Russell Johnston

And then we'll get things started. So welcome to our quarterly update from DESE, 4 superintendents, charter leaders, and collaborative leaders. This is our summer webinar. We'll be back in the fall, as we keep doing these quarterly updates for you. And as we think about today's meeting right here, we are at the beginning of August, looking at a new school year coming. We really wanna start just by sharing that that message of confidence in your leadership, that message of welcome. And so, I'm just really pleased to actually have our secretary with us to have Secretary Pat Tutwiler just give us that opening inspiration to get us all motivated for this new School year.

Patrick Tutwiler (He, Him)

Happy to do that, Commissioner. Good morning, actually, good afternoon. Excuse me, colleagues, greetings, guardians of learning and development and potential special thanks to the Commissioner and his team for the invitation to join. They have, as you know, a substantive agenda this afternoon, and my job is to offer a warm welcome, which I'm more than happy to do today, being the 1st of August. I know that all of you are busy putting the finishing touches on Pd. Days or convocation, perhaps student orientation days for the transition grades, or a little hiring or a lot of hiring, as the case may be. In short, with the onset of August comes the ramp up as we get ready to start the school year. As it happens, I was in Pittsfield yesterday afternoon, actually for the better part of the day and after a day of really incredible meetings hopped in the car for the ride home, which is not a short ride, but I like that for the music enthusiasts on the call. You know that a long car ride gives you ample time to sort of dig in, and yesterday I found myself listening to 80’s R&B. And therein stumbled upon Kenny Burks rising to the top. If you don't know that song, call it up in Spotify, or iTunes, or YouTube whatever at your leisure, rising to the top by Kenny Burke. This might be the quintessential back to school theme, song and the lyrics therein. Keep on believing all the dreams inside of you, and don't stop achieving. Let the love shine through just so energizing and fitting as we embrace all the optimism and excitement that comes with the opening of a school year. Accordingly, I welcome you to this space. I want to express my deep thanks for all that you do, the critical role that you play, and wish you all the best, as you prepare to open the 24-25 school year, and with that Commissioner back to you.

