



## **Report to the Legislature: Intervention and Targeted Assistance (2019-2020)**

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Chapter 227 of the Acts of 2020 Line Item 7061-9408 and G.L. c.69, §1J(z) and 1K  
January 4, 2021

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Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner

January 4, 2021

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to present the progress report for school year 2019-2020 (FY2020), describing the ongoing work of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Department”) to offer targeted assistance to districts and schools across the Commonwealth with the highest need in order to maximize the rapid academic achievement of their students.

This report is responsive to reporting requirements outlined in [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 section 1J](#) and the General Appropriations Act, [Chapter 227](#) of the Acts of 2020, Line Item 7061-9408, which directs the Department to provide:

*“For targeted assistance and support to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming or chronically underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, including schools and districts which have been identified as in need of “focused support” or “targeted support” within the state’s framework for accountability and assistance under departmental regulations;. . . provided further, that not later than January 11, 2021, the department shall issue a report describing and analyzing all targeted assistance efforts funded by this item; provided further, that the report shall be provided to the secretary of administration and finance, the senate president, the speaker of the house, the house and senate committees on ways and means, and the joint committee on education...”*

Since passage of [An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap](#) in 2010, the Department has evolved efforts over time to best serve students in the state’s highest need schools and districts--that is, those districts and schools determined by the state’s accountability system to be performing in the lowest 10 percent of schools, underperforming, and chronically underperforming.<sup>1</sup> Assistance efforts span a wide array of activities and levers, from direct technical assistance, to funding, to guidance, and more. To accomplish this important turnaround work, the Department strategically augments, to the extent possible, the State Targeted Assistance funds (Line Item 7061-9408) with available federal resources to support school improvement.

During FY2020 resources were used to provide an array of direct financial and professional development support to struggling districts and schools. These targeted resources are designed to address significant challenges in closing achievement gaps, with a particular emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup> An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter12>.

meeting the needs of English learners, students with disabilities, students of color, and students living in poverty.

In addition, FY2020 included significant adjustments to approaches as a result of the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjustments included flexibilities for grantees to adjust their plans, while still holding these schools and districts accountable to the purpose of serving those students requiring the most support. The Department has enabled such schools and districts to adjust and modify their approaches to serve their students under these trying circumstances.

This investment in the students served by our lowest performing schools and districts has led to improvements across the Commonwealth in closing achievement gaps. While we are not yet satisfied with the overall performance of these schools, [research](#) has shown progress made by schools engaged in substantial turnaround efforts supported by Department assistance efforts. Under our Accountability System, we will continue to track the progress for schools requiring assistance and intervention each year. This report outlines the Department's strategy for resource use in the service of students through targeted assistance and intervention efforts. Our staff works tirelessly to ensure that schools and districts receive carefully aligned and timely supports and resources through this strategy.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature: *Intervention and Targeted Assistance (2019-2020)* pursuant to the General Appropriations Act, [Chapter 227](#) of the Acts of 2020, Line Item 7061-9408, which directs the Department to provide:

*“For targeted assistance and support to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming or chronically underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, including schools and districts which have been identified as in need of "focused support" or "targeted support" within the state's framework for accountability and assistance under departmental regulations;. . . provided further, that not later than January 11, 2021, the department shall issue a report describing and analyzing all targeted assistance efforts funded by this item; provided further, that the report shall be provided to the secretary of administration and finance, the senate president, the speaker of the house, the house and senate committees on ways and means, and the joint committee on education...”*

and [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 Section 1J \(z\)](#):

*“The commissioner shall report annually to the joint committee on education, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the speaker of the house of representatives and the senate president on the implementation and fiscal impact of this section and section [1K](#). The report shall include, but not be limited to, a list of all schools currently designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming, a list of all districts currently designated as chronically underperforming, the plans and timetable for returning the schools and districts to the local school committee and strategies used in each of the schools and districts to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students . . . “<sup>2</sup>*

Following are updates on the Accountability System, targeted assistance to schools and districts provided through grants and services, and the commissioner’s initiatives. In each area, the Department seeks to directly support the strongest performance in our schools, relying on evidence-based practices to directly support those students who are least well served.

## Accountability System Overview

In 2018, the Department began reporting accountability results under its new framework for district and school accountability and assistance, which was approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (“the Board”) in June 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> M.G.L. c. 69, §1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J>.

State and federal laws require that the Department implement a system of district and school accountability. Prior to 2012, the Commonwealth's schools and districts were assessed based on both the state's five-level framework for accountability and assistance and the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. From 2012 to 2017, Massachusetts operated under a flexibility waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, which permitted us to implement a single, unified accountability system that maintained our state's high standards and expectations and met both federal and state requirements. The enactment of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 and the state's transition to a Next-Generation MCAS assessment gave us the opportunity to rethink the design of our accountability system.

