



**RACE**  
**TO THE TOP**  
MASSACHUSETTS



YEAR **2** REPORT  
JANUARY 2013



## A Letter From the Secretary

Dear Colleagues:

As I reflect on our first two years of implementing our Race to the Top (RTTT) plan, I am quite proud of all that we have accomplished so far. In keeping with our history of being leaders with regard to education improvement and reform, we have made bold choices and are implementing innovative strategies that are having significant impact on teaching and learning across our public education system.

- We are implementing new pre-K through Grade 12 Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts and Mathematics, which means that we are redefining what students need to learn in order to be well prepared for college and career success. We are implementing new strategies to continuously enhance the quality of teaching in our schools, which means that our educators are using new instructional tools and are receiving better and ongoing professional support. We are making great strides in terms of improving our neediest schools, which means that students and their families are receiving the academic and other services needed to substantially improve student achievement. And we are building an improved architecture for sharing data and using technology, which means that we are increasing access to important information about student growth and achievement. Many other RTTT initiatives are being implemented in school districts across the Commonwealth. Taken together, these initiatives are contributing to the development of a 21st century public education system in Massachusetts, one that will meet each student where he or she is and provide the targeted support that each student needs to truly succeed.

We are at the halfway point on our exciting journey, and the next two years will be equally exciting and challenging in the best sense of the word. We have come together as a Commonwealth to make difficult but important decisions that will benefit our students for years to come, and we need to continue working together to ensure that we implement every RTTT initiative successfully. On behalf of Governor Patrick, I congratulate our students, parents and family members, and educators for their excellent work to date, and I also would like to thank our community-based and non-profit organizations, business and industry partners, funders, municipal officials, and legislators for the continued commitment to this important work.

We are on track to successfully execute our ambitious and comprehensive RTTT plan, and I look forward to working with you to achieve all of our goals.



Paul Reville  
Secretary of Education

## A Letter From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues:

Massachusetts has led the nation in student performance for nearly a decade. Our students have scored first or tied for first on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in each test administration since 2005, and recently released results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study show Massachusetts students score nearly at the top internationally as well. Our dropout rate is at its lowest in half a century, and our high school graduation rate has increased for five years in a row.

- Yet with all this success, we still see room for improvement. We are particularly concerned with closing the gaps in student performance so that all Massachusetts students perform at high levels. Too many of our poor and minority students, our English language learners, and our students with disabilities are not enjoying the success that other Commonwealth students are achieving. We know we can do better.

Our goal in Massachusetts is to prepare all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school. Race to the Top represents a tremendous opportunity to help us achieve that goal. Our Race to the Top program encompasses a broad range of initiatives at the state, district, and school level, focused around four strategies:

- Strengthening curriculum and instruction
- Improving educator effectiveness
- Turning around the lowest performing districts and schools
- Using data and technology to support student performance

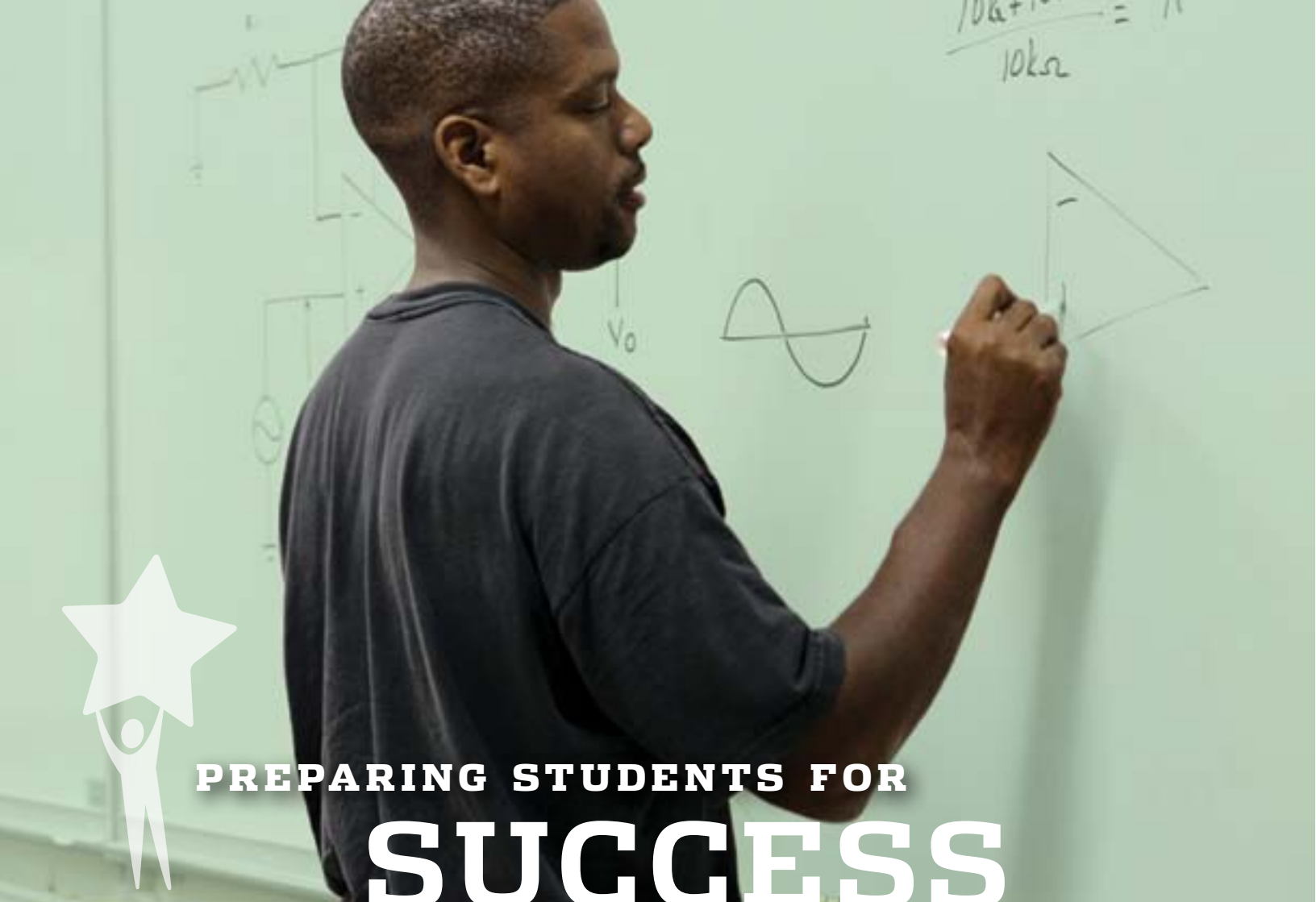
With the resources Race to the Top provides, we have accelerated our efforts to improve the state's education system and ensure that our state's students are prepared to succeed.

