



HOLISTIC SUPPORTS & ENRICHMENT:

Strengthening Social Emotional Competencies, Health & Safety

KEY INITIATIVES

The “heart strategy” is one of five **Strategic Priorities** for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), to help prepare all students for success.

The strategy also helps further all four themes in the Commissioner’s **Our Way Forward** report: Deeper Learning, Holistic Support & Enrichment, Innovation and Evidence-Based Practices, and the State as a Partner.

Areas of Focus:

To achieve this goal, DESE engages in initiatives designed to strengthen all four themes from **Our Way Forward** (Deeper Learning, Holistic Support & Enrichment, Innovation and Evidence-Based Practices, and the State as a Partner) with a focus on:

1. School climate and culture;
2. Social and emotional competencies;
3. Health, wellness, and safety; and
4. Family and community engagement

GOAL:

Promote systems and strategies that foster equitable, culturally-responsive and sustaining, safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive learning environments that address students’ varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all.

Specific areas of focus may be of particular interest to individuals or teams based on roles and responsibilities, so DESE initiative examples that support heart strategy goals are listed on the following pages under each focus area.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE ARE ONLY EXAMPLES AND MOST EFFORTS ADDRESS MULTIPLE AREAS.

ALSO NOTE: A **DESE Newsletter** periodically shares updates and offerings related to holistic supports & enrichment, including efforts to help strengthen social emotional competencies, health & safety. **Past issues** are available, and you may **sign-up online** for this and other DESE newsletters. If you have questions, please email **achievement@doe.mass.edu**.

I. SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

- ♥ **Educator workforce diversity:** *Helping schools and districts improve recruitment and retention efforts*
Partnering with educators and school and district leaders to help increase the racial and ethnic diversity of educators and superintendents in Massachusetts, including the [Teacher Diversification Pilot Program Grant Program](#), the [InSPIRED Fellowship](#), and [Influence 100](#). Complementary efforts include professional learning opportunities that support the data-informed talent diversification strategies with the goal of recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce, and improved culturally responsive educational experiences and outcomes for all students, particularly racial and ethnically diverse students.
- ♥ **Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS) Self-Reflection Tool:** *Helping schools reflect on & improve school culture*
Working with Safe and Supportive School (SaSS) [grantees](#) to pilot the current version of the SaSS Framework and Self-Reflection Tool. This work is guided by [Essential Elements](#), includes [professional learning opportunities](#), and helps identify current strengths and challenges - and informs the development and implementation of school and district action plans to promote safe and supportive learning environments. The [SaSS Commission](#) plays a key role in this work, recommending improvements to the SaSS Framework and advising DESE on the feasibility of statewide implementation.
- ♥ **Creating Positive Learning Environments:** *Promoting student engagement, learning & well-being*
Offering [numerous resources during the COVID-19 pandemic related to mental and behavioral health and wellness](#). These include several documents with guidance related to promoting the engagement and well-being of students, staff, and families from [Summer 2021](#) (with [slides](#)), [Summer 2020](#), & [Spring 2020](#).
- ♥ **Rethinking Discipline Initiative:** *Reducing disproportionate and overuse of suspensions and expulsions*
Facilitating a professional learning network and collecting action plans from participating schools and districts, with a focus on reducing the overuse of long-term suspensions and expulsions, and the disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions for students with disabilities and for students of color.
- ♥ **Systems for Student Success (SfSS) Office Initiatives:** *Developing systems to meet all students' holistic needs*
Using the Multi-Tiered System of Support ([MTSS Blueprint](#)) as a grounding framework, the SfSS office provides professional development, grants, and other learning supports to districts, including the website clearinghouse resource [MAToolsforSchools](#). In addition, they offer eight [MTSS Academies](#), focused on various components of an effective tiered system of support, such as SEL & Mental Health, PBIS, and Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leadership Practices.
- ♥ **Observations and Feedback:** *Promoting positive school culture and climates conducive to learning*
Guiding [school](#) and [district](#) leaders conducting observations, aligned with the [Educator Effectiveness Framework](#) and [resources](#) supporting culturally responsive implementation of educator evaluation.

Select Additional Initiatives

Anti-bullying Law implementation	State Student Advisory (SSAC) & GSA Leadership Councils
Views of Climate & Learning (VOCAL) Student Surveys	Priority Partners for School Turnaround

II. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

- ★ **CASEL – Collaborating States Initiative:** *Integrating social and emotional learning into policy and practice*
Participating in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) multi-state initiative to help support statewide implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL).
- ♥ **State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP):** *Promoting positive behavior supports in early childhood*
Implementing a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by supporting a cohort of several dozen districts in implementing an evidence-based, tiered intervention known as the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children.
- ♥ **Initiatives to Support Inclusive Practice:** *Sharing resources to promote evidence-based inclusive practice.*
Supporting the [Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#), [Foundations for Inclusive Practice](#) online courses; a [3-year Inclusive Tier 1 Instruction Academy](#),¹SEL, and more. Additionally, through the [Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative \(CPPI\)](#), DESE and the Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) are supporting collaborations between preschool and community-based programs to expand equitable access to high quality preschool for children with disabilities.