The purpose of the Accountability System is to provide clear, actionable information to families, community members, and the public about district and school performance. Additionally, the Accountability System helps the Department to direct resources and assistance. The framework for the Accountability System allows the Department to identify schools that require assistance or intervention, as well as schools that are demonstrating success. It maintains a single statewide accountability system that aligns with the Commonwealth's priorities while meeting federal education requirements. Highlights of the System include:

- The inclusion of accountability indicators that provide information about school performance and student opportunities beyond test scores;
- A focus on raising the performance of each district's or school's lowest performing students in addition to the performance of the district or school as a whole; and
- The use of accountability categories that define the progress that districts and schools are making and the type of support or assistance they may receive from the Department.

Accountability determinations consist of a *normative component* and a *criterion-referenced component*, which are used to classify schools. The *normative component*, or accountability percentile, measures the performance of all students in a school compared to other schools in the state. This measure is reported as a percentile, from 1 to 99, which is calculated using all available accountability indicators for a school. The *criterion-referenced component* measures a school's progress towards the Department's established improvement targets for each of the accountability indicators. This measure is reported as a percentage, representing the degree to which targets have been met.

Using the normative and criterion-referenced components, overall school results are reported in two categories: schools *requiring assistance or intervention*, and schools *not requiring assistance or intervention*. The Department focuses its assistance efforts on schools identified as *requiring assistance or intervention* in addition to all schools in districts that have been identified as *chronically underperforming*.

## **Targeted Assistance Delivery System Overview**

The Department has utilized Targeted Assistance funds (state budget Line Item 7061-9408) to support schools requiring assistance or intervention in the state [Accountability Framework](#). The Department's Statewide System of Support (SSoS) and Office of Strategic Transformation (OST) prioritize resources and intervention to districts and schools designated as

focused/targeted and broad/comprehensive support, including underperforming and chronically underperforming schools and districts, and provides direct expert assistance and accountability from Department staff and its approved partners, funding and research-based resources, and preferred access to professional development. The majority of these efforts are designed to enhance school and district capacity to effectively and proactively use proven instructional and supportive practices to boost and sustain rapid gains in student achievement. This work has been ongoing since 2010 under [An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap](#) (“the Act”) in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board.<sup>3</sup>

The Department bases efforts at school improvement on research-based effective practices for turnaround and the building of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Significant research in those Massachusetts’ underperforming schools and districts that successfully have made rapid student achievement gains identified effective turnaround practices in Massachusetts schools (“the [Turnaround Practices](#)”).<sup>4</sup> Models and guidance based on these practices articulate how challenged schools can improve their own systems and implementation. The [Turnaround Practices](#) research identified four key focus areas for successful school turnaround: 1) leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration; 2) intentional practices for improving instruction; 3) student specific supports and instruction to all students; and 4) school climate and culture that provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and families.<sup>5</sup> The Department also uses the [MTSS blueprint](#) to articulate the ways that educators can organize the fundamentals of schools around student needs.<sup>6</sup> The assistance and interventions provided through the Department are designed to promote schools’ implementation of these key practices. Department research has further indicated that the most effective way to improve student performance is through the faithful implementation of these practices in an integrated and coherent system for improvement.

Department assistance efforts use the frameworks above as a cornerstone, with technical assistance and resources provided to schools and districts as described below. Should all other avenues to implement ambitious and accelerated reforms be exhausted in underperforming schools and districts and when it is in the best interest of students, the state has intervened, using the Act’s legal authorities, and has placed districts and schools into chronically underperforming status and under state receivership. At present, three districts and four schools are under state receivership (See Appendix III for a list of these districts and schools).

## **Statewide System of Support**

Since 2010, Massachusetts has defined its approach to district engagement based on the premise that district accountability and the Department’s assistance must be closely linked to produce continuous and sustainable improvement. SSoS staff engage with districts that have schools

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<sup>3</sup> An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter12>.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that the term “turnaround” that was in use in FY2019 has been replaced in Department terminology with the term “sustainable improvement” in FY2020.

<sup>5</sup> Turnaround practices research and evaluation reports:  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/reports.html>.

<sup>6</sup> MTSS Blueprint: <https://matoolsforschools.com/resources/mtss-blueprint>.

identified as requiring assistance and intervention (Targeted/Focused Support Schools and Broad/Comprehensive Support Schools) on our state accountability system.

