

Safe and Supportive Schools Commission – Fourth Annual Report

This report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014, An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence. This Act was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014 (House Bill 4376). Provisions within this Act relating to safe and supportive schools are codified as Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 69, Section 1P (G.L. c. 69, § 1P).

April 2019

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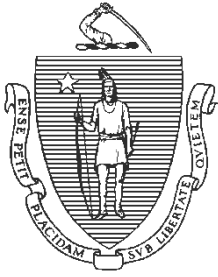
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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

April 4, 2019

Dear Governor and Members of the General Court:

On behalf of the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (Commission), I am pleased to submit this *Safe and Supportive Schools Commission - Fourth Annual Report* pursuant to section 6 of Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014 (the Act), and Massachusetts General Laws (G.L.), chapter (c.) 69, section (§) 1P (g) that reads in part:

“There shall be a safe and supportive schools commission to collaborate with and advise the department on the feasibility of state-wide implementation of the framework... The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission’s activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31.”

Creating and maintaining safe and supportive schools offers a key lever towards engagement and success for students, families, and staff in districts across the Commonwealth. In service of academics as well as other forms of learning and growth, it is crucial to ensure teachers and other educators are equipped with the tools to support and promote their students’ individual and collective needs. Preparing all students for success in school, the workplace, and civic life includes developing students’ social and emotional competencies and attending to their health and wellbeing. Moreover, academic skills and social and emotional competencies (including those in the realm of self-awareness and self-regulation, social awareness and relationship skills, and responsible decision making) are mutually reinforcing, and are most effectively developed in environments that are safe and supportive. These environments focus on high expectations for all students and building the capacity to support teachers and staff as they engage in this process. These environments implement culturally responsive systems of support that help all students experience success and growth; they value the social and cultural experiences of their students, staff, families, and partners; and they actively address bias related to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) is committed to closing gaps in achievement and opportunity, so that all students in the Commonwealth have access to a great education. One of the Department’s five core strategies in service of this goal is to [support students’ social and emotional learning, health and safety](#). Explicitly aligned with the focus of the Commission and Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law (G.L. c. 69, §

1P), the Department's goal within this strategy is to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, culturally competent, and inclusive learning environments address students' varied needs in order to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Furthermore, the Department's [District Standards and Indicators](#) include a focus on safe and supportive school climates and cultures. Additionally, numerous agency initiatives and guidance documents align with the Department's [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool](#), including, but not limited to, the [Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#), [Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training Guidance](#), [Guidelines for the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Curricula K-12](#), and [Policies and Protocols for Truancy Prevention Programs](#). This framework and tool provide a foundation for the Commission's work, as described in this report.

In the fall of 2018, aligned with the Commission's work, the Department competitively awarded 30 Safe and Supportive Schools Grants through [Fund Code 335](#), and 10 continuation grants through [Fund Code 337](#). More details on these grants can be found in this report, and the efforts of these grantees will help to further inform Department and Commission work related to effective processes for developing as well as implementing safe and supportive school action plans while networking with each other to build a community of safe and supportive educators.

This work is of great importance to the success of students in the Commonwealth, and I continue to encourage collaboration where helpful and feasible between stakeholders interested in safe and supportive schools, because aligned and integrated efforts often offer the best chance for our collective success.

I wish to acknowledge Commission members and others with whom the Commission has consulted for their dedication and contributions, and to thank the Governor and Legislature for their continued commitment to improving the education of students in our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Purpose and Context

The Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (Commission) was created by [An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence](#). The Commission respectfully submits this Report to the Governor and Legislature: *Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Fourth Annual Report* pursuant to Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014, An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence. This Act was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014. Provisions within this Act relating to safe and supportive schools are codified as Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 69, section 1P (G.L. c. 69, § 1P), the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework](#) law.

“...The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission’s activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31. The commission shall submit such annual report to the governor and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee on education, the chairs of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, and the house and senate committees on ways and means...”¹

Safe and supportive school environments are essential in order to reach high academic standards and other important educational reform goals, including diminishing the use of suspension and expulsion as an approach to discipline, preventing bullying, preventing substance use and misuse and providing support for addiction recovery, closing proficiency gaps, and halting the school to prison pipeline. These environments raise the achievement of all students, by valuing and empowering each student to feel a sense of competency and agency in each student’s learning. These environments also help students to self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, support them to form positive relationships with adults and peers, and support their health and wellbeing. In order to address proficiency gaps, safe and supportive environments act in an inclusive, equitable, and culturally sensitive way to provide access to opportunities for all students. In passing the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework law, the Legislature recognized that addressing these needs together with actions to make schools physically safe were also integral to avoiding acts of violence that have devastated other school communities.²

Massachusetts G.L. c. 69, § 1P, in subsection (a), defines safe and supportive schools as schools that foster safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive whole-school learning environments. These environments recognize the connections between academic success and students feeling safe enough to make friends, form strong relationships with adults, and take risks in the classroom (e.g., speaking up) in order to succeed. Safe and supportive schools teach students to regulate their emotions, behaviors, and attention so that it is possible for them to focus and learn. Such

¹ The full legislative charge and links to the full text of the statute can be found in Appendix B of this report.

² At the time of this law’s passage, many in the state were particularly concerned about ways to avoid the kind of violence that had occurred at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. In addition, Commonwealth students have suffered from other kinds of violence, such as bullying, suicides, and substance abuse. Many felt that creating safe and supportive school cultures were needed to address safety, social, emotional, and academic needs holistically.

schools also strive to address physical, mental health, and disability-related needs that may interfere with learning.³

However, creating such environments while addressing the needs of individual children is not easy. Many children come to school having experienced significant adversity. In addition, schools are often challenged because important policies and laws designed to create positive school cultures can be narrowly focused (for example, some efforts aimed solely at bullying prevention, truancy reduction, or behavioral health supports), such that the common skills and approaches that underlie all such initiatives are not integrated and do not necessarily work together to provide a solid foundation for safety and learning.