2012 marks the halfway point in our Race to the Top program, and I am pleased to present this report to highlight some of the exciting progress underway. We understand that reforming and improving education cannot be accomplished overnight, and that success will not be marked by a single metric or moment in time. Instead, we are engaged in a journey of continuous improvement. Race to the Top has provided us with resources to accelerate that journey and to put into place the structural changes that will carry us and our students forward.

As I said when we first began planning our Race to the Top program, our goals are ambitious and bold, but they are achievable and—perhaps most importantly—they are work that is worth doing.



Mitchell D. Chester, Ed. D  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education



# PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Massachusetts has a long tradition as a pioneer in public education. Since the days of Horace Mann, we have led the nation in creating the systems and structures needed to support student achievement. Stakeholders statewide agree that all students, regardless of their zip code, deserve a world-class education that prepares them for postsecondary opportunities, career training options, economically viable careers, and healthy, productive lives.

Our goal is to prepare all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school. We will achieve this by:

- Strengthening curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Improving educator effectiveness
- Turning around the lowest performing districts and schools
- Using data and technology to support student performance

Our focus on these strategies was a major reason the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was awarded \$250 million in Race to the Top funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010. The

award was recognition that the state's reform agenda was already underway and that our objectives were aligned with those in Race to the Top. It also affirmed our support from our districts and charter schools, two-thirds of which signed on to implement the state's proposal. The funding has provided us resources to build on our accomplishments, accelerate ongoing improvement efforts, and target new strategies for reform.

We are now halfway through this program. This report highlights some of the major activities Massachusetts has undertaken as part of Race to the Top, though by no means is it a comprehensive accounting of everything we have accomplished in the last two years. We are committed to sustaining the momentum that we have achieved and believe that the innovations launched by Race to the Top will inspire the next generation of students and educators.

## Race To The Top By The Numbers

**\$250**

million over four years with half allocated to participating districts and half to ESE

**234**

participating districts and charter schools

**1,278**

participating schools

**661,800**

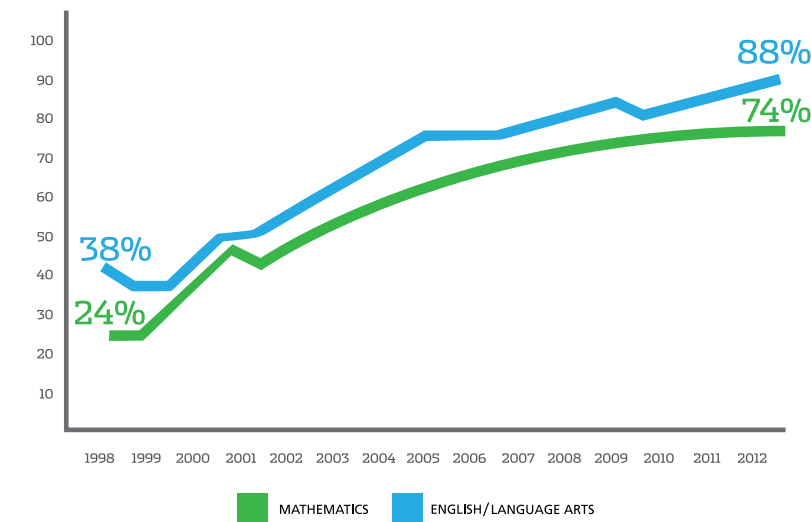
K-12 students served (69.4% of students statewide)

