness. It is important for offerings to also highlight ways to strengthen ongoing partnerships between schools and students, families, and community partners, and build in ways for all of these important perspectives to inform the learning opportunities, the assessment of whether services and experiences are beneficial, and decisions made about future efforts. Such offerings for *all staff* could include, but not be limited to, instructional staff and Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP: e.g., school counselors, social workers, psychologists, adjustment counselors, nurses) and any staff participating in a student support team or attendance-focused team.

Examples of such professional learning include [supports for implementation](#) of the [2023 Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework](#); [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\) Academies](#); and Professional Learning Communities that help strengthen [social and emotional learning and mental health enhancing systems of student support](#). It could also be helpful to provide resources that help educators with continuous improvement efforts in this realm.

These efforts can help create communities where “Culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices will support 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”¹⁰ in alignment with the Department’s Educational Vision.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note, in addition to the two aforementioned recommendations, the Commission continues to support the third recommendation, *Strengthen Safe and Supportive Schools Work through Legislative Changes*, that can be found in the [10th Annual Commission Report](#) on pages 15-18, and in the [9th Annual Commission Report](#) on pages 11-13. That recommendation relates to potential legislative amendments, in order

⁹ For more details on what is meant by culturally and linguistically sustaining practices see <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-sustaining/default.html>.

¹⁰ See EdVision: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf>, p.2.

to help update, strengthen, streamline, and advance efforts to make schools safer and more supportive. The recommendation outlines ways to consider strengthening current statutes related to safe and supportive schools to reflect specific inclusion of student groups, a greater emphasis on mental and behavioral health services, and furthering equity, equitable practices, and social justice. It also references ways to consider examining other statutes related to school improvement plans, district improvement plans, and Student Opportunity Act (SOA) plans to strengthen their relationship with each other in advancing goals related to safe and supportive schools.

ALSO NOTE: As is customary, the Department's Commission Co-Chair (Commissioner designee), as well as the Secretary of Education's member designee, remain neutral on proposed changes to state law in this context. Additionally, the Secretary of Education's member designee abstained from voting for Recommendations 1 and 2.

Commission Activities Undertaken in 2025

Highlights of Commission activities during 2025 are summarized below.

A) Focus Areas: In 2025, the Commission focused primarily on 1) proposing steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services and 2) analyzing school-wide action plans consistent with the [7061-9612](#)¹¹ FY2025 budget line item. These focus areas were embedded in Commission work throughout this year, including meeting presentations and discussions.

B) Commission Meetings: Six Commission meetings were convened in 2025. The two summer meetings (June and August) took place in person (for the first time since February 2020), and the four other meetings (February, May, September, and October) occurred virtually per the [extension to the open meeting law](#). The meetings covered topics related to the aforementioned areas of focus and included spotlight presentations from school staff or students, Commission members, Department staff, and others with relevant topic insights. Meetings also included discussions that helped inform annual recommendations, and brief Department updates when time permitted. See *Appendix C: Commission 2025 Meeting Topics* for a list of meeting presentations and discussion topics and presenters.

C) Commission member updates: The Commission welcomed four new members, appointed by the organizations cited in the legislation authorizing the Commission

¹¹ The Safe and Supportive Schools line item 7061-9612 reads in part: "...provided further, that schools receiving continuation grants to implement schoolwide action plans shall incorporate such action plans into their school improvement plans developed under [section 1I of said chapter 69](#); provided further, that the safe and supportive schools commission shall conduct an analysis of such school-wide action plans and school improvement plans, which the department shall provide to the commission, and shall include in its annual report the results of such analysis and any recommendations, including any recommendations related to improving the framework or the self-assessment tool..." See <https://budget.digital.mass.gov/summary/fy25/enacted/education/education-k-12/70619612/> for full text.

that had vacancies in their member spots.

Starting in February 2025: **Tayyeb Afzal** and **Jayus DiCarlo**, high school students, appointed to a shared member position by the Department's [State Student Advisory Council](#) (SSAC) in consultation with the state [GSA Student Leadership Council](#). Additionally, **Lucinda Mills**, Social Worker Union Representative for Boston Teachers Union, District Social Worker, Boston Public Schools; and **Donna Grady**, Kindergarten Teacher, Helen Keller Elementary School in Franklin – educators jointly appointed to a shared member position by the [American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts](#) (AFT-MA) and the [MA Teacher Association](#) (MTA).

Starting in May 2025: **Raquel Martinez**, Head of School, Snowden International School – appointed by the [MA School Administrators' Association](#) (MSAA).

