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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS, AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN MASS. EDUCATION

Research Supports Shift toward Student-Centered Learning

(BOSTON, MA) January 19, 2017 – The [Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy](#) released its annual status report to an audience of nearly 300 state education leaders, legislators, and educators this morning. The [Condition of Education in the Commonwealth](#) report gives state leaders a clear view of student progress in Massachusetts while pointing to areas in need of continued improvement.

The annual series includes a [data report](#) that looks at 25 state-level indicators of school performance, from early education through college and career readiness, to provide an annual snapshot of the educational system and a baseline for measuring progress.

“We have the best education system in the country, but we can’t rest on our laurels,” said James Peyser, Massachusetts Secretary of Education. “To maintain our global leadership, we must continue—with a sense of urgency—to reform education at all levels, and ensure we are closing critical achievement gaps.”

The report includes a number of statistics that point to the need for reform. For example, 30 percent of Massachusetts public school students require developmental—or remedial—courses when enrolling the state’s public colleges and universities, demonstrating a disconnect between the lessons we teach in schools and the skills needed for success after high school.

The report’s [Action Guide](#) aims to address this disconnect, urging state leaders and educators to rethink the one-size-fits-all approach to learning that has shaped education for the past century. The Rennie Center recommends a series of research-based changes to policy and practice that would help tailor education to the interests and learning style of each student.

Known as student-centered learning, this approach provides students with targeted support in areas where they struggle and the chance to accelerate where they demonstrate mastery, allowing educators to focus limited time and resources where they can have the greatest impact. This model is linked to increased academic performance, graduation rates, and success in college.

Schools across the state are already experimenting with student-centered approaches. At the Leominster Center for Excellence, students spend up to two full days a week at an internship site working with mentors to develop professional skills and with their teachers to create

personal benchmarks. A program at Brookline High School allows students to move at their own pace through specially designed courses. At Salem's Carlton School, students work in multi-age elementary classrooms, where teachers create personalized learning plans to move them to the next milestone.

"Despite the Commonwealth's continued gains in achievement, providing quality education to all students requires more dramatic action. We need to reconsider the very crux of how learning happens. We know the one-size-fits-all education model does not serve all children," said Chad d'Entremont, Executive Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. "Student-centered learning offers an important next step, with strategies that address the needs of all students."

The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy's mission is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. As Massachusetts' preeminent voice in public education reform, we create open spaces for educators and policymakers to consider evidence, discuss cutting-edge issues, and develop new approaches to advance student learning and achievement. Through our staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life. For more information, please visit www.renniecenter.org.

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