**53**

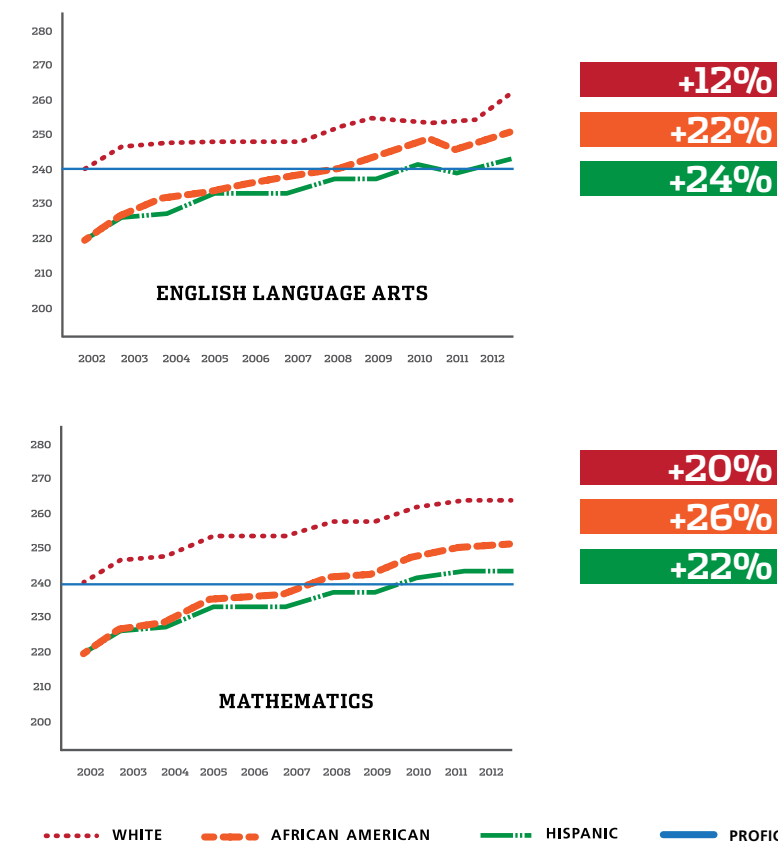
projects

## More Than a Decade of Improvement

GRADE 10 MCAS PERCENT PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED



## Narrowing the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Proficiency Gap





# STRENGTHENING CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Standards-based reform has been a hallmark of Massachusetts' education reform strategy since the Education Reform Act of 1993. We are known for having some of the highest standards for our students nationwide, and our students perform well compared to their peers as a result.

But for the next generation of education reform, we knew that simply setting high standards would not be enough. We needed to revise our curriculum frameworks to better reflect what students need to know to succeed after high school. We also needed to help educators implement those standards effectively in classrooms by providing more guidance on what high quality standards-based curriculum and instruction looks like.

#### NEW MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

In December 2010, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to adopt new curriculum frameworks in English language arts and mathematics. This was a key element of our strategy to implement a rigorous curriculum that aligns to

the expectations of two and four-year colleges and the needs of employers in our knowledge-based economy.

The new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English language arts and mathematics incorporate the Common Core State Standards, which were developed by a consortium of states to define what children should know and be able to do in each grade to stay on the path to college and career readiness. Beyond the standards outlined in the Common Core, Massachusetts also added standards for pre-kindergarten and made a small number of other additions or changes to standards in other grades.

All districts and charter schools are expected to align local curriculum with the new curriculum frameworks by the beginning of the 2013–14 school year. As of June 2012, 53 percent of Race to the Top districts (124) had already aligned both their English language arts and their mathematics curricula to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

#### MODEL CURRICULUM UNITS

Using Race to the Top resources and working with local educators, we have invested in developing tools that will help districts develop and implement high-quality curriculum. Teachers from more than 60 school districts across the Commonwealth have been working over the past two years to develop model curriculum units that span grades pre-K through 12. These units, being developed in English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, and history and social science, exemplify best practices for implementing the state's curriculum frameworks.

Some of the 34 model curriculum units we are piloting this year include: Third Graders are Independent Readers, Writers, Listeners, and Speakers; It's All About Energy; and The African-American Civil Rights Movement. Work on additional units is ongoing, with a goal of completing 100 model units by the end of 2014.

#### EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

Research has shown that exposing high school students to college-level material can be a powerful means of increasing academic preparedness and motivation for college attendance. Thus, Massachusetts used Race to the Top funds to invest in establishing six Early College High Schools. These programs allow students to experience a college-level curriculum and accumulate college credit while still in high school, while providing substantial academic support. We focused these programs on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to increase the opportunity for students currently underrepresented in higher education to enter these fields in college.

Marlborough Public Schools launched the first STEM Early College High School in the 2011–12 school year with a cohort of 180 students in sixth and ninth grades, working in partnership with Framingham State University, business leaders, and employers from the surrounding area. By the 2012–2013 school year, 400 students were enrolled in the school. Maureen Greulich, instructional leadership director and district-level administrator for STEM in Marlborough, reports, "Students seem more excited to come to class and see what we are going to do and learn each day. They love working in groups, using the laptops, and seeing the connections between the subjects. They don't mind sharing their work and possibly being wrong, because they support each other so much. Students are definitely more willing to try new methods and work longer on harder problems."

