

A message from the
Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

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September 30, 2020



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1. COVID-19: Updates from the Summer and Early September

We know you worked hard to prepare for the start of this very different school year, and we collaborated with medical experts, districts, and education stakeholders to do the same. We thank all the educators who made it possible for more than 3,000 students with disabilities to attend summer programs this year, and we were happy to see everyone return to learning this month.

Here's a sampling of our work this summer that might interest you. A more extensive list is at the [bottom of this newsletter](#). All build off of our [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) from June:

- We drew up [protocols for responding to different COVID-19 situations](#);
- We reminded districts of [flexibilities related to licensure and staffing](#) during the 2020-21 school year; and
- We issued [guidance on courses that involve shared equipment or other safety considerations](#) (*download*), with special attention to [science labs](#) (*download*).

We also worked on remote learning resources. See below!

2. New Resources: Center for Instructional Support Program Catalog and Remote Learning

Looking for content-area-specific professional development opportunities? Find networks and workshops specific to your area, as well as subject-spanning offerings, in the Center for Instructional Support's Program Catalog. You can [download it from this page](#) for the most up-to-date version.

We know that help with remote learning is of special interest. Building off of the [Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020](#) (*download*), issued on July 24, we've posted information and resources on our [remote learning webpage](#). In addition, we're offering professional development opportunities related to remote learning:

- Our Center for Instructional Support has released the [Remote Teaching and Learning Module Series](#). This is a free, five-part series of self-guided modules for teachers and other school-based educators who will be engaging in remote teaching and learning this coming year, whether through a hybrid or fully remote model.
- LearnLaunch, in collaboration with DESE, has scheduled a series of highly interactive [Building Blocks Workshops](#) that addresses elements of teaching and learning across different learning models. More information, including links to registration for each workshop, is available online.

3. The Buzz: Mini-Units on COVID-19 and Health Equity

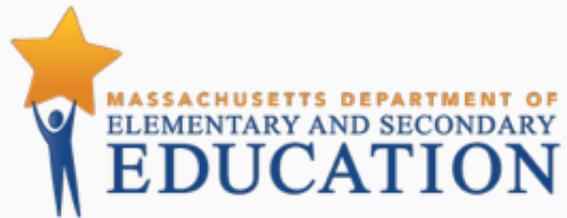
OpenSciEd has released multidisciplinary [COVID-19 & Health Equity units](#) for grades 3-5 and high school. The COVID-19 pandemic is a clear example of how science and society are connected, and these units explore how different communities are impacted by the virus through the lens of historical inequities in society. The elementary units include integrated social-emotional learning and supports for teachers and families in addressing these emotional topics. The high school materials can be appropriate for science, social studies, and health courses. Epidemiologists, public health experts, equity and antiracist education experts, community groups, as well as social-emotional learning experts contributed to the material development. A K-2 unit will be available shortly, and a middle school unit is expected in January 2021. More information, including a link to archived and upcoming webinars, is available at the link above.

Continued from *COVID-19: Updates from the Summer and Early September*

Here are some of the other actions we took over the summer and earlier this month to help districts respond to the effects of COVID-19:

- We shared information with districts on [how to use metrics from the Department of Public Health \(DPH\)](#) (*download*) to inform the district's choice of learning model;
- We shared information on the [use of mobile testing units](#) (*download*);
- We developed extensive recommendations around [creating positive learning environments for students and staff](#) (*download*) to support an expected increase in students' mental health needs;
- We shared [comprehensive special education guidance](#) (*download*) for the 2020-21 school year; and
- We gave [nearly \\$33 million in technology grants](#) to 253 districts. The grant was one of several funding sources designed to help Massachusetts school districts address costs related to COVID-19 as schools reopen. The other funding included:

- \$50 million from the federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund (part of the federal CARES Act funds) for K-12 schools and colleges and universities;
- \$182 million from the Commonwealth's federal Coronavirus Relief Fund (up to \$225 per student) for schools;
- \$502 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund previously allocated to cities and towns; and
- \$194 million in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund grants.



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