



Massachusetts Department of  
**ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

*Bridges to Success:*

**State Policy Task Force  
on the  
Transition to Postsecondary Education  
for Adult Learners**

*Funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation*

**Adult and Community Learning Services**

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

*June 2009*

***Bridges to Success:***  
**State Policy Task Force on the**  
**Transition to Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners**  
  
**Report of the Task Force**

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## **Introduction**

With funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) convened *Bridges to Success*, an interagency collaboration designed to respond to state level policy barriers and challenges impeding the transition of adult learners to postsecondary education, and engage in an action planning process to address them. The major objective in FY 2009 was to convene a Task Force of state agency representatives whose charge was to identify those barriers and challenges and craft an action plan to support adult learners' successful transition to postsecondary education.

## **Background**

This collaboration is extremely timely for a number of reasons. ESE recently completed a strategic planning process that established preparing students for success in their next steps, in college and further training, at work, and in the community as a core strategic direction for the Commonwealth's adult basic education system. Similarly, the focus of the recently concluded ABE Strategic Planning Task Force on transition to college represents the culmination of a trend in both education and workforce development policy and programming that increasingly recognizes postsecondary education as essential to both supporting family financial security and maintaining a healthy economy. Finally, in the 2008 *Ready for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Success* report, Governor Deval Patrick stressed the importance of higher education in his calls for "unleashing innovation" and "creating a global, 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce" in Massachusetts. In fact, among the goals for the Massachusetts workforce system, improving ABE/ESOL services by convening an ABE/ESOL Subcommittee of the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board was a priority. In a report developed by the subcommittee and accepted by Governor Patrick and the state workforce board in September of 2008, improving linkages to postsecondary education, training, and employment was cited as a key recommendation. Increasing transition to college services in ways highlighted in the report was among the points articulated under the recommendation.

This year, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (MEOLWD) commissioned a series of reports from the Center for Labor Market Studies (CLMS) at Northeastern University on the labor supply and labor demand trends for each of the Commonwealth's sixteen workforce investment regions. While these reports reveal distinct differences among the regions with respect both to the specific industries and to the demographics of the workforce, a clear and striking mismatch is evident across the Commonwealth. The US and state economy increasingly demands postsecondary level skills, while our supply of workers with this level of skills is insufficient to meet the demand.<sup>1</sup> In separate studies conducted by CLMS and the Commonwealth Corporation, the highest and most persistent vacancy rates in Massachusetts are in industries and occupations that rely on a workforce with postsecondary education. However, it is also true that a substantial portion of the current workforce, especially within older cities, is past the age of a traditional college student, and a similarly considerable portion of the workforce has not participated in any postsecondary education. The health of the Commonwealth's economy depends on its ability to help residents acquire postsecondary level skills that are relevant to critical industries. Adult learners cannot

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<sup>1</sup> *Breaking Through: Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers*. Jobs for the Future and National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE). November, 2004.

afford to postpone employment until they have acquired these skills. Coordination of employment and education resources make it possible for adult learners to combine work and learning and to move along a continuum of increasingly higher level education, skills training, and employment experiences.

#### **A Note on Language: The Evolving Definition of Success**

In early efforts to implement strategies for postsecondary access for adult learners, success was defined as *enrollment* in a postsecondary education program. However, because such large percentages of students did not complete their postsecondary degree or certificate program, this became recognized as an insufficient goal. Over time, the definition of success has evolved based on the experience of learners and providers. For the purposes of this report, we will define “*postsecondary success*” to mean *enrolling in a postsecondary education program academically prepared for college-level work (i.e., needing no more than one remedial or developmental education course), and persisting through to the completion of a degree or certificate*. Similarly, we will sometimes use “*transition programs*” or “*transition strategies*” to mean services aimed at achieving this broader definition of success for adult learners.

### **Guiding Principles/Shared Assumptions**

Task Force members agreed on a set of shared principles and assumptions that would guide the work of the Task Force. These are:

- **The importance of postsecondary education and training**: In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, broader access to postsecondary education and training on the part of adult learners is essential both for these individuals to achieve a family-sustaining wage and for the Commonwealth to maintain a healthy economy.
- **Systemic barriers**: There are systemic barriers to postsecondary access and persistence experienced by adult learners, as well as related systemic barriers to program development and collaboration experienced by both ABE providers and postsecondary institutions.
- **The Commonwealth’s responsibility**: To serve adult learners effectively, it is the shared responsibility of the leadership of Massachusetts state agencies to address the barriers to postsecondary success for adult learners and support a seamless system of services that enables adult learners to succeed in postsecondary education.
- **Additional benefits**: Eliminating systemic barriers for adult learners will have the added potential value of promoting increased success for *all* students, and increasing the likelihood that children of the adult learners will also aspire to and succeed in postsecondary education.

- **The need for a proactive collaborative planning effort:** There needs to be a concerted and proactive effort to identify and promote the systemic reforms that can reduce barriers to postsecondary success for adult learners. The effort to achieve the systemic reforms must be rooted in an understanding of the barriers and a vision of the policy responses shared among key educational and workforce development stakeholders.

