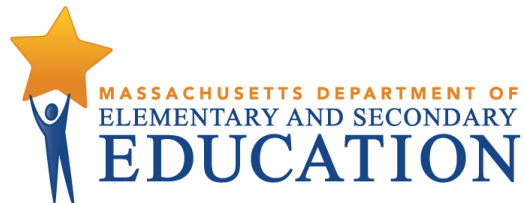


Our Way Forward

For Massachusetts K-12 Public Education

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The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

- Martin Luther King Jr.

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 ushered in an era largely focused on developing and refining a comprehensive system of standards, assessment and accountability. With a goal to achieve equity for all learners, we established clear and rigorous expectations for what our students should know and be able to do, assessments to demonstrate how students perform against these standards, and a scorecard to evaluate school and district performance. This system got everyone rowing in the same direction and helped our state surge to first place on various measures. Over the past 25 years, we have increased our graduation rates; consistently earned top scores on the federal gold standard assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); and achieved results comparable to top nations around the world on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

While we are rightfully proud of our “first in the nation” status on many educational measures, our NAEP scores have stagnated for years and, in some cases, even declined. Other states are catching up to us. More troubling is the fact that across virtually all metrics, large achievement gaps persist for our students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. A recent report – [#1 For Some](#) – highlights these disparities, many of which are stark.¹ For instance, while Massachusetts ranked 8th in the country in 2016 for our four-year graduation rate for white students, we ranked 43rd for Latinx and 19th for black students. On the 2017 NAEP 8th grade mathematics exam, 28% of low-income students scored proficient or advanced compared to 58% of their higher-income peers, 9% of English learners (ELs) scored at these levels compared to 52% of non-ELs, and 16% of students with disabilities were proficient or advanced vs. 57% of students without disabilities. The report also reveals gaps in access to opportunities, such as early childhood education programs, that could support our most vulnerable students.

At the same time, we are preparing students for a world that is changing at an accelerating rate. Our graduates will switch jobs – and even careers – frequently throughout their lives, and many of those jobs have yet to be invented. The goal of education is no longer simply to possess knowledge; instead, leveraging ever-smarter technology, students must learn to access knowledge, mine it for relevance, and apply it in new ways. Employers are increasingly valuing skills and dispositions, which can be challenging to measure, on par with content expertise. And with soaring tuitions and an uncertain return on investment from the traditional college

¹ The Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership (2018). [#1 for Some: Opportunity and Achievement in Massachusetts](#).

experience, students need additional options for pathways and credentials that bridge K-12, higher education, and employment.

Within this dynamic context, as a field we are stalled. Not only is student achievement stagnant, but we are at loggerheads on a vision for the future. We see dissatisfaction with the status quo and we have not yet achieved consensus on how to move forward in a substantive way. Moreover, through our vigorous disagreements on strategy, we have fractured our bonds as an educational community.

However, as educators, parents and students, non-profits and partners that support schools, we know what our students need and we know the ways the current systems enable and impede our efforts to support them. Unlike in 1993, we should not expect an outside “grand bargain” to point the way. Instead, we must be our own advocates: We must come together and state clearly what it will take for all public school children to be well prepared for the future and achieve their aspirations.

Our Way Forward: Four Themes

As the newly appointed Commissioner, I spent the past year on a listening and learning campaign in search of common themes for a new K-12 education platform. I participated in over 100 school visits across rural, urban, and suburban communities. I observed classroom instruction and spoke to students about their experiences in school. I heard from educators, school leaders, and superintendents about their pain points, and their hopes for their students. I met with families, community members, legislators, the business community, teachers’ unions, foundations, and non-profit partners to gather their ideas for improving K-12 public education. And I engaged the associations for superintendents, school committees, principals, charter schools, and vocational schools in regular meetings throughout the year.

At the same time, I observed and assessed the functioning of the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE). I fostered initiatives already in the pipeline, such as new curriculum frameworks and updates to the accountability system, and worked with the Governor’s office, Legislature, and others to promote the Foundation Budget Review Commission’s recommendations to sufficiently fund our schools. I continue to assert that this is the right time for the Legislature to take action on school finance reform to accelerate learning for all students, especially those most in need of support.

In March 2019, I convened a statewide education conference, *Kairos* (a propitious moment for action), to bring together a wide array of individuals and organizations to learn together and

coalesce around a way forward. Aided by DESE staff, I also monitored the latest research that I believe is relevant to the work ahead. And finally, I drew on my own longtime experience as a teacher, principal, and superintendent in urban and suburban schools.

