On March 10th, Governor Baker declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The work of CES – indeed the work of education throughout the Commonwealth – changed dramatically. We rose to the occasion with innovation, adaptation, and hard work. The CES community, our districts, and partners did so even while staff, students, educators, and caregivers struggled with illness, or supported others who are vulnerable or experiencing the effects of trauma.

**4,053**
CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES RECEIVED DIRECT SERVICE FROM CES PROGRAMS

**680**
STUDENTS IN CES AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

**1,639 +**
CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVED THROUGH DYS EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS PROGRAMS

[Image of a child wearing a mask]
Long-standing issues about equity, institutional racism, oppression, and social justice that have been increasingly centered in our own work with schools and students became a focus of a national dialogue this year. The continuing deaths of Black Americans at the hands of local authorities further galvanized our commitments and those of the communities we serve. CES held affinity group sessions for staff from across the agency, where people could openly discuss their experiences and feelings about racism and recent events. We significantly increased our support to districts and other partners to continue or in some cases, begin their equity work as organizations and educators. CES also worked with our Superintendents to voice our shared commitments for the local news outlets in June of 2020. As an organization, CES continues to believe in working to understand and take action together to challenge racism and support equity, in both educational settings and our larger communities.

Image: SEIS/DMH Instructional Coach Marleene Vizcarra at a protest in Boston, MA.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPANDED AND INNOVATED

The CES Professional Development Department rallied when education went remote – developing free PD for teachers and paraprofessionals. Over a five-week period, the team redesigned an array of courses to offer each via Zoom. Over 850 educators participated, with over 500 registrations in the first weekend alone. CES consultants also provided virtual support for educators as they transitioned to remote learning environments such as Google Classroom.

“The facilitators, at every point, provided both moral support and learning support for everyone in our cohort. Their support and enthusiasm, and the quality teaching that will happen because of it, is palpable.”

— PD participant

CES also gained approval to deliver ongoing SEI endorsement learning, complete the Special Education Team Leader Institute for 60 professionals online, and completed our second year as an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Certified Authorization Provider for the teacher certification program by becoming one of the very few authorized providers to deliver the training online after the pandemic began.

2,460 EDUCATORS PARTICIPATED IN DISTRICT-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2,437 EDUCATORS ATTENDED OPEN-ENROLLMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

462 EDUCATORS ATTENDED LICENSURE, SEI, OR READING RECOVERY TRAINING
CES quickly moved to remote, on-line, or hybrid learning in our student programs, including HEC Academy, Mount Tom Academy, After School programs, Early Childhood programs, and our educational programs under contracts with the Departments of Youth Services and DESE for Special Education in Institutional Settings. For these students, disproportionately impacted by interrupted schooling, sparsity of social-emotional supports, reduction in special education and EL services, trauma, and even basic access to the curriculum, CES’s response was immediate, timely, and caring. A key focus was maintaining ongoing strong and personal connections with students - checking-in both academically and in terms of emotional well-being.

HEC Academy and Mount Tom Academy, and the statewide regular and special education programs for the Departments of Youth Services and Mental Health, and at County Houses of Correction and the Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital, were also able to have held graduation observances, thanks to the creativity of our dedicated teachers in these programs.

CES found new ways to provide Connecting Activities services to students through a new series of online courses in career development. In response to the schools shut-down, Program Director Matt Rigney instituted weekly online classes in resume and cover letter writing and interviewing skills, and set up a weekly series of live “Meet the Pro” workshops, featuring STEM professionals for 1-hour workshops with students.

“These past two years at HEC Academy have made [our student] so much stronger—academically, socially and emotionally—and more resilient and ready to be successful. Thank you for your patience and compassion, and remarkable skills at working effectively with young adults who are having challenges finding their way in the world. I’m deeply grateful and in awe of what you do every day.”

— Sending District, Educational Advocate

MAINTAINING THE FOCUS ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS

240 STUDENTS SERVED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION AND MOUNT TOM ACADEMY PROGRAMS
Collaboration and convening for member districts and superintendents became mission critical

CES played a key role in communication and collaboration among our member districts as the crisis unfolded. After March 16th, CES arranged and hosted Zoom meetings once a week for Franklin and Hampshire County Superintendents. These meetings covered a range of issues related to COVID-19 and school closings, such as strategies for remote learning; competency determination; provision of special education services; graduations; budget planning for FY21; ideas about re-opening; and coordinating services. CES co-hosted with Senators Comerford and Hinds and Representative Carey a Zoom "briefing" for thirteen legislators early in May. This included most of our region’s delegation, including one member of the Joint Committee on Education. Two other Joint Committee members also attended. 19 superintendents provided overviews of the current status, the pressing challenges now, and those to be faced next year. Meetings with the Superintendents and other job-alike groups in our member districts continue to provide important shared support as the pandemic continues.

“Without these meetings, I don’t think I could do this. They are my lifeline.”

— Member District Superintendent

Articles of agreement and two new members

After a year-long process, our Board, School Committees, and DESE approve the revised articles of Agreement of CES in early May. We welcomed the Gateway Regional School District and the Worthington School District into full membership in CES, effective July 1, 2020.