## **The Planning Process**

The *Bridges to Success* Task Force met monthly from February to June, 2009 and included representatives from the following Massachusetts agencies:

- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – Adult and Community Learning Services;
- Department of Higher Education;
- Department of Transitional Assistance;
- Community Colleges Executive Office;
- Commonwealth Corporation.

(Note: For one of the meetings, the group was joined by several ABE and ABE-Transition-to-Community-Colleges service practitioners who added the perspective of the adult education field to the discussions.)

The Task Force's planning process included a review of the current literature on postsecondary transitions for adult learners, both best practices in transition services and the related state policies that support increased postsecondary access. (See Appendix C for a list of such policies culled from the literature.) In addition, a series of interviews was conducted with Massachusetts' stakeholders and key informants from other states, including transition services providers, advocates, researchers, and specialists in this area; their feedback was incorporated into the Task Force's deliberations. (See Appendix B for a list of the individuals interviewed.) On the basis of this information, the Task Force identified the existing barriers that have constrained access to postsecondary education for adult learners in Massachusetts. In light of those challenges, the Task Force developed an action plan to mitigate or eliminate the barriers and expand access to postsecondary education. Finally, the Task Force revised a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that specifies the partners' continued participation. (The MOU is included with this report as Appendix A.) The work of the Task Force is presented in this report.

## **Description of the Problem: Barriers and Challenges**

Barriers related to accessing postsecondary education on the part of adult learners must be considered in two ways. First, are the challenges experienced by the learners themselves and that can be addressed in part through effective transition programming. There are also challenges to the creation and sustainability of such programs, and to the development of the collaborative relationships that support effective transition services. The action plan represents the Task Force's efforts to address the full range of these issues.

## **Barriers Experienced by Learners**

Among the barriers to postsecondary success experienced by learners, there are those they bring with them, i.e., those not directly related to the policies or practices of either the ABE system or the postsecondary institutions (although they may have ramifications for changes in those policies or practices). For example, adult learners must manage a wide range of work and family issues including child care, transportation, housing, and personal finances that can make accessing and persisting in postsecondary education a daunting task. Similarly, adult learners may experience a disproportionate degree of other issues such as lack of confidence, a sense of isolation, and a fear of failure that also play out as significant barriers.

### ***Lack of Information***

Given the extent of their experience with educational systems, adult learners may not fully understand the fundamental expectations of college, and may know too little about the educational requirements of specific occupations. Colleges are complex institutes, and students need information and support to navigate the various systems; for the reasons outlined below, adult learners may need even more support.

### ***Gaps in Academic Preparation***

Some adult learners who have earned their GED often are still not ready for college-level work, reflecting the gap between the academic content necessary to pass the GED and that needed to test out of developmental courses via the college placement exam, i.e., the Accuplacer. Many students that test into developmental education courses do not persist in postsecondary education, and “despite assistance offered through remediation, students enrolled in remediation are less likely to earn a degree or certificate.”<sup>2</sup> Since we now know that the GED does not guarantee success in postsecondary education, we are charged with the task of preparing students for the GED while simultaneously preparing them for college.

### ***Lack of College Readiness***

In addition to academic rigor, adult learners also may have yet to develop college readiness skills such as time management, study skills, managing homework, and doing research that makes success at the postsecondary level difficult without a comprehensive program of advising and other supports.

Just 30 percent of first-time undergraduates enrolling in remedial reading courses completed a certificate or degree within eight years of leaving high school, compared with 69 percent of those not needing any remediation. This has major implications for adult education, as most GED graduates (85 percent in one study) entering postsecondary education require further remediation.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Institutional Barriers***

Once adult learners begin to overcome these challenges, they must confront institutional realities that function as additional barriers. Because adults have family and work responsibilities that may conflict with educational persistence, flexible scheduling (such as evening and weekend

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<sup>2</sup> *The Condition of Education* 2004, Indicator 18, USDOE. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2004//section3/indicator18.asp>

<sup>3</sup> Strawn, Julie. *Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment*. 2007.

classes), individualized programs (such as distance learning), and/or accelerative pathways (such as dual enrollment) are often particularly important for this student population. Although there are numerous evening classes at many Massachusetts community college campuses, often it is difficult for students to find specific evening courses needed to meet particular degree requirements; this makes it difficult for working students to pursue some courses of study or to take advantage of the support services they may need.

### ***Financial Barriers***

Finally, there are financial issues that impact adult learners' ability to succeed in postsecondary education including an overall lack of adequate financial aid, and specific eligibility requirements for financial aid can make it difficult for considerable segments of the adult learner population to persist in college. (Note: The Task Force recognizes that there are a number of federal policy barriers that are beyond the scope of the Task Force and this report.)

## **Barriers to Program Development and Collaboration**

Beyond the above-described barriers to postsecondary success experienced by adult learners, there are additional challenges experienced by ABE providers, community colleges, and the workforce development system regarding the collaborative development of effective transition strategies.

Just as individual programs have different programmatic approaches, the fifteen Massachusetts community colleges have different policies and practices related to services and student support. The barriers cited here do not necessarily relate to all the programs or to all the community colleges, nor are they intended to describe across-the-board circumstances within any of the individual institutions. But the research conducted for this process surfaced a number of issues that must be addressed as part of a comprehensive effort to expand postsecondary success for adult learners.