Massachusetts G.L. c. 69, § 1P, therefore, requires in part (ii) of the definition, that safe and supportive schools are also ones that align initiatives in an effective, efficient, and holistic way.⁴ It also requires the Commission to investigate and make recommendations with respect to the capacity that is needed in schools to implement a safe and supportive schools framework. The line-item language in last year's fiscal year 2018 (FY18) state budget (line-item 7061-9612) related to the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission additionally called for the Commission to "make recommendations to the board of elementary and secondary education regarding ways to include in the self-assessment tool and framework principles of effective practice for integrating student supports not later than December 31, 2017." Thus, the Commission developed recommendations to address the need for integrating services into the school culture, ensuring that students receive appropriate services at school and connect to community resources outside of school. These recommendations were shared through a memo to the Board in January 2018.⁵

Safe and Supportive Schools Framework: To assist schools to align and integrate initiatives and services, the law calls for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) to develop a safe and supportive schools framework to provide a structure and a guiding resource to help each school develop school-wide action plans that efficiently align initiatives in a way that fits with the school's (and district's) own culture and locally identified priorities. The elements of the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework are required to be consistent with the Behavioral Health and Public Schools (BHPS) Framework⁶ (created by the BHPS Taskforce in collaboration with the Department pursuant to Chapter 321 of the Acts of 2008), and organized according to the following areas of school operations:

³ G.L. Chapter 69, Section 1P specifically defines safe and supportive schools, in part, as "schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment that: (i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being." (See footnote 4 for the second part of the definition.)

⁴ Part two (ii) of the above referenced safe and supportive schools definition states that these schools also "integrate services and align initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives."

⁵ A Board Memo and attachment outlining principles of effective practice for integrating student supports can be found on <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/FY2018/2018-01/item10.html>.

⁶ The BHPS framework and self-assessment tool are available online through <http://BHPS321.org>.

leadership; professional development; access to resources and services; academic and non-academic activities; policies, procedures, and protocols; and collaboration with families.

The law establishes that the Commission investigate and make recommendations to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) on updating, refining, and improving the original framework and self-assessment tool, with the knowledge that has developed since the original BHPS Task Force drafted the framework and tool between 2008-2011.⁷

Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment Tool: Massachusetts G.L. c. 69, § 1P recognizes that the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework must be flexible and embody a process of collaboration among educators, parents, and students in order for schools to create supportive school-wide environments that avoid the use of punitive approaches while recognizing the inextricable connections between students' social, emotional, and educational needs. Thus, the law provides for the Department to create a safe and supportive schools self-assessment tool organized according to the elements of the framework (and also consistent with the one created by the BHPS Task Force) that can spark a collaborative process at each school to identify and address urgent local, district, and/or school-wide priorities related to creating a safe and supportive school culture.⁸ In consultation with the Commission, the Department is working on drafting updates, improvements, and refinements to both the safe and supportive schools framework and self-assessment tool. The current version of the self-assessment tool, accessible through the Department's website, has been used by approximately 215 schools in 100 districts, including the FY14, FY16, FY17, FY18, and FY19 Safe and Supportive Schools grantees, approximately one-third of the Gateway Cities districts,⁹ five demonstration schools that work on trauma sensitivity through the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative,¹⁰ and others.

The Commission will continue to learn from the work of schools that have utilized the current version of the self-assessment tool. Information has been gleaned by reviewing data and feedback, and this will continue to inform recommendations on revisions to the framework and

⁷ Since the creation of the BHPS Framework, reference to it has been inserted into numerous state laws and Department guidance documents, including but not limited to G.L., c. 71, § 370 (An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools); G.L., c. 240, (An Act Regarding Families and Children Engaged in Services); and G.L., c. 69, § 1P the Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence that created this Commission); as well as the Department's [District Standards & Indicators](#), [Conditions for School Effectiveness](#), [Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#), [Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training Guidance](#), [Guidelines for the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Curricula K-12](#), and [Policies and Protocols for Truancy Prevention Programs](#).

⁸ Per G.L., c. 69, § 1P(d), "The self-assessment tool created by the department consistent with the recommendations of the behavioral health and public school task force created under said section 19 of said chapter 321 shall be organized according to the elements of the framework established under subsection (b), and (if adopted pursuant to c. 69§1P(c)), shall be used by schools to: (i) assess the school's capacity to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments for all students; (ii) identify areas where additional school-based action, efforts, guidance and support are needed to create and maintain safe and supportive school environments; and (iii) create action plans to address the areas of need identified by the assessment."

⁹ Forman, Ben; Bourvier, Sonia, and Citino, Christina (September 2015). "[Building Community-Wide Social and Emotional Support Systems in Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Assessing Progress from the Perspective of Local Educators](#)," MassInc and the UMass Donahue Institute.

¹⁰ The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative is a collaboration between Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/>.

self-assessment tool, and on the feasibility of statewide implementation of the framework. The [2018 grant evaluation](#)¹¹ provided useful information on these topics, and more details are provided in the Commission Activities Undertaken in 2019 section below.

Informed by feedback on strengths and areas for growth, Commission members are continuing to hone further recommendations on ways to streamline the tool, so that educators and others can focus more of their available time on working together to analyze their school culture and tailor local solutions. While numerous districts have found the current version helpful, there is a call to continue to make the self-assessment tool technologically easier to use, and provide more guidance for schools that are creating and implementing action plans on effective and flexible ways to best meet their local needs.

The Commission continued to collaborate with the Department throughout 2018 to investigate selected topics through interviews and focus groups. Through this work, the Commission continues to consider how to best integrate and synthesize core learning into the draft revised framework and tool, and how to streamline the information so that it is most useful and user friendly. This work will continue into 2019, with the goal of the Department posting an updated Safe and Supportive Schools Framework, and a further refined self-assessment tool, for use by schools during 2019-2020.

Recommendations

Through this annual report, the Commission offers five key recommendations, which are set forth below.

Recommendation 1: The Commission recommends continued funding for the Safe and Supportive Schools line item (7061-9612) in the fiscal year 2019-2020 (FY20) budget.

