



**MASSACHUSETTS STATEWIDE PROPOSAL FOR THE
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION INITIATIVE (HSGI)
PROGRAM**

SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Massachusetts (MA) High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) project led by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to embrace the local-control elements of the education system in Massachusetts, while also implementing state-level support that adds considerable value to the local activities to substantially increase the number of students who earn a high school diploma. Based on our collective experience, this will be best accomplished through a range of activities that promote mutual sharing of needs and promising practices at and across the state and local levels.

The HSGI grant will engage targeted high schools (provided in Appendix A) in the process of conducting a careful analysis of who their at-risk students are and implementing and strengthening strategic dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery approaches. Massachusetts will collaborate with schools to assist them in implementing the highest quality interventions through technical assistance, training, and the exchange of promising practices.

Through the recent work of the *Massachusetts Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission*, Massachusetts now has the overall goal of reducing the statewide dropout rate to 1.7 percent by the 2013-14 school year. Through the HSGI grant project the ESE will implement four key activities, which combine local and state-level actions to reach this bold goal.

Key Activity 1 Creation of a State High School Graduation Coalition. Create of an inter-agency, cross-sector State High School Graduation Coalition to facilitate the statewide sharing of promising programs and practices, to engage in a public information campaign on dropout reduction, and to inform and support related state initiatives.

Key Activity 2 Expansion of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group. Considerably expand of the Work Group to increase the number of participating schools and districts and to broaden the types and frequency of opportunities for networking and sharing promising approaches among the 133 members of the HSGI School Cohort.

Key Activity 3 Implementation of Research-Based Practices in the HSGI School Cohort. Implement a select menu of research and evidenced-based practices and strategies in target schools through a competitive grant process, technical assistance, state guidance and learning exchanges with support from a new partnership with a state third-party intermediary organization.

Key Activity 4 Establishment of Three New Gateway to College Sites. Create a new partnership with the Gateway to College National Network to establish the Massachusetts Gateway to College program – an early college model to support at-risk students – at three new sites through targeted funding and technical assistance.

The project will establish a HSGI Leadership Council that will support the activities and connect the project services with new and ongoing efforts across the state. The following organizations will be included on the Massachusetts HSGI Leadership Council (letters provided in Appendix A): MA Executive Office of Education, MA Department of Higher Education, MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services, MA Secondary School Administrators Association,

America's Promise Alliance, United Way of Central MA, MA Service Alliance, Boston Private Industry Council, MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development, MA Department of Public Health, MA Department of Youth Services, Commonwealth Corporation, MA Business Alliance for Education, Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, MA Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, and MA School Counselor's Association.

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NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Introduction to the Massachusetts Landscape

The 8,500 to 10,000 students who drop out of Massachusetts public high schools each year reflect chronic educational underperformance, concentrated in particular schools and population groups. Poor educational outcomes are a looming disaster for the lives of the affected students and a danger for the Massachusetts economy. Supporting these students to achieve is the unfinished business of Massachusetts education reform, and the great moral challenge facing this generation of education leaders and policy makers. From state government to individual teachers to students and their families, there is an understanding among Massachusetts education stakeholders that doing well is not good enough.

Massachusetts data – including performance on state standards-based tests, graduation rates, college attendance rates, dropout rates, and grade retention rates – show that students who are traditionally underrepresented make up the largest proportion of students challenged by academic underperformance: low-income students, English language learners; Black and Latino students, and students with special educational needs. Massachusetts has led the nation and is seen as a pioneer in public education. We have worked tirelessly to build a system of high expectations, rigorous standards and curricula, challenging assessments, and accountability that allows our teachers to shine and our students to compete with their peers around the world. Our administration, legislature, educators, community leaders, and a wide-reaching set of stakeholders have committed to doing whatever it takes to provide every student in the Commonwealth with the tools, supports, technology, and innovative approaches necessary to ensure that each graduate is prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life in the 21st century.

However, we understand that we still need to make large strides toward lowering our dropout rate and increasing our graduation rate, particularly in communities and student groups that are traditionally underserved. There is still an uneven level of academic and social success for many Massachusetts high school students.

For its size, Massachusetts is a very diverse state, both racially and economically, with a landscape that reflects dense urban centers, former mill centers known as Gateway cities (Muro & Schneider, 2007) with large immigrant populations and a rapidly shrinking manufacturing base, large suburban swathes, and significant rural areas with no urban core. Immigrant Latino and Asian populations continue to grow at rates much higher than the rest of the population in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts also has a long history dating to the 17th century of local control of education. As a result, successful state education reform requires substantial and ongoing efforts including strong investment from our state's nearly 400 local education agencies (LEAs) that oversee approximately 370 high schools of various structures and sizes. This organizational framework works well when there is a combination of local innovation combined with effective state supports and leadership. This collaboration of state supports and leadership along with the local

implementation of innovative, research-based strategies is the guiding theory of action for the activities described in this High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) proposal.

Massachusetts Data Overview: Annual Dropout and Cohort Graduation Rates

Massachusetts dropout data calculated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) show that the annual statewide dropout rate has persistently remained between 3.1 percent and 3.8 percent from the 1992–93 to the 2007–08 school years. This represents an average of approximately 10,000 students dropping out of Massachusetts public high schools each year. In the 2008–09 school year (the most recent year of data available) the annual statewide dropout rate dipped below 3.0 percent for the first time in at least 18 years to a rate of 2.9 percent, representing 8,585 students who dropped out statewide (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010)¹.

Massachusetts began calculating cohort high school graduation rates beginning with the 2006 cohort. The statewide four-year cohort graduation rate has shown modest increases, from 79.9 percent for the 2006 cohort graduation rate to 81.5 percent for the 2009 cohort rate². Despite some slight decreases in the statewide annual dropout rate and increases in the statewide cohort graduation rate, Massachusetts data still show large gaps between subgroups, which illustrate the persistent achievement and performance gaps within the state. In addition, some districts and schools have long struggled with higher dropout rates and lower graduation rates overall than other districts and schools. Examples of dropout and graduation rate disparities include:

- Hispanic and African American males have annual dropout rates that are more than double the state average rate of 2.9 % (8.5% and 6.6%, respectively).
- Among dropouts statewide, 58% come from 24 urban districts, but these districts account for only 28% of the Commonwealth’s student population.
- Among some groups, four-year cohort graduation rates are *over 10 percentage points lower than the state average rate of 81.5%*: Limited English Proficient (57.5%), Special Education (64.9%), low-income (66.9%), African American (69.1%), Hispanic (59.7%), and students in urban schools (67.1%)

Need for the Project in the Target Secondary Schools – the HSGI School Cohort

The Massachusetts proposal focuses on *high schools* throughout the state with an annual dropout rate higher than the current state average of 2.9 percent. Using the most recent year of available data (2008-09 school year), there are 133 high schools in Massachusetts with a dropout rate higher than this state average. These 133 schools will be the target of our activities, and will be referred to as the “HSGI School Cohort” throughout this proposal. This HSGI School Cohort consists of 77 different local education agencies, comprising 89 comprehensive high schools, 24

¹ Dropout rate calculations are based upon the annual school event dropout rate calculation developed by the National Center for Education Statistics.

alternative schools, 10 regional high schools, seven charter high schools, and three vocational high schools.

The HSGI School Cohort contains 72.1 percent of the high school dropouts in the state. The annual dropout rates in these 133 schools range from just above our state average rate to a high of 47 percent. The total annual dropout rate for the HSGI School Cohort is 6.3 percent. This rate eclipses the 1.2 percent dropout rate for high schools not in this cohort. Students attending schools in this cohort are five times as likely to dropout as students not attending schools in the cohort.

Table 1: Dropouts Statewide and in the HSGI School Cohort – 2008-09 School Year

	# of Annual Dropouts	% of Dropouts in the State	Annual Dropout Rate
HSGI School Cohort	6,192	72.1%	6.3%
Non-HSGI Schools	2,393	27.9%	1.2%
Statewide Total	8,585	100%	2.9%

While most of the larger high schools with the highest number of dropouts are located in our urban communities, the HSGI School Cohort also includes high schools with dropout rates exceeding the state average located in rural and suburban areas. This HSGI School Cohort includes a number of schools that are commonly known as “Dropout Factories” (Alliance for Education, 2009) that need interventions of the highest quality and quantity. These high schools have the highest number of students never obtaining their high school diploma. In Massachusetts, 39 schools (including alternative schools) have annual dropout rates exceeding 10 percent – making up nearly one-third of the HSGI School Cohort.

Table 2: The HSGI School Cohort by Dropout Rate – 2008-09 School Year

Annual Dropout Rate (%)	# of Schools in Cohort	% of Schools in Cohort
2.9-4.0	42	31.6%
4.1-5.9	30	22.6%
6.0-9.9	22	16.5%
10.0 and above	39	29.3%
<i>Total # of schools included in the Cohort</i>	133	100%

Table 3: HSGI School Cohort by Number of Dropouts – 2008-09 School Year

# of Annual Dropouts	# of Schools in Cohort
Over 100	13
60-99	26
40-59	18
20-39	37
Under 20	39

The achievement and performance gaps mentioned earlier in the proposal are particularly present in the HSGI School Cohort. Much of the focus of this initiative will be on providing direct services and supports to students and communities who historically have been underserved, resulting in persistently high dropout rates among particular high schools. The dropout rates for Latino/Hispanic students in the Commonwealth – particularly within the HSGI School Cohort – are extremely high, making up over 60 percent of dropouts from these schools. This is especially concerning because the Latino/Hispanic population is the fastest growing subgroup in the state.

Table 4: Race/Ethnicity Percentages – 2008-09 School Year

Race/Ethnicity	% of State High School Enrollment	% of All State Dropouts	% of HSGI School Cohort Dropouts
Asian	4.7%	2.8%	3.1%
Black	8.9%	16.9%	20.0%
Hispanic	13.3%	33.8%	40.8%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%
Native American	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Native Hawaiian	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
White	71.2%	44.2%	33.7%

There are also striking discrepancies among other student subgroups. Low-income high school students make up 28.3 percent of the statewide population, but are 47.9 percent of the total dropout population and represent 53.4 percent of the dropout population among the HSGI School Cohort. In 28 of the high schools in the HSGI School Cohort over 70 percent of the students dropping out are low-income students.

Gender also plays a role. While in some high schools there are large numbers of female students dropping out, the greatest numbers of students dropping out are male, particularly Latino and African American males. In the HSGI School Cohort, 59.4 percent of the students dropping out

are male. In 31 of these high schools, over 70 percent of the students dropping out are male. Massachusetts has a fairly even number of dropouts across grade levels, which is a contrast with many states that have a large 9th grade “bulge.” This data strongly supports that the approaches in the Massachusetts dropout reduction strategy should address all high school grade levels.

The Massachusetts HSGI proposal focuses on specific learning risk factors that students face as they strive towards graduation. In Massachusetts, 3.7 percent of the high school population is limited English proficient (LEP), however 10.6 percent of those that drop out are LEP. Of high schools that are in the HSGI School Cohort, 13.1 percent of dropouts are LEP. Students with disabilities are also at much greater risk of dropping out. Among the HSGI School Cohort, 25.5 percent of dropouts have special educational needs. In 22 members of the HSGI School Cohort over 50 percent of the dropout population has special needs.

Recovery of students that have already dropped out is an especially challenging need among the HSGI School Cohort. Data analysis on the HSGI School Cohort indicates that of the students who dropped out in the 2008-09 school year, 34.8 percent did not have education or career plans at the time of leaving school, and an additional 25.1 percent of students who have dropped out have an unknown status or location. This represents nearly 60 percent of students who have dropped out from the HSGI School Cohort that do not appear to have any connection to a pathway that would ensure them of career or educational success.

PROJECT SERVICES

The Massachusetts Project Services narrative is divided into the following three parts:

- PART I – Introduction to the Massachusetts HSGI Project Services
- PART II – Setting the Stage for Proposed State and Local Activities
- PART III – State and Local Key Activities to Decrease the State Dropout Rate

These three parts describe our overarching goals with the services provided through the HSGI grant, the Massachusetts activities and initiatives the HSGI work will build on, and the combination of state and local activities that will be implemented through the HSGI.

