

To: School Committee Members
From: Corey Harris, Chief of Accountability
Subject: DESE MOU Brief
Date: July 17, 2020

On March 10, 2020, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to address significant and persistent challenges. BPS and DESE reached an agreement to work together in partnership to immediately improve the lowest performing schools, continue to address systemic barriers to equity, and support its most vulnerable students.

Over the next three years, BPS will focus on four priority initiatives. BPS will make specific improvements in the lowest performing 10 percent of schools, also known as Transformation Schools. BPS will adopt a MassCore graduation policy to make graduation requirements uniform, increase access to advanced courses, and reduce chronic absenteeism. BPS will improve the provision of appropriate learning opportunities in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. Lastly, BPS will take steps to improve the student transportation system.

Over the next three years, DESE will focus on four priority initiatives. DESE will improve teaching and learning by entering a cohort of up to 15 schools in the Kaleidoscope Network. DESE will increase access to student supports via enhanced partnerships designed to provide outside financial and other supports. DESE will enhance BPS's efforts to recruit and retain diverse and effective staff. Lastly, DESE will support BPS in the improvement of student bathrooms and other essential facilities.

In addition to the above, BPS and DESE agree to focus on improving services to English learners and improve interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient parents/guardians. BPS and DESE will also focus on the development of an earned autonomy model. DESE agrees to allocate at least \$4 million per year for three years to support both BPS's and DESE's priority initiatives.

BPS crafted a Strategic Plan which will undergird our efforts to initiate *and* sustain improvements with the aforementioned initiatives. The strategic planning framework (Commitments, Priorities, Anchor Goals, and Aligned Progress Measures) serves as the public accountability structure to ensure that we deliver on the promise of equity and excellence for Boston students and families.

Amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Superintendent Cassellius and Commissioner Riley agreed to pause conversations regarding specific plans for the agreed upon improvements. Talks in earnest between the Superintendent and Commissioner are scheduled to resume in the near future.