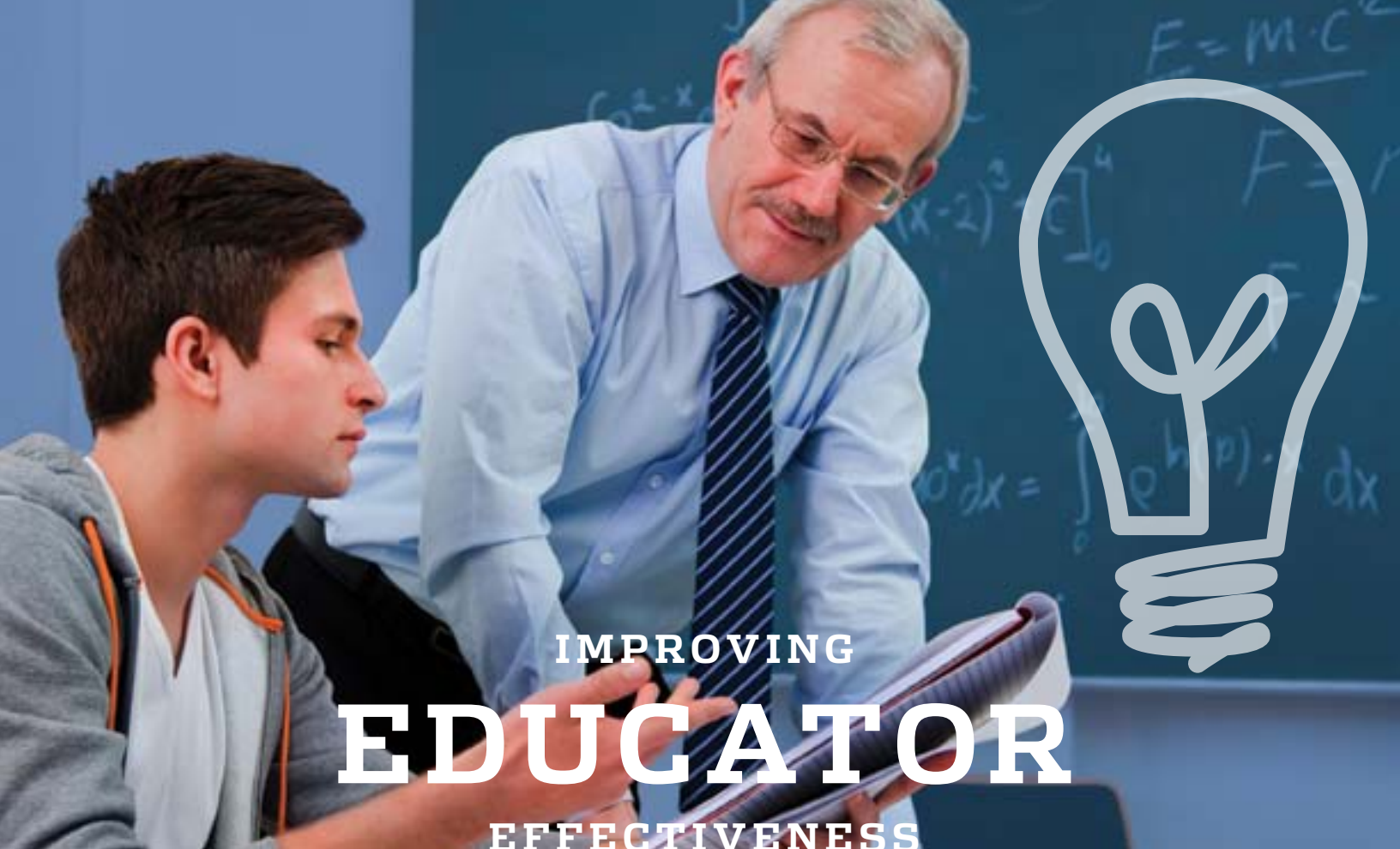
Another innovative approach, the Academy for College Excellence (ACE), combined 27 students from eight vocational/technical schools into an Early College program sponsored by the Northeastern University College of Professional Studies. All of the students are enrolled in the information technology program at their local vocational schools and obtain advanced coursework and hands-on experience through ACE. The program is a hybrid, with some classes conducted at the Northeastern campus and other lessons delivered online.

## The Voices of Early College High School Students

"The STEM classes are greatly valuable because they don't just teach the basics. The teachers guide and help the students to get there. Another way the STEM program sets apart from other classes is that STEM knowledge can be used throughout your whole life, especially when you get a career."

"This program is the key to success for me and probably many of the other students in the program. I will be the first in my family to graduate high school and the first to achieve the opportunity to be enrolled in college courses. This has been very helpful and informative."

"This program has given me a chance like none other. How many students can go into high school saying I'm already going to college?"



# IMPROVING EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS

Excellent educators are the key to improving student achievement; they are the single most powerful in-school factor behind student success. As we designed our Race to the Top proposal, we knew we had to make major investments in improving the quality of our educator workforce to ensure that instruction was consistently strong statewide. These investments address the educator development continuum, from preparation and recruitment to evaluation and professional development.

## EDUCATOR EVALUATION

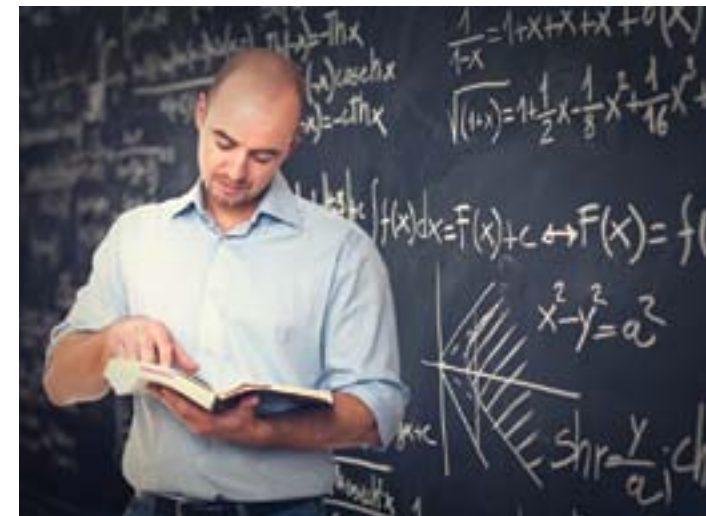
On June 28, 2011, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations for the evaluation of Massachusetts educators. The regulations were a critical milestone in a process that began the year before. Our Race to the Top application committed the state to develop and implement a new educator evaluation system in which student growth is a significant factor. The regulations require regular, meaningful evaluation of all educators—teachers, principals, administrators, and superintendents—and are intended to accomplish the following goals:

- Place student learning at the center
- Promote growth and development
- Recognize excellence
- Set a high bar for tenure
- Shorten timelines for improvement

Under the new regulations, evaluation is an annual five-step cycle beginning with self-assessment and concluding with a formative or summative performance evaluation. It is designed to be a continuous improvement process in which data from the performance rating is an important source of information for the educator's self-assessment.