The Commission is very appreciative that both Governor Baker and the Legislature have supported the work of this line item over the past four years (FY16-FY19). This funding in FY19 will be used to provide grant opportunities for school districts, leadership summits for school and district leaders (new this year, per the FY19 line item), grant program evaluation efforts, administrative support for the Commission, updates to the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool, and funds for professional development related to integrated student supports. The Commission recommends that funding in FY20 support the following efforts:

- a. Continue to upgrade and refine the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool, and to develop related guidance and materials to assist school districts with reflecting on their needs, developing associated action plans, and implementing the plans to address areas that they feel are most relevant based on the data for their schools and districts.
- b. Continue to provide funding for at least a full-time staff person to provide some capacity for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) to carry out its

¹¹ Safe and Supportive Schools grant evaluation: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/2018-sssp-repoort.pdf>.

duties set forth in the law [G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f)].¹² These responsibilities are extensive and include coordinating the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program; hosting statewide and regional trainings, and leadership summits; updating the online framework and self-assessment tool; overseeing the grant evaluation; providing technical assistance and developing and disseminating practices related to coordinating with community service providers and implementing the framework, tool, and action plans; and providing administrative support to the Commission.

- c. Continue to provide grant funding to school and district teams to help them use the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool to take on a self-reflection process, create action plans, and implement associated safe and supportive schools practices.
- d. Continue to hold statewide and regional convenings and workshops for teachers and school leaders across the Commonwealth to disseminate information and hear about the best practices from school districts on how to create safe and supportive schools. This includes best practices that are culturally responsive and focus on equity.
- e. Hold new or join existing convenings of students in regional and statewide venues to gather their input and hear their voice regarding creating safe and supportive schools.
- f. Continue to offer Systemic Student Support Academies that are informed by and will further inform the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework, Self-Assessment Tool, and related resources (such as the [Principles of Effective Practice for Integrating Student Supports, prepared for the Board by the Commission](#)). This work can offer participating districts a deeper dive into one important area addressed in the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework, for communities that identify this area as one of high priority and pressing need. This work also helps promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive healthy, culturally responsive, and inclusive learning environments that address students' varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all, which is the overarching goal of the Department's strategic priority to support social and emotional learning, health, and safety.
- g. Continue to evaluate and gather feedback from grantees on the grant program. This may include feedback on aspects of the grant program such as the new mentorship component (implemented during FY19), the revised tool, and the technical assistance and professional development provided. Furthermore, this work could also help to compile lessons learned and promising practices to disseminate with others, and to further inform tool and program improvements throughout the year.

Recommendation 2: The Commission recommends continuing to build the leadership capacity of schools and districts in developing Safe and Supportive Schools.

The Commission recommends that the Department strengthen partnerships with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Massachusetts School Administrators Association (MSAA) to develop additional and/or enhanced leadership and informational opportunities for School Committee members, Superintendents and Principals in creating safe and supportive schools. These opportunities for school committees, superintendents and principals to invest in

¹² Department responsibilities outlined in G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f) are listed in the second paragraph of this report's section below on "Department Activities Related to G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f)."

this work will focus on developing the knowledge and skills needed to recognize, design, and implement plans to create safe and supportive schools. This can potentially be accomplished through already existing MASC, MASS and MSAA Conferences, as well as through additional Leadership Summits, Workshops, and Regional Roundtables. The topics for these summits could include, but are not limited to:

- a. What it means to be a safe and supportive school.
- b. What barriers exist in developing safe and supportive schools, and promising practices to address the barriers.
- c. How to use the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment Tool to inform self-reflection and action planning, as well as developing the knowledge and skills needed to recognize, design, and implement effective efforts.
- d. How to involve all stakeholders in the process, including students, families, staff, and community partners.
- e. How to align school and district improvement plans to include goals that focus on implementing safe and supportive schools.
- f. How to develop a budget that helps fund safe and supportive schools.

Recommendation 3: The Commission recommends continuing to seek and disseminate promising practices on how to integrate and coordinate student support services, including behavioral health for schools.

Integrated student support is a school and district-based approach to promoting all students' academic achievement and wellness by developing, securing, and coordinating culturally responsive supports that build upon students' strengths and address barriers to learning. These supports are personalized, customized, and individualized to meet student needs; and they include universal efforts for all students, targeted supports for some students, and more intensive services for a few students. These resources range from traditional tutoring and mentoring to the provision of a broader set of supports such as linking students to physical and mental health care, increasing access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services, enrichment opportunities, extra-curricular activities, and connecting their families to parent education, family counseling, translation services, food banks, or employment assistance. Integrated student support efforts are a critical component of communities' endeavors to create safe and supportive learning environments that establish effective systems and strategies woven into all areas of school efforts (e.g., leadership, professional development, policies/procedures/protocols, teaching and learning, and collaboration with families as well as access to resources and services).

In October 2018, the Department solicited applications from school districts to participate in a Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy, which provides support and promising practices for the areas described above. The Commission recommends that these opportunities continue to be provided, with Department assistance and support in grades PreK-12. The Commission is looking forward to learning from the initiative and lessons culled from this work and to discussing during Commission meetings how this work can further inform refinements to the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool, the [Principles of Effective Practice for Integrating Student Supports, prepared for the Board by the Commission](#), and associated guidance documents and materials.

The Safe and Supportive Schools work (including but not limited to the framework and self-assessment tool) can benefit as we learn from schools piloting an increased focus on integrating student supports, as we look for ways to integrate lessons learned into the section of the framework and tool that addresses Access to Services, and as we look for ways to direct framework and tool users and others to resources and information on promising practices in areas they identify as a pressing need.

Recommendation 4: The Commission recommends continuing to provide opportunities to encourage, incentivize, and recognize Safe and Supportive Schools.

It is essential that schools and school districts recognize and understand the importance of creating safe and supportive schools and districts. The Commission recommends that the Department continue to explore ways to recognize the work of safe and supportive schools. These could include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Continue to consider ways to promote safe and supportive schools, possibly through the accountability system if feasible, or through other methods of reinforcing helpful strategies and practices.
- b. Encourage districts to include goals related to safe and supportive schools in District and School Improvement Plans.
- c. Explore possibilities for the Department to create a Designation of Safe and Supportive Schools, using a set of criteria, similar to the National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence program.
- d. Consider how to publicize promising practices and recognized schools in the Commissioner's weekly update and other Department communication.

Recommendation 5: The Commission recommends continuing efforts to identify ways to increase schools' capacity to access clinically, linguistically, and culturally appropriate services. This includes but is not limited to increasing the availability and use of trained interpreters where needed.