PART I – Introduction to the Massachusetts HSGI Project Services

Last year, the *Massachusetts Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission*, comprised of multiple Massachusetts government agencies in alliance with community partners, set a bold goal of drastically reducing the statewide dropout rate to 1.7 percent by the end of the 2013-14 school year³. This goal is guided by Massachusetts' characteristically aggressive approach to education reform and the Governor's target of 90 percent of students graduating from high school by 2020. The Commission offered a comprehensive set of recommended strategies based on the topic areas included in the Commission's charge, Commission members' experiences and expertise, testimony from public hearings, and existing research across the state and nation. Much of this HSGI proposal is based on those Commission recommendations.

As mentioned above in *Need for the Project*, the Massachusetts proposal focuses on high schools statewide with an annual dropout rate higher than the state. There are 133 high schools across Massachusetts with a dropout rate higher than our state average, and these schools (HSGI School Cohort) will be the target of our proposed activities. The Massachusetts statewide proposal for the HSGI program includes a set of comprehensive, multifaceted approaches at the state and local level through four key activities:

Key Activity 1	Creation of a State High School Graduation Coalition
Key Activity 2	Expansion of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group
Key Activity 3	Implementation of Research-Based Practices in the HSGI School Cohort
Key Activity 4	Establishment of Three New Gateway to College Sites

These activities, which are outlined in detail in Section III below, were selected based on a combination of:

- a variety state and national data and research on effective approaches for dropout reduction – including approaches for dropout prevention, intervention, *and* recovery;
- feedback from local education leaders on their needs and what activities and support would be most helpful in order to make progress on reducing their dropout rates;
- lessons learned from extensive planning and successful activities completed to date (described in Part II below); and

³ Reducing the dropout rate by half was based on the most recent data available at the time of the Commission report, which was the 2007-08 school year representing a state rate of 3.4 percent.

- the likelihood that activities will support sustainable services and lead to systemic change.

The guiding theory of action for the HSGI project is to embrace the local-control elements of our education system in Massachusetts, while also implementing state-level support that adds considerable value to the local activities. Based on our collective experience, we believe this will be best accomplished through a range of activities that promote mutual sharing of needs and research and evidenced-based programs and practices at and across the state and local levels. The HSGI grant will provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) with the resources needed to build on accomplishments, leverage and accelerate ongoing improvement efforts among low-performing schools (including school turnaround work), and target new strategies for reform on the state and local level where the greatest needs and achievement gaps still exist.

As described in detail below, the Massachusetts HSGI grant will include a range of activities including technical assistance, training, and competitive awards for members of the HSGI School Cohort. The primary purpose of these activities is to focus on a layered approach leading all students – regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, class, special needs, or personal circumstances – towards high school graduation. This layered model uses school-wide approaches for dropout prevention, targeted services for select groups of at-risk students for dropout interventions, and more individualized and intensive approaches for dropout recovery.

Dropout prevention is founded on research-based strategies to identify and address common or school-wide issues that may cause students to become disengaged and drop out. A focus here will be on increasing the effectiveness of overall school climate to encourage students to become more engaged in their education, as well as building engaging and high-quality programming for subgroups (e.g., limited English proficient students, Special Education students, students with mental health needs) that may be more likely to drop out.

The second layer is **dropout intervention**. Dropout intervention is a more targeted approach of serving students who are in danger of dropping out. Key indicators include students being under-credited or over-aged in high school, students who are struggling academically, students that have had many absences, and students with behavioral health issues. The intervention-focused services target students who remain somewhat engaged in school but may have significant risk factors that put them in grave danger of never earning their high school diploma.

The third layer is the most challenging of the strategies, **dropout recovery**. Prevention and intervention will lead to higher graduation rates over time; however, in the meantime, the Commonwealth cannot afford to give up on those young people who have already dropped out of high school. This layer is based on targeting students who have already exited school without obtaining a high school diploma. It involves the most arduous student-by-student efforts to recover students who have already left and have often become completely disengaged with the educational process. Thus, the HSGI activities will address the reengagement of students that dropped out and the implementation of targeted services these students often need when they return to school. Dropout outreach is a key element that can drive systemic changes for both returning dropouts and students who are at risk of dropping out through the creation of supports that are mutually beneficial to both keeping students in school as well as supporting student that

return to school. In Massachusetts, school and district leaders report that dropout outreach and reenrollment (recovery) of dropouts is often the weakest and most difficult element of their current work to increase the number of students who earn a high school diploma. This is often due to the students' complete disconnection from school and the extensive range of services often needed to support their reenrollment and success in school.

PART II – Setting the Stage for Proposed State and Local Project Activities

Because of the work undertaken by the ESE in partnership with state agency partners, nonprofit organizations, and school districts over the past few years Massachusetts is now well-positioned to considerably expand current efforts to effectively and efficiently implement a multifaceted, systemic statewide approach to dramatically increase our state's high school graduation rate and decrease our dropout rate. Pages 13-17 provide a summary of some important actions Massachusetts has undertaken since 2006 that will be the foundation for the key activities included in the HSGI proposal. A table included in *Appendix B* provides a timeline of these recent activities and other related initiatives that provide the backdrop to our proposal.

Statewide Graduation Summit

A powerful call to action began with the 2007 Graduation Rate Summit that was held to coincide with the release of the state's first reported four-year cohort graduation rate. The Summit was attended by over 700 participants representing state and local leaders in the fields of education, workforce development, health and human services, business, and the nonprofit community. The *America's Promise Alliance* has since used the Massachusetts Summit as a model for supporting Dropout Summits across the United States.

Through the HSGI grant, Massachusetts will continue and expand on interagency and inter-sector partnerships cultivated through the Graduation Summit and subsequent convenings to develop the HSGI Leadership Council (described in the *Management Plan* section) and the High School Graduation State Coalition (Key Activity 1 described below).

Early Indicator Index

In Spring 2008, the ESE began an Early Indicator Index pilot with the Massachusetts *Urban Superintendent's Network* to assign incoming ninth grade students a "risk level" of not graduating on time. The Urban Superintendent's Network meets monthly and provides district leaders with an opportunity to share ideas, concerns, and solutions to mutually held problems. The Urban Superintendent's Network is committed to partnering with ESE on this HSGI grant and a letter of support from this group is provided in *Appendix A-2*.

The early indicator pilot includes middle school indicators that were determined through statistical analysis to be the strongest predictors of at-risk students⁴. Working with the state's 24 urban districts included in the Urban Superintendent's Network, the ESE provides these middle school indicators to districts and schools so that resources and supports may be targeted at the students at risk of dropping out as soon as they enter high school.

Massachusetts was a recipient of a State Longitudinal Data Systems grant in 2010, and included in the grant activities is an evaluation of the existing Early Indicator Index and expansion to a more comprehensive system. Through the State Longitudinal Data Systems grant, Massachusetts will expand the current Early Indicator Index to all districts and schools in the state, and expand data reports to include information for earlier grade levels⁵. In addition, this information will be provided to schools and school districts on a more regular basis. Informed by our work to expand the state Early Indicator Index, Massachusetts recently partnered with the American Institutes for Research on a research-oriented grant proposal. That grant proposal builds on the expanded Early Indicator Index to develop and implement an extensive intervention system using early indicator data and, if funded, will target approximately 15 schools with the highest annual dropout rates in the state.

The use of state and local early indicator data will be a cornerstone of the HSGI activities, guiding decisions such as statewide training needs and the types of targeted programs schools will implement. Because of the emphasis on the use of early indicator data, Massachusetts will provide specific technical assistance for schools on the analysis and use of data to implement informed programs and services.

Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group

In 2008, the ESE, in collaboration with the Urban Superintendent's Network, formed a Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group (Work Group). The Work Group is a partnership among the ESE, the *New England Comprehensive Center*, and 18 of the urban districts that volunteered to be part of the group. The group's purpose is to facilitate sharing of promising dropout prevention and recovery practices and to support evidence-based district team action-planning activities. A focus of the Work Group is to critically examine student-, school-, and district-level data to inform strategic intervention approaches. Of the 18 participating districts, 13 had a lower dropout rate in 2008-09 than in 2007-08, and 10 of these 18 districts had a decrease of over one percentage point in their annual dropout rate for the 2008-09 school year.

⁴ The three middle school indicators in the current system: 1) school attendance, 2) scores on the English language arts state test (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System), and 3) scores on the math state test.

⁵ The planned Early Indicator Index expansion will be based on national research – including research from Dr. Robert Belfanz at the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, as well as Dr. John Easton's previous work at the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

As described in Key Activity 2 below, Massachusetts will expand the activities of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group through implementation of the HSGI grant. The Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group will continue to engage the 18 districts and schools currently included, as well as increase the number of participating schools. The frequency and types of technical assistance and sharing activities – such as cross-district visits and topical webinars – will also be expanded through the implementation of the HSGI grant.

Massachusetts Dropout Commission

Governor Deval Patrick signed into law an “Act to Improve Dropout Prevention and Reporting of Graduation Rates” in August 2008. Among its provisions was the creation of a commission – the *Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission* – to survey dropout prevention and recovery best practices nationwide and to identify promising programs currently in use in the Commonwealth. The Commission was comprised of 45 representatives of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors with expertise in youth development, education, workforce development, and health and human services.

The Commission released its final report on October 2009, in which it offered recommendations that fall into four overarching categories: new statewide expectations; early identification; effective prevention, intervention, and recovery; and responsive reforms and budget priorities. As referenced above, the Commission challenged the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to work together to reduce the statewide dropout rate by at least half – to 1.7 percent – by the conclusion of the 2013-14 school year. Key Activity 1 outlined below is designed to facilitate the cross-sector work the Commission called for to implement the recommended strategies. Key Activities 2, 3, and 4 directly reflect the Commission’s specific recommendations for state and local approaches to reach this bold statewide goal.

Massachusetts’ State Strategies to Achieve Graduation for All Initiative

Last winter, Massachusetts applied for and was awarded a small grant from the National Governor’s Association⁶ (NGA) to refine our statewide dropout prevention and recovery strategy. The purpose of our year-long project is to develop a comprehensive, cohesive infrastructure to support local, regional, and statewide efforts to reduce dropout rates, recover and reenroll out of school youth, and increase graduation rates. This grant provided the opportunity to bring practitioners and policymakers together to further examine the recommendations presented in the *Massachusetts Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission’s* report and to devise state-level action plans related to the issues of attendance policy; pathways to a diploma; outreach to dropouts and active recovery; and community engagement in dropout prevention and recovery. The HSGI project will provide specific resources to effectively implement those plans across each of the four key activity areas to support local initiatives to implement effective policies, programs, and services.

⁶ <http://www.nga.org>

PART III – State and Local Key Activities to Decrease the State Dropout Rate

The ESE, with support from state-level partners and in collaboration with members of the HSGI School Cohort, will implement a comprehensive range of HSGI strategies to support increasing the number of students that earn a high school diploma among the 133 target schools. The construction of essential state infrastructure for dropout reduction is a key part of the Massachusetts HSGI proposal. The ultimate intent, however, is to ensure that critical services are built and maintained in the schools that are most in need of support to engage students who are in danger of dropping out or have already dropped out. The objective of the HSGI grant is to build collaboration between the creative processes of educators at the local level to replicate outstanding practices across the state. Massachusetts intends to address, at both the state and local levels, the layered delivery model noted above focusing on dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery.

As mentioned above, Massachusetts developed an early indicator system to help identify students at various levels of risk of not completing their high school education, which the ESE is currently expanding and enhancing. State and local use of the early indicator system data will be an essential piece of the foundation for roll-out of the activities described below.

The Massachusetts project services focus on the following four key activities:

Key Activity 1 Creation of a State High School Graduation Coalition. Create of an inter-agency, cross-sector (e.g., public, nonprofit, business) State High School Graduation Coalition focused on dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery to facilitate the statewide sharing of promising programs and practices, to engage in a public information campaign on dropout reduction, and to inform and support related state initiatives.

Key Activity 2 Expansion of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group. Considerably expand the Work Group to increase the number of participating schools and districts and to broaden the types and frequency of opportunities for networking and sharing promising approaches among the 133 members of the HSGI School Cohort.