Through the evaluation process, educators will eventually receive two ratings: a performance rating reflecting their level of professional practice on four standards and their progress toward customized goals, and a rating of their impact on student learning. The two ratings together will determine the type and duration of plan the educator must complete—anywhere from a 30-day improvement plan for the lowest performing educators to a two-year self-directed growth plan for experienced educators whose performance is rated proficient or exemplary and who have moderate or high impact on student learning.

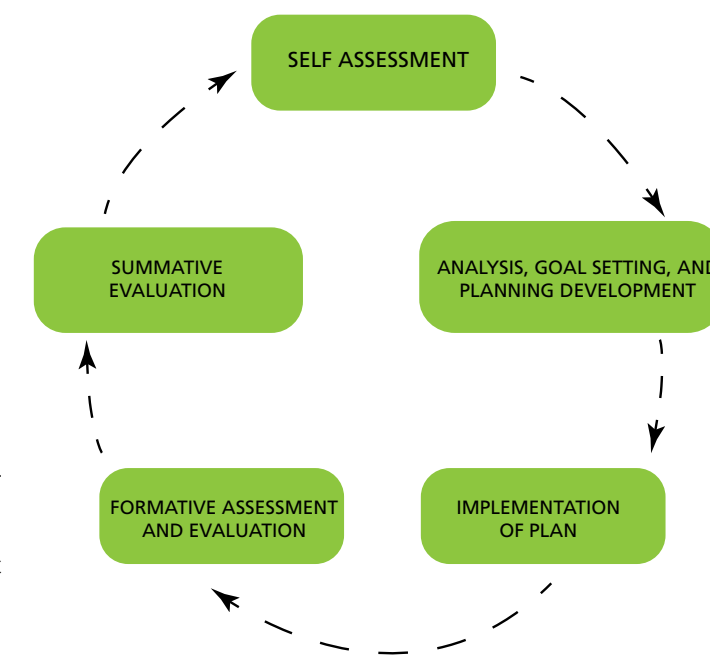
This approach allows districts to focus attention on the educators who need the most support for improvement while still ensuring that all educators have a plan to improve their practice. Meanwhile, educators will benefit from frequent, timely, and meaningful feedback on their performance and a systematic approach for improvement, both too often lacking in most districts' current evaluation practices.



Implementation of the educator evaluation frameworks began in the 2011–12 school year with 34 Level 4 (underperforming) schools across Massachusetts. In addition, 11 early adopter districts volunteered to pilot the process in the first year, providing valuable information and insights that will continue to inform the evaluation process as it expands, first to participating Race to the Top schools and districts in the 2012–13 school year, and ultimately to every public school and district in the Commonwealth the following year.

One of the challenges of statewide implementation is that each district must amend its local collective bargaining agreement to incorporate the new state requirements. Thus, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) provided model contract language as one of the tools for district implementation. Districts may choose to adopt or adapt that language or to revise their existing evaluation system to meet the regulatory requirements. As of November 2012, 123 districts had submitted their plans, with the majority opting to adopt the model contract language suggested by ESE with few or no changes. This included the largest district in the Commonwealth, the Boston Public Schools.

Another challenge is the need to train all educators on the new expectations, and to train all evaluators on how to evaluate others' performance fairly and consistently. New legislation passed in June 2012 requires districts to provide training developed by ESE to all evaluators and to all educators who must be evaluated under the regulations. ESE has since produced a Guide to Educator Evaluation Training Requirements and has made all required training materials available online. While districts may choose to use their own staff to deliver the professional development, ESE has also pre-approved a cadre of experienced vendors to support the training and has set aside funding to enable districts to engage the vendors at little to no cost. As of June 2012, over 12,000 educators and 1,700 evaluators (usually administrators) in Race to the Top districts had begun training on the new educator evaluation system.



## The 5-Step Cycle to Continuous Improvement



[The new educator evaluation framework] is a tool to encourage conversation about our practice....The teachers have been relieved by the process because it provides a thoughtful, systematic approach to looking at practice.

—CYNTHIA PARIS-JEFFRIES, PRINCIPAL,  
BLACKSTONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,  
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**UTEACH**

With an increased emphasis on STEM as both an academic track and an access point to our knowledge-based economy, there is a critical need for highly qualified science and math teachers in our middle and high schools, and that need is projected to grow over the next decade. To help meet this recruitment need, the state decided to participate in the UTeach program originally developed at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997. This program currently operates in 16 states and enrolls over 5,500 prospective teachers.

The program, seated at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, allows undergraduates in STEM majors to earn a minor in STEM teaching along with their bachelor’s degree and to obtain a Massachusetts initial license to teach mathematics, science, or technology/ engineering upon graduation. UMass Lowell is the only university in New England to offer the UTeach program. The university ran the first course in spring 2012 with an enrollment of 28 students, and in fall 2012 an additional 52 STEM majors enrolled. These students come from undergraduate programs such as mathematics, biology, physics, computer science, and chemical engineering.