Starting in September 2025: **Heidi Gold**, Senior Policy Manager – reappointed as the Executive Office of Education ([EOE](#)) Secretary's Designee (after returning from leave for a state-sponsored fellowship opportunity).

D) Acknowledgments: The Department and Commission are extremely grateful for the generous and helpful contributions of **Faith Ambrose**, Policy Manager, Executive Office of Education (EOE), who served as the Secretary's Designee on the Commission for one year, from October 2024 through September 2025. We are also appreciative of her continued contributions to work through and beyond the Commission to promote safety, health, and wellbeing for all students across the Commonwealth.

The Commission is thankful to all members for their time, contributions, insights, and dedication to efforts with and beyond the Commission that can help make schools safer and more supportive for all students. See *Appendix A: Commission Members* for a list of 2025 members.

Commission meetings are open to the public, and the Commission is also thankful to all **participating guests** for their interest and willingness to attend meetings to learn and to contribute to the Commission's discussion when possible. Attendees who participated in at least three of the five Commission meetings in 2025 included: John Crocker, Anne Eisner, Katherine Houle, and Joan Wasser Gish.

Furthermore, the Commission appreciates all **Department staff and consultants** who assisted with the 2025 Commission efforts. In particular, the Commission thanks Stacy Cabral for co-planning and helping move forward all Commission work. Additional Department colleagues who helped inform and support 2025 Commission meetings include, but are not limited to, Student and Family Support Office colleagues Chris Pond, Emily Taylor, Yi-Juin Liu, Kristen McKinnon, and Donna Traynham; and Office of Planning and Research colleagues Brendan Longe and Kendra Winner. Additionally, the Commission is thankful for the ongoing skilled work and thought partnership of the Collaborative for Educational Services (including but

not limited to Catherine Brooks and Kate Lytton), through their Department Safe and Supportive Schools grant evaluation related contract; and Jason Wheeler (Director) and Gabriel Rivas (Youth Program Coordinator) from the Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, a collaborative effort between the Department and the Commission on LGBTQ Youth.

E) Analysis of school-wide action plans: As noted at the start of this *Commission Activities* section, one of the Commission’s focus areas included analyzing school-wide action plans consistent with the 7061-9612 FY2025 budget line item. Safe and Supportive Schools grantees are required to submit an action plan, developed after completing the use of the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool [fund code (FC) 0335 Option 1]. Additionally, grantees who completed their action plan in the prior year(s) are required to submit an implementation update (FC 0335 Option 2 and FC 0337), which includes updates on the progress toward implementation of previously completed action plans.

During the FY2025 school year, the Department continued to contract with the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES), who reviewed Safe and Supportive Schools grantee action plans and implementation updates with a focus on culturally, linguistically, and clinically appropriate services, to support this year’s other Commission focus area. The contract work also included a review of the responses to the Safe and Supportive Schools Tool by FY2025 grantees with a focus on the Access to Resources and Services lever section.

The collaborative (CES) summarized their initial review for the Commission through a presentation and facilitated discussion at the August 13, 2025 meeting.¹² Key takeaways included that all of the action and implementation plans reviewed included plans to provide or support student services promoting safe and supportive learning environments. These plans primarily focused on student supports and services at the Tier 1 level, through professional development for educators and/or programs and curricula that provide supports and services to all students (as compared to Tiers 2 and 3 that provide supplemental and more intensive supports and services where there are additional identified needs). Grantees most frequently described addressing student services through social and emotional learning initiatives, equity and inclusion-focused programs, and programs related to behavior. While these efforts provide supports and services in a general way, most grantees did not explicitly describe methods that expand the access of individual students to services that were clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, especially for specific student groups who have been historically underserved. However, a few grantees did note they provided services specifically designed to support: English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, and students with mental health challenges. It was difficult to determine from the applications questions and

¹² More details on the CES evaluation presentation can be found in the [Additional Commission Documents](#) section of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Commission](#) webpage.

responses the extent to which planned services were clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, especially for specific populations.

Additional analysis and presentations to the Commission are expected to continue in 2026, when additional information from FY2025 and FY2026 grantees becomes available. The Department will continue to engage in discussions with the Commission and CES and consider whether any changes to the framework and tool, or grant documents, expectations, or learning supports will be helpful to strengthen schools' ability to help students access services that are clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

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

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

Support to the Commission: Department staff work with Commission Co-Chairs to plan and facilitate Commission meetings, take minutes, maintain the [Commission webpage](#), and draft the annual report.