### ***Adult Basic Education***

The ABE system has done a good job of helping educationally disadvantaged and limited English proficient adults improve their English language skills, earn GEDs, and integrate into American society. Further, the system has a good track record for helping those students who wish to do so to transition into college or further training. The challenge is that a very small proportion of ABE students actually set their sights on further education or training. While most adult education providers understand that today's jobs increasingly require some postsecondary education or training, many learners enter the adult education system assuming that the GED will lead to a good paying job. To help adults make informed choices, goals, and plans for their future, the ABE system must challenge this assumption, provide accurate information, and help learners connect the skills they seek to develop with how they will apply those skills in their lives.

ABE programs need to help students understand the local job market, the skills needed for success in today's economy, and how to develop those skills -- both within the ABE system and beyond it. The reports from the Center for Labor Market Studies and Commonwealth

Corporation, mentioned in the introduction, are excellent sources -- ABE practitioners need to digest this information and share it with their students. Programs and practitioners must communicate the importance of planning for “next steps” from the time a student enrolls and continuously reinforce it throughout her/his time in the programs. ABE curricula need to be contextualized and more rigorous, classes need to be more intensive, and counseling services need to be more specific and ongoing. These changes are happening; however, efforts need to be intensified to ensure postsecondary success for all students.

### ***Community College***

The community colleges have made significant progress in effectively meeting the expressed needs of their increasingly diverse student populations, including older working students, single parents, and immigrants. The colleges recognize that their adult students want and need a variety of alternative postsecondary pathways, including shorter-term certificate programs, stop-out strategies, and transfer options, and they have developed programs in response. The colleges must continue to strive to commit adequate resources to alternative pathways, and encourage the development of program models and instructional strategies that effectively accommodate the lives and learning styles of diverse populations. In addition, the colleges need to expand their offerings of interim and “stackable” outcomes for students (i.e., benchmark credentials that are meaningful as stand alone certificates but that also advance toward a degree) to most effectively meet the needs of their learners.

### ***Collaboration***

Given the challenges facing the ABE system and the community colleges, it is equally important that there be a greater degree of communication, collaboration, and coordination between the two systems. The ABE system and the community colleges must communicate to create a shared understanding of the distinctions, gaps, and points of overlap between college transition services and developmental education. Moreover, they need to better understand each other’s funding and accreditation requirements, internal structure and staffing, academic policies, and data systems in order to identify opportunities for collaboration and maximize the impact of existing resources to support postsecondary success for students.

### ***Sharing Outcome Data***

Because the ABE, community college, and the workforce development systems measure different outcomes to define success, the coordinated use of data to effectively assess transition outcomes is especially challenging. These three systems represent a continuum of services with a shared ultimate goal of career development and economic wellbeing for individuals and families. The uniqueness of the interim outcomes for each of these systems is appropriate, but it is also necessary to establish outcomes that are appropriate and useful to determine readiness to succeed at the next point in the continuum. Currently, learners are negotiating these transitions on their own; agency staff use different databases and processes for tracking and documenting learner gains that make it difficult to determine the progress of an individual navigating his or her way through these systems. Further, while it is possible to match student data in the adult education (SMARTT) database with that in the workforce development (MOSES) system, no system yet exists to match these with community college data. While we are all moving toward a more common definition of success (i.e., a family-sustaining wage), there still needs to be a greater

degree of coordination and collaboration among state agencies serving the adult education population.

### ***Funding***

A significant barrier to maximizing postsecondary success for adult learners is the clear need for greater coordination across funding streams. The substantial investments made by the various public and private entities in transition strategies are not aligned, and few cohesive strategies exist to draw lessons that can be applied across funding streams.

Without an infusion of new resources, increased coordination and alignment of existing funds alone will not be sufficient to develop the level of effective transition services needed. Since new resources are unlikely in the current economic climate, the various providers and systems must resolve to undertake initiatives that don't require new resources. Any infusion of funding that does occur should be prioritized for professional development, data matching, and curriculum development to bridge the identified content gaps.

These challenges to collaboration and coordination across systems need to be addressed to maximize the impact of these systems' aggregate resources to effectively support adult learners as they transition to postsecondary education. The ABE system, the community colleges, and the workforce development system must identify the low-literacy, low-skilled populations they share and develop coordinated strategies for meeting their short- and long-term goals. In addition, a unified coordinated approach is needed across systems to raise awareness among students, staff, and the public of the need for and existence of transition to college services.

## **Existing Transition Programs and Resources**

There are several categories of existing programs and resources that support postsecondary access and success for adult learners in Massachusetts. These are:

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, through its Adult and Community Learning Services unit, funds twelve community colleges to implement postsecondary transition programs in collaboration with one or more nearby community adult literacy centers (i.e., ABE providers). While each program is uniquely tailored to the needs of its students, all programs offer both a *College for Success* class and an introductory computer class, all are implemented in some sort of cohort model, and they can serve an individual learner for up to three semesters. (See Appendix D for a list of ESE-funded programs.)
- Transition programs funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. NMEF funds both direct services (i.e., counseling, classes, etc.) and curriculum development projects related to postsecondary transitions.
- Workforce development initiatives, funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund or other public and private sources that include a postsecondary component.