Russell Johnston

Thanks so much, secretary. Thank you for being here. Those words really matter. As we start this new school year, we need to just have that hope and inspiration in our heart, and I love that you had that found moment to gather those lyrics and bring them here. And I actually want to share with the group. I found a moment as well. So earlier this summer I had the opportunity to go to my son's orientation for college at East Carolina, and they had a session for parents and students together, and in the session that I attended they had a very gregarious outgoing and funny accounting Professor, which often, maybe you don't string together into a sentence. But this accounting professor shared a quote that has really sort of stayed with me since I was there, and the quote is this, if serving is below you, leadership is beyond you. And I loved that. He was sharing this with young people, was saying, you know, students, you have the power of leadership within you, and it's servant leadership that he was calling the students towards, and but it resonated with me as well a lot, and I thought about you know what I want you as superintendents, as executive directors, to know as we start this new school year, as we, you know, continue on picking up from where we left off last spring is that I intend to bring a spirit of servant leadership to this work with you this year, and I think it's not simple words. It's well, how does that show up? What does that look like? And I think today's agenda. And today's meeting is hopefully a sign of the type of servant leadership that we are embracing at DESE as we start this new school year. And so, as examples, you know, we reached out to you the associations that are represented here before today's meeting to ask for agenda items, I think that is an example of servant leadership. And there were things that you submitted frankly that made the list. I'm gonna show you. In just a second. There were a few topics that you suggested that I felt were better meant for maybe a discussion where I didn't have updated information to bring you to and frankly love that the Superintendents Association raised a lot of those topics. So, I did reach out to Mary Burke last week just to talk about where we are with this agenda today, and I think that's also a sign of like my respect for the topics you brought forward. Some of them. You're going to see. Some of them, I think, are better suited for a discussion, because I want your voice, and how we develop some of those issues, some of those ideas. And then, finally, we are, of course, recording and posting today's session again in service of people who can't be here, who are like the Secretary said, busy with the opening of school. And so, it's really this kind of all-around viewpoint that I want to share with you today of this idea of how we approach leadership collectively, and just really a pleasure to get to kick things off with you today. So, here's our agenda. If I can advance the slide. There we go, just a quick update on our education vision. I promise to be fast there. We actually have quite a cadre of my very esteemed colleagues here at DESE today to actually provide you very direct information about the topics that you see listed here. They are organized relative to our strategic objectives and core functions, and we'll save a little time at the end for your questions, so I won't read you what's coming. I hope you just take a quick scan. And let's just jump right into it. So just a quick update on our education vision. I promise to be brief here. Just want to ground ourselves in the fact that this is what our vision is. I'm not going to read this to you because you've heard this from me a lot even this summer, but it's important just to know what we are about here at DESE, and our DESEre to make change in the places where students have been most historically marginalized in our State. That's what we are called to do. That's what we are in service of. In addition, we've aligned our 3 strategic objectives in order to implement that vision. And so, you see them here. And like, I mentioned, our agenda today is organized around our strategic objectives because we want to make sure that we're rowing together, that we are wanting to have impact through collective effort and through alignment, and so excited about the work that we've been doing here at DESE to align to these strategic objectives. And it's also important that there are just some things that DESE has to do as a State Education Agency that we fully embrace. We call those our core functions. And so again, you see them here. The core functions also have to be in service of our vision, and I'm just so pleased about the way that my DESE colleagues have really worked to make sure that anything they're producing. If it's part of a core function. It's part of a strategic objective really reflects our vision. So that again we row together as tightly as we can. That's an Olympic little metaphor there, if you will. And again, how will you know that that exists? I just wanna call your attention back to our catalog of Alliance support where we have listed all of the DESE initiatives that are available for this upcoming school year. All in one place, if you haven't looked at it. Please take a look. We wanna be in service of your work, your efforts. And we think that having all of our professional development options, our grant options, our networks, our guidance documents in one place that are aligned to our strategic objectives that are often aligned to your strategic objectives will be very useful as we start this new school year. So, like I said, I went fast there so that we can now slow down a little bit and really delve into the subject matter that we have to take on more in a more in-depth way today. So, 1st based on feedback that we received from you as well as you know, we have some information to share today about what's coming from DESE. We want to start by talking about chronic absenteeism, and frankly, how we start this school year on a really positive note, with our families, with our students welcoming them into school, and just getting ready for even further improvements in our attendance in our engagement with our families and our students. And so, the purpose in us doing this today is twofold one. I want to make sure you have up-to-date information about data, statewide data as well as information about some of the root causes that we see nationally around chronic absenteeism, because I hope that this information could almost be turnkey. If you have to make a presentation around attendance or absenteeism that you could use some of our slides that show statewide data and then compare to your local data really is just hopefully in service of work that you might have to be doing this year relative to this important topic. And then I want DESE to be clearer this year about how do we address chronic absenteeism? And so, I'm really pleased that my colleague, Becca Shore is going to come on screen right now, and Becca's going to guide us through these slides and give you that overview that will hopefully again, look at the data, look at root causes. And most importantly, then, how can we collectively address chronic absenteeism? So, Becca over to you.

Becca Shor (she/her)

Thank you so much, Commissioner. It's great to be in this virtual space with you all I'm standing in today for DESE’s chief absenteeism officer because he doesn't have a chief absenteeism officer. Alright, that's not an oversight that makes sense, because when we think about attendance and addressing chronic absenteeism. It is probably one of the most multidisciplinary, multi-pronged priorities that we have. It affects everything from transportation and operation. Systems to Sis are strong systems for student support to the quality of instruction and family engagement. And so, everyone really has a role in impacting attendance. And that's true at the state level as well. And so, we're really excited to, as Commissioner Johnston mentioned, be alongside you thinking about ways that we can continue to mitigate the barriers for students to be able to be present, both physically and mentally and emotionally, in school, Russell, if you could advance the slide. That'd be great.

Russell Johnston

Got it.