Key Activity 3 Implementation of Research-Based Practices in the HSGI School Cohort. Implement a select menu of research and evidenced-based practices and strategies in target schools through a competitive grant process, technical assistance, state guidance and learning exchanges with support from a new partnership with a state third-party intermediary organization.

Key Activity 4 Establishment of Three New Gateway to College Sites. Create a new partnership with the Gateway to College National Network to establish the Massachusetts Gateway to College program – an early college model to support at-risk students – at three new sites through targeted funding and technical assistance.

Key Activity 1 Creation of a State High School Graduation Coalition

The ESE, in collaboration with the HSGI Leadership Council (see *Management Plan* and *Appendix B* for details), will create and facilitate a State High School Graduation Coalition to help inform and promote the work from the HSGI grant. This statewide focus on promotion of the issue was recently cited by the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices as a critical element for a state’s dropout prevention and recovery strategy (National Governor’s Association, 2009). The State High School Graduation Coalition will be a cross-sector, diverse group of organizations representing state government, business, and non-profit organizations that will meet quarterly over the five-year grant period. The purposes of the Coalition include:

- 1) To create a public information campaign that includes a common branding strategy that all partners can use to promote and frame their respective work in the context of dropout reduction and increasing high school graduation rates. For example, the Coalition may select to establish some common language to refer to this issue that members can use for their relevant materials and events.
- 2) To share information, expertise, and resources among the Coalition partners as well as with the members of the HSGI School Cohort through presentations and trainings from Coalition members and guest experts.
- 3) To serve as a resource to support and inform the work of related initiatives and activities occurring in the Commonwealth, as well as the implementation of recommendations in the Dropout Commission report. For example, the Coalition work will help inform the ESE’s support of underperforming schools, including schools implementing a turnaround strategy. In addition, one focus of the Governor Patrick Administration’s Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet (Cabinet), which is comprised of Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, Public Safety and Housing, and Economic Development and Administration and Finance, is on integrating services for children, youth, and families. The Cabinet will use the Coalition as advisors on how to best meet the diverse needs of at-risk youth. The Cabinet’s recent work focuses on the state’s underperforming schools in districts where dropout rates are largely above the state average.

Key Activity 2 Expansion of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group

Massachusetts will considerably expand the current Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group (Work Group) through enhanced technical assistance, networking/sharing events, and training opportunities as well as increasing the number of participating schools. The Work Group will continue to be a partnership between the ESE, the participating schools and districts, and the New England Comprehensive Center. The New England Comprehensive Center is committed to partner with ESE on this grant, and specifically in the expanded services of the Work Group, and a letter of support from the New England Comprehensive Center is provided in *Appendix A-2*.

Work Group strategies will build on resources and opportunities piloted over the last two years, including: development of needs assessment tools, presentations at schools and community based organizations that showcase local promising activities, topical webinars highlighting promising programs and practices, and meetings that bring together teams of educators from each participating school and district. A range of opportunities for all interested members of the HSGI School Cohort will be provided by the ESE in partnership with the State High School Graduation Coalition (Key Activity 1) and the New England Comprehensive Center at least ten times per year over the five-year grant period.

Training topics will include supporting behavioral health in schools, addressing the needs of “newcomers,” developing a portfolio of alternative pathways, effectively outreaching to students that have dropped out, creating transition programs, and other needs identified by qualitative and quantitative data collected at the local and state levels. Research and recommendations from national organizations cite the use of early indicator data as an important element for all dropout reduction activities (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008; National Governor’s Association, 2009). Work Group activities will include targeted coaching and technical assistance on analysis and use of the state’s revised early indicator system to best inform new and improved supports and programs for students.

Another major piece of this Work Group is the integration of local work and direct programming with students and the construction of a statewide infrastructure of collaboration around all topics concerning dropout reduction. One constant struggle among both state and local education leaders is the identification and sharing of concrete promising programs and practices across the state. To meet this need, the ESE will review, document, and share school and district-level promising approaches implemented through the HSGI School Cohort members as well as in other schools and states.

In addition, as a state with many schools and districts there are infrequent opportunities for educators to work collaboratively to investigate practices that will assist youth through improved programs and services. All Work Group technical assistance and networking activities will be open to every member of the HSGI School Cohort thereby building capacity in both large urban schools as well as smaller rural and suburban schools with high dropout rates. Participating schools in the Work Group must commit to creating a team of staff (or expanding an existing team) that will engage in the variety of Work Group activities and be primarily responsible for ongoing local needs assessments, analysis of early indicator data, collaborating with teams of staff from other HSGI School Cohort members, and implementation of new or expanded program and services. The team of staff will include representatives from the district-level to ensure alignment with district-wide goals and initiatives, as well as feeder middle schools to vertically coordinate student support services and programs.

Key Activity 3 Implementation of Research-Based Practices in the HSGI School Cohort

Massachusetts will support the local implementation of a select menu of research and evidenced-based practices and strategies through a grant award process and facilitation of specific technical assistance, training, and peer exchanges among the schools implementing the targeted practices.

This local funding and technical assistance support will be facilitated through a state contract with a third-party intermediary organization. High schools included in the HSGI School Cohort will be eligible to apply for financial and technical assistance support to implement one to three of the seven options described in further detail below: 1) Alternative pathways; 2) Adult advocates for student support; 3) Positive school climate and socio-emotional systems of support; 4) Service-learning and work-based learning models; 5) Credit recovery, credit acceleration, and distance learning expansion; 6) Expansion of the school year/ structured learning time and summer transition programs; and 7) Programs and systems specifically designed to serve transient students.

The ESE chose a limited number of potential fundable options to ensure that schools can focus on research-based practices with the highest potential of success and that focused technical assistance can be provided in these areas through the HSGI Leadership Council (described in the *Management Plan*), the State Coalition (Key Activity 1), and our contracted technical assistance partners. We are offering members of the HSGI School Cohort this range of activities to implement because each school may have different student needs, different gaps in current services, and different levels of progress towards reducing their dropout rate.

Award Process for Local Implementation

Massachusetts, in partnership with a third-party intermediary organization, will fund evidence and research-based programming on a competitive basis to high schools that present innovative proposals. The intermediary will assist the ESE and the HSGI Leadership Council in administering funding for local programming, providing overall grant management, as well as assisting with the coordination of technical assistance on the state and local levels. While all 133 HSGI School Cohort members will be eligible for the opportunities mentioned under Key Activity 2 – the expansion of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group – implementation grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to those schools with the highest numbers of dropouts and that have proposed plans that will best serve targeted youth and the HSGI state goals.

Funded proposals will have the best potential to serve students most at-risk of not graduating from high school using strategies of prevention, intervention, and/or recovery. Grants will also only be awarded to those schools that have completed a significant examination of their data (including early indicator data) and conducted a data-based planning process. Funding will support the development of focused strategies with clear benchmarks and objectives over a sustained period of time. The competitive awards will be scored on a rigorous rubric by a team appointed by the HSGI Leadership Council. Awards will be based on the quality of the proposed activities and strategies along with those schools' commitment to engage in the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group (Key Activity 2), as well as participate in additional professional development and peer exchanges specifically designed for schools receiving grant awards. Applicants must describe how the middle schools that feed the eligible high schools will be involved in planning and/or implementation activities.

Massachusetts proposes to award at least \$2,000,000 per year in focused awards to HSGI School Cohort members to meet their most pressing dropout reduction needs. Upon the award of the HSGI grant, a request for proposals (RFP) will be sent to eligible schools. Schools awarded

grants will be eligible for continuation for the entire five-year HSGI grant period subject to meeting the state benchmarks and goals described in their proposals and completing an annual self-evaluation survey. Schools with more than 40 dropouts in 2008-09 school year (most recent year of dropout data available) will be eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 per year and schools with more than 20 dropouts will be able to apply for up to \$50,000 per year to support one to three of the research-supported activities. Up to three eligible schools per school district may apply for a grant award. The awards will be made beginning in spring 2011 contingent on HSGI grant funding, and award amounts may be prorated based on the timeline of activities and strategies for districts during year one. Members of the HSGI School Cohort that apply for implementation support through this process will also be permitted to apply for support through the Gateway to College application process described under Key Activity 4 below.

In addition to implementation grants, a small amount of funding will be reserved for planning grants for schools that have not yet had the ability or resources to put significant effort into examining their early indicator data and other data sources, and have not conducted thorough planning to support students who are dropping out. All HSGI School Cohort members will be eligible to apply for a competitive \$5,000-\$15,000 one-year planning grant.

Table 5: Eligibility for the HSGI Award Program by Tiers of the HSGI School Cohort

Levels of HSGI School Cohort <i>All 133 schools meet the basic eligibility criteria of an annual rate greater than the state average.</i>	# of Schools in Tier	Eligibility for HSGI Award Program
Tier 1 of HSGI School Cohort <i>Schools with at least 40 annual dropouts</i>	57 Schools	May apply for: 1) competitive grants up to \$100,000 per year for up to 5 years, and 2) a 1-year competitive planning grant
Tier 2 of HSGI School Cohort <i>Schools with 20-39 annual dropouts</i>	36 Schools	May apply for: 1) competitive grants up to \$50,000 per year for up to 5 years, and 2) a 1-year competitive planning grant
Tier 3 of HSGI School Cohort <i>Schools with less than 20 annual dropouts</i>	40 Schools	May apply for a 1-year competitive planning grant

Technical Assistance and Learning Exchanges for Award Recipients

The ESE, in collaboration with state partners, will facilitate technical assistance and learning exchange opportunities specifically for the recipients of funding to implement evidenced and research-based programs and services. These opportunities will be in addition to those offered through the expanded Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group. Each of the high schools receiving a grant award will be required to participate in a range of activities to support the successful implementation of award activities as a condition for receiving grant funds. Technical assistance and sharing will be provided through several means: on an individual basis through regular site visits and teleconferences with awardee schools, biannual awardee group gatherings, and biannual peer learning exchanges. Expertise from the members of the High School

Graduation State Coalition (Key Activity 1) and the HSGI Leadership Council will be incorporated into the training and technical assistance events as appropriate.

Biannual awardee group gatherings will provide a venue where common challenges and questions among the awardee schools will be discussed and addressed. Awardee gatherings will include opportunities for technical assistance and training, as well time for sharing and networking among the award recipients. Technical assistance will focus on critically examining student-, school-, and district-level data to inform strategic intervention approaches. This includes training for use of the state's early indicator system, as well as support for analysis of local data and enhancement of program services based on available data.

In addition to gatherings for the entire group of awardee schools, Massachusetts will also create a peer learning exchange group for each of the targeted research-based strategies and programs (described below). For example, a peer learning exchange group will be created for all schools using grant funds to support the creation of alternative pathways. The primary purpose of each peer learning exchange group is to provide a structured venue for subgroups of awardees to come together and share successes, challenges, and receive strategy-specific training.

Eligible Program Options for Grant Awards and Targeted Technical Assistance

Massachusetts will focus the grant award process and facilitation of technical assistance on a select, narrow menu of research-based practices and strategies. The eligible options cover a range of dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery strategies (some options address multiple layers of strategies, e.g., both intervention and recovery) and were selected based on available research, feedback from local education leaders, recent state and local efforts and plans, and the likelihood that the efforts made through the HSGI would be sustainable after the five-year grant period.

The seven research-based program and services options are:

- 1) Alternative Pathways to meet a range of student needs
- 2) Adult advocates for student support
- 3) Positive school climate and socio-emotional systems of support – including implementation of the Massachusetts Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework
- 4) Service-learning and work-based learning models specifically targeting students most likely to not graduate
- 5) Credit recovery, credit acceleration, and distance learning expansion through development of courses/modules, pilot implementation of courses/modules, and training of staff
- 6) Expansion of the school year/ structured learning time and summer transition programs
- 7) Programs and systems specifically designed to serve transient students, including migrant students, ELL student, refugees, immigrants, and other newcomers

1) Alternative pathways to meet a range of student needs. Schools may apply for seed money and implementation funds for new, high-quality models for alternative pathways to a high school diploma, including the development of new programs or new schools (including Innovation

Schools⁷ and charter schools). For at-risk students, alternative education pathways have the potential to offer a smaller and more personalized environment in which to learn and form strong connections with school staff and peers (Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, 2009). Alternative education may present a different pathway in which to achieve educational success and to earn a high school diploma (The Urban Institute, 2010).

