

A message from the
Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

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October 15, 2024

Commissioner's WEEKLY UPDATE

News from Acting Commissioner Russell D. Johnston and the Massachusetts
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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1. Webinars on Registered Teacher Apprenticeships:

The Department is excited to invite you to a series of webinars to learn more about Massachusetts' [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program \(RTAP\)](#), an innovative pathway into teaching designed to build a more diverse and effective teaching workforce that reflects the rich cultural backgrounds of our students. The apprenticeship program is centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion, providing equitable opportunities for aspiring educators, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to enter the teaching profession at little to no cost.

To help people explore RTAP and how it supports the cultivation of future educators, DESE is holding informational webinars:

- Registered Teacher Apprenticeships in Massachusetts, **11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Friday, October 18**. This session will provide a comprehensive overview of the apprenticeship program and is open to anyone interested. [Please register online.](#)
- Supporting Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs as Approved Educator Preparation Providers, **12:00 to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 24**. This session is specifically for approved sponsoring organizations interested in learning how they can get involved in supporting registered teacher apprenticeship programs and helping districts build a diverse teaching workforce. [Please register online.](#)

To ask questions or express interest, please email EducatorApprenticeships@mass.gov.

2. Pictures of the Week:



Meet a student who is literally soaring! [Tiago Antunes](#), a senior, took an aviation course at Chelsea High School offered through the school's Acceleration Academy over April vacation. Now, he is taking flight lessons while balancing a schedule that includes Early College courses at Bunker Hill Community College and a work schedule that helps pay for his lessons. He hopes to become a pilot. *(Photos courtesy of Chelsea Public Schools)*

3. Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council to Meet:

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's School and District Accountability and Assistance Advisory Council will meet from **9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 16** at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, 181 Boston Post Road West, Marlborough. Topics for discussion include an overview of the 2024 MCAS and accountability results, early findings from progress monitoring visits to schools, and the report from the

Accountability System Review Advisory Committee. The agenda and meeting information are posted on the [council's webpage](#).

4. Western Mass. Early College Recruitment Pep Rally:

Public and community college presidents, deans, and administrators who want to build or enhance Early College partnerships are invited to an [Early College Recruitment Pep Rally](#) for the Berkshire and Pioneer Valley regions. The event will run from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Friday, December 6** and is designed to energize and engage public and community colleges in expanding and enhancing Early College programs. Registration is open until **Friday, October 18** through the link above.

5. Induction and Mentoring Advisory Group:

The Department is seeking to form an advisory group of PK-12 induction and mentoring program leaders, mentors, and mentees to support the development of guidance and resources for teacher induction and mentoring. The advisory group will meet virtually throughout the 2024-25 school year. For more information and to express interest in participating, please submit [this form](#) by **Sunday, October 20** or email educatordevelopment@mass.gov with any questions.

6. Apply to be a Green Ribbon School:

The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools recognition program honors exemplary schools and districts that reduce environmental impact and costs, improve students' and staff's health and wellness, and deliver effective environmental and sustainability education that incorporates STEM, civics, and

green career pathways. Each year, Massachusetts selects one or more schools or districts to honor at the state level; those honorees are then elevated to the U.S. Department of Education where they will have the opportunity to be honored as a national Green Ribbon School/District. The 2025 Green Ribbon Schools [program application](#) is now open. Applications are due **Tuesday, December 17**.

Optional office hours will be held on the following dates:

- **10:00-11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 30:** [Register](#)
- **10:00-11:00 a.m. on Friday, December 6:** [Register](#)

Visit the Massachusetts Green Ribbon Schools [webpage](#) or [email Nicole Scola](#) with any questions.

7. Reminder to Report on Budget for SROs, Mental Health Staff:

[Section 37P of G.L. c.71](#) requires superintendents, including leaders of Commonwealth charter schools, to annually report to DESE: the cost of assigning school resource officers (SROs) if they have SROs, and a description of the district's or school's proposed budget for mental, social, and emotional health support personnel. This information was due to DESE on **August 1**. The Department is asking districts that have not submitted this information to please use this [survey form](#) to submit the information by **Thursday, October 31**. If a district has updated their SRO memorandum of understanding (MOU), please email the signed MOU to SRMOU@mass.gov. Please send any questions about these requirements to achievement@mass.gov.

8. Advanced Learning Pilot:

The Department's Center for Strategic Initiatives is seeking five school districts with teams focused on grades 3-8 to participate in a five-year Advanced Learning

pilot project. This project will focus on utilizing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to extend, accelerate, and differentiate content for students with advanced learning needs. [More information and a link to apply](#) are available online. Applications are due **Friday, November 1**.

9. DESE Resource Corner:

New Special Education Data Dashboard: The Department is excited to share that the [Resource Allocation and District Action Report \(RADAR\)](#) for Special Education Dashboard is now online. The tool is designed to help schools and districts assess and compare how they allocate resources and analyze outcomes for students with disabilities. It is intended to help districts make strategic decisions as they develop plans and budgets. The dashboard provides information to consider relative to policies and practices promoted by DESE, such as using the most inclusive placements possible.

Use the dashboard to look at:

- Demographic data among students with disabilities, including race/ethnicity, English learner status, and low-income status;
- Patterns in when students are identified for services and types of placements; and
- Outcomes including MCAS results, programs of study, and postsecondary paths.

[Public datasets used to power the dashboard](#) are available for download from the Massachusetts Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub.

10. “Your Presence is Powerful” Call for Submissions:

There is still time to submit entries for DESE’s [Power of Presence](#) initiative, like this

[recent submission from Bridge Boston Charter School](#). Submissions are due by **Friday, December 20**. The Department hopes to hear from a wide range of people: pre-K to high school students, adult students, families, school staff, educators, and administrators! Submissions could include a short story about a school community, a painting of a favorite teacher, a photo of classroom decorations, a video interview of a favorite teacher, a song that students have been practicing for the school play, or a testimonial about a new skill. Be creative and [enter today!](#)

11. New Guidance and Resources for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education:

The Department's Office of Language Acquisition, in partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the [Region 1 Comprehensive Center](#), recently released comprehensive [guidance and tools](#) for supporting Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). These resources include:

- [Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education \(SLIFE\): Guidance for SLIFE Identification, Services, and Support](#): A comprehensive document providing educators with a holistic approach to identifying and supporting SLIFE
- [Massachusetts SLIFE Toolkit](#): An interactive companion resource offering practical tools for educators.

The guidance and toolkit were informed by DESE's work with the Massachusetts SLIFE Community of Practice, which includes about 60 participating districts. For more information or to join the SLIFE Community of Practice, please [email David Valade](#).

12. COVID-19 Tests:

Public school districts, including charter schools, may request over-the-counter

rapid antigen COVID-19 self-tests **free of charge** from the federal government for their students, families, staff, and school communities. These self-tests are easy to use and can play an important role in containing the spread of the virus. Schools can use these tests, for example, to stock nurses' offices and main offices with tests; to send test kits home with students or parents; or to distribute within their communities to put these valuable safeguards in the hands of students, parents, and staff who need them. [Orders can be placed online.](#)

13. For Your Info:

- **October is Farm to School Month:** Celebrate [National Farm to School Month](#)! Massachusetts Farm to School's resources include [lesson plan ideas](#). Consider nominating a local farm, educator, or school nutrition professional for Mass. Farm to School's [Kale Blazer](#) award, and [sign up](#) for Mass. Farm to School's mailing list to receive the weekly #F2SMonth emails.



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