Becca Shor (she/her)

So just a headline of the trajectory that we've been on right now as of March this past spring, about 19.6% of our students were chronically absent. And we just wanna start by thanking you, because that is down from a rate of 27.7 at our highest during the pandemic. So more than 8 percentage points that, due to your tireless work and persistence, we've already lowered that rate considerably. And then, at the same time it's still considerably higher than our pre pandemic rate of 13. And not only that, I mean I've been here for a while. I've been working with many of you. It's not like we were satisfied with 13%. Pre pandemic. This is something that we've been working on for a while. So, it's definitely an area that requires additional focus and attention. Russell, if you could advance the slide. We want to start by just sharing a few data slides broken out by different factors starting by grade span. So both before the pandemic. And now you can see that pre-k and high school grades are pretty consistently the ones that have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. You can see that they flip, flop in certain places, but that seems to be a trend that is ongoing. Of course there are very different implications for the causes for that, and how we approach it, but something to definitely keep in mind. On the right-hand side. I won't go through all these talking points. But one that I do wanna mention right now is that the research shows that chronic absenteeism doesn't just affect the students who are chronically absent. It also impacts the students that are in classrooms and schools with chronically absent kids. So it's really important that we're not just thinking about it as like a targeted support that's going to impact a certain percentage of kids. But really, so many of our students are having a spillover effect. Whether that's because there's a change in instructional practice or pace the school climate, etc., so definitely something that warrants our attention, next slide, please. We also wanted to look at it by specific student groups that we know we've have been historically marginalized and really deserve our attention. In particular, we see that English learners, low income students and students with disabilities have significantly higher rates of chronic absenteeism than the all student average. And this is important, not just because it's impacting them at a greater rate, but because research has shown that the impact of being chronically absent is more significant for those student groups. So, it's kind of a double whammy of impact here, which is why we should really pay attention to what are the underlying causes. And how can we address them, next slide? Similarly, we think it's really important to look at what are the trends related to race and ethnicity. And you can see that there's considerable amount of variance when we break it out by that. Those student groups in particular, just to name that 2 out of 5 Hispanic high school students miss more than 10% of school, which is, or 10% or more of school, which is really a staggering statistic, and I also wanted to call out, may. Maybe some of you saw recently. Ed Week had an article about the negative biases that come along with for teachers and educators who are thinking about their students are chronically absent. So, you have this negative fueling cycle where teachers have biases against students who are chronically absent. Students feel that, and then potentially, are chronically absent at a greater rate. And so, it just keeps on going with that cycle. And when you consider that type of bias, in addition to the racial and ethnic biases that we know exist, and that we know our districts are trying to dismantle again, it's potentially a double whammy effect in terms of the experiences and perceptions that students feel at school. Next slide. So, we know that probably everybody on this call is familiar with this data, but just wanted to share the most recent data points. There's a very strong correlation between MCAS and grad rates with chronic absenteeism in terms of NCA. MCAS. The success rates of meeting or exceeding expectations are nearly cut in half for students who are chronically absent is huge. Similarly, the 4-year graduation rates are cut by approximately a 3rd, so this is not just an issue of being in school, but really succeeding in school and after school, next slide please. Now, let's just talk briefly about some of the underlying causes right in terms of the national research in a post pandemic world. Many of the same risk. Factors and underlying causes are the same. We think about our physical and mental health challenges, transportation issues. Sometimes there are misconceptions about the importance of attendance, and also the detrimental impact of being absent economic and housing instability issues. And then, of course, school aversion experience. You know, what? What is the culture like? What is the instruction like? Do kids want to be in school? But we wanted to point out that there are some trends that we're seeing post pandemic even a couple of years out. The 1st is that it's just much more widespread demographically, it's affecting all of our students, all of our communities, certain student groups greater than others, but it's just much more vast than it was before. We also see rises in youth, mental health challenges. I'm sure we don't have to tell you that I'm also social worker by background. So, you know, I have an affinity for this space as well. And so, we know that we need much more accessible access to mental health care and also tier. One. Mental health supports in schools. And then there's also this shift in perception. Right about. Am I going to send my kid to school? Even as an adult? I'm like, am I going to go to work. I think about how I would use to go to work before and like boxes of tissues and feeling really ill. And that seemed like, okay. And now you have like a quick sneeze, and you don't go. But the trouble is, of course, we don't have the same systems for students to be able to succeed if they're staying home, as I can do, like zoom in for this meeting. So, there's a lower threshold for missing school, and there's also a lot of confusion about. What are the current protocols around missing? Missing for Covid right now we have a huge surge of Covid happening. And you hear probably 12 different answers about how long you have to stay home, etc. So, getting really clear about those things? And then, of course there are continued economic stressors that have been exacerbated since the pandemic, next slide. Please. Now, as we think about what to do, I'm sure y'all have seen those like one. Pagers that say, like these are the top 3 tips for addressing chronic absenteeism and you know oftentimes the strategies that they list are perfectly valid. Often have an evidence base. Nothing wrong with them. But there is a challenge here, and maybe really 2 challenges. The 1st is that a lot of times those particular strategies are perhaps a little bit more superficial, and I don't mean that in a derogatory sense. But they're the types of things that aren't necessarily addressing the underlying systems, but rather like a shorter term like incentive program to getting students to, you know, mitigate the barriers that they're experiencing and motivate them to come to school. But it doesn't necessarily again address those underlying root causes. Another challenge that we see is on the left side. You saw there are a lot of different reasons that kids aren't coming to school, and so it doesn't make sense to have like a 1 size, Fidel approach to the strategies to address it. So, we really wanted to stress on the left-hand side of the screen the importance of really good data systems and practices and root cause analyses to understand what are the trends around attendance in our school? What are the underlying reasons? Looking at talking to students and families about what is happening, so that we can really make sure that we're tailoring our strategies to the reasons that are relevant in our local context. Once we've done that, this is not an exhaustive list. But we think of the types of strategies largely in 4 buckets. One is around proactive family partnership and outreach. And I think this is really notable, because a school's family engagement systems can be twice as predictive of chronic absenteeism as rates of poverty which is really remarkable. So really thinking about how the early positive and supportive communication and collaboration systems are in place. Secondly, looking at holistic student support systems. How are we proactively identifying, addressing and assessing students, strengths and needs in multiple domains, not just attendance and academics, but social, emotionally, physically, mental health, etc. And then how are we tracking and adjusting our interventions based off that, including wraparound supports and other types of supports? 3rd thinking about school culture and belonging like? Do students feel safe

