

Accelerating Student Learning

The Need for Urgency and Innovation

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on our education systems and our students. In Massachusetts, recent data show that student achievement has dropped for all student groups across all types of schools and communities and across all grade levels and subject areas. Average reading scores have fallen 12% and average math scores have dropped 8%. While, in many school districts, the rate of chronic absenteeism has increased by 9%.

These impacts have the potential to seriously affect the future of our students and the Commonwealth. It is estimated that Massachusetts students are facing a reduction of nearly 8% of their lifetime earnings due to pandemic-related learning impacts. Massachusetts will share in the expected 2.5% decrease in national GDP over the remainder of this century and an economic loss of over \$400 billion.

MACP and MBAE, in a follow up to our 2020 report *Choosing a Return to Better*, collaborated on this review of student learning impacts and strategies for accelerating student learning in an attempt to set the stage for state leaders and policymakers to urgently address these issues in 2024 through legislation, state budget action, policy development and implementation, regulatory and programmatic action and any means necessary. At this critical juncture, state leaders must develop a comprehensive response to ensure that the last few years will be seen as a temporary blip in the Commonwealth's proud history of educational achievement for all, and not a generational setback that impacts countless lives as well as the state's economic future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Utilizing a combination of several sources of funding, including from still-available federal ESSER funds and Chapter 70 aid increases from the Student Opportunity Act, we are recommending the widespread use of the following strategies that evidence shows are working here in Massachusetts and in other states:

1. **Embrace High-Dosage Tutoring** as a primary strategy for accelerating student learning and encourage and incentivize its adoption by school districts.
2. **Adopt a goal of creating universal access for students to college and career pathways programs** to include the earning of college credit and industry-recognized credentials, participation in work-based learning and dedicated career counseling for every student.
3. **Require all school districts to adopt a high-quality science-based literacy curriculum** while offering them support for teacher training and the hiring of literacy coaches.
4. **Continue to expand efforts to grow the use of Expanded Learning Time models**, such as Acceleration Academies, longer school days and summer programming.
5. **Work to remove barriers to innovation and the redesign of high schools**, such as seat-time requirements and policies that inhibit competency-based, off-site and off-hours learning.
6. **Revive efforts to identify and close digital equity gaps** by supporting continuity of student access to technology, devices and connectivity.



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