- Department of Transitional Assistance-funded transition programs, currently at six community colleges, focused on transitioning TANF recipients to work. These programs provide services for learners including training, internships, job search, coaching/case management, and enrollment in classes at the college while they are working.
- Campus-based and community-based programs and resources, available to both traditional high school graduates as well as adult learners, include programs such as The Education Resources Institute (TERI) College Planning Center (formerly known as the Higher Education Information Center), campus-based federally funded TRIO programs such as Talent Search and Educational Opportunities centers (EOC), and a variety of federally funded campus remediation and workforce development initiatives.

Additional work is required to complete a comprehensive asset map of transition programs and resources. Such an asset map would have information about all programs targeting adult learners for services that would help them to matriculate into certificate or degree programs and succeed. “Adult learners” includes individuals either in possession of or working toward a “non-traditional” high school credential, and may include GED graduates, returning students, and others needing support to make the successful transition to college level work toward a postsecondary certificate or degree. These learners’ point of entry into transition services may be through the adult education, community college, and/or workforce development systems.

Because postsecondary education is increasingly recognized as critical to economic success for individuals and families and is therefore getting increasing attention from funders and policy makers, new federal resources may be coming to Massachusetts in this area. For example, the Trade Adjustment Act will provide resources for people who have lost their jobs through foreign competition, and the US Department of Labor will have funds for preparing under-employed and low-skilled individuals for jobs in high demand and emerging industry sectors. Both initiatives will have major postsecondary components. Maintaining an updated asset map will require coordination among the state agencies pursuing these resources.

## **Policy Objectives**

The Task Force developed specific policy objectives based on a review of the relevant literature; the interviews conducted with Massachusetts’ stakeholders and key informants from other states, and discussions within the Task Force. These objectives are intended to address the identified barriers and challenges summarized in this report and to serve as the framework for future policy development. The policy objectives, presented below, have been grouped into three categories:

- State-level ABE goals and program standards;
- Systems coordination;
- Funding for transition services.

Achieving these objectives will result in fully integrating postsecondary transition services into ABE programs, reaching across systems to maximize the impact of the full range of existing resources, and providing adequate funding for these services within the relevant systems.

## **State Level ABE Goals & Program Standards**

- 1) **Information and messages about the importance of postsecondary education**: Embed information, data, and messages about the importance of postsecondary education and training at every level of ABE/ESOL programming so that it supports a culture of expectation and aspiration regarding postsecondary education among both learners and program staff.
- 2) **Instructional and counseling services related to next steps**: Ensure that ABE/ESOL programs provide instructional and counseling services related to next steps (i.e., transitions to post-secondary education, training, and/or employment), and that community adult learning center services address academic preparedness for postsecondary, employability skills, and college success/readiness skills.
- 3) **Standards and measures for transition programs**: Develop and implement program standards (i.e., components and characteristics) and accountability measures (i.e., outcomes) for transition programs, potentially to address: systems for tracking participant outcomes, curriculum, program structure and staffing, and staff development.
- 4) **Transitions support through community planning**: Continue and expand support of ABE community planning partnerships to engage community colleges, workforce development providers, and business/labor representatives, and to pursue collaborative agreements to provide additional postsecondary transition and employment resources for adult learners.

## **Systems Coordination**

- 5) **Interagency advisory board**: Establish and convene an interagency advisory board to guide the interagency collaboration regarding the support, operation, and governing policies of college transitions programs and strategies for adult learners. The advisory board will also take responsibility for advocacy regarding the policy objectives in this report. The Massachusetts state level entities to be represented on this advisory board include, but are not limited to:
  - Executive Office of Education
    - \* Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – Adult and Community Learning Services
    - \* Department of Higher Education
    - \* Community Colleges Executive Office
  - Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
    - \* Commonwealth Corporation
  - Executive Office of Health and Human Services

\* Department of Transitional Assistance

- 6) **Increase awareness of adult education and community college curriculum content:** Create and implement strategies for increasing understanding among learners, ABE program staff, and community college faculty about the academic content (and in particular the overlaps and gaps) required to complete the GED and to be prepared for college level work in non-developmental courses. Identify and explore opportunities to refine and expand the ABE and community college curriculum to minimize or eliminate these content gaps.

### **Funding for Transition Services**

- 7) **Adequate funding for transition services:** Provide adequate state and federal funding for transition programs and for the transition-related components of ABE programs (including the related curriculum development and staff training).
- 8) **Funding for expanded transition programming:** Provide funding for expanded transition programming, specifically:
- Ensure that transition programs for adult learners are in place statewide;
  - Offer transition programming in community-based and workplace sites, in addition to community college sites; and,
  - Support data matching among the ABE, community college, and workforce development systems for the purpose of effectively tracking learner outcomes over time and across systems, measure progress, and evaluate effectiveness.

## Action Plan

The following chart presents specific activities related to the implementation of the policy objectives in the previous section of this report over the coming five years. (In the chart, “leadership responsibility” is intended to indicate the group that will lead efforts related to the specified activities. Most of the activities in the action plan will, in practice, involve a high level of collaboration among the key stakeholders.) In addition, for each of the policy objectives, the chart includes a summary of the potential barriers to implementation and the resources and partners necessary to support implementation.