physically and emotionally in school? Do they feel connected to at least one adult? Do they feel connected to their peers as well as other activities before and after school. And finally, and we really can't stress this enough engaging instruction, right? Like, why come to school if you're not challenged. If you're not engaged, if you're not getting anything out of the time being spent there. So back to our Ed vision, are we ensuring that students are engaged in learning experiences that are real world, relevant and interactive? And are we really leveraging their student identities in and supporting that work? Next slide? Please.

Russell Johnston

In.

Becca Shor (she/her)

Thanks. Okay, this is like your back-to-school eye test, I think. I promise we're going to go through all of these. But you'll get the slides later. So just wanted to share. And again, this is not an exhaustive list. But we looked at various strategies that you all have been using over the past number of years and have given some examples of things that you found to be successful. One that I would maybe to call out is, you know, in the school culture and belonging thinking about how 9th graders are actively being connected to at least 2 extracurricular activities. That's a huge, huge indicator of whether they're going to remain engaged when we talk to students. We know that's why kids come to school. That's why they persist oftentimes because of the connections that they have through positive youth, development activities, sports, drama, etc. Another thing we just wanted to stress and talking about the strategies is that it's important that we not have such a laser-like focus on attendance that we undermine the work more broadly. I think a good example of this is family engagement, right? We want to be working really actively with families to ensure that they understand the importance of coming to school that they have any supports they need for mitigating barriers to coming to school, but it will undermine the relationship if they feel like the only reason, we're reaching out is to get their kids to come to school. We really want that to be a shared partnership between families, students, and the school to share a vision. For where students are going and what types of supports they need to get there. Next slide, Russell. Bye, there we go. Yeah, perfect. So just, nope. Okay, perfect. So just very briefly, in terms of the work ahead. Right now, we're gathering more information. We know what the national landscape indicates. But we want to hear more from all of you about what's been working, what's not and thinking about? Are there collective barriers that we at the state level could have some type of role in helping to mitigate. Some of you have already completed this survey, which thank you so much. If you haven't, we would really encourage you to do so, to not only share some of the strategies you've been using that have been working, but also to identify any challenges that you've been experiencing and moving forward. We'll be looking at ways that we can align the supports that we have as well as potentially expand the supports that we have to have a direct impact in this area. And the last slide is just a handful of resources. And actually, when you get the deck. It will have all the sources that were cited. In this presentation as well. But I'll wanted to particularly note that the DESE’s dropout prevention and re-engagement network will be having a convening in October focused on chronic absenteeism. So be on the lookout for information there alright. See Russell.