This year, the Commission has informed focus groups across the state on the issue of schools' access to clinically, linguistically, and culturally appropriate services. The [summary report](#) of six focus groups conducted by the Harvard Law Clinic with parents, parent partners, school liaisons, advocates, clinicians, and professionals outlines challenges many families face when needing to access services. The Harvard Law Clinic conducted this work under the guidance of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, a joint program of Massachusetts Advocates for Children (who has a representative on the Commission) and Harvard Law School.

Additionally, the Harvard Law Clinic's conducted focus groups with [parents and community providers](#) in 2017 to help inform Commission work, and these revealed a critical need for adequate and quality interpretation services in schools. The focus group discussions indicated that some schools utilize other students or unqualified staff to interpret sensitive information to families about their child(ren). To better support family engagement efforts in schools, the Commission recommends intentionally promoting and supporting efforts that address the need for schools to broaden their ability to communicate in a way that considers the cultural and linguistic needs of all students and their families. This includes professional development for

educators in best practices for family engagement and cultural sensitivity and awareness. In addition, in order to broaden language, oral interpretation, and translated materials at every point of contact, schools can be encouraged and supported (possibly through local, state, and federal resources) to (a) ensure all services offered are culturally and linguistically appropriate, including, but not limited to, the use of bilingual staff and interpreters through contracted services; (b) increase the availability and use of trained interpreters and avoid reliance on using family, friends, and children as interpreters, particularly when topics are of a sensitive nature; and (c) improve the degree to which leadership and staff are representative of populations served, and make efforts to review and change policies were needed to ensure equity in service provision and accessibility for youth and their families.

Future Directions

The Commission sets forth an ambitious agenda for the next several years described below, with more details on priorities for 2019 to be honed during the early part of the year (2019). Elements include informing further progress towards an updated Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and tool; collaboration with the Department to inform guidance that can be shared with schools and districts related to effectively integrating safe and supportive schools' goals into school and district improvement plans; and gathering information from additional stakeholders to inform future recommendations called for in the Safe and Supportive Schools statute (G.L. c. 69, § 1P). A number of the next steps outlined in the 3rd report will continue in 2019 and beyond.

The Commission's goal is to assist school communities with creating safe and supportive learning environments for *all* students. Safe and supportive schools support the whole child in forming positive relationships with adults and peers, self-regulating their emotions and behaviors, achieving high academic standards, and being physically and emotionally healthy. Safe and supportive schools value the expertise of educators to engage in a process that integrates the many initiatives necessary to create safe and supportive school cultures. Safe and supportive schools actively work to eliminate bias related to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation in all school-wide activities and throughout all school operations. They value the social and cultural experiences of students, staff, families, and partners, and ensures that culturally responsive systems of support are fully integrated into the culture of schools.

The Commission reached consensus on the direction of these next steps described below, and agreed that further discussion will inform details and priorities for the upcoming year and beyond.

1. In order to help meet the statutory charge in G.L., c. 69, § 1P that the Commission “investigate and make recommendations to the board on updating, improving and refining the framework and the self-assessment tool as appropriate,” the Commission will work with the Department and Board, as appropriate, to advise and continuously refine the development of the **Safe and Supportive Schools Framework. The goal is for the Department to make an updated framework available for use during the 2019-2020 school year (starting in late fall or early winter).** The Commission will additionally continue to inform the Department's efforts to utilize expert assistance to ensure the **Safe and Supportive Schools**

Self-Assessment Tool is user friendly and helpful in assisting schools and districts to enhance the infrastructure necessary to address the needs of the whole child; to integrate and align initiatives related to safe and supportive schools; and to support equitable access, opportunity, and outcomes for all students. The tool will be further refined based on the feedback received from grant recipients and other school districts who are using the fall 2018 revised version tool.

2. In order to help meet the statutory charge in G.L., c. 69, § 1P that the Commission “examine and recommend model approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e) with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement,” the Commission will continue to collaborate with the Department as it pilots and refines the guidance drafted with the Commission in 2017 for **incorporating locally tailored action plans developed through the use of the self-assessment tool into school and district improvement plans** using the Department’s Planning for Success approach. The Commission also plans to draft and propose a readiness guide to complement the guidance for incorporating action plans into school improvement plans. This readiness guide will be designed to assist schools and districts with understanding the framework and tool, gathering data, and using the tool to engage in a safe and supportive school culture change process that is embodied in the self-assessment tool.

The Commission also will further explore ways to incorporate the many laws and legal reporting requirements into the framework and self-assessment tool (for example, those related to student discipline from Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012, and those related to bullying prevention and intervention plans from Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010 and Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014), in order to make plan creation and reporting by schools more streamlined and integrated with the many other initiatives it must carry out.

3. In order to help meet the statutory charge in G.L., c. 69, § 1P that the Commission “identify strategies for increasing schools’ capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force,” and “propose steps for improving schools’ access to clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services,” and “develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families, including families of children with behavioral health needs,” the Commission, within its capacity, will continue to help inform, collaborate with, and learn from efforts of the Department, as the Commission considers making additional recommendations regarding **access to clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services**. These efforts may include gathering additional information (e.g., through focus groups), reviewing and analyzing available data on the services and supports needed by families and students (e.g., through existing reports or data sources), or making recommendations related to this. Discussions may include considering recommendations related to data on state agency, community-based, behavioral health, early education, and special education efforts, and on any other services or supports, including MassHealth-funded services which families and students require. Considerations may include information about access, availability, waitlists, and other barriers families encounter in seeking services. One source of data that may be helpful are [Family Resource Centers](#) (FRCs). The FRCs are a statewide network of community-based providers offering multi-cultural parenting programs, support groups, early childhood services, information and

referral resources and education for families whose children range in age from birth to 18 years of age.

As a part of this, the Commission will work with the Department to find ways to hold additional focus groups, such as those with educators, student support staff, and more at the school level so that these efforts can further inform Commission recommendations with respect to the legislative mandate specifically focused on *school's* access to appropriate services.