Alternative education programs/schools may also enable schools to maximize their use of teachers who are skilled in and dedicated to educating at-risk students. Furthermore, schools and districts are able to better meet the needs of their community, to the extent that alternative education programs and schools assist students who need smaller and more tailored environments to address specific needs by utilizing, for example, positive behavioral supports.

The development of alternative pathways is one of the most universally acknowledged dropout reduction strategies, and in Massachusetts, demand for these types of programs far exceeds supply. There are currently 186 public alternative schools and programs across the state, enrolling approximately 5,000 middle and high school students. However, school districts often cite the need for increased capacity and quality among existing sites, and the need for new alternative pathways options as one of their greatest barriers related to best serving students most likely to drop out and to reengage former dropouts. Students who return to school after dropping out may be especially in need of an alternative pathway that is carefully constructed to support their unique needs.

Existing alternative education programs/schools pathways in Massachusetts include those targeted to very specific populations (e.g., parenting teens, expelled students, students retained in grade nine), as well as more general enrollment that includes a broader base of students that have risk factors for dropping out of school. They may be established within the traditional school during the regular school day; within the traditional school after the regular school day; or in a separate, off-site location – including at community-based organizations. Districts may also elect to create a separate official school devoted to alternative education.

Program implementation funds will provide support and infrastructure to increase the number of alternative pathway options available to students who need to reconnect to a pathway to graduation. A particular need in the state is to further diversify the portfolio of programs/schools that are designed to meet particular population needs. Specifically, there is a need for increased alternative education pathways for students eligible for school expulsion or long-term suspension (Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, 2009), migrant and immigrant students, students that are “over-aged and under-credited” compared with their peers, pregnant and parenting teens (Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, 2010), Special Education students, and students with extended absences due to illness or disability.

⁷ A Massachusetts Innovation School is an in-district public school that may use increased autonomy and flexibility in six areas (curriculum, budget, schedule and calendar, staffing, professional development, and district policies), and is authorized by the local school committee.

2) Adult advocates for student support. HSGI School Cohort members will be eligible to apply to support two types of counseling/professional staff to support positive student outcomes through the support prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts at the local level: 1) graduation/readiness coaches and 2) reengagement/recovery coaches. These staff and associated programming assist students in meeting personal and academic needs through a meaningful and sustained personal relationship with a trained adult. National research has shown the importance of skilled, caring adults in the lives of students (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008 and Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Youth focus groups conducted in Massachusetts demonstrated the importance of these relationships in keeping students connected with school (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007). The adult should be responsible for addressing academic and social needs, communicating with families, and advocating for the student. Training for adults serving students is integral to this design to ensure that they have the depth of expertise to effectively support at-risk students. Coaches can act as a case manager and monitor beyond the current capacity of the district to provide academic and personal counseling and can focus on the coordination of academic and social resources for students at risk of not obtaining a high school diploma. These staff can assist with parent and family engagement strategies and individualized plans for graduation and beyond.

2a) Graduation/Readiness Coaches. Graduation/readiness coaches focus specifically on graduation strategies for at-risk students. This program concept is based on the Georgia High School Graduation Coach Initiative that began in 2006. The coach's primary responsibility will be to identify at-risk students through early indicator data and other sources, and help them succeed in school by keeping them on track academically before they consider dropping out. Coaches identify, recruit, and engage parents and concerned adults, organizations, and government agencies to serve in a variety of supplementary roles.

The Georgia state graduation rate has increased from 69.5 percent in 2006 to 75.4 percent in 2008. According to staff from the Georgia Governor's Office, the improvement is largely attributed to the Graduation Coach Initiative (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). The Massachusetts graduation/readiness coaches will work with teachers, students, and families in a guidance function to tap a range of resources available within a particular community – from tutoring to family support to internships and apprenticeships.

2b) Re-Engagement/Recovery Coaches. Re-Engagement/Recovery Coaches operate as dropout outreach workers and are a critical component of a system of student support. These coaches offer support for students who have already dropped out of school and act as a conduit back to school by providing the necessary support for students once they return to school, particularly for those students who are over-aged and under-credited.

Dropout outreach is a key element that can drive systemic changes for both returning dropouts and students who are at risk of dropping out. In Massachusetts, Boston Public Schools is using the active recovery model through Project Reconnect. Project Reconnect was piloted in Boston by its workforce investment board, the Boston Private Industry Council, in partnership with the Boston Public Schools. Over the last three years, two outreach workers, former dropouts themselves, have re-enrolled over 800 dropouts in school.

A critical early finding of this project was that many students wanted to return to school, but did not realize they could until someone reached out to them. This high-leverage project has had a significant impact in a short amount of time. It has resulted in changes in thinking, policy, and programming in the Boston Public Schools, as well as a decrease in the dropout rate. A new re-engagement center recently opened in Boston to organize the district's efforts to re-enroll dropouts, and one high school has opened an in-house alternative program which adds to the portfolio of alternative options for Boston students. An additional benefit of the project is getting a more nuanced understanding why students left school, which is helping to better target assistance for dropout prevention and intervention efforts.

By building programming based upon the experience of Boston and other cities with re-engagement centers, Massachusetts will be able to effectively support HSGI School Cohort members using implementation funds to support recovery coaches across the Commonwealth to reach out to disconnected youth. The ESE will work collectively with these new coaches to provide technical assistance and sharing of good practice in order to improve the coaches' skills and services to students.

3) Positive school climate and socio-emotional systems of support – including implementation of the Massachusetts Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework. Many issues with disengaged students and those who may be at risk of dropping out are not academic in nature and therefore require non-academic systems of support. Students' behavioral health is intricately connected to academic, social, and emotional success at school. Establishing a school climate that promotes students' behavioral health can also help promote positive and productive functioning and school success (UCLA Center, 2008). Behavioral health refers to the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of all students, including students with mental health needs.

HSGI School Cohort members can apply for funds to assist students to identify, understand, and self-regulate their emotions and interactions with peers and adults. These skills can help to mitigate problematic and disruptive behavior both in and out of the classroom by teaching students how to positively interact and communicate. This programming will also be used to teach students strategies to strengthen problem solving and decision-making skills.

Funds may be used to establish partnerships with community based program providers and other agencies such as social services, child welfare, mental health, and law enforcement. The intent of this programming will be to address the root causes of problematic classroom and school behavior or mental health needs for students who are at risk of dropping out. This work may also address external social factors such as family concerns or substance abuse issues.

Schools may also use grant awards to increase their capacity to implement the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework (Framework) recently created by the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Task Force (established in Massachusetts through Section 19 of Chapter 321 of the Acts of 2008). The recommendations of this Framework are based on a substantial compilation of state and national research and are not required activities; rather the Framework serves as a roadmap of potential activities for school to implement. The Framework emphasizes

the importance of establishing and enhancing the three levels of behavioral health, which mirror the layered approach of dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery described above. The three levels of activities included in the Framework are: 1) *supportive school environments* that promote the behavioral health of all students through whole-school supportive environments, 2) *early interventions* that provide collaborative approaches to identify and address behavioral health symptoms early, and 3) *intensive services* that coordinate intensive interventions for students with significant needs.

Grant funds can be used to establish or support a professional learning community (PLC) in the school to convene for reflection and discussion, and to move forward school practices that promote students' behavioral health. Reflection and goal setting can be done through the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Assessment Tool that was created by the Task Force, based on the recommendations included in the Framework. Areas that can be reviewed and addressed through the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Assessment Tool include school leadership practices; professional development; student access to resources and services; academic and non-academic approaches that enable all students to learn; policies, procedures, and protocols; and collaboration with families.

4) *Service-learning and work-based learning models specifically targeting students most likely to not graduate.* HSGI School Cohort members can develop and implement service-learning programs, internships, and work-based learning opportunities, each of which can be a key dropout reduction strategy, through which students demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by various state curriculum frameworks, the Common Core of Learning, and 21st century skills.

Research shows service-learning (Bridgeland, et al., 2008) can be a powerful tool to help address many of the primary factors that lead to dropping out and in turn increase student engagement. Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. By connecting service to academic coursework, students are afforded the chance to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to make a difference in their communities, making learning more relevant. Through service-learning, students build 21st century skills like global awareness, entrepreneurship, leadership, and teamwork as they work together to discover needs/problems in their communities and identify and implement solutions to address them. By its nature, service-learning provides opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate their learning in varied ways, often very different from the traditional classroom. Using this methodology, students who have been unsuccessful with traditional teaching and learning can tap into their strengths and feel more successful in school. Service-learning also engages various community partners and local businesses to provide additional support from adults in the community, helping students to feel more connected.

When students recognize the connection between their schooling and the impact that it has on their success in the workforce, they tend to become more focused and engaged learners. Research on dropout reduction shows that one of the most common reasons that students give for leaving school is that their classes are not interesting and that access to more real-world learning

opportunities would have improved their chances of graduating (Bridgeland, et al., 2006 and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007). A recent study by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies cites research that found that teens from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly black and Hispanic teens, are less likely to drop out of high school if they participate in a paid work experience (Sum, et al., 2006).

The ESE, through expansion of its Connecting Activities initiative (Westrich & Leonard, 2009) will work in collaboration with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and local workforce investment boards in Massachusetts to help HSGI School Cohort members fund worksite experiences for students within their respective regions and support students who are most in need by integrating structured work and learning programming with academic teaching and learning. Connecting Activities links students and teachers with local employers to create applied learning opportunities through structured internships and career exploration activities.

5) Credit recovery, credit acceleration, and distance learning expansion through development of courses/modules, pilot implementation of courses/modules, and training of staff. Credit recovery and acceleration is a key strategy in recovering dropouts and preventing students from dropping out. Many students are in danger of not receiving a high school diploma because they are over the traditional high school age or are behind in high school credits and skills. In many cases this can be due to long term truancy, repeated course failures or attendance issues, and is often especially true for students who are recovered after dropping out. For other students, particularly those early in their high school careers, it provides some acceleration towards graduation, bringing the reality of graduating from high school closer within reach, particularly for those students with the greatest risk factors as designated by our early indicator system. In essence, it provides some light at the end of the tunnel for those students who may face the largest struggles in earning a high school diploma (National Governor's Association, 2009).

Grant funds can be used to accelerate learning and credit accumulation by making meaningful instructional hours outside of the traditional classroom or beyond the typical school day count toward graduation. These opportunities could include distance learning opportunities such as those courses that are being developed through our state's *Title II-D Technology Competitive Grant Program: Online Courses and Modules Grant for At-Risk High School Students*. Through this effort, local educators are in the process of creating dozens of thoughtfully-designed courses and course modules in high-need content areas that can be utilized to help students recover and accelerate high school credit.

Funds may also provide extra study time and opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after school, Saturday school, or summer enrichment programs. These programs may offer students engaging, personalized opportunities to improve academic skills and accelerate credit accumulation.

6) Expansion of the school year/ structured learning time and summer transition programs. Many students who are in danger of dropping out or have been recovered have severe academic deficits, such as being undercredited toward high school graduation or lacking literacy,

numeracy, and other academic skills – all necessary to be successful in class work and to meet high academic standards. Research has shown that the transition to high school (Abrams & Haney, 2004) is a tenuous time for many students and it is during this time that many students may fall behind and begin to disengage from high school. Summer, particularly in the summer previous to ninth grade, provides an opportunity to address core academic skills that students may be lacking while allowing time to adjust to the realities of high school that can differ greatly from the more nurturing nature of the middle school experience (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). From a developmental and motivational perspective, eighth and ninth grades are critical times for transition supports designed to assure *all* students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school (UCLA Center, 2008).

HSGI School Cohort members may apply for funds to select students to participate in summer, weekend, extended day, or vacation programming aimed at providing support to develop academic skills accelerate learning or earn credits toward graduation (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). These expanded learning time opportunities may also provide enrichment and socio-emotional supports for students to increase school engagement and prepare students for academic success. These interventions should be designed to promote and maintain positive attitudes during the transition, anticipate and prevent problems and provide special assistance to those whose problems may manifest themselves more greatly at the high school level. The intent of these programs is to provide a bridge toward what can often be a more complex and less nurturing high school environment and provide students at-risk for dropping out with tools and support to be successful.

