# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner  |
| **Date:** | October 22, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Update on Strategic Objective 3: Accelerated Literacy Reviews in Educator Preparation and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program  |

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This memorandum provides an update to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision and Strategic Objective #3, with a specific focus on two key initiatives: the Accelerated Literacy Reviews in Educator Preparation, and the new Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program.

***Strategic Objective #3: Developing and Sustaining a Diverse & Effective Workforce***

Developing and sustaining a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement is an essential component of our Educational Vision. In support of this strategic objective, we are partnering with districts, schools, and educator preparation providers to develop more expansive and robust pipelines of diverse and well-prepared educators and leaders; to create the conditions to sustain and retain diverse and effective staff, particularly those who entered the field through alternative pathways; and to implement opportunities for all staff to continually grow and develop through cycles of continuous improvement.

In this update to the Board, we will be sharing information on two programs that are advancing this strategic objective: Accelerated Literacy Reviews in Educator Preparation, and the new Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program.

* **Accelerated Literacy Reviews in Educator Preparation.** All aspiring teachers of students in grades PK–3 should be prepared with the knowledge and skills to teach evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining early literacy. To advance [Mass Literacy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/), DESE launched the [Early Literacy in Educator Preparation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy.html) initiative in 2020 and established the following goal: *by SY2024-2025, all Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities teacher candidates in Massachusetts are prepared, through coursework and opportunities for practice and high-quality feedback, in evidence-based early literacy as outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide.*

This initiative includes the following key components:

1. Setting clear expectations for educator preparation programs through the [*Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-criteria.pdf).
2. Assessing educator preparation programs' alignment to the criteria in order to make decisions about program approval, including authorizing individual programs or groups of programs to operate.
3. Supporting educator preparation programs across the Commonwealth to make meaningful shifts in their approaches so that prospective Elementary, Early Childhood, and Moderate Disabilities PK–2/PK–8 teachers are well-prepared on day one in their licensure role to support **every** student's early literacy development.

With the state's investment in early literacy through [Literacy Launch](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/literacy-launch-reading-success-from-age-3-through-grade-3), DESE is *accelerating* early literacy reviews of 170 programs over the next four years. More information about Accelerated Early Literacy Program Review and Approval, including the timeline and review schedule, is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/accelerated-early-literacy.html>.

* **Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs.** In October 2024, DESE announced the launch of an exciting new pathway to teaching: the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP).

In partnership with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s Division of Apprentice Standards, DESE developed the RTAP to expand and further diversify the educator workforce by providing an affordable, job-embedded pathway to teaching. With an emphasis on preparing aspiring teachers to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student population, RTAPs will prioritize some of our hardest-to-staff roles (e.g., special education, ESL, early childhood, STEM), build pipelines in communities with representation gaps between student and teacher demographics, and invest in a teaching workforce that better reflects and serves the rich diversity of our communities.

This fall, DESE will be inviting districts and their partner educator preparation providers to submit applications to operate an RTAP in accordance with the state’s expectations and requirements for this new role. Grant funding will also be available for RTAPs that prioritize teacher shortage areas.

More information about the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/teacher-apprenticeship/default.html>.

At the October 29 meeting, Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner; Claire Abbott, Director of Educator Effectiveness; and Lakia Baymon, RTAP Coordinator, will present overviews of these two initiatives to the Board and invite discussion, questions, and feedback.