Grants and Evaluation: Department staff provide grant coordination for the Safe and Supportive Schools [grant program](#), which supports school and district team efforts to develop and implement action plans that organize, integrate, and sustain school and district-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments and coordinate and align student support initiatives. The program also funds efforts for school and district staff who have used the tool to provide support to other grantees; other districts interested in using the self-reflection tool; districts beginning to implement action plans created previously; the Department and Commission; and other stakeholders interested in safe and supportive schools. The Fiscal Year 2026 [Competitive](#) Grant Program was posted in May 2025 and [awarded](#) in September 2025, using \$161,000 to support efforts in 18 communities. Furthermore, 10 districts were awarded a total of \$100,000 through [continuation](#) grants.

Additionally, the Collaborative for Educational Services, through a contract with the Department to help evaluate the grant program, provided a presentation on an interim report and facilitated discussion at the August 2025 Commission meeting. See the *Commission Activities* section for more details.

Professional development to support work related to safe and supportive schools: During 2025, the Department offered a series of professional development

that included webinars and virtual networking meetings. Department staff collaborated across initiatives to coordinate a virtual session in January 2025 on using data to create equitable, engaging, and supportive learning environments. In March 2025, two in-person events were held in the eastern and western parts of the state. These sessions included a keynote and professional development session and breakout opportunities to share, plan, and collaborate with other grantees. The Department continued the contract with the [Equity Imperative](#), a portion of which is funded through the Safe and Supportive Schools line item 7061-9612, to provide an equity-focused online course for Safe and Supportive Schools grantees, [Rethinking Discipline](#) initiative participants, and others.

Department staff also provided technical assistance as needed to grantees on tool use and held drop-in sessions with grantees in the spring of 2025 to answer questions and for grantees to share with each other what they were working on or what they had done in past years related to action planning and implementation.

Additional Department Efforts: The Department is engaged in a wide array of initiatives beyond those noted above that also help to strengthen safe and supportive learning environments in a number of complementary ways.¹³

¹³ For additional examples of Department initiatives that help strengthen safe and supportive school efforts, see [Additional Commission Documents](#) section of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Commission](#) webpage.

APPENDIX A: Commission Members

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

Commission Role Represented (alphabetically listed)	2025 Member Name	Title, Organization
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)- Massachusetts (MA) / MA Teachers Association (MTA)	Donna Grady and Lucinda Mills (shared position)	<i>Grady:</i> Kindergarten Teacher, Helen Keller Elementary School in Franklin; President, Franklin Education Association (MTA); MTA Co-Chair Safe Schools for All Task Force; and Mass PTA Committee Chair for Health, Safety and Wellness <i>Mills:</i> Social Worker Union Rep. for Boston Teachers Union (AFT- MA), District Social Worker, Boston Public Schools
Community-based organization (CBO) representative that provides services as part of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), and that provides mental health services in schools	Beverly Williams	Executive Vice President, Behavioral Health and Community Services, BAMSI (Brockton)
Experience Implementing the Framework	Jariel Vergne	Director of Social-Emotional Learning and Equity, Holliston Public Schools
Former BHPS Taskforce Member and Tool Developer/Evaluator	Melissa Pearrow	Executive Director, Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children (BIRCh) Project; Associate Professor in School of Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development; and School Psychology Program Director, UMass Boston; and MSPA Past President
MA Administrators for Special Education (ASE)	Kristin Campione	Director of Student Services, Ayer-Shirley Regional School District
MA Advocates for Children (MAC)	Marissa del Rosario	Trauma-Sensitive Schools Specialist, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
MA Association of School Committees (MASC)	Ellen Holmes	MASC Past President; and Former Member of the Ashburnham-Westminster Reg. School Committee

MA Association of School Superintendents (MASS)	John Doherty, Ed.D.	Commission Co-Chair (Selected by Commission Members); MASS Professional Development Chair, Retired Superintendent, Reading Public Schools
MA Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers	Margie Daniels	Social Worker, and Executive Director, Middlesex Partnerships for Youth
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department)	Rachelle Engler Bennett	Commission Co-Chair (Commissioner Designee); Associate Commissioner, Student and Family Support
MA Organization of Education Collaboratives (MOEC)	Susan Farrell	Central MA Collaborative Executive Director
MA Recovery High School representative with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders	Michelle Lipinski	Principal, Northshore Recovery High School
MA School Administrators Association (MSAA)	Raquel Martinez	Head of School, Snowden International School
MA School Counselors Association (MASCA)	Donna M. Brown	MASCA Member and Past Executive Director
MA School Nurse Organization (MSNO)	Shanyn A. Toulouse, DNP, MEd, RN, NCSN	Northeast Regional School Nurse Consultant at Haverhill Public Schools
MA School Psychologists Association (MSPA)	Andria Amador	Senior Dir., Behavioral Health Services, Boston Public Schools; and MSPA Past President
Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)	Johana Rodriguez	Family Support Specialist
Secretary of Education (EOE Designee)	Faith Ambrose, then Heidi Gold	Director of Policy for Data & Integrated Ed and Human Services, MA Executive Office of Education (EOE)
State Student Advisory Council (SSAC)	Tayyab Afzal and Jayus DiCarlo (shared position)	<i>Afzal</i> : SSAC and Regional SAC member; and Methuen High School Student <i>DiCarlo</i> : Regional GSA Student Leadership Council Member; and Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational Technical High School Student

