

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, March 2, 2017
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent of Schools

Supporting Transgender Students and Their Families

Despite the recent rollback of protections for transgender students at the federal level our commitment to transgender students and their families has not wavered. As you know the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed the *Act Relative to Gender Identity* which took effect on July 1, 2012. That law and the accompanying guidance from DESE make it clear that Massachusetts schools are prohibited from discriminating against transgender students. The changes at the federal level have no impact or effect on our commitment to transgender students and their families.

In order to support transgender students in our schools a Gender Identity Leadership Group was formed. This group is led by Director of School Counseling and Clinical Services Christina Palmer and also includes Baker School Principal Dr. Mary Brown, Heath School Principal Dr. AC Sevelius, Darby Neff-Verre, Director of Counseling at Brookline High School, and Kate Sullivan, School Counselor at Pierce School. The group is focused on: developing district protocols and training for district leaders, teachers, students, and families; supporting gender identity in our school communities; and identifying curricula and resources.

The Gender Identity Leadership Group is developing the following working documents to support school leaders, school counselors, students and parents, including:

Gender Support Plan: Guides a school principal through initial meetings with identified students and parents

Decision Tree/Flow Chart: Principals and school counselors follow this when a student identifies as transgender or gender expansive; helps guide them through steps and responses based on information that the student and/or parent provides

Individual Support Plan Templates: To be used when developing plans to support students and their family

Resources for Staff, Families and Parents: Handouts, articles, websites, tools, books and other materials

In addition to this work at the district level, we have made specific accommodations in our schools with regard to bathrooms. For example, at Brookline High School, all bathrooms can be used by transgender students. Further we have identified three bathrooms at the high school as *gender inclusive* for use by transgender students or other students who are uncomfortable using a bathroom that may or may not conform to their gender identity. Those three bathrooms are clearly marked with this signage:



In our K-8 schools, five of the nine buildings have single stall bathrooms that are considered gender inclusive. All buildings have multiple single stall bathrooms that are currently used for staff that could be used as student bathrooms instead. All of the K-8 buildings are in need of better signage for their gender inclusive bathrooms. We will be sharing the signage developed by BHS with the elementary schools.

School Visits

Since our last School Committee meeting I was able to visit both Lower Devotion and Upper Devotion Schools. At Lower Devotion I visited 3rd and 4th grade classrooms and observed literacy, history and science instruction.

Today, at Upper Devotion, I observed several classes. In one 5th grade class, students were reading texts about the U.S. Colonial Era and analyzing the texts for bias. Students were able to identify where author opinion was presented as fact, as well as where the author's experience living in the 21st Century created a lens of bias in the way they described life in the 1600s. In another 5th grade class students were deep in their work of opinion writing. Students were completing essays on whether schools should allow chocolate milk to be sold in school cafeterias. Based on the research students had done, the vast majority of students wrote essays arguing that chocolate milk should not be sold in school cafeterias.

I also had the opportunity to observe 6th grade students planning the procedures for an upcoming science experiment, with each group testing the effects of different variables on the experiment. Another group of 6th grade students was deep in their world geography work, studying the different regions of Western Europe. I also observed 8th grade students at the start of class engaged in challenging and interesting chemistry work. Lastly, I was able to visit with 8th grade students as they worked in small groups on a variety of math problems.

I continue to be impressed at the level of individualized attention, educational support and high-quality instruction that I observe when visiting classrooms across the district. These visits are the highlight of my weekly calendar and serve to keep me directly connected with the most central part of our work: an excellent education for every student.

Principal Announcements

At the February 16 School Committee meeting I was pleased to announce the appointment of Genteen Jean-Michel as the permanent principal of Runkle School. You will recall that, at that time, I did not announce the permanent Heath School principal as I wanted to first share the news with the Heath School staff, which I did on the morning of Friday, February 17. While the news has already been shared with Heath School staff and parents, I did want to take a moment to officially announce that Dr. AC Sevelius has been appointed as the permanent principal of Heath School. Having served so capably as Interim Principal since July 2015, I know you join me in welcoming Dr. Sevelius to this role in a permanent capacity. The letter announcing Dr. Sevelius' appointment is attached.

