




Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner

# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MassGrad High Schools Selected for Graduation Alliance Project  
**From:** Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner   
**Date:** December 1, 2022  
**Subject:** Reducing Chronic Absenteeism and Improving Academic Performance

We are launching a new effort to re-engage chronically absent and academically at-risk students. ENGAGE Massachusetts, a new program in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Graduation Alliance, will serve students in grades 6-12 and provide additional academic and social-emotional supports to boost school attendance and academic performance.

ENGAGE Massachusetts is available to school districts, students, and families in prioritized high schools at no cost. When your local education agency opts into the program, you will refer eligible students to be connected with an Academic Success Coach who:

- Conducts risk assessments to identify any barriers to school engagement and academic success.
- Builds personalized success coaching plans.
- Regularly works with the students to help them navigate challenges and be their best.

The goals of ENGAGE Massachusetts are to:

- Reach students as fast as possible.
- Identify their academic and social-emotional barriers to school engagement and academic success.
- Provide them with individualized, ongoing human support.
- Stabilize and improve their attendance and academic performance.

More than 29 percent of Massachusetts public school students were chronically absent during the 2021-2022 school year. [These numbers](#) have continually risen since 2019 with high schools showing some of the highest percentages of chronically absent students. Chronically absent students typically have lower academic outcomes, for example some of the [state's research](#) has shown that students who are chronically absent in 10<sup>th</sup> grade have a four-year graduation rate of 62 percent vs 93 percent for those students who are not chronically absent.

**ENGAGE Massachusetts provides your students with an additional layer of support without burdening your staff with more responsibility.** Academic Success Coaches start their relationship with students by conducting a risk assessment, which identifies any barriers preventing students from engaging with and succeeding in school. This data is gathered and shared with school districts through a dynamic data dashboard, allowing them to provide interventions to students, if appropriate. Coaches can also work one-on-one with students to help them navigate any academic or social-emotional challenges by providing:

- Academic and community resources,
- Access to 24/7 tutoring services,
- Homework help,
- Motivation,
- Study, time-management, and test-taking tips,
- Feedback on resumes and cover letters,
- and more.

This support program is available throughout the 2022-2023 school year. An independent evaluation of the ENGAGE program demonstrated **significant gains in student attendance, GPA, credit earned rate, and graduation rate** when compared to students who were referred to the program and participated as compared to those who did not participate.

Get started now by filling out the form on [EngageMA.GraduationAlliance.com](https://EngageMA.GraduationAlliance.com) or by emailing [EngageMA@GraduationAlliance.com](mailto:EngageMA@GraduationAlliance.com). All you need to do is provide contact information for your district’s point of contact and data coordinator and share an estimate of the number of students you plan to refer to ENGAGE.

If you have any questions, please contact Nyal Fuentes in the office of College, Career and Technical Education [nyal.f.fuentes@mass.gov](mailto:nyal.f.fuentes@mass.gov).

The following high schools are on our priority list for services.

Agawam - Agawam High	Lowell - Lowell High	Randolph - Randolph High
Barnstable - Barnstable High	Lynn - Classical High	Revere - Revere High
Boston - Madison Park High	Lynn - Lynn English High	Salem - Salem High
Boston - The English High	Malden - Malden High	Southbridge - Southbridge High
Chelsea - Chelsea High	Marlborough - Marlborough High	Springfield - High School of Commerce
Dennis - Yarmouth - Dennis - Yarmouth Regional High	Milford - Milford High	Waltham - Waltham Senior High
Everett - Everett High	New Bedford - New Bedford High	Wareham - Wareham Senior High
Falmouth - Falmouth High	Peabody - Peabody Veterans Memorial High	Weymouth - Weymouth High School
Framingham - Framingham High	Pittsfield - Pittsfield High	Whitman - Hanson - Whitman - Hanson Regional

Gloucester - Gloucester High	Pittsfield - Taconic High	Worcester - Burncoat Senior High
Holyoke - Holyoke High	Quabbin - Quabbin Regional High	Worcester - North High
Hudson - Hudson High	Quincy - Quincy High	