Massachusetts SSoS staff provide comprehensive assistance to districts and schools that is differentiated by need, provides structured opportunities for teachers, administrators and district leaders to engage in activities that include coaching, facilitated work teams, professional communities of practice, and resource networking. The Department's [turnaround practices](#) and [District Standards and Indicators](#) provide processes and tools to support evidence-based practices across the Commonwealth.

Schools and districts requiring assistance or intervention are supported by resources from throughout the Department. Mainly, the direct targeted assistance for turnaround in the high-need districts and schools is overseen through the SSoS in the Center for District Support. The SSoS provides targeted assistance through a multi-pronged approach that offers customized support based on district size, capacity, and accountability status. In 2019-2020, the SSoS offered assistance affecting districts with a combined total of 128,251 students, which is 13.5 percent of the state's total student enrollment (948,828). Approximately 62.3 percent of these students were economically disadvantaged, 23.7 percent were English learners, and 19.8 percent were students with disabilities.

The SSoS is structured with both regionalized and centralized components to meet the various needs of these 227 schools in 53 districts in 2019-2020. Through the SSoS, the Department deploys assistance teams in West/Central and Coastal regions to work in partnership with districts in schools that have been identified by the accountability system as requiring assistance or intervention. These teams facilitate the development and implementation of school turnaround plans in the identified schools and help districts leverage resources (from the regional assistance teams, SSoS centralized supports, the Department, and partners) to support student achievement. All assistance the SSoS provides rests on a strong foundation of the evidence-based research derived from Massachusetts and other states' successful turnaround schools and districts, as described above. This research base provides models and strategies for the SSoS staff to guide schools and districts to make similar progress in their own practices and programs. Targeted supports include coaching and training for school and district educators on the research-based practices and facilitating practices to ensure their effective and sustained implementation. The staff also facilitates strong data use and connect educators to other Department programs and resources to enhance local capacity.

The turnaround plans are the cornerstone of individual school improvement efforts. They are developed by groups of stakeholders for each school to ensure broad investment across the school community. The plans determine and organize the efforts that the school will undertake to better serve all students, especially those students who are least well served. Plans address how schools will implement the research-based Turnaround Practices to make lasting change. The plans are renewed periodically and are the foundation and roadmap for all ongoing improvement efforts.

The Department provides centralized supports for the two regions such as staff training and professional development, resources for schools and districts on turnaround, on-call expertise, project work plans, contracts, and grant processing and monitoring. The centralized team also

oversees the research to identify best practices in turnaround and ensure these practices impact policy and are embedded into practice. Finally, this team ensures implementation of the statutory requirements related to underperforming schools, the allocation of federal school improvement grant resources to support turnaround schools and monitoring of progress in schools implementing turnaround plans. The centralized team at the Department are access points to high quality external partners, multi-year academies, grants, and technical assistance—all resources which are made available to districts.

These offices closely coordinate with the Office of Strategic Transformation (OST), which is responsible for the implementation of state receivership and alternative governance models, to ensure resources and supports to all targeted schools and districts are aligned, and to share promising practices.

The following sections describe how the funds have been used (in some cases in combination with available federal resources) and the results for schools and districts at the different levels of accountability status. It is important to note that assistance efforts shifted between March 2020 and June 2020 as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. SSoS continued to provide assistance and support to districts and schools throughout spring 2020, but the focus of the engagement fell in line with the challenges of the time, including but not limited to; adapting instruction from in-person to fully remote, student engagement, social emotional support and family engagement, and shifts in fund use towards planning for new models of teaching and learning in SY2020-2021.

### **Direct Regional Support**

The SSoS provided the following assistance to districts and schools requiring assistance and intervention in the Coastal and West/Central regions using \$5,570,948.67 of Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funding in 2019-2020.

#### **Grants:**

A significant portion of Targeted Assistance funding was issued to districts and schools requiring assistance or intervention in the form of Targeted Assistance Grants (TAG). There were several TAG categories within which schools were eligible: Planning Grants, Implementation Grants, and Subgroup Performance Only Grants. Across all grant categories, the grant-funded activities that districts and schools engaged in were expected to fall into two broad categories:

1. Planning and pre-implementation activities, and
2. Activities supporting the implementation of turnaround plans

TAG funding focused on the development and implementation of turnaround plans, in alignment with federal and state requirements and Massachusetts' best practices. Funding allocations were tiered, based upon school percentiles and whether schools had an existing turnaround plan. Schools without a plan received funding and support to develop a high-quality plan. Schools with an existing plan received funding and support for plan implementation.

As the pandemic shifted planned funding for schools, many districts opted to redirect FY2020 funds into the summer of FY2021. These amendments were focused on moving funds for staff planning for reopening schools in FY2021 and to address student learning loss experienced through the spring 2020 school shutdowns.