Russell Johnston

No, really appreciate that, Becca and also something to be on the lookout for is our back-to-school messaging campaign. You may be familiar that we worked on this last year we had that great image of Secretary Tutwiler, and the video that we had that was commercially available through many different outlets and networks. We're staying on message again this year, focusing on presence in schools, presence and attendance. And we are. The campaign this year is going to be about the power of presence, and that your presence is powerful and just. So, you know, from September to December. We are going to have this out, and it will be sort of a call to action, a call to response where we will ask people who see this ad to give us their perspective, their feedback. On what? What are those motivating things that inspire them? To want to be engaged in school that you're doing that is resonating with students and families and educators. And so we want some of those personal narratives, those positive things that are really driving students to want to be in school and increasing their attendance. And we're just then going to turn around and promote them. So, you should see this on our Twitter, feed, and other outlets, where we will then sort of broadcast the great work that you are doing to inspire, to inform and to increase again just that engagement and that attendance as we go forward into this New Year. So just want to give you a quick heads up on that. And Becca really appreciate this presentation. Thank you so much. Up. Next, based on your request, is for us to look at 2 items related to our strategic objective of promoting deeper learning. The 1st is about our efforts to align comprehensive health and PE framework with social, emotional learning. I'm really glad that Erin Hashimoto-Martel, Dr. Erin Hashimoto-Martel, our associate Commissioner for the Center for instructional support, will guide us through that conversation, and, Erin, you'll just take it, then right into the second part of this conversation about literacy launch and our literacy resources. So, Erin, really happy to turn it over to you, and I'm going to get the clicking down now, so I won't be advancing. Stutter, stepping these slides. So, Erin. please take it away.

Erin Hashimoto (she/her)

All right. Well, thank you. So yes, I'm excited to spotlight a couple of different things coming from our center for instructional support today. So, the 1st is just talking about where social emotional learning standards are so in our newest framework, the 2023 comprehensive health and PE framework that includes standards on health, education, physical education, and also includes the development of social and emotional competencies. So, the Sel competencies are authentically in great integrated in the framework throughout our practices, their topics, their standards. So, in this slide, you see on the right, how the framework was developed, using the collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning. The castle framework really informed the development of how Sel shows up in a fraud across the practices which you see on the left, as well as in the topics and down to the standards. If you want to see more details around the crosswalk, between the castle framework and our framework. We do have that listed on our web page as a resource for further information. So, what I also wanted to show was, just give you an example of how that looks in our in our standards. So, this is just an example of one topic one practice the self-management and goal setting. So, I want to kind of orient you to what some of these codes are. So, the framework is grouped by practice and then topic, and then the standards. So here the example is the practice of self-management and goal setting. The topic is mental and emotional health. and there can be multiple topics under each practice. And then you see the 5 standards there that are expected for students by the end of second grade