Performing Arts at Brookline High School

Next week is the annual BHS Spring Play, directed by Summer Williams. Performances are Thursday 3/9, Friday 3/10, and Saturday 3/11 at 7:30 p.m. in the Black Box Theater (there is also a matinee performance at 5:30 pm on Saturday). Continuing in the tradition of our drama department at BHS, Summer has taken on a very powerful show this year: *Every 28 Hours*. She is incorporating many students in the production including quite a few who have never participated in drama prior to this, as well as a number of BHS faculty members in the final piece of the show. *Every 28 Hours* plays are described on the every28hoursplays.org website as part of a "national partnership focused on the widely shared and contested statistic that every twenty-eight hours a black person is killed by a vigilante, security guard, or the police in the United States." *Every 28 Hours* is a series of 1 minute plays inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.

This Saturday, March 4, Mark VanDerzee and Mary Mastandrea will co-host the preliminary round of the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild (METG) State Drama Festival from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the BHS auditorium. We welcome seven schools to BHS for this day-long festival, and Mark and Mary also direct a group of BHS students in a piece for the festival. A special thanks to Mark, Mary and Summer for the incredible amount of work that goes into planning, preparing for and hosting this festival.

Proposed Changes to 2017 Accountability Reporting

I have attached, for your review, a memorandum from DESE outlining proposed changes to school and district accountability reporting for 2017. I look forward to discussing this in more detail with you at a future Curriculum Subcommittee or full School Committee meeting.



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Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

February 17, 2017

Dear Heath School Families and Staff,

I am pleased to announce the selection of Dr. AC Sevelius as Heath School principal. Dr. Sevelius joined the Heath community as vice principal in 2014, and has served as the interim principal since July 2015. Prior to joining the Public Schools of Brookline, Dr. Sevelius served for ten years at the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Boston, five of those as principal and four of those as vice principal. Dr. Sevelius has also served as a teacher and reading instructor in Berkeley, California and Nagoya Japan.

The Heath School principal search committee engaged in a thoughtful and rigorous hiring process in order to select the best person to lead the Heath School community forward. The search committee reviewed the application packets of over thirty highly qualified candidates, interviewed multiple candidates, and selected several finalists for the position. Dr. Sevelius' belief that a joyful, high-quality education is a fundamental civil right stood out to members of the committee. Equally important to committee members is Dr. Sevelius' understanding that the ways we support how children learn are as important as what students learn.

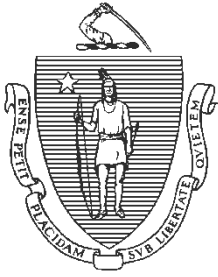
Dr. Sevelius has proven to be an instructional and community leader, helping to further develop the supportive, safe and effective learning environment that all students deserve and need. During tenures in two school communities, Dr. Sevelius has expertly led and collaborated with faculty to address issues of equity and achievement for all learners. Dr. Sevelius is a collaborative leader and a clear communicator who works with teachers, families, and students to directly address challenging issues in a respectful and productive manner.

As principal of Heath School, Dr. Sevelius will continue the work that is important to the Heath community, and openly and energetically embrace the challenges we face. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Sevelius as principal of the Heath School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew J. Bott', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Principals
From: Russell Johnston, PhD, Senior Associate Commissioner
Date: March 2, 2017
Subject: Proposed Changes to 2017 Accountability Reporting

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarification around proposed changes to accountability reporting for the 2017 school year and the proposed technical amendment to *603 CMR 2.00: Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools* as it relates to district and school accountability reporting in 2017. Among other matters, the regulations describe Massachusetts' framework for district accountability and assistance and the process for placing schools into Levels 1-5. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has [voted to solicit public comment](#) on an amendment to these regulations. The proposed amendment would allow the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to refrain from placing certain schools into Levels 1-3 at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. These amendments would apply to schools with grades 3-8 and relate to one school year. High schools will continue to administer the legacy MCAS and will continue to be placed into levels.