4. In order to help meet the statutory charge in G.L., c. 69, § 1P (g) that the Commission “identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments,” the Commission will also assist the Department in gathering information from Safe and Supportive Schools grantees and participants in the Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy about their successes and challenges and needs, and will also consult with other stakeholders as appropriate. This information can help guide the Department as it develops or refers to **professional learning materials, workshops, institutes, and other opportunities** that respond to stakeholders' specific requests for materials to enhance school/district capacity to lead the process of creating safe and supportive schools.
5. The Commission will work with the Department to develop written **materials that delineate the relationship between safe and supportive schools cultures and academic success**. These materials can articulate how building a safe and supportive school culture fits with the many other initiatives in the Department and helps create the context and vision that underlies safe and supportive schools.
6. The Commission will help inform the Department's efforts to hold leadership summits for Superintendents, Principals, and School Committee members to prioritize work to create safe and supportive environments, provide leaders with the tools to lead professional development to staff, and assist the Department with the development of materials. The Commission and Department will explore whether these opportunities can be offered during times these leaders are already gathered (e.g., during gatherings hosted by the associations of superintendents, administrators, school committees, etc.).
7. The Commission will seek opportunities for students to give their input and feedback on what Safe and Supportive Schools should look like, based on their experience and that of their peers.
8. The Commission will invite members with expertise in higher education to inform discussions as to what college course syllabi and programming for safe and supportive schools could look like in teacher and administration preparation programs, to be most effective.
9. The Commission will continue to be interested in hearing updates regarding the revision process for the **Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework**, and will consider whether

to offer public comment (as individuals or on behalf of organizations they represent on the Commission) when a draft revised version of the framework is approved by the Board for this purpose (likely in 2019).

10. The Commission will consider ways to gather information, provide advice, and participate in discussions with the Department as it investigates ways to **increasingly use safe and supportive schools measures as indicators of school quality and student success.**
11. **The Commission will present annual recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on areas set forth in the statute.** The Commission will reflect upon the information gathered through the steps described above and will develop a draft summary from the information gathering. As the information is assessed and synthesized, the Commission will deliberate upon appropriate recommendations related to topics the Commission is asked to address. Agreed upon recommendations will be included in the fifth annual report (December 2019).
12. **Commission Members will engage in outreach to represented organizations and other stakeholder groups, and participate in any appropriate public relations campaigns.** Commission members will solicit, from the organizations they represent, input on the Commission's recommendations to the Board, Department, and Legislature. Also, members will support any public information campaign work undertaken by statewide leadership, where appropriate.

Commission Activities Undertaken in 2018

Commission areas of top priority focus in 2018 included updating the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment Tool, so that it could be piloted with FY19 grantees (in the fall 2018), and investigating where challenges exist for schools to access services that are clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. Below is a brief summary of activities conducted during this fourth year of the Commission.

- Maintained the **Commission website**¹³ with information on reports, responsibilities, members, meetings, and contact information.
- Convened **six full Commission meetings** in 2018, including a summer retreat. Meeting dates and locations in 2018 were as follows: January 30 (Malden), April 25 (Malden), June 1 (Shrewsbury), August 1 retreat (Cambridge), October 4 (Shrewsbury), and November 5 (Malden). The Commission is grateful to the Shrewsbury Town Hall and the Harvard Law School for generously allowing their space to be used for Commission meetings.
- Welcomed **new member** Henry Julio East-Trou, Executive Director, Gandara Center. Dr. East-Trou was appointed by the Secretary of Education, and represents a community-based organization (CBO) that provides services as part of the Children's Behavioral Health

¹³ Commission website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/?section=commission>.

Initiative (CBHI), and that provides mental health services in schools.

- Selected a **new Co-Chair** in October, Dr. John Doherty, Superintendent of Reading Public Schools. The Commission is grateful for his willingness to serve, and also grateful to the prior Co-Chair, Susan Cole, who served with the utmost dedication for nearly four years (mid-winter 2015-fall 2018). The Commission selected Co-Chair serves alongside the Department’s Commissioner’s designee (Rachelle Engler Bennett).
- Discussed and deliberated on recommendations to include in this fourth annual report to the legislature.
- Engaged in **conversations with Department staff** related to safe and supportive schools grants, evaluation work, leadership summits, and other professional development efforts. Additional topics of discussion included integrated student services work, the Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework revisions, the Promote Prevent Commission, school report cards, climate surveys, and accountability.
- Informed a series of **focus groups** about “access to services” generously conducted by seven Harvard Education Law Clinic graduate school students guided by the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, a joint program of Massachusetts Advocates for Children (who has a representative on the Commission) and Harvard Law School. The six focus groups were held with parents, parent partners, students, school liaisons, advocates, clinicians, and professionals on access to services. The students wrote a [Memorandum on their Focus Group Findings](#) (April 2018), and presented this information for discussion at the April 25, 2018 Commission meeting. This work informed Commission discussions, and the findings resonated with many members. The findings will also help frame discussions during subsequent focus groups (including but not limited to ones that will take place in late fall and early winter with social workers and superintendents, respectively), and inform considerations for future Commission recommendations to the legislature.
- Drafted a graphic to illustrate the various components of work related to promoting safe and supportive schools. This effort is evolving, and the latest available version is in Appendix C.
- Informed the Department’s efforts to update the **Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment (Reflection) Tool**. Revisions were underway throughout the year, with input of Commission members and external stakeholders. A version ready to pilot by grantees was posted in late fall 2018, and longer-term updates will be made over the course of 2018-2019 and be ready for use in the fall 2019. A few examples of ways the tool was updated are noted below.
- Informed refining of guiding principles, or **essential elements** of safe and supportive schools, that undergird the many interwoven initiatives that work together to create safe and supportive schools. Meetings in May with the Department’s Principal and Teacher Advisory Committees (PAC and TAC), and with others during the year, further informed the honing of these elements. These elements are included in the revised tool and are described in further detail below.

Essential Elements of Safe and Supportive Schools



- 1. Deepening administrator/staff understanding** of the need for a safe and supportive schools and the need for a whole school approach that values the expertise of educators and includes the voices of students and families.
- 2. Supporting all students to feel safe**-physically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally and academically.
- 3. Holistically supporting the whole student to:**
 - form positive **relationships** with adults and peers,
 - manage and **self-regulate** their emotions and behaviors,
 - develop a sense of **competency** and academic success, and
 - experience **physical health and well-being**.
- 4. Explicitly connecting students to the school community** and providing them with multiple opportunities to learn and practice newly developing skills.

