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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Jeff Wulfson, Acting Commissioner

Date: March 16, 2018
Subject: Special Board Meeting on Personalized and Competency-Based Learning

At the March 26, 2018 Special Board Meeting, the Board will hear a panel presentation and engage in a dialogue with panel members and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) staff about personalized and competency-based learning. One goal of the meeting is to better understand personalized learning, competency-based learning, and their relevance to helping to close achievement, employability, and equity gaps in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech Consortium (MAPLE) a public-private partnership between the Department and the nonprofit LearnLaunch Institute, was formed to facilitate broader access to personalized learning models for interested districts. MAPLE defines *personalized learning* as follows:

Personalized learning seeks to accelerate student learning by tailoring the instructional environment – what, when, how and where students learn – to address the individual needs, skills and interests of each student. Within a framework of established curriculum standards and high expectations, personalized learning motivates students to reach their goals. Students take ownership of their own learning and develop deep, personal connections with each other, their teachers and other adults. Technology is necessary to implement personalized learning effectively, affordably, and at significant scale. Teachers leverage technology to gain detailed and timely knowledge of their students that guides instruction. Effective use of technology allows teachers and students to focus more on creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

The New England Consortium of Secondary Schools (NESSC), which Massachusetts recently joined due to high demand from districts to engage in networking and support in personalized learning models, defines *competency-based learning* as follows:

Competency-based learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. The general goal of competency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, careers, and adult life. If students fail to meet expected learning standards, they typically receive additional instruction, practice time, and academic support to help them meet the expected standards.

Members of the panel will include:

Michael Horn: A Massachusetts resident and member of the Board’s Digital Learning Advisory Council (DLAC), Mr. Horn is a nationally recognized expert on next-generation learning models and is the author of several books, including *Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* and *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*.

Lourenco Garcia: Dr. Garcia is the principal of Revere High School. The school has been attracting attention for its work in personalizing student learning since it was honored for excellence by the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University in 2014.

Amy Rex: Ms. Rex is the principal of Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington, MA. Prior to her current role, Ms. Rex was a principal in Vermont, where a 2013 state law charged secondary school educators to create personalized learning environments that offer flexible pathways to graduation and a planning process by which students and educators can reflect on and document student learning over time.

Other members of the panel (to be named) will include a Massachusetts teacher, a current student at Boston Day and Evening Academy, and a recent graduate of Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School. Each will speak to their experiences as an educator or as a student in schools that emphasize personalized and competency-based learning. In addition, the Board will have the opportunity to discuss these topics with **David O’Connor**, Executive Director of MAPLE, and **David Ruff**, Executive Director of NESSC, and hear brief overviews of their respective work in Massachusetts.

Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner for Educational Options, and Ken Klau, Director of Digital Learning, will join us for this discussion.

Enclosures: December 14, 2016 press release announcing the launch of the MAPLE Consortium
December 13, 2017 press release welcoming Massachusetts to NESSC

Massachusetts Accelerates Adoption of Personalized Learning Through New Public-Private Partnership

Education Innovator David O'Connor to Serve as Executive Director

December 14, 2016 - Boston, MA. The LearnLaunch Institute and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today announced the creation of a public-private consortium to catalyze personalized learning: the Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech (MAPLE) Consortium. Supported by The Barr Foundation and Nellie Mae Education Foundation, MAPLE will leverage the work being done by the Commonwealth's most innovative schools to enable all districts to incorporate personalized learning approaches and cutting-edge pedagogies, ensuring all students are prepared to be productive and successful citizens in the 21st Century.

“While proud of how Massachusetts schools perform when compared to other states, we need to enable success for all students, preparing them to compete globally in the 21st Century. This requires fostering and accelerating the rate of adoption of effective practices in teaching and learning,” said Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts commissioner of elementary and secondary education. “The MAPLE Consortium is a collaborative effort with local school districts to identify, analyze, and nurture successful new models of personalized learning and then catalyze and support the expansion of these models and practices across the Commonwealth.”

The announcement took place at Natick Public Schools, one of the founding MAPLE Consortium members. Natick's Superintendent Peter Sanchioni said “MAPLE will provide peer support for meeting our objective of supporting the best possible learning for all our students, tailored to their individual needs, interests, and talents. Our experiences will be instructive to other Massachusetts districts as they move toward personalized learning.”

Somerville Superintendent Mary Skipper said, "The MAPLE Consortium will enable us to more rapidly identify innovations that work, make adjustments in those that don't, and strategically continue to move forward towards helping all of our students succeed."

Founding district members of the Consortium include Andover, Arlington, Beverly, Burlington, Concord, Millis, Natick, Needham, North Reading, Revere, Somerville, and Westford. Over the next year, MAPLE intends to add up to thirty more Member Districts to support the systemic expansion of personalized learning in Massachusetts. Member Districts will participate in peer learning, in which they share approaches, challenges and solutions as they move toward personalizing the education of all their students, with the aim of increasing student engagement and achievement. Research and technical assistance partners will also be members of the Consortium. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will use the group as a sounding board for policies to help innovation flourish.

MAPLE will connect districts with necessary resources – a strong peer learning community, professional learning, digital tools, funding strategies, and a rich evidence base – to create thoughtful and innovative new models of teaching and learning that improve student engagement and achievement. “MAPLE will enable districts to learn from each other, as well as from our strong community of education researchers and education entrepreneurs, providing resources that strengthen local models, and supporting the broader adoption of promising innovations in teaching and learning,” said Eileen Rudden, Chair of the LearnLaunch Institute.