Through these efforts, I see four themes emerging for our way forward in Massachusetts:

- I. Deeper Learning for All
- II. Holistic Support and Enrichment
- III. Innovation and Evidence-Based Practices
- IV. The State as a Partner

Below, I outline the rationale and work ahead for each of these themes. I then present my plan for a pilot program at DESE that will bring together educators, schools, and districts to jumpstart work across these themes, with particular emphasis on our central theme: *Deeper Learning for All*.

Theme I: Deeper Learning for All

As I traveled the state, educators told me that while they appreciate the rigor of our curriculum frameworks and the data from MCAS, they have also observed unintended consequences. In too many cases, they have seen the curriculum narrowed to focus on assessed subjects or shallow coverage of content in a rush to cover all standards before MCAS testing. They also reported instances of too much time spent drilling students on tested skills, divorced from a cumulative, meaningful learning context. The result is that often students are disengaged and unable to connect their daily lessons with their current or future lives.

There is growing awareness not just in our schools – but also in the research community – that we must more closely match students’ daily experience in school with the expectations they will encounter in college, in their careers, and as citizens navigating a complex world. This means asking students to work in ambiguous contexts, on meaningful projects with larger purpose, and both independently and in teams – all while connecting these activities to our state standards.

Preparing our students for their futures starts with ensuring a strong grasp of challenging, grade-appropriate academic content. TNTP’s 2018 [*Opportunity Myth*](#) report, an examination of the student experience in five diverse U.S. school districts, found that a significant percentage of assignments students were given were not up to grade level standards.² Moreover, TNTP found that increasing the rigor of classroom work, especially for students who started the school year

² TNTP (2018). [*The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting them Down—and How to Fix It.*](#)

behind, had significant positive effects on student achievement. We must do more to ensure that all students – especially those who are behind academically – have access to challenging, standards-aligned curricular materials and assignments.

But while ensuring equitable access to rigorous curricula is an important first step, our students will be asked to do more than demonstrate mastery of rigorous content. They will be asked to create, to invent, and to combine and apply concepts in new ways.

In their recent book, [*In Search of Deeper Learning*](#), Jal Mehta and Sarah Fine describe their six-year survey of U.S. schools.³ They found that three primary attributes, “mastery, identity and creativity,” supported by a strong learning community, distinguish environments that ask students to think in deeper and inventive ways. In this model, students not only demonstrate fluency in a given academic domain, but also come to identify themselves as participants within and contributors to the domain. Through the skilled guidance of an expert teacher, students are not learning *about* history or mathematics, but instead take on the roles of historians and mathematicians themselves. In action, this “apprenticeship model” of teaching and learning asks students to assume increasing levels of responsibility, eventually making their own authentic contributions to the field.

Mehta and Fine also highlight research by Fred Newmann arguing that student engagement is core to achievement⁴ – and yet engagement levels drop precipitously the longer students are in school; 75% of fifth graders say they feel engaged as compared to 41% of ninth graders and 32% of eleventh graders. And we also see that “engagement gaps” follow some familiar patterns: boys less engaged than girls, lower-income students less engaged than higher-income, and Latinx and black students less engaged than white and Asian students.⁵

Across the Commonwealth, I have seen examples of powerful teaching and rigorous deeper learning, where students are highly engaged in substantive tasks, thinking critically and creatively, and working collaboratively. We need to build upon these successes. There is evidence that deeper learning experiences are more common in affluent communities and honors-track classes – school settings to which our underprivileged students, English learners, and students with disabilities do not always have equitable access.⁶ We must work together ensure these types of engaging deeper learning experiences are accessible to all students.

³ Mehta, Jal and Fine, Sarah, (2019). *In Search of Deeper Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 14.

⁴ Newmann, Fred M. (1996). *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁵ Mehta and Fine, 27-28.

⁶ Mehta and Fine, 26.

The shifts required to support a statewide move to deeper learning are not trivial, and they will require partnerships across all levels of the education system:

In the Classroom: Focusing on Deeper Learning Tasks. As a state, we must intensify our focus on the tasks and activities that students are working on in the classroom. As Richard Elmore has stated, “task predicts performance” – that is, the quality of the activities students engage in will determine how well they learn the material.⁷ Every teacher should be equipped with a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to state standards. After mastering that curriculum, teachers can innovate further. Leveraging our expert educators and vetted partner-created resources, we must develop statewide models of engaging tasks – activities that ask students to master content knowledge and life skills through the creation of meaningful, original work products. We must also ensure that our school communities hold high expectations that *all* students can effectively engage in higher-order tasks.