5. Building staff capacity to **develop culturally responsive practices that dismantle implicit biases and systemic inequalities in order to create** learning environments that welcome, include, and support all students to deeply learn, grow, and thrive.
6. **Promoting equitable access, opportunities and outcomes** for all students to ensure they are engaged and challenged to achieve their fullest potential.
7. **Supporting the school staff’s capacity to work together as a team** with a sense of shared responsibility for every student.
8. **Helping the school staff assess and adapt** to the ever-changing needs of students and the surrounding community.

Department Activities Related to G.L. c. 69, § 1P(f)

The statute calls for many actions to be taken on the part of the Department, all of which are subject to appropriation. A brief update on Department work to date and plans for the balance of the fiscal year are also noted below.

“(f) Subject to appropriation, the department shall facilitate and oversee the implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework in schools that vote to develop and implement the framework. The department shall, subject to appropriation: (i) provide technical assistance to schools on using the self-assessment tool and developing school action plans and to districts on coordinating with community service providers and developing strategies to facilitate the district-wide implementation of the framework; (ii) develop and disseminate model protocols and practices identified in the framework; (iii) establish a safe and supportive schools grant program, through which grantees shall pilot and share with other schools an effective process for developing and implementing school action plans; (iv) update its website to include the framework, the self-assessment tool, best practices and other information related to the implementation of the framework; (v) host regional trainings for schools and districts; and (vi) provide administrative support to the safe and supportive schools commission established under subsection (e). Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the ability of the department to contract with individuals, external partners or other entities to support the functions established under this section; provided, however, that the department shall consider opportunities for education collaboratives or other regional service organizations to coordinate and disseminate training, technical assistance and information to school districts on the implementation of the framework.”

Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program: In August 2018, the Department posted two FY19 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant opportunities through [Fund Code 335 \(FC 335\) Safe and Supportive Schools Competitive Grants](#), and [FC 337 Safe and Supportive Schools Continuation Grants](#) for continuation grants, with applications due September 20 and October 4,

2018, respectively. Information about this opportunity was sent to prior applicants and also included in the August 24, 2018 Commissioner’s Weekly Update.¹⁴

Informed by feedback from the field, Commission meeting discussions, and the evaluation, the FY19 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Fund Code 335 (Competitive)¹⁵ offered districts up to \$10,000 per selected school and \$20,000 maximum per selected district for one of two options. Districts that had not used the framework or self- assessment tool in the past applied through grant *Option One* to develop action plans that organize, integrate, and sustain school and district-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments and coordinate and align student support initiatives. Selected schools in grant recipient districts will create action plans based on all the elements of the online framework and self-assessment tool. Grantee districts will also create district action plans that support the selected schools. Districts that had used the tool to create action plans in the past could apply through grant *Option Two* which will allow former tool users to begin or continue to implement school-based action plans (and associated district-support plans) that were created in prior year(s). Additionally, these grantees will also serve as mentors Option One grantees. All 30 districts that applied were selected for funding for use in approximately 70 schools. Just over \$369,000 from line item 7061-9612 will be leveraged by grantees through this grant program to develop and implement action plans and network among each other to share best practices that will help create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments,

Fund Code 337 (Continuation) will allow schools that received the FY18 grant to create action plans to receive funds in FY19 to implement items from the action plans they created using the self- assessment tool in the prior year. A total of 10 districts¹⁶ were awarded continuation grants, for use in approximately 12 schools, supported by just over \$107,000 from line item 7061-9612.

Professional development to support work related to safe and supportive schools: During the 2017-2018 School Year a planning team including representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the Collaborative for Educational Services, and Massachusetts Advocates for Children’s Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative created a yearlong professional development series that included webinars, in person regional networking meetings, and a statewide convening. The series was focused on the importance of healthy social, emotional, and physical well-being on learning and development and on efforts to create equitable and inclusive environments for all students. Participants in the series had the opportunity to learn with and from grade-span colleagues (early childhood/elementary and middle/high school) and community-based partners.

Following the November 17, 2017 webinar from Dr. Jayne Singer, that was described in the third annual report, on January 4, 2018, Joe Ristuccia, from Massachusetts Advocates for Children’s Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, hosted a webinar titled “Bridging Knowledge to Practice” where participants learned about the primary steps that can be taken to begin taking action in building a trauma sensitive school. This webinar served as an introduction to three winter

¹⁴ Weekly Update with grant information: <https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-8-24-18-pbis-and-literacy-academies-school-safety-roundtable-family-engagement?e=fbf1e6819a#competitivefysafe>.

¹⁵ FY19 grantees (competitive): <http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2019/awards/335.html>.

¹⁶ FY19 grantees (continuation): <http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2019/337/>.

regional networking meetings where participants gathered in person to discuss and share promising practices related to safe and supportive learning environments, engaging in a problem of practice activity, and learn about the tool from a former FC 335 grantee.

On March 23, 2018, the Department convened [FY18 FC 335 grantees](#) and others from across the state, for a full-day conference titled, “Safe and Supportive Learning Environments: Bringing Together Social and Emotional Learning, Trauma Sensitivity, and Positive Behavioral Approaches.” The day started with a keynote plenary featuring three schools engaged in the process of becoming trauma-sensitive schools. Participants then attended breakout sessions where presenters shared best practices around topics related to socio-emotional integration, positive behavior practices, and ways to create and implement safe and supportive environments and how to use the framework and self- assessment tool to help in the process of creating them. The conference also included community team planning time to share information learned, engage in vertical alignment of strategies and approaches, and strengthen working relationships.

Grant program evaluation: The Department used approximately \$25,000 in 2018 from line item 7061-9612 towards an independent [evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant program](#) conducted by Collaborative for Educational Services (CES). Hired through a competitive state procurement process, CES worked with the Department and the 17 grantees awarded [Fund Code 335 Safe and Supportive Schools Competitive Grants](#) during the 2017-2018 school year. The purpose was to learn more about how local grant teams were coordinated, how staff facilitated using the tool, the usefulness of the tool in understanding the schools/districts’ needs, the process used by teams to engage in action planning, and ways the Department can strengthen the tool and grant process. Information was gathered through online surveys, focus groups, phone interviews, and site visits.

