

The Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)

- Provides leadership, oversight, funding, support, and accountability to approx. 400 school districts and nearly 1 million students in grades K-12, as well as 20,000 adult learners
- Led by the Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education, established in M.G.L. c. 69 § 1B
- One of three agencies (DESE, EEC, and DHE) within the Executive Office of Education

DESE's Areas of Work

- Administration and Finance
- Deeper Learning
- District Support
- Educational Options
- Instructional Support
- Legal
- Planning and Research
- Strategic Initiatives
- Student Assessment



dese



**EDUCATIONAL
VISION**

Our goal is that as a result of their public education in Massachusetts, students will:

Attain academic knowledge and skills: achieve in a comprehensive and diverse range of subjects and apply their competencies in relevant, real-world contexts

Understand and value self: know their own strengths, interests, and areas of growth, be self-aware, be a self-advocate, and make responsible decisions

Understand and value others: understand differences and multiple perspectives, empathize with others, and build connections with peers and adults

Engage with the world: understand and think critically about local, national, and world events and societal systems; and create positive change through civic action

So that they can:

Be curious and creative: find joy in learning, pursue their interests, and use innovative thinking to approach opportunities and solve challenges, including those previously unseen

Shape their path: be well prepared to thrive in college and/or career and be positioned for life-long learning

Feel connected: see themselves as valuable and involved members of their communities and be aware of their independence and interdependence

Be empowered: play a role in advocating for equity, justice, and liberty in their communities and beyond

All students in Massachusetts, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, will have equitable opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades. Culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices¹ will support students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning², and are held to high expectations with targeted support.

Learning experiences are relevant, real-world, & interactive

Learning experiences

- Students learn through curriculum and instruction that aligns with Massachusetts curriculum frameworks at or above their grade level, connects to their identities, and utilizes evidence-based practices.
- Students solve problems, think critically, ask questions, make meaning of complex ideas, and can demonstrate their learning.
- Students learn and develop language through content-rich activities that promote authentic communication.

Relevant and real-world

- Students learn by engaging with diverse perspectives and apply their learning to examine the natural world and different historical, social, and political contexts.
- Students have opportunities to make choices, connect to relevant or real-world contexts, and effect change.

Interactive

- Students enjoy and look forward to their learning experiences.
- Students have frequent opportunities to interact with their peers, make sense of complex ideas together, and develop academic language.
- Students take academic risks, learn from mistakes, incorporate feedback, and are proud to produce high quality work.

All students are known & valued

Students are known

- Students and families have a sense of belonging: they are known, respected, and valued for who they are and what they bring to the school community, including their unique identities, strengths, interests, needs, languages, exceptionalities, and backgrounds.
- Students attend safe and supportive schools that tend to their overall wellbeing.
- Students gain awareness of how they think, learn, relate, and communicate, including in multiple languages/dialects.

Students are valued

- Students engage in learning that values and builds on their background knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural and linguistic assets.
- Students are active participants and have a voice in shaping their learning experience.

Individualized supports enable students to excel at grade level (or beyond)

Excel at grade level (or beyond)

- Students receive necessary evidence-based supports and accommodations to learn knowledge and skills at grade level (or beyond).
- Students with disabilities receive carefully designed instruction that accelerates their growth towards learning goals.
- Students who are learning English receive explicit language instruction that enables access to grade-level content.

Individualized supports

- Students engage with flexible and responsive supports that are based on information gathered from classwork, observations, and assessment data; these supports are designed to fade away over time as students build more independent skills.
- Students have multiple options for how they access content and how they demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have learned, including in various formats or languages.
- Supports are tailored to students' academic, physical and mental health, and social-emotional needs.



The Commissioner: Role & Duties

From statute:

- Assess effectiveness and monitor the performance of schools and districts
- Assist districts in school-based management systems
- Oversight of the improvement process for underperforming schools and districts per MGL
- Engage in master planning every five years

Regulatory:

- Implement & execute the various functions of state regulations as approved by the Board, including:
 - Charter schools
 - Accountability & assistance
 - Educator licensure & renewal
 - Special education
 - Equal access to educational opportunities
 - Dispute resolution
 - Student discipline
 - School finance
 - Student Opportunity Act implementation

"The commissioner shall analyze the present and future goals, needs and requirements of public elementary, secondary and vocational-technical education in the commonwealth and recommend to the board comprehensive means to achieve a well-coordinated system of high achievement in public education in the commonwealth." (MGL c. 69 § 1B)

The Commissioner: Desired Qualities

- Forward-thinking, data-driven educator
- Proven leader and manager within complex, multi-tiered systems
- Has a strong grasp of the salient issues, success drivers, and challenges of public education systems
- Skilled in navigating state government structures and the political process, and the ability to place Massachusetts trends within the national context
- Demonstrates effectiveness in devising imaginative approaches that serve students, teachers, and their school communities
- Possesses an unwavering commitment to the transformational power of elementary and secondary education
- Has a clear track record of dismantling systemic inequities and improving the experience of all students, particularly those from marginalized communities and experiences