7) *Programs and systems specifically designed to serve transient students, including migrant students, ELL students, refugees, immigrants, and other newcomers.* Funding will be available for HSGI School Cohort members to implement or enhance programming for students who tend to be highly mobile due to recent immigration, migrant work, homelessness, or economic factors beyond their control. Among the fundable models will be programming that serves English Language Learner students with low English proficiency, particularly for those students who may have little or no literacy in their first language (Short & Boyson, 2010). These programs are intended to accelerate English language acquisition, develop academic content vocabulary and higher level thinking skills, promote the development of social and academic skills that students will need when entering district high schools, build a foundation for long-term academic and socio-cultural success, and serve as a learning site for best practices in educating secondary school English Language Learners who have interrupted schooling or gaps in their formal education.

There is strong evidence that mobility during high school diminishes the prospects for graduation for all students. Massachusetts cohort graduation rate data shows striking differences between students that attend one high school versus students that attend more than one Massachusetts high school. Students that attend one high school have a cohort graduation rate of 85.9 percent, compared to students that attend two high schools (62.4 percent), students that attend three high schools (39.8 percent), and students that attend four or more high schools (24.9 percent) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010). Residential mobility for economic, family, migratory, or other (often undesirable) reasons can cause severe

interruptions in student academic and support services – leading towards a disconnect with schooling and the inherent social supports that may be available. Funds may be awarded for specialized programming and policies that target highly mobile and transient student populations and ensures that they are on a route to graduation (Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

Needs Assessment and Planning Process

In addition to the funding awards for program implementation and technical assistance described above, Massachusetts will also provide competitive one-year grants (for \$5,000 to \$15,000) for schools to work with early indicator data and conduct planning to determine the best strategies to serve students who are in danger of not earning a high school diploma. All members of the HSGI School Cohort are eligible to apply for a planning grant. Planning grants will be provided through the third-party intermediary and targeted at those schools that have conducted a limited amount of early indicator data analysis, needs assessment, and strategic action planning. Tier 1 or Tier 2 schools (described in Table 5) that receive a planning grant in year one will be eligible to apply for grant funds to support the implementation of services from the menu of research and evidenced-based strategies during the remaining four years of the grant cycle. Schools receiving planning funds will be required to work with other members of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group on identifying promising strategies to engage students and increase graduation rates and to create a comprehensive action plan for dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery.

Key Activity 4 Establishment of Three New Gateway to College Sites

Massachusetts will create a new partnership with the Gateway to College National Network, a national nonprofit organization that is addressing the dropout crisis through community college based programs. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Gateway to College National Network is provided in *Appendix A-2*. One of the core responsibilities of the Gateway to College National Network is to create and replicate innovative programs throughout the country, including the Gateway to College⁸ program. The Gateway to College program is designed to help high school dropouts and students on the verge of dropping out to earn a high school diploma while also earning college credits. Gateway to College is a proven early college model that reconnects struggling students with their education. The program serves students between the ages of 16 and 21 and enables them to complete their diploma requirements while attending their local community college. Credits are transferred to a partnering high school's transcript each semester, and students supplement their coursework with career exploration and support from a small cohort of peers and advisors.

Across the country there are 24 colleges in 14 states that are partnering with 111 school districts to offer this program to students, and the program is yielding promising results. Despite struggling with very poor attendance in traditional high schools, Gateway to College students have an average attendance rate of 87 percent while enrolled in the program. Nationwide, Gateway to College students passed 78 percent of nearly 47,000 college courses (with a C or

⁸ <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/>

better) and earned an average of 41 college semester credits, putting them well on their way to earning an associate's degree.

There are currently three Gateway to College programs operating in Massachusetts, located at Massasoit Community College, Mt. Wachusett Community College, and Holyoke Community College. To date, 524 students have participated in Massachusetts Gateway to College programs. The expertise from these sites will be employed to provide technical assistance to the three new program locations.

Over the past two years Massachusetts laid the groundwork for expanding Gateway to College sites across the state. Community colleges and school districts have participated in informational meetings with the existing sites to learn about the program design and have expressed a clear interest in new program development. The HSGI grant provides Massachusetts the opportunity to capitalize on this interest and need to establish new program sites. This Gateway to College initiative will be coordinated with our proposed Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Early College initiative in the Commonwealth's Race to the Top (RTTT) proposal as part of a unified early college initiative in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the University of Massachusetts system.

Through the new partnership with the Gateway to College National Network, Massachusetts will develop a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select three new community college sites to provide funding for planning and implementation of new Gateway to College programs. The selected community colleges will be required to have a formal partnership with one or more of the members of the HSGI School Cohort. Massachusetts will select community colleges and partnering HSGI School Cohort members based on a demonstrated significant commitment and readiness to establish new Gateway to College Program, including committed use of early indicator data to help assess student needs. Schools that apply for support to implement research-based strategies (described in Key Activity 3) will also be permitted to partner with a community college to apply for support to create a Gateway to College program.

In addition to working with the Massachusetts HSGI Leadership Council to award funding to three new locations, the Gateway to College National Network will provide training, technical assistance, data collection, program evaluation, professional development, and instructional coaching to each new Gateway to College program site for a minimum of a three-year period. In addition to these services, the Gateway to College National Network will provide a \$100,000 funding match during the grant period to provide further support to the three new sites.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Role of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) will provide overall leadership and oversight for successful implementation of the HSGI grant program. The ESE is the State Educational Agency (SEA) for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The ESE is charged with the responsibility of ensuring improved teaching and learning in all of the Commonwealth's elementary and secondary public schools. The ESE will also be responsible for connecting the implementation of the HSGI project and lessons learned from the HSGI School Cohort with other educational initiatives, including the support for underperforming schools and school “turnaround” implementation.

The key ESE staff who will be assigned to work on this project as a percentage of their time (in-kind grant support) are described below. The resumes for these ESE staff are provided in *Appendix B*. In addition to these key staff, other ESE staff with specific content expertise will be involved in particular grant implementation activity as needed. For example, the topical webinars that will cover areas of common challenges among the HSGI School Cohort we will draw on the expertise of ESE staff in the Office of English Language Acquisition, Office of Special Education, and Office of School Redesign.

The ESE will also hire a dedicated full time (1.0 FTE) dropout prevention and recovery specialist to provide comprehensive coordination of activities (in collaboration with the Project Director) and a half time (0.5 FTE) program evaluator to measure the effectiveness of the project at both the state and local levels (in collaboration with the Principal Investigator). Job descriptions and required qualifications for both positions are provided in *Appendix B*.

Brief Highlights of State-Funded Staff Qualifications and Experience

PROJECT DIRECTOR: *Jenny Caldwell Curtin* – Coordinator of Alternative Education and Trauma Sensitive Schools – 50% of Time In-Kind

Ms. Curtin, MPP, will be the Project Director for the HSGI grant implementation. Ms. Curtin has extensive experience providing training and resources to school districts and organizations interested in promising strategies related to implementing trauma sensitive schools, high-quality Alternative Education programs, and dropout reduction approaches. She also administers the state funded Alternative Education and Safe and Supportive Learning Environments grant programs, as well as the federally funded Online Courses and Modules for At-Risk Students grant program. Ms. Curtin is actively involved in coordinating several state efforts related to supporting students who are most likely to drop out of high school, including the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group. She will provide overall leadership for the HSGI grant implementation, ensure that the project coordinates and aligns with ongoing ESE and other initiatives, participate in all meetings and technical assistance activities with the participating schools, and maintain regular communication with HSGI Leadership Team and High School Graduation State Coalition throughout the project timeframe.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Kendra Winner* – Research and Evaluation Specialist – 10% of Time In-Kind

Dr. Winner, M.A., Ed.D., will be the Principal Investigator for the evaluation of the HSGI grant implementation. Dr. Winner's eighteen years of educational research experience includes work with a variety of student populations such as urban students, children with cognitive and language disabilities, and low-income and working-class. She has worked on a number of longitudinal studies including an analysis of the language and literacy development in an ethnically and economically diverse group of high achieving high school students, the language and literacy development of low-income children, and the design and implementation of an evaluation of a Boston urban middle-school intervention. Dr. Winner will ensure that the design of the HSGI evaluation is implemented rigorously and reliably and will supervise the all aspects of the evaluation – the design of evaluation tools, data collection, and statistical analysis.

***Nyal Fuentes* – Academic Support Specialist – 25% of Time In-Kind**

Mr. Fuentes, M.Ed, C.A.G.S., works with connections for academic support and college access for high school students as well as assisting the Department in its secondary school and career and college pathway initiatives. He has experience in education in urban schools with first generation college-going youth particularly with Latino and other immigrant high school youth in dropout prevention and academic acceleration. He formerly worked in the Department's Office of English Language Acquisition and the Office of School Improvement Planning.

***Robert Curtin* – Manager of Data Analysis and Reporting – 10% of Time In-Kind**

Mr. Curtin, M.A., is a state and national leader on the calculation of education statistics, and particularly on the methodology for transparent, quality calculations of annual dropout and cohort graduation rates. In addition to managing the Data Analysis and Reporting Office at the ESE, he is the current Chairperson for the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC) General Statistics Standing Task Force for the U.S. Department of Education. Mr. Curtin will provide overall management for the data analysis required for the indicators included in the HSGI Annual Performance Report and the project assessment process.

***Rachelle Engler Bennett* – Director of Student Support – 10% of Time In-Kind**

Ms. Bennett provides overall management to the Student Support office at the ESE, which includes a range of programs and services for school districts across the state. Her role includes oversight of the application and review process for state and federal grant programs and contracts with outside organizations. Ms. Bennett will work with the Project Director to implement the competitive contract process for selection of the third-party intermediary and to establish contracts with technical assistance and training providers to support local implementation of services.

HSGI Leadership Council

To support the HSGI implementation, the ESE will create a HSGI Leadership Council, which will include key individuals with selected external agencies and organizations. Through the development of this HSGI grant proposal the ESE reached out to a select group of individuals and organizations to gauge their interest in participation in the HSGI Leadership Council. Letters

of support are included in *Appendix A-2*. Members of the HSGI Leadership Council will represent their organizations at quarterly meetings convened to implement the goals of the grant. Members of the HSGI Leadership Council will also serve as core members of the State High School Graduation Coalition (described in *Project Services*). Members of the HSGI Leadership Council will provide assistance in connecting this HSGI grant implementation work with other state dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts, as well as college and career readiness initiatives underway in the state. The HSGI Leadership Council will also provide expertise and training resources to the HSGI School Cohort. The organizations committed to the HSGI Leadership Council are described in *Appendix B*.

Partnerships with Third-Party Intermediary Organizations

Massachusetts will partner with two third-party intermediary organizations to efficiently provide financial and technical assistance support for the target high schools. The first intermediary is the Gateway to College National Network, as described in Key Activity 4 in *Project Services* above. The Gateway to College National Network will provide start-up funding, technical assistance, and evaluation for three new Gateway to College sites in Massachusetts. The Gateway to College National Network was selected for this role because of their unique position of extensive national expertise in the replication of Gateway to College programs. The Gateway to College National Network was selected through a competitive procurement process managed by the ESE. A signed MOU with the Gateway to College National Network is provided in *Appendix A-2*.

Massachusetts will select a second intermediary organization through a competitive contract procurement process managed by the ESE. The purpose of the second intermediary will be to oversee the competitive award process for the implementation of the research-based strategies and planning processes, as well as to assist the ESE and HSGI Leadership Council with facilitation for the awardee gatherings, peer exchange meetings, and training events (Key Activity 3).