### Support Staff Services:

A combination of full-time and contract staff, who are in part supported by Targeted Assistance funds, worked with districts and schools on turnaround planning and implementation efforts and offered networking opportunities for urban leaders through a variety of mechanisms, such as the Urban Superintendents' Network and District Turnaround Leaders' Network, to build capacity through sharing of best practices and thought-partnering with others in similar roles to solve complex challenges intended to improve student outcomes for every student. The SSoS contracts with various vendors added to our capacity in providing direct support services to schools, specifically in providing feedback on turnaround plans and resource development.

### Site Visit Services:

Targeted Assistance funds were used to contract with outside vendors to conduct one or two-day site visits at schools requiring assistance or intervention. The vendors used SSoS approved rubrics to collect data and generate findings relative to schools' implementation of several indicators aligned to the four Turnaround Practices. The final site visit reports were used by schools to reflect on their turnaround plan implementation in order to make necessary midcourse corrections. Trained SSoS assistance teams supported schools in the use of site visit data. The data within the site visit reports was also used by the SSoS team to assess patterns and trends in improvement efforts across the state and identify and disseminate best practices.

In continuing partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Targeted Assistance funding supported a New Superintendents Induction Program to build instructional leadership capacity across the state.

### Progress:

In October 2019, two underperforming schools were exited by the Commissioner from status based on more than three years of progress in achieving gains in student achievement: William Ellery Channing Elementary School in Boston and John J. Duggan Middle School, Springfield (Springfield Empowerment Zone).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department requested and received a waiver from the federal requirement for the annual statewide student assessment. In addition, legislation enacted in Massachusetts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (St. 2020, c.56, §7) waived the requirement in state law to administer the MCAS assessments to students for the 2019-20 school year. As a result, the SY2019-2020 regular administration of grade-level MCAS tests for all students was cancelled. Without this data, the Department is not immediately able to report on the full range of progress markers of schools and districts supported by SSoS in SY2019-2020.

## **Strategic Transformation Services**

The Office of Strategic Transformation (OST) provided supports to districts and schools in state receivership and under alternative governance structures through grants, direct assistance, research, and high-quality partners using \$2,612,703.96 of Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funds in 2019-2020.

### **Chronically Underperforming Schools**

Chronically underperforming schools, as defined by state law, [M.G.L. c. 69, §1J](#), at the expiration of their underperforming school plans, failed to show enough improvement as required by the goals, benchmarks, and/or timetables of the turnaround plan.<sup>7</sup> There were no new schools identified for receivership in FY2020.

The turnaround plans for the four schools in receivership originally designated as chronically underperforming in October 2013, expired in May 2017 and were renewed for an additional three-year period in August 2017. These schools are: UP Academy Holland and Paul A. Dever School in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker School in New Bedford. UP Academy Holland and John Avery Parker School were managed by a nonprofit operator, while Morgan Full Service Community School and Paul A. Dever School were managed by individual receivers in 2019-2020.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department requested and received a waiver from the federal requirement for the annual statewide student assessment. In addition, legislation enacted in Massachusetts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (St. 2020, c.56, §7) waived the requirement in state law to administer the MCAS assessments to students for the 2019-20 school year (SY). As a result, the SY2019-2020 regular administration of grade-level MCAS tests for all students was cancelled. Without this data, the Department is not immediately able to report on the full range of progress markers of schools and districts supported by OST in SY2019-2020.

### **Chronically Underperforming Districts**

Three districts have been designated as chronically underperforming, in accordance with [M.G.L. c. 69, §1K](#).<sup>8</sup> The Board designated the Lawrence Public Schools district under receivership in November 2011, the Holyoke Public Schools under receivership in April 2015, and the Southbridge Public Schools under receivership in January 2016. A list of these districts, in accordance with [M.G.L. c. 69, §1K](#), can be found in Appendix III. Targeted strategic intervention and assistance from the Department began in 2011 when the first district was designated. These districts are in varying stages of implementing turnaround plans and evidenced-based turnaround strategies. An update about each of these school districts follows.

#### **Holyoke Public Schools:**

In FY2020, the use of Targeted Assistance funds under Line Item 7601-9408 for Holyoke emphasized the development of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) across the academic, behavioral and social emotional. This included enhancing culture and climate through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and implementation of SEL competencies and enhancing core academic instruction and research-based interventions at all grade levels. The turnaround plan included the following priority areas intended to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students:

- High quality instruction for all;
- Personalized pathways;

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<sup>7</sup> M.G.L. c. 69, §1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J>.

<sup>8</sup> M.G.L. c. 69, §1K: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1K>.

- Engaged students, family, and community;
- An effective and thriving workforce; and
- A system of empowered schools.