We are providing this information in order to solicit feedback from stakeholders regarding the proposed changes. The public comment period will close on April 5, 2017.

Background

Statewide standardized testing tied to statewide curriculum frameworks began with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and has helped educators, parents, and communities understand where students are progressing and where to focus on improvement. At that time, under the direction of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, ESE developed the [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System \(MCAS\)](#), which has been administered annually since 1998.

In 2011, Massachusetts joined the [Partnership for Advancement of Readiness for College and Careers \(PARCC\)](#), a multi-state consortium formed to develop a new set of assessments for English language arts and mathematics. In November 2015, after a two-year "test drive" of the PARCC assessments, the Board [voted to adopt a path to a next-generation MCAS](#), which will be administered for the first time to all students in grades 3-8 this spring.

Transitions

The timing of the first administration of this new assessment aligns with our transition to a revised system of accountability and assistance as required by the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#). In addition to maintaining the annual testing requirement, ESSA requires

that state accountability systems contain certain elements that are not present in our current system. The development of this revised system is underway, and we intend to make more information available to the public as it becomes available.

In the last three years, we have administered both MCAS and PARCC in grades 3-8, with some schools administering PARCC on paper and others administering the computer-based version of the assessment. We remain confident in the quality of these assessments and our ability to link their results on a single scale. However, the assessment transition provides us with an opportunity to set a common assessment baseline for use in a revised district and school accountability system. Therefore, we are proposing to reset the accountability baseline for schools administering the new assessment this spring under the terms detailed below. The 2017 next-generation MCAS results for grades 3-8 will serve as the baseline for future accountability reporting.

2017 Assessment and Accountability Reporting

This year, assessment and accountability reporting for grades 3-8 will be different. We intend to report next-generation MCAS results for each district and school, including a normative measure of achievement to help districts and ESE identify schools that may require support. We will also report assessment participation rates separately for English language arts, mathematics, and science, for each district and school as a whole as well as for each subgroup. Districts and schools that assess at least 90 percent of their students in each group and in each subject will not be assigned an accountability and assistance level of 1-3. Any district or school with participation rates below 90 percent for any group in any subject will be placed into Level 3. Additionally, any high school administering the next-generation MCAS (applicable to high schools also serving any grades 3-8) that has persistently low graduation rates for one or more groups will be placed into Level 3. Progress and Performance Index (PPI) and school percentile data will not be reported for schools serving grades 3-8, regardless of participation rates.

Current Level 4 and Level 5 schools administering the new assessment this year that meet the required exit criteria in 2017 would be eligible to be exited, but would not be assigned a new accountability and assistance level. Level 4 and 5 schools that do not meet exit criteria will maintain their accountability and assistance level. New Level 4 and Level 5 designations may still be made at the discretion of the Commissioner.

At the high school level, traditional MCAS tests will be administered as usual, and assessment and accountability results will be reported as they have in the past. High schools will continue to receive an accountability and assistance level based on their PPI and school percentile data, with adjustments for those schools with persistently low graduation rates, or low or very low assessment participation. New Level 4 and Level 5 designations may still be made at the discretion of the Commissioner. A table describing this proposal is attached to this memo.

Assessment and Accountability Reporting in 2018 and Beyond

The first district and school accountability determinations under our revised system of accountability and assistance will take place in the fall of 2018. At that time, we plan to use

assessment results and other indicators from 2017 and 2018 to make accountability determinations, with the intention of building up to a system that includes four years of data. It is important to ensure that districts and schools maintain high levels of participation in 2017, as participation rates used in the 2018 accountability determinations will include data from both 2017 and 2018.