At the School: Establishing Conditions for Deeper Learning. Principals play a critical role in shaping school environments that promote deeper learning. The length of periods in the school schedule, how cross-teacher sharing and professional development are organized, the quality of curricular choices – all of these and more matter a great deal in this effort. Policies and practices established by superintendents and school committees – and the degree of autonomy they in turn provide to schools to meet student needs – also play a pivotal role. Beyond systems and structures, school and district leaders set the tone for education, projecting the norms and values that animate a learning community for children and adults.

With the Community: Building Relevance and Connections. We must also accelerate our efforts to connect students to relevant learning opportunities beyond the classroom, such as internships, community-based learning, innovation pathways, early college, and vocational education. These experiences break down the barriers separating education from work, enabling students to further build their skills and apply their growing expertise in real-world settings. And they support students in building their emerging identities, better preparing them to map their own pathways to higher education and employment.

At DESE: Re-thinking Policy Conditions. Finally, we must acknowledge that some state policies may pose real or perceived challenges to implementing deeper learning at scale. A serious effort to broaden deeper learning statewide will require us to examine the incentives and constraints

⁷ City, Elizabeth, and Richard Elmore, Sarah Fiarman, and Lee Teitel (2009). *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

within our systems and re-align these systems as needed to support deeper learning initiatives in schools.

Through the pilot program described in the second half of this paper, we will enlist districts, schools, educators, and communities to further define this work – at the local and state levels – together.

Theme II: Holistic Support and Enrichment

In my visits to schools across the state, I heard clearly and consistently that students’ social-emotional health and wellness needs are intensifying across urban, rural, and suburban schools – and presenting at earlier ages. If we are to provide equitable access to deeper learning for all, we need to ensure all students receive strong foundational supports and enriching experiences beyond core academics.

As Elaine Weiss and Paul Reville contend in their book [*Broader, Bolder, Better: How Schools and Communities Help Students Overcome the Disadvantages of Poverty*](#), we need “systems of integrated student supports” to “free children up to engage in the type of critical thinking and deeper learning to which our schools and education systems aspire.”⁸ All children need appropriate mental and physical health supports, grounded in safe and supportive school cultures, so they can enter the classroom genuinely ready to learn. Robust support services are especially necessary for students who have unique challenges or are suffering from and distracted by trauma and toxic stress.

In order to thrive, all students also need enriching experiences – arts, music, and opportunities for civic engagement, among others – both within and beyond the traditional school day. Children from more advantaged backgrounds are more likely than economically disadvantaged students to have access to a rich array of extracurriculars, clubs, sports, and other opportunities after school.⁹ Many of these enriching experiences promote deeper learning, as they engage students as hands-on participants in the creative process.

In most cases, schools alone cannot deliver these experiences for all students. Families are schools’ first essential partner. Principals and teachers must engage our families as true partners,

⁸ Weiss, Elaine and Reville, Paul (2019). *Broader, Bolder, Better: How Schools and Communities Help Students Overcome the Disadvantages of Poverty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 4-5.

⁹ Snellman, Kaisa, Jennifer M. Silva, Carl B. Frederick, and Robert D. Putnam. “[The Engagement Gap: Social Mobility and Extracurricular Participation among American Youth](#).” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 657, no. 1 (January 2015): 194–207.

both by listening and responding to their dreams for their children and equipping them to support their children's growth and development at home. Community-based non-profits, employers, and universities also play a critical role in partnering with schools to support students in holistic ways, from wraparound supports to quality afterschool and summer learning programs, from athletics and enrichment to mentorship programs.

DESE can also do more to develop networks of principals, superintendents and district leaders, school committee members, and charter and vocational leaders working to address these challenges. The state can help to identify quality support partners and convene education practitioners to share promising strategies, especially in districts serving significant populations of high-needs students, or those beginning to experience demographic shifts that will require increased student supports. Finally, we can also work more collaboratively across state agencies that serve children and families, finding ways to coordinate services and data so we can respond effectively to students' needs.