Lawrence Public Schools:

In FY2020, key initiatives in Lawrence included: fostering high-performing autonomous schools, supporting partners to operate and assist schools, increasing extended learning opportunities through Acceleration Academies and summer-learning, expanding Restorative Justice training and practices, implementing the revised teacher contract, continuing the high school transformation, and expanding pre-school and kindergarten programs. Each school's program is tailored to the needs of its students.

Southbridge Public Schools:

In FY2020, the use of Targeted Assistance funds under Line Item 7601-9408 for Southbridge emphasized leadership training, stabilizing culture and climate through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and enhancing core academic instruction at all grade levels. The turnaround plan included the following priority areas intended to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students:

- Ensuring an inclusive and supportive school community with high expectations and rigorous, equitable, and personalized instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners;
- Developing a district wide professional culture of highly effective teaching and leadership;
- Creating the conditions to enable and apply evidence-informed decision-making;
- Establishing systems and processes to cultivate and leverage family engagement and community partnerships; and
- Organizing the district and reallocating resources to ensure high-quality management, accountability, system wide coherence, and sustainability.

Springfield Empowerment Zone:

Another targeted assistance and intervention effort provided to strengthen capacity of underperforming schools was the facilitation of and strategic support for the Springfield Empowerment Zone. The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) is a voluntary partnership between the SEZP Board, Springfield Public Schools, and the Department, working in close collaboration with the Springfield Education Association and aimed at rapidly improving outcomes for Springfield's middle and high school students. Created in 2014, SEZP has supported leaders and educators to make bold changes in school programming by strategically exercising new autonomies. In the school year 2019-20, SEZP used their flexibilities and autonomies to continue to develop leadership capacity, refine and improve their performance management system to drive improvement, and to integrate focused and explicit work around equity and anti-racist practices with a specific focus on high quality culturally responsive instruction.

Overall, schools and districts in chronically underperforming status used Targeted Assistance funding through direct grants to districts and contracts with high-quality vendors in a variety of

different ways to accelerate student outcomes and improve student experience. They include but were not limited to:

- Receivers and consultants to lead instructional and cultural improvements
- Progress monitoring to track and compare progress and to support in time response and adjustment
- Facilitation of local stakeholders for feedback and turnaround strategy development
- Recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff with an emphasis on teachers and staff of color
- Professional learning around content, social emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, and culturally responsive teaching
- Mentoring and coaching of teachers and leaders
- Effective implementation of high-quality curriculum resources and interventions
- Expanded availability and improved program quality of pre-kindergarten aligned to research based early childhood guidance and curricula
- Development and expansion of secondary pathways to improve graduation success
- Professional learning and implementation of effective family outreach and home-school connections

## **Direct Supports for Effective Curriculum and Instruction**

The Center for Curriculum and Instruction provided the following assistance to districts and schools requiring assistance and intervention, using \$468,778.00 of Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funding in 2019-2020.

### **High Quality Instruction—Summer Planning Grants**

In July and August 2019, the Department used Targeted Assistance grant funds to provide 12 districts with funding to support teachers to deepen their understanding and implementation of high-quality instructional materials, methodologies and programs to support the revised 2017 English Language Arts-Literacy, 2017 Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks, and the 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) standards. The grant focused on planning for selecting or implementing high-quality instructional materials or piloting the OpenSciEd middle school STE instructional materials. Awards were made to the following districts: Amherst, Boston (2 awards), Chelsea, Fall River, Fitchburg and Leominster (joint award), Haverhill, Lynn, Northampton, North Brookfield, Athol-Royalston, and Central Berkshire Regional.

### **Johns Hopkins and PCG Curriculum Audits**

The 2019-2020 fiscal year focused on providing follow-up support to the 14 districts that participated in a curriculum audit during the 2018-2019 school year. In SY2018-2019, the Department used state Targeted Assistance funds to contract with Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Education Policy and the Public Consulting Group to work with a subset of underperforming districts to conduct audits of their written, taught, and learned curricula. Audit reports were delivered toward the end of the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Content Leads at the Center for Instructional Support and Statewide Systems of Support teams spent the fall of 2019 meeting with each district team to unpack the audit reports and plan follow-up support. As a result of

these meetings 8 of the 14 districts were placed on a path to go through an adoption process to replace low-quality, incoherent curricula with a high-quality, standards-aligned option.