they met these standards the code se, after each standard indicates that it's a social and emotional learning standard which are integrated across all of the health and PE standards. So yes. This indicates the 1st 2 in mental health and mental and emotional health the 1st 2 indicates the grade span by end of grade 2 and the second 2 is the number related to the number of the practice. So that's just orient you to what it would look like if you actually go into the framework and are looking for those social and emotional learning standards. And really, also, we encourage educators, all educators across content areas be integrating these practices in their content areas. And we also have crosswalks. You know, for example, what does what these standards look like in a math classroom? And so we encourage you to go. Look at those resources as well that are posted on our website. So lastly, on this topic, I'll leave you with some resources that are available now and signal some things that are coming soon. But we did recently just post a quick reference guide really meant for school and district administrators to help you understand? What are the specifics around when families want to opt out of sex education we also have. Next week we're running our summer Institute to around the conference of health and PE framework. So, registration is still open today. So, if you want someone from your district to attend, please have them go ahead and go to that registration link and register today for ongoing support throughout the year there is the Conference Health and PE Leader network. So you'll have the link there to sign up for kind of sporadic opportunities to engage with the leaders overseeing this work across the State, and also a few spots left in the social, emotional, Behavioral Academy for this upcoming year, and then excited for some things coming soon. We'll have a curriculum guide that we'll post shortly this month. We are also planning in partnership with mass, a fall webinar, and we'll also soon. You should see the grant around supporting students, social, emotional learning, behavior, and mental health and wellness. Grant. So those are things coming soon and hopefully. That also exemplified just how? Each across the strategic objectives, really, how? Across all 3 objectives, they really reinforce and build upon one another in order to support our educational vision. So, all right. So that was about sel, I'm excited now to talk a little bit about literacy launch. so, as many of you have likely heard about. So, with this year's budget, Governor Healy included a new early literacy line item funded by the fair share dollars to create the new Literacy Launch initiative. It's focused on strengthening early literacy from age 3 to grade 3 and was expected to be spent on a multi-year basis in partnership with EOE, EEC and DESE. So the stated goal of literacy launch broadly is to increase the number of public schools and licensed early education and care providers in the Commonwealth, in providing evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction to students in pre-k through grade 3 through literacy launch, we're committed to equity and early literacy experiences and outcomes, so that all students are able to read and write on grade level by grade 3. The literacy launch will have a variety of programs and opportunities funded by it. The 1st one that we're going to release is the partnership for reading success, Massachusetts Grant or Prism one this Grant program is our 1st one that we're releasing it will provide significant support and resources. It's an intensive competitive grant. It will eligible funding will include materials, time expertise and support over 4 years, so that schools can really implement and sustain what that evidence-based culture and linguistically sustaining practices, the systems and structures? So that all students can read and write on grade level by grade 3. We'll release additional literacy launch grants and programs over the coming months and years. So, we recognize not all schools and districts are a good fit for prism. One. But we will provide other entry points and other programs that we feel will meet the needs of other communities all right. So, who should apply for prism one specifically so, all Massachusetts, public school districts and charter schools who are already using high quality instruction materials for tier one in grades, K to 3 are eligible to apply districts, must also agree to partner with at least 2 community-based preschool providers throughout the course of the prism. Grant

and though all districts using are eligible, size will come into consideration as well. So, the expectation is that all schools that are serving that pre-k grade 3 in that district that's participating would be required to participate in the Grant program with the exception of kind of the big and small. So that's up to. We would expect all the schools to participate in that district up to 15 participating schools per district. So, if you're one of those larger districts with more than 15 schools. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us. If you would like support in selecting which 15 schools would be the right ones to participate. And then, on the other end of the spectrum districts that only have one or 2 schools that serve pre-k to 3. We are asking to apply in a consortium with other districts to reach a minimum of 3 participating schools. So, this just allows the smaller districts to kind of combine to expand capacity as instructional leaders, but also allow us to really stretch the prism funding to reach as many students as possible, so please visit our prism website. Which will help you with a lot of these decisions. So, kind of 2 pieces. I wanna point you if you're looking for the actual RFP that is posted on our web on our website, and you'll apply through the gems. Platform applications are due. October first, for additional resources and support related to the application. You can go to our literacy web page. There's an FAQ section, some application support videos. And also, if you want to sign up for office hours to ask kind of questions directly to Literacy team you can get all that information there. So that's a lot of where you can go for additional information, for that.

Russell Johnston

Excellent, excellent Erin, I appreciate this. Oh, there is one more sorry. I do apologize.

Erin Hashimoto (she/her)

Last list of resources so that we're excited about prism one, we have other additional early literacy resources just wanted to signal and point to those other things that are going on here. You'll the links for interest and registration forms for the networks and communities. Institutes will be in the chat. And also, you can find them all on our website site website. So please engage.

Russell Johnston

Definitely. And we hope this is helpful, because one of the questions that we were asked for this presentation today was, where can we find those early literacy resources. And so, Erin, this, the website, the web address we're showing here that and Martha's putting in the chat. This is really the go to hub to find all the items that are listed here.

Erin Hashimoto (she/her)

Yes.

Russell Johnston

Excellent, excellent thanks very much, really appreciate this update. And we hope that there's a robust interest in prism and everything that we're doing relative to learning launch. Thanks very much. Great. So up. Next, we want to. Now turn to some of our core functions, and the 1st one is an update on the fiscal year 25 state budget. Really pleased that we have our colleague, Rob O’Donnell, here with us, the director of school Finance. So Rob, just really glad for you to be here today to kind of Orient district leaders, school leaders, charter leaders to what we should be thinking about, what you'd want them thinking about as we enter into this new school year, and particularly as we look at some of the things that can support accurate data collection through the October one data collection period that will support you know the development of their chapter. 70 funds for the upcoming school year for the fiscal year 26 school year. So, Rob, glad for you to just offer some pointers today, as we look ahead to this new school year.