Select Additional Initiatives

Additional resources to promote SEL	Students' Mental Health & Wellness Grants
Standards for PreK-K (SEL/Approaches to Play and Learning); revised PreK-K Learning Experiences	SEL/Mental Health Academy
Approaches to Intentional & Playful Learning PK-3 (DESE/MA School Administrators Association)	Culturally Responsive SEL
Piloting grade 1-3 SEL resources	Educator Effectiveness Rubrics
Piloting Service-Learning (SL) & SEL Academic Integration	Expanded Learning Time (ELT) and Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs & PD (federal 21st CCLC and state ASOST / ELT)

¹ Inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for all students, with and without disabilities, in general education settings. Guidebook tools are based on the frameworks of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.

III. HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND SAFETY

- ♥ **Strengthening Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Professional Learning Opportunities** Working with districts through the [School Mental Health Learning Network CoIIN](#) (Collaborative Innovation and Improvement Network), in partnership with the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium ([MASMHC](#)) and a cross-agency state team. The network is run by the National Center for School Mental Health. [Additional learning opportunities related to school mental health](#) are also available, including an ongoing training series - [Thriving Minds](#), focused on guidance and support for building comprehensive school mental health systems that address the holistic needs of students.
- ♥ **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA): helping staff support mental health and wellness** Training teachers and other school staff to recognize and support (and refer to professional mental health services, if needed) students who may be experiencing mental health or substance use challenges and/or may be in crisis. Districts can [request a training and/or register for a session](#).
- ♥ **Substance Use and Misuse Prevention and Recovery: Sharing guidance on effective policies** Supporting [Recovery High Schools](#), as well as sharing guidance about effective district and school policies on substance use prevention and verbal screening, to help school districts and charter schools to create and submit their substance use prevention and education policies to DESE (as required by the Legislature).
- ♥ **Community Eligibility Program (CEP) & MA School Breakfast Challenge: Expanding access to school meals** Continuing outreach, training, and technical assistance through DESE’s Office for Food and Nutrition Programs to increase the number of eligible schools and districts participating in CEP. This initiative allows districts in high-poverty areas to offer school breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. Through the School Breakfast Challenge, schools can commit to statewide goals for increasing student participation in breakfast programs.
- ♥ **Healthy Schools for Student Success: Improving student health and educational outcomes** Developing district and school level capacity to utilize the [Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community Framework](#) to drive continuous quality improvement of Local Wellness Policies and nutrition, physical education/activity and chronic disease management throughout the school day in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- ♥ **School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health (SWITCH):** is a movement dedicated to supporting and advancing wellness efforts for Massachusetts students, schools, and communities. Families, teachers, and administrators are all important players to the wellness dream team, and when everyone invests in school wellness, both classrooms and communities thrive!

Select Additional Initiatives

Comprehensive Health Framework – under revision	Youth Risk Behavior Surveys and comprehensive sexual health education, with CDC & DPH
Safe Schools Programs for LGBTQ Students	Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy
Emergency management planning support	

IV. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- ♥ **Family and community engagement:** *woven throughout many of the above initiatives*
Informed by the [Parent and Community Education and Involvement Advisory Council \(PCEIAC\)](#), the [Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals](#), and more.
- ♥ **Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts:** *a cross-sector roadmap*
Offering guidance for practitioners in the education, health, and human services sectors – and collaboratively developed with 11 state agencies. A [virtual page-flipping version](#) of the framework is also available, and companion resources are under development.
- ♥ **Statewide Family Engagement Centers:** *Supporting state and local capacity building*
Developing an infrastructure of support, grounded in the family engagement framework noted above.
- ♥ **MA Family Institute for Student Success (FISS):** *Supporting family-school collaboration*
Strengthening families, school administrators, and teachers’ knowledge and skills to partner effectively to support student achievement. Families engage in a 9-week institute, taught in their primary language; and school staff also receive training. Supported through the federally funded [21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program](#).
- ♥ **Family Literacy:** *Programs that provide services to improve the economic prospects for families and support school success for children*
Providing literacy and language acquisition instruction for parents, caregivers, and family members concurrently with family-centered services such as interactive literacy activities and support for family engagement in their children’s development and learning.
- ♥ **Educational stability:** ensuring children and youth who are homeless, in foster care, migrant, or in military families have full access to a consistent public education. Offering Educational Stability learning sessions, guidance documents, and more.
- ♥ **Technical assistance and guidance:** *to school districts and families*
Helping to ensure the enrollment, [attendance](#), and opportunity to succeed in school - and promoting [principles of effective practice for integrating student services](#).

QUESTIONS? Email achievement@doe.mass.edu