<b>Policy Objective</b>	<b>Leadership Responsibility</b>	<b>Year 1 (FY2010)</b>	<b>Years 2 &amp; 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)</b>	<b>Years 4 &amp; 5 (FY2013—FY2014)</b>
<b>State Level ABE Goals &amp; Program Standards</b>				
<b>1) Information and messages about the importance of postsecondary education</b>	Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) & Mass. Community College Executive Office (MCCEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, assemble, and disseminate the relevant information and data</li> <li>• Present and reinforce this message at the ABE directors meeting</li> <li>• Develop and provide related professional development for the field</li> <li>• Community Adult Learning Centers and community colleges collaborate on “college for a day” and other awareness activities for adult learners</li> <li>• Incorporate information learned into policies in FY 2010 and ongoing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine and expand professional development</li> <li>• Refine and expand awareness activities for adult learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess and refine</li> </ul>
<b><u>Potential Barriers</u></b> Lack of access to all relevant data in a consistent format		<b><u>Resources and partners</u></b> Community colleges ABE providers Workforce development providers Employers Marketing expertise		<b><u>Benchmarks</u></b> Informational materials Awareness activities Professional development materials and activities Regular, current data reports

Policy Objective	Leadership Responsibility	Year 1 (FY2010)	Years 2 & 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)	Years 4 & 5 (FY2013—FY2014)
<b>2) Instructional and counseling services related to next steps</b>	ACLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and/or develop service models and contextualized curriculum</li> <li>• Develop and provide related professional development for the field</li> <li>• Incorporate expanded expectations into policies FY 2010 and ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue and expand development of and disseminate service models and curriculum</li> <li>• Refine and expand professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement new models and performance standards</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Barriers</b> Lack of resources to develop and implement new curricula		<b>Resources and partners</b> ABE providers MCCEO Community colleges Workforce development providers Employers WIBs Comm Corp	<b>Benchmarks</b> Professional development materials and activities Policy framework includes expanded expectations for instructional services and counseling to support students' next steps.	
<b>3) Standards and measures for transition programs</b>	ACLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage transition program coordinators in discussions of standards and measures</li> <li>• Identify full range of short- and long-term learner goals</li> <li>• Evaluate current programs (implemented under the auspices of ESE, Comm Corp, and DTA) and draw lessons about best practice</li> <li>• Identify and/or develop best practice transition models</li> <li>• Finalize standards and measures, and incorporate into future Transitions RFPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue RFP for ABE-to-Community College Transition programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement new models and performance standards</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Barriers</b> Lack of resources for transition programs		<b>Resources and partners</b> Existing transitions program coordinators MCCEO Community colleges Workforce development providers Employers WIBs Comm Corp	<b>Benchmarks</b> Best practice documentation New ABE-to-Community College Transition RFP, including standards and measures	

Policy Objective	Leadership Responsibility	Year 1 (FY2010)	Years 2 & 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)	Years 4 & 5 (FY2013—FY2014)
<b>4) Transitions support through community planning</b>	ACLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and disseminate best practices regarding transitions in the context of community planning</li> <li>• Develop and provide professional development for community planning partnerships regarding partner engagement and resource development to support transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and disseminate vehicles and processes for the engagement of employers in developing contextualized ABE/ESOL curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess and refine</li> </ul>
<u><b>Potential Barriers</b></u> Uneven engagement in the partnerships by the full range of local partners		<u><b>Resources and partners</b></u> ABE providers MCCEO Community colleges Workforce development providers Employers WIBs Comm Corp		<u><b>Benchmarks</b></u> Professional development materials and activities Engagement of partners, especially employers

Policy Objective	Leadership Responsibility	Year 1 (FY2010)	Years 2 & 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)	Years 4 & 5 (FY2013—FY2014)
<b>Systems Coordination</b>				
<b>5) Interagency advisory board</b>	Executive Office of Education, ACLS, and the Bridges to Success Implementation Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct outreach for representatives from statewide entities and other participants</li> <li>• Gather and disseminate complete and current data about postsecondary access for adult learners</li> <li>• Continue working toward a data-matching system</li> <li>• Finalize working agenda and issues to address</li> <li>• Develop and disseminate messages about the importance of postsecondary education and training</li> <li>• Begin developing processes for coordinating investments and outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate and resolve identified issues</li> <li>• Assess effectiveness and refine structures and processes</li> <li>• Continue working toward an updated data-matching system (including ongoing maintenance of the system)</li> <li>• Continue work on processes for coordinating investments and outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue efforts, assess and refine</li> </ul>
<u><b>Potential Barriers</b></u> Multiple priorities competing for the time and attention of statewide partners Lack of access to all relevant data in a consistent format; challenge of data matching		<u><b>Resources and partners</b></u> Exec. Office of Education Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development Exec. Office of Health & Human Service Dept. of Elem. & Secondary Ed. -- ACLS Department of Higher Education Department of Transitional Assistance Community Colleges Executive Office Commonwealth Corporation NELRC Nat'l Governor's Assn State Sectors Strategies Data matching expertise	<u><b>Benchmarks</b></u> Data matching methodology and updating procedures Convened and active Advisory Board	