The evaluation indicated a number of areas of strength. These include:

- The grant provides time and space for a reconsideration of how schools approach discipline, and helps shift school culture as well as policies and procedures;
- The tool helps identify strengths and gaps, needs for professional development, and to develop action plans that addresses these gaps;
- The tool also enhances knowledge of district resources available; and
- Schools and districts value the connections with other districts that the program provides through statewide professional development convenings.

The evaluation also described areas for growth that include:

- The condensed timeline of the grant program was challenging for implementation;
- There are aspects of the tool to strengthen such as the wording of some questions, greater clarity or guidance related to a process to use to complete the tool, finding some information in the tool, and clearly connecting school and district action plans with the action plans informed by using the tool.
- Some teachers and administrators are uncertain how they will be able to sustain change, if the grant funding ends with the current school year; and
- Interest in more Department guidance for using the tool and creating the action plan.

The Department and Commission incorporated changes where possible in the tool and grant program, informed by the evaluation. For example, the grant program in 2018-2019 includes grantees who are implementing action plans informed by previous use of the tool, and these grantees will be able to provide guidance to other grantees who are funded to use the tool and create action plans this year. Furthermore, the grant was posted and awarded earlier this year, to try to at least slightly expand the timeframe for doing the work. Moreover, the updated tool (to be posted late fall or early winter this year) incorporates a number of changes intending to address grantee feedback. Additionally, a further updated version will likely be posted in late fall or early winter of the 2019-2020 year. The Department is working with CES to expand the evaluation into 2018-2019, and among other areas of focus will look at the experience of grantees who receive guidance from their mentor peers.

Integrating Student Supports: The Department issued an RFR during the spring that will be funded through the line item earmark related to integrating student supports. This RFR sought one or more individuals or organizations to assist the Department with planning and facilitating professional development on effective practice for integrating supports, for schools/districts that apply and agree to participate. This work will help communities create and implement plans that help them adopt new or refine existing practices. Through the RFR process, the Department selected the Rennie Center and Boston College Lynch School of Education's Center for Optimized Student Support. This effort will fund a new Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy, aligned with our Safe and Supportive Schools initiatives and our existing academies for PBIS, Tiered Literacy, Tiered Math, and Inclusive Tier 1 Instruction. The academy will focus on K-8 schools and include three in-person workshops (December 2018, and February and April 2019) and two virtual convenings (January and March 2019), as well as additional targeted support and technical assistance. The academy is designed to deepen practitioners' understanding of the critical components of a system that effectively and proactively identifies and addresses students' strengths and needs. It will also help district and school practitioners identify next steps. By the end of the year, participants will have developed a preliminary plan for advancing toward a system of integrated student support, and they will be prepared to move forward toward implementing an approach that can be embedded in the ongoing work of school and district staff to create safe and supportive schools. An informational webinar was held on October 11, applications were due on November 9, and selected participants (nine districts) were notified in December. These efforts are in support of the larger umbrella of creating safe and supportive learning environments, and as noted in other sections of this report, will build upon and help further inform work related to the principles of effective practice, the framework, and the tool.

Additional Department efforts: Additional funds enabled full-time staffing to support Safe and Supportive Schools Framework related work. This staff work includes providing technical assistance and training to school districts; policy development and dissemination; project planning and implementation; grants and contract management; inter-agency collaboration; and coordination of and participation in information gathering efforts such as focus groups, and in research and evaluation activities.

APPENDIX A: Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Members

Last Name (Alphabetically Listed)	First Name	District / Agency / Role Represented	Title
Adams	Brandon	State Student Advisory Council	Student, Norfolk County Agricultural High School
Amador	Andria	MA School Psychologists Association (MSPA)	MSPA Past President; Senior Director of Behavioral Health Services, Boston Public Schools
Anastasio	Brian	State Student Advisory Council	Student, Blue Hills Regional Technical High School
Bennett	Rachelle Engler	MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)	Commission Co-Chair (DESE Designee); Associate Commissioner, Student and Family Support, DESE
Brown	Donna M.	MA School Counselors Association (MASCA)	MASCA Executive Director
Burd	Sara	Arlington Public Schools, Practitioner of the Framework	Director of Social Emotional Learning, Arlington Public Schools
Cole	Susan	MA Advocates for Children (MAC)	Commission Co-Chair (through September 2018, selected by members); MAC Senior Project Director, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
Daniels	Margie	MA Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers	Social Worker, and Executive Director, Middlesex Partnerships for Youth
Diehl	William	MA Organization of Education Collaboratives (MOEC)	MOEC Board of Directors Regional Representative; Executive Director, Collaborative for Educational Services
Doherty	John	MA Association of School Superintendents (MASS)	Commission Co-Chair (starting October 2018, selected by members); Superintendent, Reading Public Schools
East-Trou	Henry Julio	Representative of a community-based organization (CBO) that provides services as part of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), and that provides mental health services in schools	Executive Director, Gandara Center
Holmes	Ellen	MA Association of School Committees (MASC)	MASC Regional School Committee Chair; Ashburnham-Westminster Reg. School Committee Member
Lipinski	Michelle	Representative of Mass. Recovery High Schools with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders	Principal, Northshore Recovery High School
Lipper	Katherine	Secretary of Education (EOE Designee)	General Counsel, MA Executive Office of Education
Pearrow	Melissa	University of MA - Boston, Former BHPS Taskforce Member and Tool Developer/Evaluator	Associate Professor of Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development
Styer	Judith	MA School Nurse Organization (MSNO)	MSNO Past President; Director of Health and Wellness, Framingham Public Schools
Whitehead	Richard	MA Administrators for Special Education (ASE)	Director of Student Services, Wayland Public Schools

APPENDIX B: Legislative Charge for the Commission

Massachusetts General Laws, c. 69, § 1P(g): There shall be a safe and supportive schools commission to collaborate with and advise the department on the feasibility of state-wide implementation of the framework. The commission shall consist of 19 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education or a designee; 1 of whom shall be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school committee member appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school principal appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association; 1 of whom shall be a teacher appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a director of special education or a director of student support services appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education; 1 of whom shall be an executive director of an education collaborative appointed by the Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by The Massachusetts School Psychologists Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school social worker appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education, behavioral health and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc. appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a student appointed by the department of elementary and secondary education's student advisory council; and 3 members to be appointed by the secretary of education: 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force who participated in the development and statewide evaluation of the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force with experience implementing the framework; 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts recovery high schools with expertise in adolescent substance use disorders; and 1 of whom shall be a representative from a community-based organization that provides services as part of the children's behavioral health initiative and that provides mental health services in schools. The commission shall select a co-chair from among its appointees.