APPENDIX B: Legislative Charge for the Commission

There shall be a safe and supportive schools commission to collaborate with and advise the department on the feasibility of state-wide implementation of the framework. The commission shall consist of 19 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education or a designee; 1 of whom shall be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school committee member appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school principal appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association; 1 of whom shall be a teacher appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers—Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a director of special education or a director of student support services appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education; 1 of whom shall be an executive director of an education collaborative appointed by the Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by The Massachusetts School Psychologists Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school social worker appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education, behavioral health and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc. appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a student appointed by the department of elementary and secondary education's student advisory council; and 4 members to be appointed by the secretary of education: 1 of whom shall have experience implementing the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall have experience implementing the framework; 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts recovery high schools with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders; and 1 of whom shall be a representative from a community-based organization that provides services as part of the children's behavioral health initiative and that provides mental health services in schools. The commission shall select a co-chair from among its appointees.

The commission shall: (i) investigate and make recommendations to the board on updating, improving and refining the framework and the self-assessment tool as appropriate; (ii) identify strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force; (iii) propose steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; (iv) identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students'

behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments; (v) identify federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation of the framework; (vi) develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families, including families of children with behavioral health needs; and (vii) examine and recommend model approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e), with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

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

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

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

NOTE: [Mass. General Laws c.69 § 1P | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-general-laws-c69-ss-1p)¹⁴ includes the current language of the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law (G.L. c. 69, § 1P), as shown above, as amended by [St. 2024, c. 140, § 105](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/st-2024-c-140-s-105), effective July 1, 2024. This law was originally established as part of *An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence*.

¹⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-general-laws-c69-ss-1p>

APPENDIX C: Commission 2025 Meeting Topics

2025 Date	Primary Discussion Topics and Presenters
February 4	1) Context setting and Commission 2024 focus areas. 2) Presentation and discussion on the community-based organization BAMSI, and its connection to the Commission charge on access to clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services with <i>Commission Member Beverly Williams</i> .
May 8	1) Presentation and discussion on updates on the 2024 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results and School Health Profiles and their connection to safe and supportive school learning environments with <i>Chiniqua Milligan, the Department's School Health Analyst</i> . 2) Student and educator panel on perspectives on cultivating safe and supportive learning environments with <i>Commission Members Tayyab Afzal, Jayus DiCarlo, Donna Grady, and Lucinda Mills</i> . 3) Co-Chair John Doherty (the Commission-selected co-chair) was confirmed to serve another term (through Winter 2025-2026).
June 25	1) Essential Elements feedback session with <i>Emily Taylor, the Department's Early Learning and Safe and Supportive Schools Specialist; and Stacy Cabral, the Department's Rethinking Discipline and Safe and Supportive Schools Specialist</i> . 2) Administrator panel (collaboratives and special education) on perspectives on creating services that are clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate with <i>Commission members Dr. Kristin M. Campione and Susan Farrell</i> . 3) Commission charges discussion and gallery walk to inform draft recommendations and potential upcoming focus areas.
August 13	1) Welcome from <i>Pedro Martinez, DESE Commissioner</i> . 2) Presentation and discussion regarding school year 2025 safe and supportive schools grant evaluation and analysis with <i>Catherine Brooks, Senior Research Evaluation Specialist, Collaborative for Educational Services</i> . 3) Presentation and discussion on safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students with <i>Jason Wheeler, Director, Safe Schools Program (SSP) for LGBTQ Students</i> . 4) Feedback on themes from prior commission discussions.
September 25	1) Presentation and Discussion on building bridges across stakeholders with the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework to advance belonging, well-being, and student success, with <i>Commission Member Jariel Vergne</i> . 2) Presentation and discussion on the substance of recommendations to include in the 2025 annual report to the legislature.
October 23	1) Safe and Supportive School Framework and Tool 101 information session with <i>Emily Taylor</i> . 2) Discussion, deliberation, and voting on the substance of recommendations to include in the 2025 annual report to the legislature.