Robert O'Donnell

Great. Thanks, Russell. So, as everyone knows, the Governor signed the FY 25 budget on Monday. So, FY, 25, chapter 70 funding levels are up $309 million over FY 24. That includes foundation aid for districts that are eligible for new foundation funding as well as $104 and minimum aid increases for districts that are not eligible for foundation aid funding increases. So, no sooner is the FY 25 budget settled. And we're already looking ahead to FY 26 budget development. So, as we launch into the new school year, we wanna remind you to really pay very close attention to your October one enrollment reporting this is a really key driver of your foundation budget and your chapter 70, funding overall. So, to that end you should really be paying very close attention to your SIM. Summary reports, particularly some reports, one and 2 as you work on your October one, reporting upcoming. So, summary report one includes all of your resident enrolled students. Summary report to our students enroll in your district who are. accredited to other districts who are fiscally responsible for them. So that includes incoming school choice students and other students that might be tuitioned into your district. So, it's really important that you look at year over year changes by grade in your enrollment reporting to identify any reporting discrepancies before you certify your October one numbers the other thing. We wanna bring your attention to our understanding how we identify students in your districts who qualify to be counted as low income. So, the primary mean that means that we're using to identify these students is through a 4-period match that we have with the Executive Office for Health and human services. That's how we're identifying the vast majority of students who are identified as low income for Chapter 70, funding purposes we've made improvements to that match over time since it was 1st launched back in 2016 2017, so we have a high level of confidence in the match. That being said, though. Under the Student Opportunity Act. We've created an alternative means for you to identify students who, may qualify to be counted as low income, but who, for whatever reason, are not being picked up with our match. With eohs for state, databases for public benefit programs. so, in order to support that process. Around the supplemental low-income data collection. We've got a couple of webinars scheduled upcoming the 1st one is scheduled for August 13.th we're gonna repeat that webinar on September 19th we're also gonna provide that web that training in person at convening on September 25th So we sent out a communication to business managers earlier this week with links to register for these webinars. We're also gonna be sending that out to Sims contacts. We're gonna post it in the upcoming commissioner’s update. So, keep an eye out for those trainings. It's up to each district to determine whether or not you know, they wanna participate in this supplemental collection. It's not required but we wanna make sure that you have all the information necessary to determine whether or not you wanna collect additional forms from families to identify them to be counted as low income so so keep an eye out for those training dates and registration links a couple of other things I'll just point out. So, we are on track to fully implement the Student Opportunity Act by FY 27. So, FY 25 is year 4 of years of a 6-year implementation schedule for the Student Opportunity Act. So, we're over the halfway point terms of implementing that that law.

The other thing, the last thing I'll point out this was a prominent issue in FY 25 budget development. So, I just wanna point you to how we come up with this number. So, the inflation rate that we use to determine chapter 70, inflation rate adjustments annually comes from table published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. It's linked here. It's called the Implicit Price Deflator for state and local government services. So, we look at a quarter 3 to quarter 3 comparison in that table. This is something you wanna investigate on your own. That's where we get the inflation number this year was its set of 1.35, which is a downward shift from prior years? Or was those 4 and a half percent, and that had an impact on overall? It increases for districts. So just to inform you where that number comes from. You can go to that. The link to that table Russell, that's all I wanted to share, so I'll pass it over to you.

Russell Johnston

Yeah. Rob, that was great. I know that, you know, when I took over this position in March you know, there were several district leaders that reached out to say, we're struggling with some of these. You know how we're left regarding the matching process or how we understand the inflation rate. So, I really appreciate you being here today and the resources we're offering as we have in the past, but just doubling down on them this year about how we can make sure that the match happens. Well. how we can know where the inflation rate is coming from. Those are just important details to be watching as this year unfolds, and so appreciate these extra supports and look forward to any feedback that districts have about how we can further improve them as we go forward.

Robert O'Donnell

Thanks, Russell.