The success of UTeach rests in early and frequent field experiences for students under the watchful eye of mentor teachers in partner districts. The courses require students to teach three times in elementary and middle school classrooms and receive feedback from their mentor and from a UTeach Master Teacher. The program is underway in partnership with the Lowell, Methuen, and Dracut Public Schools and will begin operating in Lawrence schools in 2013. Participating teacher Cheryl Ortega of the Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary School in Lowell said, “I felt that the program allowed the interns a quick but effective look at the realm of teaching, and that they benefited from it. Additionally, my students experienced

the learning of new concepts with materials they would never have encountered otherwise.”

**PRE-ADVANCED PLACEMENT TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS**

Supporting educators’ growth throughout their careers is another key element of our Race to the Top educator effectiveness strategy. One way we are accomplishing this is through our pre-Advanced Placement training program. The intent of this project is to increase the number of students who enroll and succeed in Advanced Placement courses, particularly in underserved schools and districts with large numbers of low-income and minority students. The program provides training to middle school and high school teachers so that they can implement new teaching strategies and increase content rigor in their classes, which then will improve student performance and create a college-ready culture before students enroll in AP courses.

The curriculum, called Laying the Foundation or LTF, is provided by Mass Insight Education, which contracts directly with districts to provide the professional development. More than 1,200 teachers from 75 districts across the Commonwealth have participated in this training in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, general science, biology, physics, and chemistry. Jon Workman, a teacher at the Collins Middle School in the Salem Public Schools who has participated in the program, said, “My teaching practice has improved dramatically after two years of LTF training. Students are thinking critically and successfully participating in more rigorous learning activities. As a result of LTF, I have set higher expectations in my classroom. My students have met and exceeded those expectations.”



# TURNING AROUND

## THE LOWEST PERFORMING DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

In our Race to the Top application, we noted that for a small number of our schools, student outcomes were so poor that the need to transform practices was urgent and dire. The state's 2010 Act Relative to the Achievement Gap set the criteria for identifying those schools and provided the rules, tools, and supports to address some of the conditions that contribute to underperformance.

The state's objective is to assist districts with establishing the capacity and systems of support necessary to improve teaching and learning in their lowest performing schools. Our theory of action is that the district, rather than the state, is best suited to provide the supports these schools need, and that the state's role is to help the districts serve this function.

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE LOWEST PERFORMING DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

Since implementation of the Act in January 2010, the state has identified 44 underperforming (Level 4) schools. Together these schools, spread across 10 districts, serve over 22,000 students. Nearly 85 percent of their students are low income, 30 percent are English language learners, and 20 percent are students with disabilities. These students are served by more than 1,800 teachers and 700 other educators. If these schools were a district, it would be the fourth largest and third poorest district in the state.

These schools have been targeted for aggressive intervention through a turnaround plan developed in collaboration with

the superintendent, the school committee, the local teachers' union, administrators, teachers, community representatives, and parents. ESE prioritized these districts for assistance and provided significant targeted supports to help connect them to useful turnaround resources where appropriate, and district leaders and local union presidents have been receiving ongoing technical assistance through ESE's Level 4 Schools Network.

After two years, 24 of the 34 Level 4 schools identified in 2010 have made combined gains in English language arts and mathematics of 10 percentage points or higher on their Composite Performance Index between 2010 and 2012. Initial research has identified strong leadership, effective instruction, data systems, and a well executed tiered set of interventions and supports for students as the most common factors differentiating those that improved rapidly from those that remained steady or declined.

### WRAPAROUND ZONES

We recognized in our application that supporting student academic achievement meant more than just new instructional techniques or a new tutoring program; it also meant supporting the social, emotional, and health needs that can have a substantial impact on student learning. Thus, we established the Wraparound Zone Initiative through Race to the Top to help build district and school capacity to systematically address students' non-academic barriers to learning.



Seven districts are currently implementing Wraparound Zones in a total of 36 pilot schools. The strategies being used vary across districts, but all have several priorities in common. All participating schools work to establish a safe and supportive climate with a culture of positive regard and high expectations for all students. All implement a comprehensive, proactive system that identifies student academic and non-academic needs and connects at-risk students to targeted supports. These include resources from both the school district and the larger community in areas as broad as prevention, enrichment, early intervention, and crisis response services. Finally, each participating district focuses on strengthening the systems required to support and sustain these efforts and to replicate promising practices in other district schools.

As just one example, Springfield implemented a wraparound zone in each of its Level 4 elementary schools through a partnership with City Connect. A school site coordinator works with teachers and staff to review the needs of every student in the building and connect them to the appropriate resources in the school, district and community. In the 2011–12 school year alone, 98 percent of students in these schools—2,100 children—were connected to more than 13,000 services and enrichment activities.

### PRIORITY PARTNERS FOR TURNAROUND

We also recognized in our proposal that our existing state capacity to support turnaround was insufficient to meet demand. Thus, we created the Priority Partners for Turnaround program to qualify proven organizations to support district and school turnaround.

Priority Partners have a strong track record of results and can demonstrate effectiveness in accelerating school improvement. These organizations are vetted through a rigorous review process that includes evaluation data, references from former clients, and an intensive interview with the organization's leadership team. Priority Partners participate in a quarterly networking session to coordinate practice and learn from one another's experiences. Partners were also eligible to compete for a competitive Priority Partners Investment Fund totaling \$2.4 million to expand their services, develop a new set of services, or partner with other Priority Partners.