Theme III: Innovation and Evidence-based Practices

I see great things happening in schools and classrooms across the state, but currently there are limited ways for educators across cities and towns to find out what others are working on, let alone understand which practices are leading to success with students. Right now, our K-12 education system lacks a systematic way to measure the impact of innovations and incorporate strong practices into a collective body of evidence. This is a huge missed opportunity to elevate and learn from the countless examples of positive work happening in our schools each day. In the coming year, as part of our deeper learning pilot program, we will begin to introduce a more systematic way to incentivize and learn from innovation in our schools.

In addition to learning from home-grown innovation, we must also broaden awareness of evidence-based strategies from research, highlight examples of this work in action, and use the resources of the state to support further adoption. Districts and schools should expect continued DESE support in areas such as educator workforce diversity, standards-aligned curricula through our CURATE initiative, and expanded access to early college partnerships, among others. We will also direct seed funding, foster supports, and monitor outcomes in new areas backed by current and emerging research such as the Acceleration Academies model, home visiting programs, and labor-management partnerships.

Educator Workforce Diversity. Today, 40% of our students in Massachusetts public schools are students of color, while only 8% of our teachers are of color. A growing body of research, well summarized in a recent piece by Dan Goldhaber and colleagues entitled [Why We Need a Diverse Teacher Workforce](#), shows improved high school completion and life outcomes if students of color

have even one teacher who looks like them in their elementary school experience.¹⁰ In addition, this research indicates that this teacher “role model” effect has important qualitative impacts. For instance, teachers of color have higher expectations of students of color and their classrooms have lower discipline rates for students of color, as compared to their white teacher peers.

Building on my work in Lawrence where we tripled the number of Latinx teachers in a five-year period, we have hired a Senior Associate Commissioner at DESE to oversee efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion for the teachers and leaders in our schools and districts. We are examining our licensure practices and other strategies to promote entry into the profession for underrepresented groups, especially black and Latinx teachers. We are also creating inclusive cohort experiences to ensure educators have robust support throughout their teaching career through the InSPIRED Fellowship and Influence 100 initiatives.

While we have taken some early actions, our biggest strategy is focused on learning from schools and districts. This spring, we made a significant investment in a local incentive program, awarding nearly \$2 million to over a dozen districts to pursue strategies of their choice to recruit and retain a diverse teacher workforce. We will learn from these sites as we build out the plan for this work in the coming year.

CURATE: CUrriculum RATings by TEachers. This past school year, DESE launched a new initiative called CURATE to support educators, schools, and districts in selecting rigorous, standards-aligned curricula. The project enlists educators from across the state to serve on CURATE panels, which review evidence on the quality and alignment of publisher-created curricula. These reviews are based not just on alignment to Massachusetts standards, but also ease of implementation as reported by educators. The first round of curriculum reviews will be available in summer 2019. As noted in the TNTP *Opportunity Myth* report above, upgrading our instructional materials state-wide is a critical way to provide equitable access for all students to rigorous content.

Expanded Access to Early College Partnerships. In 2017, a joint resolution by the boards of elementary and secondary education and higher education produced a call to action for local communities to develop early college partnerships between high schools and colleges. Recent national research studies cited in [Investing in Early College](#), a MassINC report published in June 2019, confirm the strength of this intervention: low-income students who enroll in early college programs are *twice as likely* to complete a post-secondary degree as students assigned to control groups.¹¹ Massachusetts is off to a strong start with 17 early college programs serving 2,500 high

¹⁰ Goldhaber, Dan, Roddy Theobald, and Christopher Tien (2019). “[Why we need a diverse teacher workforce.](#)” Phi Delta Kappan, 100 (5), 25-30.

¹¹ Forman, Ben (2019). [Investing in Early College: Our Most Promising Pathway.](#) Published by MassInc.

school students across the Commonwealth today. We will work to secure funding to support early college expansion and continuous program improvement.

Acceleration Academies. Based on success in Lawrence with a vacation learning time program called Acceleration Academies, other communities have begun to explore and adopt this model, including Springfield and Chelsea. A study of the program in Springfield, [Making the Most of School Vacation](#), showed positive effects on student outcomes.¹² We are building capacity and identifying resources at the state level to scale up this program to additional communities, to support their efforts in closing achievement gaps.