Project Management Timeframe

Table 6: Milestones and Tasks for the Project Services over the Five-Year Grant Period

Milestones and Tasks for the Project Services	Timeframe
Notify all stakeholders, including the HSGI Leadership Council members and target high schools, about the result of the HSGI application to formally begin the grant implementation	Oct. 2010
In collaboration with the Gateway to College National Network, develop a competitive process for selection of the first of the three new Gateway to College program sites	Oct.-Nov.2010
Implement a competitive procurement process to select a third-party intermediary organization to facilitate the process for target school awards and facilitation of school convenings	Oct.-Nov.2010

Milestones and Tasks for the Project Services	Timeframe
Convene the HSGI Leadership Council quarterly per grant year to inform the implementation of state and local activities and connect HSGI grant activities with other state initiatives related to dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery	Year 1: Nov. 2010 and Feb., May, Aug. 2011 Years 2 through 5: Nov., Feb., May, Aug.
Formally invite a broad range of state agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education to join the State High School Graduation Coalition	Nov. 2010
In collaboration with the Gateway to College National Network and the HSGI Leadership Council, the first of the three new Gateway to College program sites is selected	Dec. 2010
Convene the State High School Graduation Coalition quarterly per grant year to share relevant resources and initiatives, plan support for the HSGI School Cohort, and connect to related state initiatives	Year 1: Dec. 2010 and March., June, Sept. 2011 Years 2 through 5: Dec., March, June, Sept.
In partnership with the third-party intermediary, develop a competitive process for eligible schools to apply for program implementation grant funds or planning process grant funds	Dec. 2010
The first selected Gateway to College program site begins implementation of the grant award from the Gateway to College National Network	Jan.-Aug. 2011
HSGI School Cohort members apply for funds to implement one to three of the research-based activities outlined in <i>Project Services</i> or a planning grant	Jan. 2011
In partnership with the third-party intermediary and the HSGI Leadership Council, select awardees for the implementation of the research-based activities and the planning process	March 2011
Biannual meetings to provide training and technical assistance with the awardees implementing: at least one research-based activity, a planning grant, or the Gateway to College program	Year 1: April 2011 Years 2 through 5: Oct. and April
Peer learning exchange meetings for each of the topic areas under local activities implementation (e.g., adult advocates, expansion of the school year, alternative pathways)	Year 1: July 2011 Years 2 through 5: Jan. and July
Implement Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group activities for entire HSGI School Cohort – including the webinars, topical trainings, and cross-district visits	At least 10 times per year throughout the five-year grant period
Development of the tools used for the assessment of project effectiveness – including the annual self-evaluation tool, student and staff surveys, and the protocols for observations and focus groups	Jan.-May 2011
School award recipients complete funding continuation applications and annual self-evaluation reports	Years 1 through 4: Aug.

Milestones and Tasks for the Project Services	Timeframe
Completion and submission of the performance report to the U.S. Department of Education	Annually
Implementation of data collection tools outlined in the assessment of project effectiveness – including school surveys, focus groups, and evaluations of technical assistance and training opportunities	Throughout the entire five-year grant period
End-of-project focus groups with the HSGI School Cohort members and final summary reports on lessons learned and promising practices	May-Aug. 2015

ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to calculating the performance indicators outlined by the HSGI program, the Massachusetts plan for project assessment is designed to address three questions regarding the implementation and outcomes of the HSGI program:

- 1) How are the HSGI Key Activities being implemented?
- 2) How are state-level activities changing the way local educational professionals access and utilize resources for dropout prevention and recovery services?
- 3) What is the impact of the HSGI program on student outcomes?

Methods and Analyses

Questions 1 and 2 will be assessed with a mix of methods and data sources. The grant award application process to implement the menu of research-based strategies, the planning process, and the Gateway to College program will require applicants to report on methods and strategies used to conduct a needs assessment, to identify reasons for high dropout rates, and how their targeted initiatives will address these. Self-evaluations will be required for each grant recipient at the end of each year and will include open ended questions and implementation scales on school leadership, school policies, procedures, and systems, partnerships and collaborations, and impact of state activities. In addition, the following data will be collected for all participating schools:

- Site visit observations to understand the methods and context of implementation
- Student surveys regarding reactions to dropout prevention and recovery services
- Program staff surveys regarding experience and perspectives of staff providing dropout prevention and recovery support
- School leadership surveys, to understand the role, experience and perspectives of school leaders during the HSGI implementation
- Observations and evaluations of technical assistance and sharing events
- Attendance for state level events to examine intensity of participation
- Evaluations of technical assistance and sharing events
- Focus groups of participants in the technical assistance and sharing events

Questions 3 will be addressed using quasi-experimental methods with data collected through the Massachusetts longitudinal data systems. An interrupted time series analysis will examine whether the HSGI program has an impact on the performance measures required by the grant for staying in, progressing in, and completing school (e.g., graduation rates for student subgroups, numbers and percentages of students earning credits necessary to graduate). The interrupted time series will test whether there are significant differences in the performance measures before and after implementation of the HSGI program. In this analysis, schools are treated as their own comparisons in order to account for the fact that the populations effected by and causes for drop out prevention and, hence, the corresponding interventions vary across the programs. The amount of program variation, the competitive nature of the granting process, and the fact that all schools with drop out rates that exceed that of the state will be participating, preclude random assignment.

Feedback from the formative evaluation data collected during the implementation will be shared with participating schools and program staff throughout the grant. In addition, key data from the finding will be publicly reported and be used for additional research. This research will be conducted with oversight from our Principal Investigator, a new halftime position at the ESE, as well as the time of consultants on an as-needed basis.

Part 6 – APPENDIX A-1: REQUIRED ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS

Massachusetts High School Graduation Initiative School Cohort

The high schools below are the 133 high schools in the Commonwealth that exceeded the 2.9% Massachusetts statewide dropout rate in school year 2008-2009
(Methodology descriptions below)

District Name	School Name	2008-09 Dropout Rate (%)	High School Enrollment (#)	Total Dropout Count (#)
Holyoke	Center for Excellence	47.1	17	8
Boston	Boston Adult Academy	43.2	278	120
Lawrence	High School Learning	42.1	254	107
Fall River	Resiliency Preparatory	41.8	158	66
Phoenix Charter Academy	Phoenix Charter Academy	41.3	150	62
Lynn	Fecteau-Leary	39.8	88	35
New Bedford	West Side Jr-Sr HS	37.1	62	23
Revere	Seacoast School	36.5	115	42
Brockton	BB Russell Alternative	35.6	90	32
Boston	Egleston Comm. High School	35.3	102	36
Fitchburg	Fitchburg Alt. ED Program	34.2	120	41
Brockton	Brockton Champion	33.3	150	50
Chicopee	Chicopee Academy	32.9	73	24
Athol-Royalston	Ellen Bigelow	30.8	13	4
Lawrence	School for Exceptional	30.7	88	27
Lowell Middlesex Acad CS	Lowell Middlesex Academy	30.6	111	34
Somerville	Full Circle High School	28.9	45	13
Boston	Community Academy	27.0	63	17
Springfield	SAFE	25.9	320	83
Provincetown	Provincetown High	25.0	64	16
Boston	Charlestown High	17.4	1,008	175
Medford	Curtis-Tufts	16.7	30	5
Springfield	High School/Science-Tech	15.7	1,470	231
Boston	Monument High School	15.2	361	55
Bellingham	Primavera Jr/Sr H S	15.2	33	5
Greenfield	Poet Seat	14.3	7	1
Boston Evening Academy HMCS	Boston Day and Evening Academy	14.0	301	42
Boston	Jeremiah E Burke High	13.9	790	110
Boston	The Engineering School	13.3	309	41
Springfield	High School Of Commerce	13.1	1,260	165

District Name	School Name	2008-09 Dropout Rate (%)	High School Enrollment (#)	Total Dropout Count (#)
Holyoke	Wm J Dean Voc Tech High	12.4	663	82
Haverhill	Haverhill Alternative School	12.1	33	4
Boston	Social Justice Academy	11.9	336	40
Wareham	Wareham Cooperative	11.8	85	10
New Leadership HMCS	New Leadership CS	11.5	209	24
Boston	Odyssey High School	11.0	356	39
Lawrence	Business Management	10.2	469	48
Boston	Academy of Public Service	10.1	286	29
Brockton	Lincoln Alternative	10.0	30	3
Boston	Brighton High	9.8	1,247	122
Chelsea	Chelsea High	9.3	1,415	132
Boston	Noonan Business Academy	9.0	245	22
Lawrence	Health & Human Services	8.2	478	39
Worcester	South High Community	7.9	1,375	109
Boston	Excel High School	7.6	397	30
Boston	Community Academy	7.5	385	29
Lynn	Lynn Voc Tech Institute	7.5	1,066	80
Holyoke	Holyoke High	7.4	1,252	93
New Bedford	New Bedford High	7.4	2,963	219
Worcester	Burncoat Senior High	7.1	1,211	86
Boston	Madison Park High	7.1	1,482	105
Boston	Boston International	6.9	174	12
Codman Academy CS	Codman Academy Charter	6.9	116	8
Randolph	Randolph High	6.8	792	54
Boston	East Boston High	6.6	1,426	94
Boston	Media Communications Tech	6.5	355	23
Lawrence	Performing & Fine Arts	6.4	533	34
Waltham	Waltham Sr. High	6.3	1,424	89
Athol-Royalston	Athol High	6.2	451	28
Worcester	North High	6.1	1,121	68
Rockland	Rockland Senior High	6.0	654	39
Springfield	Putnam Voc Tech High	5.6	1,586	89
Lawrence	Math Science & Technology	5.5	493	27
North Adams	Drury High	5.5	495	27
Boston	The English High	5.4	833	45
Chicopee	Chicopee High	5.3	1,258	67
Ralph C Mahar	Ralph C Mahar Regional	5.3	494	26
West Springfield	West Springfield High	5.2	1,302	68

District Name	School Name	2008-09 Dropout Rate (%)	High School Enrollment (#)	Total Dropout Count (#)
Southbridge	Southbridge High	5.2	407	21
Haverhill	Haverhill High	5.2	1,864	96
Lawrence	International High School	5.1	488	25
Gardner	Gardner High	5.1	887	45
Boston	William McKinley	5.0	240	12
Boston	Brook Farm Business	5.0	340	17
Attleboro	Attleboro High	5.0	1,735	86
Mohawk Trail	Mohawk Trail Reg. High	4.6	373	17
Southwick-Tolland	Southwick-Tolland Regional	4.5	583	26
Chicopee	Chicopee Comprehensive	4.4	1,371	61
Webster	Bartlett Jr. Sr. High School	4.4	565	25
Lawrence	Humanities & Leadership	4.4	522	23
Springfield	Springfield Central High	4.4	2,079	91
Lowell	Lowell High	4.3	3,396	147
Taunton	Taunton High	4.3	1,833	79
Boston	Snowden Int'l High	4.2	402	17
Worcester	Doherty Memorial High	4.2	1,469	62
North Central Charter Essential	North Central Charter Essential	4.2	238	10
Malden	Malden High	4.2	1,720	72
Salem	Salem High	4.2	1,268	53
Boston Preparatory CS	Boston Preparatory Charter	4.1	49	2
Greenfield	Greenfield High	4.1	393	16
Holbrook	Holbrook Jr. Sr. High	4.1	246	10
Pittsfield	Taconic High	4.0	967	39
Winthrop	Winthrop Sr. High	4.0	552	22
Avon	Avon Middle High School	3.8	234	9
Spencer-E Brookfield	David Prouty High	3.8	546	21
Weymouth	Weymouth High School	3.8	2,094	79
Peabody	Peabody Veterans	3.8	1,885	71
Everett	Everett High	3.8	1,729	65
Dennis-Yarmouth	Dennis-Yarmouth Regional	3.7	964	36
Maynard	Maynard High	3.7	326	12
Quaboag Regional	Quaboag Regional High	3.7	381	14
Global Learning Charter	Global Learning Charter	3.7	82	3
Westport	Westport High	3.7	520	19
Woburn	Woburn High	3.6	1,374	50
Lynn	Lynn English High	3.6	1,705	62
Adams-Cheshire	Hoosac Valley High	3.6	468	17
Palmer	Palmer High	3.6	497	18

District Name	School Name	2008-09 Dropout Rate (%)	High School Enrollment (#)	Total Dropout Count (#)
Boston	Another Course To College	3.6	221	8
Ware	Ware Junior/Senior High	3.6	306	11
Winchendon	Murdock Middle/High	3.6	390	14
Pittsfield	Pittsfield High	3.6	1,006	36
Quincy	Quincy High	3.6	1,316	47
Brockton	Brockton High	3.5	4,084	144
Somerville	Somerville High	3.5	1,404	49
Fall River	B M C Durfee High	3.5	2,330	81
Boston	Quincy Upper School	3.5	202	7
Whitman-Hanson	Whitman Hanson Regional	3.5	1,270	44
Gill-Montague	Turners Fall High	3.5	318	11
Northbridge	Northbridge High	3.4	638	22
Oxford	Oxford High	3.4	551	19
Fitchburg	Fitchburg High	3.4	1,278	43
Boston	Urban Science Academy	3.4	327	11
Lynn	Classical High	3.3	1,225	41
Monson	Monson High School	3.3	395	13
Dighton-Rehoboth	Dighton-Rehoboth Regional	3.2	1,050	34
Methuen	Methuen High	3.2	1,927	62
Harwich	Harwich High	3.2	374	12
Lee	Lee Middle/High School	3.2	343	11
Plymouth	Plymouth North High	3.2	1,046	33
Ayer	Ayer High	3.1	385	12
Bellingham	Bellingham High School	3.0	760	23
Quabbin	Quabbin Regional High School	3.0	1,006	30
Hull	Hull High	3.0	372	11

Methodology for the Calculation of Massachusetts Dropout Rates 2008-09 School Year

Population

The annual dropout calculations were derived from the population of students enrolled in grades nine through twelve in Massachusetts public schools. High school enrollment was based on the October 1, 2008 Student Information Management System (SIMS) submission. The dropout count was collected during all three SIMS submissions (October, March, and June) and then checked against data submitted by all other districts.