- Two Districts joined the Evaluating and Selecting Network: New Bedford (Math); Brockton (English Language Arts/Literacy)
- 6 Districts joined the Selecting Lite Network: Malden (Math); Fitchburg (English Language Arts/Literacy); Framingham (English Language Arts/Literacy); Lowell (Math); Saugus (English Language Arts/Literacy); Taunton (Math)

Additionally, Framingham made adaptations to their 6-12 English Language Arts/Literacy curriculum by redesigning units to include texts of grade-level complexity. Finally, Saugus committed to a full implementation of Paths to College and Career in English Language Arts/Literacy.

## **Commissioner's Strategic Initiatives**

The Center for Strategic Initiatives provided the following assistance to districts and schools requiring assistance and intervention, using \$3,899,793.80 of Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funding in 2019-20.

### **AP/IB Exam Subsidy and Support for AP Exams**

The Department committed \$350,000 to provide Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exam fee subsidies for low-income public school students in districts that have one or more schools identified as requiring assistance (except those that qualify due to low participation only) in the state's accountability system. Low-income students from 56 districts were eligible for the subsidy: Amherst, Amherst-Pelham, Argosy Collegiate Charter School, Athol-Royalston, Attleboro, Bentley Academy Charter School, Beverly, Boston, Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School, Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, City on a Hill Charter Public School Circuit Street, City on a Hill Charter Public School New Bedford, Clinton, Codman Academy Charter Public, Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School, Easthampton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Framingham, Gardner, Gateway, Gloucester, Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical, Greenfield, Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual District, Hawlemont, Holyoke, Lawrence, Libertas Academy Charter School, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, New Bedford, North Adams, Northampton, Orange, Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School, Peabody, Pittsfield, Randolph, Saugus, Southbridge, Springfield, Taunton, TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual, UP Academy Charter School of Boston, UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, Uxbridge, Webster, Westfield, Weymouth, Winchendon, and Worcester.

The Advanced Placement STEM & ELA Program, executed through the vendor Mass Insight Education and Research (Mi), partnered with high schools to drive a school culture of high expectations and increase participation and performance in AP courses for historically underserved student populations. In addition to receiving AP STEM and ELA exam subsidies from the state AP STEM and ELA program, low-income students in Mi-served districts also received additional subsidies for all other subjects through this particular funding. Low-income students in Mi-served schools were eligible for fee reductions for AP exams in STEM and ELA

subjects under a provision in the state AP STEM and ELA program. The following districts partnered with Mi in FY2020 for this program: Boston Public Schools, Boston Green Academy, Horace Mann Charter School, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Clinton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lowell, Malden, New Bedford, Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School, Peabody, Pittsfield, Saugus, Southbridge, Springfield, Webster, and Worcester.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, 9,684 AP exams (an increase of 21 percent over FY2019 figures) and 181 IB exams were subsidized for qualifying students through this program.

### **Acceleration Academies**

In FY2020, the Department partnered with Lawrence Public Schools, Chelsea Public Schools, Holyoke Public Schools, and New Bedford Public Schools to implement Acceleration Academy programs during the February and April school vacation weeks. An Acceleration Academy is a week-long academic program designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons that meet the specific academic needs of students participating in the program. Students who attend an Acceleration Academy receive the equivalent of an extra month of learning (20-25 hours) in a single subject area.

Partner districts received funds to implement their Acceleration Academy programs through either a Targeted Assistance Grant or through the Office of Strategic Transformation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the districts only ran in-person Acceleration Academy programs in February 2020. Approximately 1,800 students participated in the February Academies. Funds earmarked for the April Acceleration Academies were either returned to the state (Chelsea Public Schools returned their remaining funds) or were used to run alternative Acceleration Academy programs in the summer of 2020 (Lawrence Public Schools, Holyoke Public Schools, and New Bedford Public Schools ran summer Acceleration Academy programs).

### **Anthem Group Event Planner for Professional Development and Awards Ceremony Event**

In FY2020, the Department used Target Assistance funds to contract with The Anthem Group to provide event planning services for a professional development and awards ceremony event for teachers selected to teach in an Acceleration Academy program (described below). The Anthem Group worked closely with the Department to organize all aspects of the event, from finding and hiring presenters to securing venues for the event. The event recognized 80 teachers for their teaching excellence and provided these teachers with a day of professional development led by leading education researchers and practitioners.

### **Diversity Network**

In FY2020, Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funds were used to provide limited financial support for the Department's statewide Diversity Network. The Diversity Network is a two – year professional development series focused on diverse educator recruitment and retention efforts. The Network consists of 35 districts, 10 Educator Preparation Programs, and 10 community partners.

## **Influence 100**

Currently, only 4 percent of Massachusetts school superintendents are people of color, while 40 percent of the students served by public school districts are people of color. In FY2020, the Department 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 the Department to enhance their strategic planning for equity. In its pilot year, Influence 100 comprised 26 fellows from 15 districts: 92 percent are people of color, 42 percent are current principals, and 58 percent are central office leaders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Influence 100 programming was able to shift to a virtual setting. State funds were used to hire contract employees to oversee this initiative and provide support to participating districts.