Home Visiting Programs. A critical foundation for school communities is the strength of the connection between educators and families. The home visiting model is a research-backed intervention in which teachers receive professional development so they can make positive connections with families in their homes. This process helps families and educators develop a united front to bridge children’s school and home lives, maximizing their academic potential. According to [research](#) by Johns Hopkins University, students who attended a school where at least 10% of families received home visits showed favorable outcomes in school attendance and ELA assessment scores, as compared to students at other schools.¹³

Labor-Management Partnerships. Findings in a Center for American Progress report, [Teachers Unions and Management Partnerships: How Working Together Improves Student Achievement](#), show that labor-management partnerships can also make a significant contribution to raising achievement for disadvantaged students.¹⁴ The report notes higher student outcomes in high-poverty schools when administration and educators engage in frequent communication about important issues and foster collaborative environments.

Theme IV: State as a Partner

My listening tour also made clear to me that communities are seeking more individualized support from DESE based on their context and needs. School committees, superintendents, principals, and educators need a state partner to problem solve with them through complex issues that they identify. Such partnerships between state and local communities can provide tangible solutions to these challenges.

¹² Schueler, Beth (2018). [“Making the Most of School Vacation: A Field Experiment of Small Group Math Instruction.”](#) *American Education Finance and Policy*, recently accepted for publication.

¹³ Sheldon, Steven and Jung, Sol Bee (2018). [Student Outcomes and Parent Year 3 Evaluation Teacher Home Visits](#). Prepared by Johns Hopkins School of Education for Parent Teacher Home Visits.

¹⁴ Rubinstein, Saul and McCarthy, John E. (2014). [Teachers Unions and Management Partnerships: How Working Together Improves Student Achievement](#). Published by the Center for American Progress.

If we listen to the goals and priorities of each community, we can better mobilize cross-functional supports to make progress. The state can help build local capacity and incentivize communities to adopt and accelerate best-in-class teaching practices and supports for students.

DESE will always be a regulatory organization, and compliance is necessary to ensure we maintain high standards of safety, rights, and education for our students. Yet I know from my time in schools and districts – and from feedback from educators and administrators this year – that in some areas our compliance oversight could be less burdensome. I have been working closely with DESE’s senior team to identify ways we can continue to carry out our responsibilities while reducing administrative burdens for schools and districts. In the coming year, the agency will take steps to review and streamline our procedures and provide relief in selected areas subject to state policy and regulations.

As DESE moves to implement new initiatives aligned to our core themes, the agency’s strategic plan will evolve as we determine what we will continue to do, what we will improve, where we need to build new capacities, and what we may need to stop doing so we can carry out our mission with fidelity.

Finally, I will continue to set a tone promoting collaboration and compromise across the education ecosystem. We need to move past “all or nothing” thinking, turn the page on past disagreements, and come together around new ideas that can make a positive difference for students.

Our First Step: The Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning

We will begin to shift the state towards implementing these themes and immediately impact schools and classrooms through a new pilot program at DESE called the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning (KCL). Starting in fall 2019, school districts, individual schools, and educators will be able to apply to participate in this effort. Our initial goals will be to:

- Create a research and development (R&D) hub of educators, schools, and districts focused on incubating and assessing innovative approaches to deeper learning, including standards-aligned instruction and assessment (*Theme I*)
- Form a highly engaged network of practitioners, through which holistic support (wraparound) and enrichment efforts and evidence-based practices can be identified and shared (*Themes II and III*)
- Model a new approach for how DESE can partner with the field to support adoption of promising practices, especially those shown to close achievement gaps, while respecting and learning from each community’s context (*Theme IV*)

While the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning will address all four themes of *Our Way Forward*, the primary focus will be on our central theme: Deeper Learning for All. Through this effort, we will start to gather the Massachusetts education community around this new vision for the student experience and take concrete steps to pilot new approaches. While this pilot will be open to all schools and districts across the state and is intended to benefit all learners, the network will be committed to closing achievement gaps for underperforming subgroups through deeper learning efforts and the other themes outlined above.