Personalized learning seeks to accelerate student learning by tailoring the instructional environment – what, when, how and where students learn – to address the individual needs, skills and interests of each student. Within a framework of established curriculum standards and high expectations, personalized learning motivates students to reach their goals. Students take ownership of their own learning and develop deep, personal connections with each other, their teachers and other adults. Technology is necessary to implement personalized learning effectively, affordably, and at significant scale. Educators leverage technology to gain detailed and timely knowledge of their students that guides instruction. Effective use of technology allows teachers and students to focus more on creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Education innovator David O’Connor will serve as MAPLE’s executive director, bringing experience and expertise from a career of leadership at education innovators such as Pearson, Amplify Education, and Apple.

Founded in 2012, LearnLaunch has established itself as the hub for education innovation in New England, harnessing and advancing the potential for digital technologies to improve education outcomes. Implementing personalized learning requires readiness from teachers and administrators, support from parents and the local community, as well as increased sophistication in implementing and using classroom technologies. LearnLaunch has proven experience in both educator professional learning and education technology, as well as in how innovations begin, take root, and grow.

About MAPLE

MAPLE is a public-private consortium hosted by the LearnLaunch Institute and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech (MAPLE) Consortium aims to catalyze personalized learning throughout Massachusetts K-12 education.

MAPLE is dedicated to connecting districts and schools with necessary resources – a strong peer learning community, professional learning, digital tools, funding strategies, technology partners, and a rich evidence base – to create innovative models of teaching and learning to improve student engagement and achievement. Learn more at <http://www.learnlaunch.org/MAPLE> or follow @LearnLaunch #MAPLE.

About LearnLaunch Institute

LearnLaunch Institute catalyzes a community that drives innovation to transform learning and increase achievement. Our education innovation ecosystem mobilizes educators, entrepreneurs, learners, investors, and industry affiliates. As a nonprofit, the Institute offers learning opportunities and connections to individuals, support services to schools, and a district network. We believe in expanding access to learning that is engaging, personalized, and effective. Edtech is a critical component of achieving this vision at scale. For more Information and our upcoming events, visit www.learnlaunch.org or follow us @LearnLaunch. LearnLaunch Institute is a part of the LearnLaunch family, which includes LearnLaunch Accelerator and co-working space LearnLaunch Campus. Learn more about our full family of services at www.learnlaunch.com.

About the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is proud to support a public education system that is a national leader and among the best worldwide. The Department's work focuses on strengthening curriculum, instruction and assessment; improving educator effectiveness; supporting social-emotional learning, health and safety; turning around the lowest-performing districts and schools; and using data and technology to support student performance. www.doe.mass.edu.

NESSC Welcomes the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education December 13, 2017

PORTLAND, ME – Today, the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) announced that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has joined with the state education agencies of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont as a member of the NESSC. Together, the NESSC’s six member states represent over 950 public high schools with over 640,000 students.

“Rhode Island and Massachusetts have a long and proud tradition of partnership and collaboration, and the addition of Massachusetts to the NESSC will enhance the collective work of the Consortium and its member states around the region,” says Mary Ann Snider, deputy commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). “We are all stronger when we work together in the best interest of students, and RIDE looks forward to working with our neighboring state in this new capacity.”

The New England Secondary School Consortium is a groundbreaking collaboration of the New England states to share ideas, learn with and from one another, and support innovative secondary schools that will meet the learning needs for all students to be successful. The NESSC is coordinated by the Great Schools Partnership, a nonprofit school-support organization located in Portland, Maine.

“Joining the NESSC will give Massachusetts districts that are interested in innovative approaches access to resources and thought partners to inform their work. We are pleased to make this opportunity available to our districts,” says Cliff Chuang, a senior associate commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The NESSC is also pleased to announce the collaborative efforts of the Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech Consortium (MAPLE) as a key partner in supporting Massachusetts secondary schools interested in joining and participating in the NESSC’s League of Innovative Schools, a regional professional learning community for schools. Currently, 116 secondary schools across New England participate in the League of Innovative Schools, and membership is expected to grow in the next several years.

The League of Innovative Schools hosts state-specific and regional events for its members—secondary schools committed to educational equity, student-centered learning, and ongoing improvement. This year’s fall conference for League of Innovative Schools members brought together 250 educators from across New England to network, exchange professional expertise, and create better learning experiences for their students.

MAPLE, a public-private partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the nonprofit LearnLaunch Institute, will collaborate with the Great

Schools Partnership and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to convene League of Innovative Schools activities in Massachusetts.

MAPLE was established in 2016 and has a current membership of 36 districts. MAPLE member secondary schools will now have the option to join the League of Innovative Schools to share ideas, receive technical assistance, and pursue funding opportunities together.

“This collaboration will help us bring together the most innovative school districts in Massachusetts with innovative schools throughout New England, to the benefit of all our students,” says David O’Connor, executive director of MAPLE.

On March 12 and 13, 2018, the NESSC will hold its annual School Redesign in Action Conference in Providence, Rhode Island, with an anticipated audience of 1,300 educators from New England and the nation. Several Massachusetts schools have been selected to present at this conference.

“The NESSC is the premier learning and leadership group for New England’s education policy leaders, a vibrant network of schools and districts seeking to advance change, and the heart of a regional community committed to ensuring that all students are prepared for success— educationally, economically, and as engaged citizens,” says Nick Donohue, president & CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. “Massachusetts joining the consortium is a welcome addition, given the Commonwealth’s position in the region and nationally. Their participation will support the Consortium to continue its central role in accelerating personalized, student-centered learning throughout New England.”

The [New England Secondary School Consortium](#) is a regional partnership working to advance forward-thinking innovations in secondary education that will empower the next generation of citizens, workers, and leaders. The Consortium is funded by the [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#) and coordinated by the [Great Schools Partnership](#).

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