Currently 23 Priority Partners for Turnaround provide services in 54 districts; nine districts are being served by more than one of the Priority Partners. These organizations provide targeted support in social, emotional, and health needs; maximizing learning time; effective use of data; and district systems of support. Further, 12 of these districts are being served by seven Priority Partners that received funding from the Priority Partner Investment Fund.



# USING DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

TO SUPPORT STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Massachusetts' Race to the Top proposal also included a substantial investment in data and technology tools. Our goal was to provide cutting-edge technological tools and timely, relevant data and information to educators. We also aimed to promote a culture of effective, data-informed decision making at all levels of education, so that our educators would integrate the use of the best and most up-to-date data in their classrooms every day.

## EDWIN

To meet these goals, ESE is launching Edwin, Massachusetts' new, comprehensive teaching and learning platform. The vision of Edwin is to provide educators with quality resources to continue to promote high levels of student achievement and to help reduce persistent proficiency gaps. This system is intended to support educators and foster teaching and learning, providing on-demand access to two sets of resources: Edwin Teaching and Learning, which will include instructional materials, curriculum planning tools, model curriculum units, and a variety of assessments including curriculum-embedded performance assessments, and Edwin Analytics, which will include data analysis and reporting tools.

Using Edwin, classroom teachers, principals, professional support personnel, and district leaders will be able to access data from a wide range of sources such as attendance, course enrollment, and college matriculation. Real-time student, teacher, and course data, as well as historical data including state assessment data, will give educators new, actionable information and tools to serve their current students and to grow as professionals.

The platform will also offer educators access to curriculum and instruction resources aligned with current Massachusetts curriculum frameworks that they can use to improve their practice and the programs that serve their students. This suite of tools will be phased in over time, with the first components available to some users in the 2012–13 school year.

Over the past year ESE has also made strides to improve the systems already in place. Most notably, we expanded the capacity of the Education Data Warehouse, which will eventually become the heart of Edwin Analytics. The warehouse provides school districts with access to over 60 reports detailing state assessment results and student enrollment information. After the improvements, we saw a 91 percent increase in the number of reports run when MCAS results are released, from about 100,000 in August 2011 to over 190,000 in August 2012.

## EARLY WARNING INDICATOR SYSTEM

As one of the first tools from Edwin Analytics, over the last year ESE worked closely with the American Institutes for Research to create an early warning indicator system for students in grades 1 to 12. The purpose of the Massachusetts Early Warning Indicator System is to provide statistically validated data to schools and districts on the likelihood their students are on track to reach key academic goals. The system is a tool to identify students who may need additional supports. Educators use these data along with their knowledge of the child to understand why he or she is off track and identify appropriate interventions.

The risk models reflect national research and promising practices, feedback from a range of stakeholders, and extensive testing of risk indicators and statistical modeling using longitudinal Massachusetts data. They are based on four age groups, each linked to a relevant academic goal:

- Early elementary (grades 1 to 3): Proficiency on the 3rd grade reading MCAS test
- Late elementary (grades 4 to 5): Proficiency on the 6th grade English language arts and mathematics MCAS tests
- Middle grades (grades 6 to 8): Passing grades in all 9th grade courses
- High school (grades 9 to 12): On-time high school graduation

The first set of reports were released to school districts in September and will soon be available through Edwin Analytics.

## SCHOOLS INTEROPERABILITY FRAMEWORK (SIF)

The infrastructural backbone of these new data and technology tools is the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF), a means of automating data collection and reporting from districts. Once in place, SIF will allow districts near real-time information for educators about their students in Edwin and other state technology resources, so that educators will get reports for the students actually in their classrooms, not just those enrolled earlier in the year. This automatic updating will greatly increase the value of these tools for our state's educators. It will also simplify state data reporting requirements, currently a substantial burden for districts.

Our goal is that by 2014, all Race to the Top districts will have implemented SIF. Right now over 100 districts are sending data on a near-real time basis to ESE, and a pilot set of nine districts certified their end-of-year student enrollment data through the SIF protocol. Our goal for fall 2012 is to certify the student enrollment collection with the other participating districts and to pilot a second data collection with a small number of districts. Local school districts participating in SIF have reported that the SIF project has encouraged them to address internal challenges to improve the cleanliness of their data systems.





# MAKING CHANGE FROM WITHIN: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND INNOVATION

Our Race to the Top proposal set out an ambitious set of reforms across a broad set of policies and programs. We knew that in order to accomplish our objectives, we would need to strengthen our systems for leading and governing our work.

## STRENGTHENING SUPERINTENDENTS, SCHOOL COMMITTEES, AND UNION LEADERSHIP

Successful school district leadership requires three parties to work together effectively: the superintendent, the school committee, and the local teachers union. Through Race to the Top, ESE worked with state associations to create programs targeted at each of these three groups to clarify their role in supporting student learning, to establish collaborative working relationships, and to support cooperation and shared decision-making.

The New Superintendents Induction Program is a three-year program available to superintendents new to the role or to their district. Professional development sessions, assignments, and intensive coaching center on four broad areas essential to effective district leadership: strategic instructional leadership, district leadership team development, human resource management, and supervision and evaluation. Currently 73 superintendents are participating in the program, with the support of 16 coaches.

The District Governance Support Project aims to provide a similar set of supports, but to school committee members rather than superintendents. The District Governance Support Project specifically focuses on the school committee's role in policy-making, budget-setting, selection of the district superintendent, collective bargaining, and other fiduciary responsibilities, as well as providing strategies and skill-building around helping to support student achievement and accountability. Five workshops have been delivered in about a dozen districts statewide as of June 2012, with more districts in planning phases or under consideration for future cohorts.