## **The Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning**

Commissioner Riley identified Deeper Learning as a high priority shift in the educational landscape for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with the rationale that, in order to meet the demands of the modern world, students need to be able to research, create, and apply concepts in new formats and in collaboration with other students. The shifts required to support a statewide move to Deeper Learning must engage all levels of the education system, from educators creating communities where Deeper Learning thrives to policymakers realigning incentives to support this new approach. The Department's goal is to accelerate the efforts to connect students to relevant learning opportunities beyond the classroom, such as apprenticeships, community-based learning, innovation pathways, early college, and technical education.

As such, the Department established a pilot program in FY2020: The Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning. From an initial pool of 491 schools and districts, 20 schools and districts were admitted to Kaleidoscope's Cohort One: Abraham Lincoln Elementary, Academy of the Pacific Rim, Amvet Boulevard School, Andover Public Schools, Chatham Elementary School, Chestnut Accelerated TAG, Eliot K-8 Innovation School, ENLACE Academy at Lawrence High School, Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School, Lincoln Elementary, Mary M Walsh Elementary, Nipmuc Regional High School, North Attleborough Middle School, Orleans Elementary School, Randolph Community Middle School, Rumney Marsh Academy, South Street School, TechBoston Academy, Up Academy Leonard, and W.E.B. Du Bois Regional Middle School. 13,984 students are enrolled in the 20 schools and districts of Cohort One, 13.4 percent of which identify as African American / Black, 26.2 percent of which identify as Hispanic / Latinx, 10.9 percent of which are English Learners, 18.9 percent of which are students with disabilities, and 33.4 percent of which are classified as economically disadvantaged. Fifteen schools were classified as Title-1, and four of these schools were identified as being in need of targeted support under the 2019 accountability system.

In FY2020, Kaleidoscope used Line Item 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance funds in two specific ways to support the needs of the Cohort 1 schools that were designated as in need of targeted

assistance. Starting in December 2020, Kaleidoscope hosted multiple professional learning sessions for school staff. In March, programming was cut short by the COVID-19 state of emergency in the Spring of FY2020. The Kaleidoscope team immediately pivoted to a remote learning world, providing 10 professional learning sessions in two months to address the new needs and supports identified by educators implementing deeper learning strategies during the challenges of emergency remote teaching and learning. State Targeted Assistance funds were also used to establish a partnership with TNTP, an organization formerly known as The New Teacher Project and nationally renowned for its work regarding equity in education. With TNTP support, the Kaleidoscope team was able to develop necessary content and infrastructure for providing training to schools in need of assistance in times of crisis and provide capacity building for the burgeoning team.

### **LEE Public Policy Fellowship Program**

In FY2020, Line Item 7016-9408 Targeted Assistance funds were used to support two LEE Public Policy Fellowship positions. The fellows supported special projects and policy development focused on efforts to diversify our state's educator workforce. Specifically, the fellows helped to lead and support work related to the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program, the Commissioner's Recruitment Visits to college and universities, and the METCO program.

### **MTEL Preparation Vouchers**

In FY2020, the Department purchased and issued 144 MTEL preparation vouchers to the twenty school districts awarded the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant. The MTEL preparation vouchers were distributed by districts to eligible recipients to provide the preparation needed to successfully pass the MTEL exam and obtain provisional licensure.

### **Open Architects – School and District Resource Reviews**

The Department contracted with Open Architects to provide support for evidence-based planning and resource allocation strategy. Specifically, in FY2020 Open Architects assisted the Department in crafting the guidance and requirements for Student Opportunity Act plans of districts and charter schools. These plans must be completed by districts and charter schools in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act. The plans outline the gaps to be closed and the evidence-based strategies that districts and schools will use to close them. Open Architects provided financial analyses and policy support in determining the mechanisms and requirements of the planning process and assisted implementation as well.

### **Summer Institute for Literacy Leadership**

The Summer Institute for Literacy Leadership (SILL) is a collaborative effort between the Department and local educational agencies, including Crafting Minds, Hill for Literacy, and the Grimes Institute. In FY2020, the Institute was hosted by the Somerville Public School District. It was designed to support teachers' instructional practices with elementary-aged struggling learners. The Institute focused on three critical areas: 1) building teacher background knowledge in the science of reading; 2) coaching educators as they planned and delivered Tier 2 Structured Literacy routines, and 3) supporting teachers' abilities to create learning environments that foster intrinsic motivation. Teachers participating in the program came from Somerville, Arlington, Cambridge, and Medford. Approximately 35 rising second to sixth graders, who were identified as requiring extended school year services to close gaps in their literacy abilities, participated in

the Institute. Throughout the four-week half-day program, students received 40 hours of instruction, including 26-30 hours dedicated to Structured Literacy Instruction. Pre-post data indicates that students made significant gains across all measures of phonemic awareness, decoding, and oral reading fluency. Additionally, through training, online coursework, workshops, and individual coaching, teachers reported increased knowledge and confidence in planning and delivering structured literacy routines.