Kaleidoscope Schools and Districts

Through the Kaleidoscope effort, we will create opportunities and incentives for educators, school leaders, and superintendents to build upon successes and try out new approaches. To support this effort, we will create a new team within DESE focused on guiding and supporting KCL participants. This team will partner closely with intermediaries that have a successful track record in creating the conditions for deeper learning in schools and districts, and will connect educators and administrators who are pursuing similar strategies. Schools and districts that apply to participate in the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning will have the following common commitments and opportunities:

- **Engaging performance tasks.** Kaleidoscope schools and districts will work to increase the time students spend learning and demonstrating their knowledge through highly engaging, applied, and relevant tasks and activities. These tasks must be rigorous, standards-aligned, and built on a foundational, high-quality curriculum that supports high expectations for all students. They must ask students to demonstrate essential skills, such as critical thinking and collaboration, in addition to mastery of content. Districts and schools will have the opportunity to pilot a priority set of “transformative tasks” developed by educators across the Commonwealth (see next section, below), adopt vetted partner-created tasks, and receive professional development to design their own high-quality tasks.
- **Innovative assessment design.** Kaleidoscope participants will work with DESE on new performance-based tests and pilot other ideas for broader and deeper measures of student learning and school outcomes. The NAEP, through its new Technology & Engineering Literacy Assessment, and PISA are already beginning to create forward-looking assessments that address deeper, applied learning. Kaleidoscope schools and districts will partner with DESE to help Massachusetts respond to this shift. While schools will be encouraged to pursue deeper learning across all subject areas, we will focus initially on designing new performance-based assessments in history/civics/social studies and

technology and engineering. We will also explore other important measures such as student engagement in school and the community, and student valuing of learning.

- **Increased district and school flexibilities.** DESE will support Kaleidoscope sites in navigating DESE regulations and policies, including creating new areas of flexibility to support the shift to deeper learning. As we learn what practitioners need to meet their objectives, DESE will make new approaches available statewide.
- **Resources and support.** DESE will provide funding and resources for Kaleidoscope sites as well as regular opportunities for network-wide sharing. Schools and districts can request grant funds to support their plans, including teacher planning stipends and technical assistance partners.

The application for the first cohort of the KCL Schools and Districts Network will be available this fall, with selection and launch in winter 2020. In July 2019, we will solicit letters of interest to gather an initial understanding of the number of schools and districts that may apply to participate. The selected pilot cohort will serve diverse student populations and geographic regions, with traditional public schools, vocational technical and/or agricultural schools, charter schools, collaboratives, and adult education centers all encouraged to apply.

In the initial pilot group for the KCL, we will look to include a handful of districts that have already taken steps towards a deeper learning approach and a larger number of individual schools that have demonstrated readiness to move in this direction. In addition, depending on the volume of interest, we may designate a group of “priority pipeline” schools for future cohorts of the KCL. These schools would join the larger group of Kaleidoscope sites in the first cohort in piloting performance tasks and strengthening their curricula and would be well-positioned to join future KCL cohorts as full members. We plan to launch the next cohort in fall 2021 and subsequent cohorts thereafter. In addition, we will find ways to regularly share the work of the KCL with the broader Massachusetts education community.

As part of the application process this fall, we will ask interested districts and schools to collaborate with local stakeholders, such school committees, parent organizations, student councils, teachers’ unions, and other partners, as they prepare their applications. The application will include information about participant commitments that can be shared with stakeholders to guide local school and district decisions about whether to apply.

Transformative Tasks by Teachers

Massachusetts educators will play a central role in the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning. Through Kaleidoscope’s Transformative Tasks by Teachers initiative, we will issue an all-call for Massachusetts teachers to design and submit outstanding, rigorous activities that engage students in transformative learning tied to state standards. By soliciting inspiring yet concrete examples of what deeper learning tasks look like, we can begin to set a new bar for high-quality, engaging instruction state-wide. Task creation workshops will be made available to educators interested in submitting tasks for consideration.

Teachers who submit the highest-rated performance tasks, which will be vetted by a panel of educators and other experts, will each receive funding and recognition and these tasks will be piloted throughout the Kaleidoscope network of schools and districts. We will make sure implementation of these tasks is coupled with rigorous, rapid evaluation efforts to assess effectiveness.

Educators whose tasks are selected will also be invited to join a transformative task workgroup to collaborate with the Commissioner and DESE staff to identify and develop models for scaling transformative instruction. Through this effort, we will partner directly with our classroom teachers and expand the reach of their best ideas.

Moving Forward

The past 25 years of education reform gave our Commonwealth an essential foundation. This work was necessary – but, in the end, not sufficient – to support equitable and high-quality learning environments and strong outcomes for every student in the Commonwealth. It is now up to us as educators, school leaders, superintendents, school committees, and in collaboration with our families, communities, and partners to map our way forward. The Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning, alongside other new initiatives addressing each of our themes, is where we will start.

I look forward to further discussing the themes and plans outlined in this document with the Massachusetts education community, and building upon them together in the coming months and years.