# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner  |
| **Date:**  | June 10, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Supports for Newly Arrived Homeless Students |

This memorandum updates the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on steps taken by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to support districts that are experiencing an influx of newly arrived homeless students in connection with the emergency assistance shelter system.

Massachusetts has welcomed nearly 3,000 newly arrived homeless students through the emergency assistance shelter system in school year 2023-24, and the students have enrolled in 80 districts across the state. Through coordinated efforts by the executive branch with support from the Legislature, the Commonwealth is providing school districts with various forms of assistance as they enroll and serve the increased population of students experiencing homelessness, many of whom are also English Learners. Districts have received additional funding to address students’ immediate needs, as well as funding to reimburse them for associated educational costs. Districts also receive funding to transport students who elect to remain in their “school of origin” in a different city or town, as provided under the federal McKinney-Vento Act.

In addition, districts have been provided access to a variety of state resources, technical assistance, and professional learning offerings that are available at no cost to them. These supports include:

* Access to DESE’s contract for translation (for documents) and interpretation via video and phone (for conversations).
* Technical assistance, webinars, and professional learning for educators and administrators. Approved vendors and DESE content experts are providing this support, which addresses topics such as family engagement, social emotional and mental health supports, high-quality instruction for English Learners, and building the capacity of districts’ systems to enroll and support newly arrived students.
* Grant funding and professional learning to increase the number of teachers who are certified in English as a Second Language (ESL) and those who hold an endorsement in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) in eligible districts.

At the Board meeting on June 18, 2024, Assistant Director of Student and Family Support Kristen McKinnon, Director of the Office of Language Acquisition Allison Balter, and Chief Schools Officer Komal Bhasin will present an overview of these efforts and respond to your questions. They will also be joined by administrators from MA public school districts, who will give an overview of their district’s efforts to support newly arrived students.