As a reminder, state law (G.L. c.69, s.1I) requires that all students who are educated with public funds participate in a statewide student assessment program under the direction of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition, ESSA includes a mandate for annual statewide testing, and the U.S. Education Department requires action by states in cases where participation drops below 95 percent of students overall or for students in subgroups. As we develop our revised accountability system, we will be sure it complies with state and federal participation requirements.

Next Steps

We welcome your comments on the proposed amendment to state accountability regulations as they relate to accountability reporting in 2017. Please submit feedback to legal@doe.mass.edu. The deadline for public comment is April 5, 2017. After reviewing the responses received during the public comment period and determining whether further changes are needed, we will bring the amendments back to the Board in April 2017 for final adoption.

Enclosures

[Proposed Amendment to Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools, 603 CMR 2.00 \(Limitation of Certain Provisions for 2016-17 School Year\) - clean version](#)

[Proposed Amendment to Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools, 603 CMR 2.00 \(Limitation of Certain Provisions for 2016-17 School Year\) - strikethrough version \(redlined version\)](#)

Attachment: Proposal for 2017 School Accountability Determinations

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Elementary, Elementary/Middle, and Middle Schools (serving grades 3-8)		
Level	Reason	Description
No level	<i>Schools administering the next-generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8</i>	Schools administering the next-generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8 that do not otherwise meet the criteria for Levels 3-5
Level 3	<i>Very low assessment participation (less than 90%)</i>	Schools with less than 90 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
Level 4	<i>Among lowest achieving and least improving schools</i>	Schools classified into Level 4 by the commissioner
Level 5	<i>Chronically underperforming school</i>	Schools classified into Level 5 by the commissioner

Middle/High and K-12 Schools (serving a combination of grades 3-8 and 9-12)		
Level	Reason	Description
No level	<i>Schools administering the next-generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8</i>	Schools administering the next-generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8 that do not otherwise meet the criteria for Levels 3-5
Level 3	<i>Persistently low graduation rates for one or more groups</i>	Schools in which one or more groups in the school has a 2016 four-year cohort graduation of less than 67 percent and 2015, 2014, and 2013 five-year cohort graduation rates of less than 70 percent that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
	<i>Very low assessment participation (less than 90%)</i>	Schools with less than 90 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
Level 4	<i>Among lowest achieving and least improving schools</i>	Schools classified into Level 4 by the commissioner
Level 5	<i>Chronically underperforming school</i>	Schools classified into Level 5 by the commissioner

High schools (serving grades 9-12)		
Level	Reason	Description
Insufficient data	<i>Insufficient data</i>	Very small schools or new schools
Level 1	<i>Meeting gap narrowing goals</i>	Schools for which the cumulative PPI for all students and high needs students is 75 or higher that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 2-5
Level 2	<i>Not meeting gap narrowing goals</i>	Schools for which the cumulative PPI for all students and/or high needs students is 74 or lower that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 3-5
	<i>Low assessment participation (less than 95%)</i>	Schools with less than 95 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 3-5
Level 3	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of schools</i>	Schools with school percentiles between 1 and 20 that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of subgroups</i>	Schools with one or more student subgroups (A) placing in the 20th percentile or lower relative to all subgroups in the state, and (B) placing in the 20th percentile or lower relative to that particular subgroup within the school type category, that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5; designated <i>focus schools</i>
	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of schools and subgroups</i>	Schools meeting both of the above criteria that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5; designated <i>focus schools</i>
	<i>Persistently low graduation rates for one or more groups</i>	Schools in which one or more groups in the school has a 2016 four-year cohort graduation of less than 67 percent and 2015, 2014, and 2013 five-year cohort graduation rates of less than 70 percent that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
	<i>Very low assessment participation (less than 90%)</i>	Schools with less than 90 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
Level 4	<i>Among lowest achieving and least improving schools</i>	Level 3 schools classified into Level 4 by the commissioner
Level 5	<i>Chronically underperforming school</i>	Level 4 schools classified into Level 5 by the commissioner