Russell Johnston

Jim. if this was the Olympic relay, our last topic would be about emergency assistance shelter updates and Anne-Marie, you would be our anchor sprinter. So, I'm passing the baton to you to just give our district and school leaders an update on what they should know. Now about some recent changes to the shelter system in our state, especially as we support families experiencing homelessness. So, Anne-Marie, glad for you to take it away.

Anne Marie Stronach

Thank you, Commissioner, and it's great to be with you all again, and looking forward to another year of working with you all the emergency assistance commonly referred to as Ea has changed the length of stay policies and is receiving quite a bit of media attention. If you noticed these changes, no doubt will have impacts in districts across the Commonwealth. It is important to keep in mind that the goal of Ea policies are to ensure that shelters is temporary, supportive, and normally occurring. There are 2 lengths of stay policies. One is the traditional Ea, which includes the hotels that allows our guests to live in the shelters up to 9 months with a potential 90 day extension, the other, which was formerly overflow shelters, and now, as of today, called temporary respite centers or tic trcs have a 5 day length of stay policy, with some very specific potential exceptions which range from 5 to 30 days. It's important to keep in mind a couple of things. First McKinney veto is still in play and it requires district to enroll students, even if the student lacks the typical required documents and immunizations, and Anne Arthur is going to drop the homeless brochure in the chat, which will give you some additional information on that

in the Ea traditional sites case managers will work with homeless liaisons to enroll in enrollment specialists directly to enroll students in the trc sites, which is a little bit different the case managers will be working directly with the families to ensure. They understand their educational rights, and the school enrollment options and families will direct the enrollment with the districts. and then Ruth is gonna drop the flyer in the chat which the case managers will be reviewing with the families at the Trc's additionally homeless students can continue to attend their school of origin school, which they last enrolled, if their family's preference and is feasible. families request this and receive transportation for up to one hours from to and from the school of origin. as Ea. Case managers work with families to secure safe housing upon exiting the Trc’s. We anticipate that this will increase the enrollment of homeless students who are doubling up or living with families while they acquire fixed, adequate and regular nighttime Residency. This will definitely have an impact across the commonwealth. We believe. Additionally, we're seeing an influx of newcomers within the Trc’s, including an increased overage student population. The newcomers has a welcoming FAQ. Which will help you. Manage this and navigate these matters and can address these types of questions, and that will be put in the chat. We understand the impacts on the districts, and we're here to help in the upcoming weeks and months. We'll be providing grant opportunities to affected districts, webinars regarding the matter to all of you, providing technical assistance upon request, and we will continue to work with mas tapping into your experience and expertise, using superintendents shelter task force as a vehicle to improve and share out information on this matter. During the 24-25 school year and back to you, Commissioner, and please call me if you have any questions.

Russell Johnston

Thank you, Emery. Glad to see your email address down there at the bottom of the screen as well for people to be able to use. And so certainly tap into that. And, Emory, I appreciate that this is new news like you said it's just released the update to the policy, and I appreciate the way that you and our team here at DESE are shifting our approach supports those bullets down there at the bottom. Henry, you and the team have really adapted what you're doing to be responsive to this change. To say we're now needing to think differently about the districts we need to reach, particularly as we see the increase, perhaps, in doubling up. And so, the sort of direct outreach that we'll be doing will shift, based on the shift in policy and hopefully just being responsive to what our districts need to meet the needs of the students who enroll during this upcoming school year, but really appreciate that responsiveness.

Anne Marie Stronach

Thank you.

I appreciate team as well.

Russell Johnston

Definitely. So just to wrap things up I just want to shift to an update on the superintendent's checklist this actually just came out while we've been in this meeting. So, as you know, we annually provide you the checklist. I listed it as being released soon as now. You have it actually. And so, if you don't have it is, here's the link where you can find it on our website again, this is just that comprehensive overview of all the responsibilities of a district under the leadership of the superintendent. And there are, some new things this year just to look through. So, you know, if you have a minute during this month with your team, maybe just looking over seeing what are those things you already have in place? And then, are there some things on the list that you think? Oh, you know we're actually not doing this yet. So, who are we going to sign this to? How are we going to get this done? We just want it to be that column all in one. Just so you know what are the requirements that come through statute and regulation that have to be implemented in our schools. So, we hope you find this a useful resource as we start this new school year. So again, just wrapping things up now and looking ahead, we're gonna end the recording so we can move to Q&A.