Definitions and Calculations

The Department applied a dropout measure that was developed by the U.S. Department of Education. A dropout is defined as a student in grades nine through twelve who leaves school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school, and does not re-enroll before the following October 1. Students considered to be dropouts were checked against data submitted by all other districts. If student dropped out and then re-enrolled in another district, the student was not considered a dropout.

The dropout count was based on two groups of students:

Summer Dropouts: Students who were reported in the October 1, 2008 submission as a dropout or a transfer to an in-state public school (with no record of re-enrollment) prior to the beginning of the 2008-09 school year.

School Year Dropouts: Students who were reported as either a dropout or a transfer to an in-state public school (with no record of re-enrollment) during the 2008-09 school year.

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, in compliance with the National Center for Education Statistics reporting guidelines, summer dropouts were applied to the grade in which they failed to enroll. For example, a student who was reported as enrolled in grade ten at the end of the 2007-08 school year, but fails to enroll in the 2008-09 school year, was counted as a grade eleven dropout because the student completed grade ten.

According to the U.S. Department of Education dropout measure, students who dropped out during a particular reporting year, but returned to school, graduated or received a GED by October 1 of the following year were not counted in the final dropout count; these students are referred to as returned dropouts. The final dropout count equals students who were considered to be dropouts at the end of the 2008-09 school year (preliminary dropouts) minus all returned dropouts.

Figure 1: Final Dropout Count Calculation

Final dropout count = Preliminary Dropouts (Summer Dropouts + School Year Dropouts) – Returned Dropouts

Example for the 2008-09 school year:

$$\text{State final dropout count for 2008-09} = (2,298 + 9,579) - 3,292 = 8,585$$

A dropout rate is the frequency that a dropout occurs within a defined population. The Department calculates the annual dropout rate as the number of students who drop out of school over a one-year period, minus the number of returned dropouts, divided by the October 1 grade nine through twelve enrollment, and multiplied by 100. For the 2008-09 school year, the one-year period was from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

Figure 2: Annual Dropout Rate Calculation

$$\text{Annual dropout rate} = \frac{\text{Final dropout count}}{\text{October 2008 Grade 9-12 enrollment}} * 100$$

Example:

$$\text{State annual dropout rate for 2008-09} = \frac{8,585}{292,372} * 100 = 2.9 \%$$

Part 6 – APPENDIX A-2: Private and Public Entities

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING AND LETTERS OF SUPPORT

(Note: due to the size and format of the file, signed letters are not included in this compiled version of the proposal. All letters were included in the version submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.)

- 1. Gateway to College Memorandum of Understanding**
- 2. America’s Promise Letter of Support**
- 3. Massachusetts Executive Office of Education Letter of Support**
- 4. Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Letter of Support**
- 5. Massachusetts School Counselor’s Association Letter of Support**
- 6. Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education Letter of Support**
- 7. Massachusetts Secondary School Administrator’s Letter of Support**
- 8. New England Comprehensive Center Letter of Support**
- 9. Boston Private Industry Council Letter of Support**
- 10. Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy Letter of Support**
- 11. Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville Letter of Support**
- 12. Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy Letter of Support**
- 13. United Way of Central Massachusetts Letter of Support**
- 14. Massachusetts Urban Superintendents Network Letter of Support**
- 15. Commonwealth Corporation Letter of Support**

Part 7 – APPENDIX B: OTHER

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DESCRIPTIONS OF HSGI LEADERSHIP COUNCIL PARTNERS

America's Promise

America's Promise is dedicated to forging a strong and effective partnership alliance committed to seeing that children experience the fundamental resources they need to succeed – the Five Promises (caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education and opportunities to help others) – at home, in school and out in the community. A particular program Grad Nation is a national movement to mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce.

Boston Private Industry Council (PIC)

Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) is a public-private partnership that connects business, the Boston Public Schools, higher education, government, labor, and community organizations to create innovative workforce and education solutions. The PIC is the connection between education and workforce, between school and career, and between classroom and the workplace. PIC initiatives thrive on the synergy created when business and community needs overlap. The result is a win-win situation: Businesses develop the workforce they need and Boston residents gain access to career opportunities and higher incomes.

Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp)

The mission of CommCorp is to build upward mobility pathways for Massachusetts youth and adults to prepare for high demand careers, in concert with state and regional partners. Their approach is that education and workforce development is strategically focused, outcome based, and results driven. They achieve this by understanding and addressing employer needs for a twenty-first century workforce, and people's needs for stronger skills and better jobs.

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

The Mass. Alliance on Teen Pregnancy advocates statewide and mobilizes communities to prevent teen pregnancy, to increase opportunities for youth and young parents, and to empower young people to make healthy decisions about relationships, sex, parenting, and life.

Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE)

MBAE is committed to a high quality public education system that will prepare all students to engage successfully in a global economy and society. We bring together business and education leaders to promote education policies and practices based on measurable standards of achievement, accountability for performance, and equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE)

The Board of Higher Education is the statutorily created agency in Massachusetts responsible for defining the mission of and coordinating the Commonwealth's system of public higher education and its institutions. The Board of Higher Education works to create and maintain a system of public higher education which provides Massachusetts citizens with the opportunity to participate in academic and educational programs for their personal betterment and growth; to

contribute to the area's existing base of research and knowledge; and to contribute to the Commonwealth's future economic growth and development.

Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)

The Mass. Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development is committed to working on behalf of job seekers, apprentices, union members, claimants, employers, attorneys and researchers. EOLWD provides a wide variety of programs and services to serve constituents across the Commonwealth. The cornerstone of services is a network of 37 One-Stop Career Centers providing support for youth and adults seeking employment pathways.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)

DPH serves all the people in the Commonwealth, particularly the under served, and promotes healthy people, healthy families and healthy communities. DPH believes in the power of prevention and works to help all people reach their full potential for health.

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS)

DYS strive to promote positive change in the youth committed to our care and custody by engaging in partnerships with communities, families, and government and provider agencies. By working in close collaboration with these entities, we can continue to provide rehabilitative services to youth and help make communities better and safer places to live.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (EOE)

EOE focused the collective energies of the Massachusetts Departments of Early Education, Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education to ensure that our public elementary, secondary, and higher education schools are meeting the needs of our students. They are committed to advancing actions and initiatives that will improve achievement for all students, close persistent achievement gaps, and to create a 21st century public education system that prepares students for higher education, work and life in a world economy and global society.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)

EOHHS exists, first and foremost, to ensure the health and wellbeing of every resident of Massachusetts. Its services include support for all health and human service initiatives throughout the Commonwealth. EOHHS is also responsible for all support for Children, Youth and Family Services.

Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association (MSSAA)

MSSAA is the professional association for secondary school principals in the Commonwealth. MSSAA supports the best possible educational opportunities for middle level and high school students throughout Massachusetts by initiating leadership training and providing services designed to improve administration and instruction.

Massachusetts Service Alliance

The Massachusetts Service Alliance, established in 1991, is a private, nonprofit organization that serves as the state commission on community service and volunteerism. Its mission is to catalyze the innovation and growth of service and volunteerism by creating partnerships that maximize resources, expertise, capacity, and impact.

Massachusetts School Counselor's Association (MASCA)

MASCA works for the promotion, improvement and expansion of guidance and counseling in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MASCA works to help counselors better understand their role and make more effective use of skills and talents in the complex areas of counseling and guidance, studies and publicizes the functions and responsibilities of counselors, helps to upgrade and improve the guidance, counseling and related fields, provides a channel by which counselors can be brought into a more vital and influential position with educational leaders, is active in the legislative process, encourages research aimed at the improvement of the counseling profession, maintains high ethical and professional standards for counselors, and develops and implements program to foster interest in career development programs.

Rennie Center for Education and Research

The Rennie Center's mission is to develop a public agenda that promotes significant improvement of public education in Massachusetts. They envision an education system that educates every child to be successful in life, citizenship, employment and life-long learning. The Rennie Center offers educators and policy makers a "safe place" to consider evidence and perspectives, discuss issues and develop new approaches to their work. They seek to foster thoughtful public discourse and informed policy making through non-partisan, independent research, civic engagement, and effective action.

United Way of Central Massachusetts

For 90 years, the United Way of Central Massachusetts has played a critical role in the local community by helping those in need. As community leaders, they convene local resources - donors, volunteers, partners, and agencies to address the most critical human needs, and create a positive, measurable impact in the community.

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GATEWAY TO COLLEGE NATIONAL NETWORK SCOPE OF WORK

The following describes the services to be provided by Gateway to College National Network (GtCNN) to the three new network member colleges and their partner schools during the three-year process of program start-up and implementation. This work will occur over the five-year HSGI grant period.

Discovery:

Discovery begins at the initiation of a relationship between a community and GtCNN. It is complete once a formal agreement to implement a Gateway program is reached. Discovery is a critical process by which colleges and their school district partners learn about the Gateway to College program model and also investigate the policies and practices of their partner institutions. The discovery process includes an on-going technical assistance relationship with GtCNN, one or more visits to a Gateway to College program, a site visit to the potential partner college, the development of a Letter of Interest and a projected program budget. In many cases, the discovery process also includes a policy scan of the community in order to determine feasibility of the policy environment.

Training:

The training process for new member colleges to the Gateway to College National Network is comprised of three in-person training events, four web-based training discussions, and additional web-based professional development offerings. Program staff and faculty are required to participate according to their job role and the topic of a particular event.

The January *Program Management* event is designed for the program director, the program director's supervisor, and the lead resource specialist (student support personnel). Additional members of the school district or college leadership are invited to participate as well. This three-day event prepares key staff members to address the multiple facets of program operation through the lens of developing an implementation plan. The event also includes a kick-off social event for college presidents and school district superintendents.

The March *Student Selection and Support* event walks direct program staff through the selection process, including participation in a student information session and hands-on activities designed to prepare program staff for the outreach and selection process. This three day event also includes exposure to counseling and student support techniques and an opportunity to assess areas of need for further professional development among the program director and two resource specialists.

The April *Curriculum and Instruction* event prepares Gateway program directors to lead their instructional faculty in the creation of themed, linked, curricula which is activity-based, student-centered and, in many cases, a departure from the type of instruction familiar to most college faculty. This three day event also provides the first opportunity for program staff to meet the instructional coach that they will work with during their first two years of implementation. During the course of the training and planning year, GtCNN also facilitates a minimum of four web-based training events on topics providing "just in time" information for new program implementation. Additional webinars and conference calls are facilitated on an as needed basis during that same period.

Approximately once per month throughout the academic year, an additional, on-going aspect of training includes virtual “Brown Bag” webinars, which are professional development offerings delivered by educational professionals and GtC practitioners via a web-based format. These offerings are focused in the general areas of *Program Management*, *Student Support*, and *Curriculum and Instruction*. Brown Bag webinar topics range from innovative instructional methods, and program management practices to student support strategies. Webinars are open to all faculty and staff of network member programs.