Finally, ESE is working with the state's union leadership and others to develop the Massachusetts Education Partnership, whose mission is to improve student achievement and success through collaborative labor-management relations in school districts across the Commonwealth. In the 2012–13 school year, the Partnership will pilot the program with several district labor-management teams who will work together to establish shared goals in student achievement and success

## REGIONAL SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

Race to the Top has also helped Massachusetts build a stronger system for educators to improve their professional practice. For instance, six regionally based District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs) have been established to help Level 3 districts and their



schools access and use professional development and targeted assistance. DSACs are staffed with data, literacy, and mathematics specialists, as well as a support facilitator and a Regional Assistance Director, often a retired superintendent from the region. A recent program evaluation conducted by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts found that 94 percent of DSAC service recipients agreed that the assistance they received was relevant to their educational priorities and sufficient to meet their needs.

In addition, six Readiness Centers also operate in Massachusetts. The Readiness Centers were established to advance Governor Patrick's goal of increasing integration and coherence across the education continuum. Regional consortia of partners provide high-quality professional development services for educators from early education through higher education; disseminate information about effective models and best practices; and convene educators to collaboratively address key education priorities, inform policy discussions, and leverage resources and expertise. The Centers are supporting numerous Race to the Top initiatives across the state, particularly around implementation of the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

## INNOVATION SCHOOLS

A signature component of the 2010 Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, Innovation Schools are in-district public schools that employ innovative strategies to accelerate student achievement while keeping school funding within districts. Innovation Schools, which are established by local school districts, can employ greater autonomy and flexibility with regard to curriculum, staffing, budget, schedule/calendar, professional development, and other district policies. Currently 44 Innovation Schools operate in communities throughout Massachusetts.

“The true power of the [New Superintendents Induction] program is the experience that the coaches bring to the table. They serve as a sounding board for us and provide incredible advice. They ask me a lot of good questions, and that makes me a better practitioner. In my 23 years as an educator, I have never worked with such a strong, proactive leadership group.”

—JOE MARUSZAK, SUPERINTENDENT,  
MENDON-UPTON SCHOOL DISTRICT



According to Steve Mahoney, founding principal of the Springfield Renaissance School, "Putting together and managing the planning of a new school is a great exercise in community conversation. We have to earn those autonomies every year. We don't get to do things differently unless we are producing results. Schools, like our students, are works in progress, and Innovation School status is an explicit commitment to having a very public collaborative conversation about what works best for our students."

#### LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECEIVERSHIP

Despite the strides the state has made to improve the quality of governance in our districts, in some instances the circumstances in a district are so dire and the state's concern so great that immediate action is required. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education took such action in November 2011 when it designated the Lawrence Public School district as Level 5, or chronically underperforming. This marked the first use of this designation since it was established in the 2010 Act Relative to the Achievement Gap.

Intensive planning and intervention have begun to transform this district of 13,000 students. The commissioner appointed Jeff Riley, a former principal and central office leader in the Boston Public Schools, as the receiver, with all the powers of the superintendent and the school committee. Riley worked with a local stakeholder group and the district leadership team to develop four key strategies for turning around the district:

- Extended time, strategic use of data, and high expectations for academic achievement
- Recruitment, retention, and cultivation of great people and proven partners
- Strengthened support and engagement for students beyond academics
- Increased autonomy and accountability for schools to promote student success

Implementation of these strategies began in August 2012. Notable in the state's work with Lawrence Public Schools has been the successful integration of several Priority Partners and a state-funded implementation director into the district's activities. By using the powers established in Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, the state has provided the Lawrence Public Schools with the authority and resources it needs to turn itself around. The final results are still several years hence, but the work is off to a strong start.





SUCCESS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



## What's Coming Next

- Massachusetts is at the halfway point of implementing its Race to the Top objectives. Many programs, resources, and tools have been developed and are now being deployed in districts; others are on the way. Over the final two years of the program, here is some of what the education community in Massachusetts should expect to see:
- Statewide implementation of the state's new curriculum frameworks in English language arts and mathematics, as well as revisions to other frameworks.
- Additional curriculum and instruction resources available to all districts to help them implement the new frameworks, including more model curriculum units, a digital library of curriculum tools, and curriculum-embedded performance assessments, available via Edwin Teaching & Learning.
- A potential shift to a new generation of assessments for English language arts and mathematics through the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).
- Full implementation of the new educator evaluation framework in all districts.
- Continued training and support on educator evaluation, including resources for districts to help them select appropriate measures of student growth and achievement to support the evaluation rating of impact on student learning.
- New reports about the programs that prepare students to become educators, highlighting each program's characteristics and the performance of their graduates.
- A full suite of data analysis and reporting tools available statewide with near real-time access for all educators, including the Early Warning Indicator System and data on college enrollment, persistence, and completion, via Edwin Analytics.
- Further integration of Priority Partners into the state's Level 4 schools and expansion of the Priority Partners list to other areas of need.

More broadly, we will continue to support our educators, who are the most important resource we have for increasing student achievement. We will continue to nurture the partnerships we have built with stakeholders statewide. And we will continue to focus on leadership and governance and will use the tools the legislature has given us to promote excellence and hold districts accountable. Through these strategies, we will achieve our goal: to prepare all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school.

Please visit [www.doe.mass.edu/rttt](http://www.doe.mass.edu/rttt)

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