The commission shall: (i) investigate and make recommendations to the board on updating, improving and refining the framework and the self-assessment tool as appropriate; (ii) identify strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force; (iii) propose steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; (iv) identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments; (v) identify federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation of the framework; (vi) develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families,

including families of children with behavioral health needs; and (vii) examine and recommend model approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e), with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

The commission may collect and review data and feedback from schools as the schools complete the self-assessment tool and develop school action plans, and may convene stakeholders to facilitate solutions to challenges as such challenges arise during the implementation process. The commission may request from the department such information and assistance as may be necessary to complete its work.

The commission shall consult with and solicit input from various persons and groups, including, but not limited to: (i) the office of the child advocate; (ii) the department of early education and care; (iii) the department of children and families; (iv) the department of mental health; (v) the department of public health; (vi) the department of youth services; (vii) the department of developmental services; and (viii) any other parties or entities the commission deems appropriate.

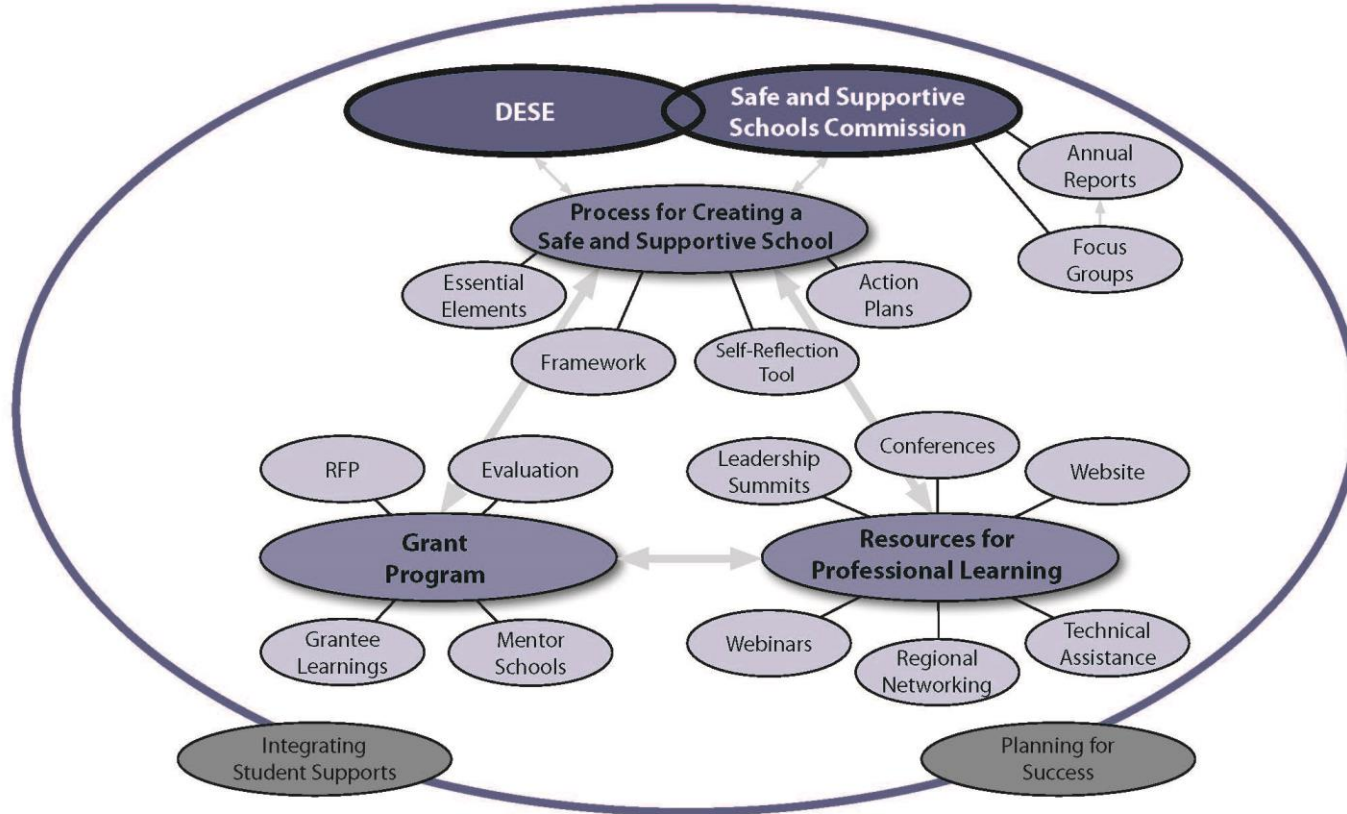
The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission's activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31. The commission shall meet not fewer than 4 times annually. The commission shall submit such annual report to the governor and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee on education, the chairs of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, and the house and senate committees on ways and means. The first 3 annual reports shall include recommendations regarding: (i) federal funding sources that may support statewide implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework; (ii) training programs and professional development for school staff on creating safe and supportive learning environments; (iii) improving access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and (iv) addressing the administrative functions necessary to carry out the implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework.

NOTE: The full text of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter284) (G.L. c. 69, § 1P), within *An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence*, can be found on <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter284>.

APPENDIX C: Safe and Supportive Schools Community of Practice: A Visual

Safe and Supportive Schools Community of Practice

*How can Massachusetts set conditions that will support schools to become safe and supportive?**



*Safe and Supportive Schools foster a safe, positive, healthy & inclusive whole-school learning environment that: (i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and (ii) integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives. (MGL c. 69, sec. 1P (a))