

Student Voice and the Report: **Students' Voices:** **Their Perspectives on How Schools Are and Should Be**

MAC Preliminary Policy Recommendations to inform Commission recommendation deliberations

July 19, 2019

1. Through the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment tool, MAC suggests that the Department consider inviting schools to hold their own listening and learning sessions with students. A link in the Framework and Self-reflection tool to the questions asked for this report could allow schools to gain more specific feedback from their own students that could inform the development of school-wide action plans.
2. Relatedly, the Department and the Commission could explore and recommend to schools and districts best practices for developing student leadership committees or other mechanisms through which students can play a leadership role at schools and help guide educators' priority setting and action planning following the listening sessions.
3. The Department might also consider neutral and supportive ways to include obtaining student input and feedback among the activities required to receive funding through the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant program.
4. MAC suggests that the Commission consider recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Department to use this information to consider other ways to fairly, accurately and comprehensively evaluate student learning and achievement and to consider a broader range of accountability mechanisms that assess schools and districts, not just with respect to students' performance on standardized tests, but also on the quality of the learning environments they are providing for students.
5. MAC requests that the Commission consider recommendations that the Governor, the Legislature, and the Department can use to explore how the MCAS test might be narrowing the curriculum, including limiting access to content students feel they need to do well in school and life (two examples from the report are African American History and skills necessary to transition to adulthood in the community). In addition to having access to such content, the Commonwealth could explore opportunities for students to demonstrate their mastery of this content in ways that count toward the academic proficiency required to obtain a high school diploma.
6. MAC suggests that the Commission recommend in its Annual Report that the impact on student learning of the workforce issues described herein be explored, including class size, teacher turnover, use of long-term substitutes, and lack of staff educators and administrators

who share the background of students. In identifying solutions to each of these workforce issues, it could be a priority to train and hire educators and administrators who have the skills, capacity, and desire to create safe and supportive learning environments.

7. MAC suggests that the Commission request the opportunity to disseminate this Learning and Listening report broadly. In addition to the Governor and Legislature, this report could be disseminated to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, through the Commissioner's Weekly Updates, future Safe and Supportive Schools leadership summits, conferences, regional trainings and other convenings related to Safe and Supportive Schools.