<b>Policy Objective</b>	<b>Leadership Responsibility</b>	<b>Year 1 (FY2010)</b>	<b>Years 2 &amp; 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)</b>	<b>Years 4 &amp; 5 (FY2013—FY2014)</b>
<b>6) Increase awareness of adult education and community college curriculum content</b>	ACLS and Bridges to Success Implementation Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify financial and human resources to conduct a crosswalk of the skill sets covered in the assessments</li> <li>Conduct crosswalk, and disseminate the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement messages and strategies regarding curricula and assessments</li> <li>Provide professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess and refine messages and strategies</li> <li>Explore opportunities to revise ABE curriculum frameworks and assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Barriers</b> Lack of resources to conduct the curriculum crosswalk Faculty time and effort for curriculum revisions		<b>Resources and partners</b> ABE providers MCCEO Community colleges Curriculum and assessment expertise		<b>Benchmarks</b> Completed curriculum crosswalk Awareness materials and activities Curriculum revisions that reduce content gaps
<b>Funding for Transition Services</b>				
<b>7) Adequate funding for transition services</b>	Interagency Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update asset map of relevant funding streams and current programs</li> <li>Identify and implement strategies for maximizing the impact of existing funding</li> <li>Identify sources and strategies for securing additional funding for transition services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement funding strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess and refine</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Barriers</b> Diverse and continuously evolving transition programs and resources Lack of new resources for transitions		<b>Resources and partners</b> ABE providers MCCEO Community colleges Workforce development providers Comm Corp Public and private funders of transitions services and/or workforce development		<b>Benchmarks</b> Updated asset map (programs and funding) Process for coordinating programs and investments to maximize impact of existing resources New resources for transition programming
<b>8) Funding for expanded transition programming</b>	Interagency Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update asset map of current programs and service gaps</li> <li>Identify sources and strategies for securing additional funding for transition services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement funding strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess and refine</li> </ul>

<b>Policy Objective</b>	<b>Leadership Responsibility</b>	<b>Year 1 (FY2010)</b>	<b>Years 2 &amp; 3 (FY2011 – FY2012)</b>	<b>Years 4 &amp; 5 (FY2013—FY2014)</b>
<u><b>Potential Barriers</b></u> Diverse and continuously evolving transition programs and resources Lack of new resources for transitions		<u><b>Resources and partners</b></u> ABE providers MCCEO Community colleges Workforce development providers Comm Corp Public and private funders of postsecondary transitions services and/or workforce development	<u><b>Benchmarks</b></u> Updated asset map (programs and funding) Process for coordinating programs and investments to maximize impact of existing resources New resources for transition programming	



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester  
Commissioner

## *Adult and Community Learning Services*

### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The *Bridges to Success* Task Force was convened in early 2009 with the shared belief that broader access to postsecondary education and training on the part of adult learners in Massachusetts is essential both for these individuals to achieve a family-sustaining wage and for the Commonwealth to maintain a robust and healthy economy; and the related belief that there must be a concerted, proactive, and collaborative effort to identify and promote the systemic reforms that can reduce the barriers to postsecondary access and success for adult learners.

This Memorandum of Understanding signifies that the representatives of the Massachusetts' state agencies listed below agree to support a sustained and ongoing effort to implement the policy objectives and action plan developed by the *Bridges to Success* Task Force in the course of its planning process that culminated in June 2009. This action plan (included in the final report) aims to expand access to and insure success in postsecondary education for adult learners, reaching across systems to maximize the impact of the full range of existing resources, and providing adequate funding for these services within the relevant systems. The long-term impact of these efforts will be coordinated policy development, sustained interagency collaboration, and the implementation of strategies that enable adult learners to successfully transition to postsecondary education within the Massachusetts community college system, prepared to do college level work, and with access to services and resources that support their completion of a degree or certificate.

The parties to this agreement include the following:

- Adult and Community Learning Services Unit at the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- MA Department of Higher Education
- MA Community Colleges Executive Office
- Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
- Commonwealth Corporation

Representatives of the above agencies commit to the following activities:

- To work toward and support implementation of the Task Force 5-year action plan in the areas of state level ABE goals and program standards, systems coordination, and funding for transitions;
- To participate in the interagency Advisory Board called for in the Task Force report, and to assign a staff person to attend Advisory Board meetings who can act with authority on behalf of the organization;
- To encourage all staff within their respective organizations to collaborate to the extent possible in efforts to provide information about their current policies and practices regarding services to adult learners that support their successful transition to postsecondary education, to participate in related committees or workgroups, and to support the implement the Task Force action plan.

We, the undersigned, agree to the terms and conditions in this document:

We, the undersigned, agree to the terms and conditions in this document and agree to pursue the goals and objectives of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant application.