### **Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant**

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. In light of these findings, recruiting and retaining a diverse and effective educator workforce is a promising strategy for districts to address educational inequity.

In FY2020, the Department continued to implement the Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant with State Targeted Assistance funds, which was awarded to twenty school districts to support local efforts to strengthen and diversify existing teacher recruitment and retention strategies. As in FY2019, grant funds were used to provide financial assistance to paraprofessionals (such as classroom aides), district graduates, recent college graduates, and provisionally licensed teachers to support enrollment in, and completion of, an approved educator preparation program; provide preparation support for the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL); and/or remove associated costs of MTEL examination fees. Additionally, the grant continued to support the development and enhancement of ‘grow-your-own’ programs such as education pathways for high school students.

As in FY2019, grant funds were used to provide professional development and technical assistance to teacher diversification pilot program grantees in the areas of cultural proficiency and unconscious bias through our vendor, TNTP. As recipients of grant funds, districts engaged in sustained, high quality professional development activities and engaged in comprehensive systems reviews with the goal of developing comprehensive talent diversification strategies.

### **Closing Summary**

The total expenditures from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 from Line Item 7061-9408 were \$12,552,224.43.

The vast majority of the State Targeted Assistance funds were used to enable districts and schools to implement innovative, research-based strategies targeted to advance the performance of the state’s highest need students and close the achievement gap. The intensity and focus of assistance were based on district and school needs, interest, capacity, and accountability status. In FY2020, Targeted Assistance funds (Line Item 7061-9408) continued to contribute to initiatives designed to achieve rapid improvement through capacity building and embedding of research based, effective turnaround practices in struggling schools and districts, as well as effective practices throughout the state. The support provided by the Office of Strategic Transformation, SSoS teams, and expert external partners, as well as the direct grants and

targeted high leverage programs, were strategies that assisted districts and schools to achieve the improvements noted in this report.

# Appendix I

**Schools without required assistance or intervention  
(approx. 85%)**

**Schools requiring assistance or intervention  
(approx. 15%)**

<b>Schools of recognition</b>	<b>Meeting targets</b>	<b>Partially meeting targets</b>	<b>Focused/targeted support</b>	<b>Broad/comprehensive support</b>
<p>Schools demonstrating high achievement, significant improvement, or high growth</p>	<p>Criterion-referenced target percentage 75-100</p>	<p>Criterion-referenced target percentage 0-74</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Non-comprehensive support schools with percentiles 1-10</li> <li>•Schools with low graduation rate</li> <li>•Schools with low performing subgroups</li> <li>•Schools with low participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Underperforming schools</li> <li>•Chronically underperforming schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>2018:</b> Performance against targets reported in 2 categories (meeting &amp; partially meeting) <b>2019:</b> Performance against targets reported in 3 categories (meeting, partially meeting, &amp; not meeting)</p>				

## Appendix II

### List of 2019-2020 Underperforming and Underperforming Schools

<u>District Name</u>	<u>School Name</u>
Boston	Dearborn
Boston	Henry Grew
Boston	Brighton High
Boston	Excel High School
Boston	The English High
Boston	Madison Park High
Fall River	Mary Fonseca Elementary School
Fall River	Samuel Watson
Lawrence	Oliver Partnership School
Lawrence	UP Academy Oliver Middle School
New Bedford	Hayden/McFadden
New Bedford	New Bedford High
Springfield	Forest Park Middle
Springfield	John F Kennedy Middle
Springfield	M Marcus Kiley Middle
Springfield	Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (North)
Springfield	Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (South)
Springfield	Van Sickle Academy
Springfield	High School of Commerce
Springfield	Springfield High School of Science and Technology
Athol-Royalston	Athol Community Elementary School

## Appendix III

### List of 2019-2020 Chronically Underperforming School Districts

Holyoke Public Schools  
Lawrence Public Schools  
Southbridge Public Schools

### List of 2019-2020 Chronically Underperforming Schools

<u>District Name</u>	<u>School Name</u>
Boston	Paul A. Dever Elementary
Boston	UP Academy Holland
Holyoke	Morgan Full Service Community School
New Bedford	John Avery Parker Elementary