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Anne Serino, Administrator Date  
 Adult and Community Learning Services  
 MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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David McCauley, Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development Date  
 MA Department of Higher Education

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Janice C. Motta, Executive Director Date  
 MA Community Colleges Executive Office

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Rebekah Lashman, Sr. Vice President Date  
 Commonwealth Corporation

## **Key Informants Interviewed**

### **Out-of-State**

Adrienne Glandon, Ohio State University  
Jody Angelone, Ohio State University  
Kristin Ockert, ABE Professional Development Administrator, Washington State  
Tina Bloomer, Policy Associate, Workforce Education, Washington State  
Shauna King-Simms, Kentucky Community and Technical College System  
Mike Leach, Public Policy Director, Southern Good Faith Fund, Arkansas  
Elaine Baker, Director of Workforce Initiatives, Community College of Denver  
Joe Magyar, Gateway Community College, New Haven CT  
Katrina Jones, Gateway Community College, New Haven CT  
Amy Dalsimer, GED Bridge Programs, Laguardia Community College (NYC)

### **Massachusetts**

Jane Souza, CONNECT Consortium  
Mary Williams, EdLink Consortium  
Pam Boisvert, Colleges of Worcester Consortium  
Beth Hogan, North Shore Community Action Programs  
Elia Dreyfus, Holyoke Community College  
David Kelley, Statewide Developmental Education Committee  
Jane Shea, Quinsigamond Community College  
Sylvia Beville, Metro South/West Regional Employment Board  
Mary Sarris, North Shore Workforce Investment Board  
Dan Singleton, Boston Office of Jobs and Community Services  
Kirsten Daigneault, Quinsigamond Community College  
Ruth Clark, Middlesex Community College  
Joseph Hennessey, Berkshire Community College

### **Researchers**

Ann Coles, Pathways to College Network  
Julie Strawn, Center for Law and Social Policy

## **Summary of State Policy Recommendations in the Research**

Below are policy recommendations identified in current research documents.

### ***Breaking Through: Better Together: Realigning Pre-College Skills Development Programs to Achieve Greater Academic Success for Adult Learners, November 2008***

- 1) Incorporate Pre-College Skills Development into State Policy Goals.
  - Link the need for aligning adult education and community colleges at the state level to the necessity of increasing the skills of lower-skilled adults to accomplish the state's high priority economic development goals.
- 2) Coordinate Administration of Pre-College Skills Development Programs to Promote Alignment.
  - Invest authority for and coordination of alignment in a high-level state entity.
  - Allow dual enrollment for adult education and community college programs.
  - Allow flexibility in local decision making on key policy issues.
- 3) Improve Performance Measurement and Data Tracking to Emphasize Results.
  - Develop specific performance measures to promote alignment and transitions, with an emphasis on program quality.
  - Enhance tracking systems to collect data about student progress, transitions, and outcomes.
- 4) Strengthen the Capacity of Pre-college Programs to Implement an Aligned Approach.
  - Build out from areas of greatest capacity.
  - Develop a pedagogical "community of practice" that includes adult education and development.

### ***Breaking Through: Overcoming Obstacles, Optimizing Opportunities: State Policies to Increase Postsecondary Educational Attainment for Low-Skilled Adults, March 2008, Jobs for the Future, Amy-Ellen Duke and Julie Strawn***

- 5) Create a shared vision of the state's economic future among key stakeholders in education, workforce development, and economic development – a vision that includes the reasons why increasing the number of adults with postsecondary credentials is crucial.
- 6) Set measurable goals for achieving the vision, including increasing postsecondary access for lower skilled adults, and ensure that funding flows in ways that support progress toward those goals.

- 7) Track individual outcomes across workforce education services and into the labor market, in order to identify trouble spots and document successful approaches with an especially close look at outcomes for lower-skilled adults.
- 8) Help community colleges connect in a broader, more strategic way with local employers, in order to link their needs to for-credit college offerings and to help lower-skilled adults get good jobs in demand in the local labor market.
- 9) Overhaul the content and delivery of adult education, English as a Second Language, and college remediation, in order to accelerate progress and connect these services closely to occupational pathways in the colleges.
- 10) Create and expand more flexible and comprehensive financial aid strategies and more personalized career and academic counseling and support, in order to support postsecondary access and success for lower-income adults.

***Strengthening State Adult Education Policies for Low-Skilled Workers – The Working Poor Families Project, Amy-Ellen Duke and Evelyn Ganzglass, Summer, 2007***

- 11) Promote transitions to postsecondary education and the attainment of marketable, for-credit postsecondary credentials.
- 12) Align adult education programs with credit-bearing postsecondary education and training entrance requirements to accelerate learning and promote attainment of postsecondary credentials.
- 13) Increase intensity of adult education and to better help students achieve their goals.
- 14) Support student success by encouraging implementation of promising models and requiring that contracts include wrap-around support services and other program design features that will increase persistence and completion.
- 15) Raise the quality of instruction.
- 16) Increase funding to serve more students, especially in ESOL programs.
- 17) Increase access to basic skills and literacy instruction in the workplace.
- 18) Continuously improve the program through the use of data and benchmarks.

***Fits and Starts: The Difficult Path for Working Single Parents, Crittenton Women's Union, The Center for Social Policy at UMass Boston, Ruth Liberman, Rebecca Loya, Randy Albelda, Elisabeth Babcock, November, 2008***

*Immediate Recommendations: Navigating the Paths to Self-Sufficiency*

- 19) Train case managers to provide in-depth financial and educational counseling.
- 20) Introduce work support “calculators” to help families anticipate and plan for benefit loss.

*Near Term Recommendations: Making the Leap*

- 21) Improve financial aid for education to provide comprehensive coverage for working parents by a) offering two years of community college at no cost to low income workers, b) making permanent and raising the income eligibility cap for the Education Rewards Grant Program, c) encouraging and enabling more recipients of TAFDC to pursue higher education and training.
- 22) Increase availability of free or low-cost skills development programs by making the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund permanent.
- 23) Expand child care and housing supports for students by a) phasing out child care vouchers more gradually as workers progress from earning \$11 to \$16 per hour, expanding availability of child care subsidies, increasing the number of covered hours to include time spent on homework, studying for exams, and commuting; b) increasing the number of housing vouchers, increasing eligibility for vouchers, c) creating subsidized campus-based child care for students at all MA community colleges, d) removing all barriers to receiving child care and housing vouchers by implementing new consistent policies.

*Long-term Strategy: Building a Bridge*

- 24) Raise eligibility criteria for Mass universal health care.
- 25) Boost the state Earned Income Tax Credit from 15% to 30% of the federal credit and market this broadly.
- 26) Implement complementary eligibility requirements and common definitions across state systems and programs.
- 27) Create a user friendly website to streamline application processes and give information.
- 28) Simplify application and recertification processes and lengthen periods.

***Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment, National Commission on Adult Literacy, Julie Strawn, September, 2007***

- 29) Designate an entity in the state to lead and guide cross-agency goal-setting and performance measurement related to lower-skilled adults earning marketable credentials.
- 30) Keep the over arching focus of cross-agency goal-setting efforts on the bottom line goal of lower-skilled adults earning credentials that lead to family-supporting jobs.

- 31) Put in place data-sharing agreements between the relevant adult education, training, and postsecondary agencies to allow tracking of individual outcomes for lower-skilled adults over time, across workforce programs, and into the labor market.
- 32) Do wider tracking and set broader goals for adult education transitions into postsecondary education than those required for federal funding.
- 33) Set performance goals for postsecondary education that include transitions from college remediation into for-credit courses.
- 34) Pilot integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training approaches aimed at helping various lower skilled populations move into in-demand occupations that offer family-supporting wages.
- 35) Put in place statewide mechanisms that bring together employers and adult and postsecondary education and training providers at the regional level to address critical local workforce needs, and ensure that lower-skilled adults are included.
- 36) Anticipate state policy and funding issues important for taking integrated approaches to scale and sustaining them by using local pilots to identify needed state policy and funding formula changes.
- 37) Include college remediation services as a focus of state policy change to create integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training options.
- 38) Use state grant funds for up-front costs related to program start-up, such as curricular redesign.
- 39) And contextualization of remediation; determine early the business model for funding ongoing operational costs of integrated services.
- 40) Explore the possible use of more creative and flexible policies on using ABE funds beyond required federal match.
- 41) Align state-funded training programs outside adult and postsecondary education.
- 42) Track outcomes of pilots and compare costs/benefits to those of existing policies in order to scale up what works.
- 43) Make state student aid available to less than half time students if they are enrolled in certificate or degree programs.
- 44) Allow state student aid to be used for remedial education and for at least some non-credit occupational programs that are articulated to certificates and degrees.
- 45) Allow state student aid to be combined with Pell grants, up to the total cost of attendance.

- 46) Make state student aid available to students without a high school diploma or GED.
- 47) Use state funds to encourage promising models that support adult and postsecondary education success by lower-skilled adults, track outcomes, and scale up what works.
- 48) Allow occupationally focused adult and postsecondary education and training to meet work requirements for TANF recipients.

## Transition Programs Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

<b>Funded Community College</b>	<b>Name of Transitions Program &amp; Location</b>	<b>Community Adult Learning Center Partner</b>
<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>Project Link, Pittsfield</i>	Pittsfield Adult Learning Center Berkshire County House of Corrections
<i>Bristol</i>	<i>Step Up to College, Fall River</i>	Bristol Community College/Fall River ABE
<i>Bunker Hill</i>	<i>Transition to College, Charlestown</i>	Cambridge Community Learning Center Bunker Hill Community College
<i>Cape Cod</i>	<i>Program for Adult College Transition, W. Barnstable</i>	Plymouth Public Library Cape Cod Community College/ ACCESS
<i>Greenfield</i>	<i>Next Step Up, Greenfield</i>	The Literacy Project Center for New Americans
<i>Massasoit</i>	<i>ABE Transition to Community College, Brockton</i>	Brockton Public Schools Training Resources of America/Brockton
<i>Middlesex</i>	<i>Links, Bedford</i>	Lowell Community Adult Learning Center Middlesex Community College
<i>Mt. Wachusett</i>	<i>ABE Transition to Community College, Gardner</i>	Clinton Public Schools Mt. Wachusett Community College Learning Center
<i>North Shore</i>	<i>Project Enable, Lynn</i>	Operation Bootstrap North Shore Community College Adult Learning Center
<i>Northern Essex</i>	<i>Transition to Community College, Haverhill</i>	Community Action Inc. Northern Essex Community College Amesbury Community Adult Learning Center
<i>Quinsigamond</i>	<i>Future Focus, Worcester</i>	Worcester Public Schools Quinsigamond Community College
<i>Springfield Tech</i>	<i>ABE Transition Program, Step Up to College, Springfield</i>	Valley Opportunity Council Massachusetts Career Development Institute