Technical Assistance:

Technical assistance includes the support to each partner program in addition to the support provided by the partner’s primary GtCNN liaison. This assistance includes but is not limited to: support with print materials or public announcements provided by the communications manager, support with program budget analysis provided by the finance director, and the time of the Executive Director when called on to assist with administrative challenges.

Site Support:

Site support comprises the primary relationship between the college (and school district, when needed) and GtCNN. This relationship begins with the *Program Management* training event and continues for the duration of the college’s membership in the GtCNN. This relationship includes visits to the partner colleges and, during the first semester of service to students, it includes weekly telephone discussions with program directors. Site support is facilitated by one primary liaison at GtCNN, but it may include being connected to many other members of the GtCNN team or other National Network partners. GtCNN site support specialists provide program directors with guidance throughout implementation, solutions to program challenges, and a peer with whom they can develop new ideas.

Instructional Coaching:

During the first two years of service to students, partner Gateway programs receive 14 days of on-site instructional coaching services from a coach with master-teacher skills in instructional design and classroom management. Coaching is a critical element of direct service to college faculty who are working with students with different needs and more diverse learning styles than they may have previously encountered. Coaching services are individualized and customized to work on the goals of individual faculty members and include direct observation of instruction and one-on-one meetings with faculty. Coaching services are provided in coordination with the instructional leadership of the local Gateway program director.

Data collection and evaluation:

Gateway partners are provided a data-collection tool that can be customized in order to allow programs to collect specific student- and program-performance data in addition to what may be possible with school district or college data collection software. Additionally, the Gateway to College database can be customized to streamline the reporting requirements programs have to their multiple partner institutions.

Along with the Gateway database, GtCNN provides detailed, individualized, guidance and instruction to program staff for the collection of data as well as bi-annual analysis and reports on student performance and student survey results. GtCNN program evaluation services contribute

to: real-time data-driven decision making for programs; reports for program partners and funders; and the creation of a body of evidence that colleges and districts can use for additional fundraising efforts and the development of future initiatives.

Peer Learning Conference:

All Gateway partner programs participate annually in a Peer Learning Conference (PLC), a national event in which faculty and staff consult and collaborate with their peers. The PLC is a three-day event each July which is co-hosted by a Gateway partner college. Given the unique nature of the Gateway program—working with struggling high school students in a college environment—faculty members place great value on the opportunity to work directly with peers serving the same population.

In addition to peer-led workshops, the PLC also features presentations and workshops by subject-area experts from a range disciplines and topic areas. The PLC is a centerpiece of the annual cycle of support and professional development opportunities provided by GtCNN.

RESUMES FOR KEY DEPT. OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PERSONNEL

Jenny L. Caldwell Curtin
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EDUCATION

Massachusetts Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), May 2008
Institute for Educational Leadership – Washington, DC and Northeastern University – Boston, MA

Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD
Master of Arts in Public Policy (MPP), concentration in social and education policy, May 2004
Certificate in Nonprofit Management, May 2004

Tulane University, Newcomb College, New Orleans, LA
Bachelor of Arts (BA) in sociology and minor in psychology, May 2001

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education **Malden, MA**
State Coordinator of Alternative Education and Trauma-Sensitive Schools October 2005-Present

- Manage four grant programs – the Alternative Education program (18 grantees), the Safe and Supportive Learning Environments program (32 grantees), the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Planning and Programming (18 grantees), and the Online Learning for At-Risk High School Students (14 grantees):
 - Oversee the budgets that funds the grants and grant-related training activities
 - Administer the competitive grant process, including design for the request for proposals
 - Facilitate and organize regular grantee meetings, trainings, and site visits
 - Provide individualized technical assistance and general grant administrative oversight
 - Chair and inter-agency Advisory Committee for the Safe and Supportive Learning Environments grant
 - Supervised a contracted employee to develop an evaluation tool for the SSLE grant program
 - Designed grantee evaluation tools and compile results in annual summary reports
- Support the development of trauma-sensitive school practices, high-quality Alternative Education programs, and general dropout prevention approaches statewide:
 - Design statewide conferences and regional networking events
 - Manage a pilot to provide young worker safety training to students enrolled in Alternative Education programs
 - Conduct quantitative and qualitative research and analysis on the field Alternative Education, school discipline practices, and reasons why youth drop out of school

- Develop and strengthen innovative internal and external collaborations to develop strategies related to supporting the educational achievement of all youth, which includes representing the Department on at-risk youth related activities, such as:
 - Facilitate an inter-agency planning committee to develop a statewide leadership summit on increasing high school graduation rates
 - Co-chair the MA Coalition for Youth Violence Prevention with the Dept. of Public Health, which led to the first statewide conference developed by the Coalition
 - Chair the Education Committee for the Youth Aging Out of DSS Care Taskforce, resulting in recommendations in a state report to better support the educational achievement of students in state custody
 - Chair an inter-agency workgroup to create a guidance document for educators on supporting students and staff when there in concern about child abuse or neglect
 - Co-organize an intra-Department dropout prevention and recovery workgroup to support in-depth efforts among urban school districts

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education **Malden, MA**
Data Analyst June 2004-October 2005

- Conducted data analysis and wrote annual dropout data reports and grade retention data reports
 - Highlighted for the first time the percent of students that dropped out after successfully completing the state assessment required for graduation
- Supervised a contract employee for the creation of a policy recommendations report on options for the Department’s methodology for a graduation rate, which led to Massachusetts becoming a national leader in the development of a four-year cohort high school graduation rate
- Provided technical assistance to Department staff and school districts on Federal Title I data, dropout data, and grade retention data

Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies **Baltimore, MD**
Program Associate September 2002-June 2004

- Managed Clearinghouse activities for the national Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA) Initiative for the U.S. Department of Labor, including:
 - Supervised a consultant to support Clearinghouse responsibilities
 - Led design and organization of a national conference, which resulted in the creation of a sustainability advisory committee and a concrete continuation strategy
 - Facilitated conference planning workgroup and sustainability advisory committee
 - Created content for first YDPA newsletter
- Conducted field tests for an alternative education self-assessment tool, and redesigned the tool for the Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development
- Researched and co-authored key publications including:
 - Concept paper for a transitional housing project for youth in Baltimore City
 - Guidebook on using public money to develop Alternative Education programs for dropouts, created for the Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development
- Assisted in the planning stages for the creation of a Baltimore innovation high school

Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation

Washington, DC

Program Intern

May 2003-July 2004

- Wrote chapters on welfare reform to result in publishing a book to provide concrete policy recommendations
- Evaluated Youth Safe Haven after school replication sites, and develop recommendations for a technical assistance strategy for the replication sites
- Researched and recommended potential locations for Delancey Street program replications

PUBLICATIONS (SELECTED SAMPLE)

- *Youth Voices - How High Schools can Respond to the Needs of Students and Help Prevent Dropouts: Findings from Youth Focus Groups.* Created for the Massachusetts Department of Education, July 2007.
- *Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools: District Survey Results.* Created for the Massachusetts Department of Education, April 2006.
- *Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools: 2003-04.* Created for the Massachusetts Department of Education, October 2005.
- *Neighborhood Effects of Hope VI: Evidence from Baltimore.* Co-researched and written at the Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2002.

KENDRA WINNER

EDUCATION

Ed.D. Human Development, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
M.A. Applied Child Development, Tufts University, Medford, MA
B.A. Honors, English Literature, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Malden MA 2010 - present

Research and Evaluation Specialist

Oversee the development of evaluations and research plans in collaboration with state program staff and develop qualitative and quantitative research designs and reviews

- Developed methodologically rigorous evaluation and research designs, including designs that can measure causal impacts
- Created and implemented surveys
- Wrote research and evaluation guidebook for state staff
- Collaborated effectively with internal and external stakeholders to achieve project results

Jobs For the Future, Boston, MA

Consultant

2009 - 2010

Led the design and creation of training tools for a national effort to provide underserved students with the support and experiences necessary to gain postsecondary education

- Created a suite of ready-to-use protocols, tools and assessments designed around common early college high school design and implementation issues
- Created and carried out interview protocols and analyses to reflect the expertise of Jobs for the Future staff in resource design
- Provided consultation on process and design of training tools

TeachFirst, Inc. Seattle, WA/Burlington, MA

2007 - 2008

Director, Teaching and Learning

Led national training program evaluation and redesign to build organizational leadership and school change

- Designed series of training modules and learning experiences for K-12 administrators and teachers to implement changes in infrastructure and instruction to improve low-income student learning outcomes
- Designed and implemented a continuous feedback process to document and improve training program quality and outcomes
- Managed writing teams and outsourced staff, including style and copy editors
- Supervised and mentored new training designers
- Trained and evaluated consultants on training delivery

**University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL), Lawrence, KA
2006 – 2008**

Consultant

Managed, designed and authored DVD and guide book to support the integration of adolescent literacy instructional strategies into university content area methods courses

- Created and managed project goals and design
- Directed video editing and digital design team to create DVD video, navigation and design
- Managed the writing of and co-authored DVD User Guide.

**Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
2005 – 2007**

Lecturer 2006 - 2007

Interim Director, Language and Literacy Master's Program & Lecturer
2005 - 2006

Managed program to ensure graduates can evaluate and provide effective literacy practices, engage students in their own learning, and provide leadership among peers on effective literacy instruction

- Designed and delivered weekly lectures and interactive learning experiences, and evaluated student performance for graduate level courses in reading comprehension, language and literacy development and language and culture
- Advised students and created opportunities for personal and professional networking and support
- Developed web based and departmental infrastructures to improve diversity recruiting and admissions yield

**Teachscape, Inc., New York, NY/San Francisco, CA
1999 – 2005**

Director, Research and Evaluation 2004 - 2005

Founded company's internal evaluation of professional development outcomes

- Created data collection methods, reporting procedures, metrics and instruments

Educational Services Project Manager 2001 -2004

Managed the strategic design, training and ongoing support for multiple teacher training projects in high-need school districts serving low-income students

- Designed face-to-face and online field staff trainings on literacy and technology
- Trained, supervised and evaluated field staff
- Participated in evaluation design and data collection, analysis and reporting
- Hired, supervised and evaluated design team
- Developed and implemented facilitation practices and activities to build and sustain online learning

Literacy Content Specialist 1999 - 2001

Directed the curriculum development and design of online, video case studies for in-service K-12 teachers

- Lead and managed a team of academic experts in the design of online literacy instruction curriculum
- Supervised video production crews filming classroom instruction
- Managed the media production to design video case studies and attendant tools and materials

The Boston Plan for Excellence, Boston, MA

1998 – 1999

Director of Research

Designed and carried out research on aspects of whole school reform in the Boston Public Schools

- Created methods, collected data, and conducted analysis on district professional development spending
- Designed and carried out research and analysis on the role of building leaders in standards-based reform and student achievement outcomes
- Acted as liaison to board on research projects; prepared and presented reports for board review

Harvard Graduate School of Education

1992 - 1998

Research Associate

- The middle school youth project, Gil Noam, Principal Investigator
1996 -1997
- Children with early corrective heart surgery. Lowry Hemphill, Principal Investigator
1994 -1998
- Urban adolescent development in literature. Lowry Hemphill, Principal Investigator
1993 -1994
- The Home-School Project. Catherine Snow, Principal Investigator
1992 -1994
1996 -1997

Project Coordinator, The Harvard RALLY Project, Cambridge, MA

1994 -1998

Co-founded clinical support program for at-risk urban middle school students

- Designed mental health services, mentoring and academic support program for classroom settings
- Hired, trained, and supervised clinical staff working with students in and out of classrooms
- Hired and supervised evaluation staff and designed evaluation methods

EXPERIENCE:

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, *Educational Specialist* May 2001-present

Staff member of the Secondary and School Support Unit

- Provide technical assistance for academic support and other grant programs including proposal conception, development and implementation
- Assist in the coordination of statewide high school redesign and improvement initiatives
- Assist in the development of college, public school and workforce development initiatives for older youth
- Assist in the development and implementation of statewide policies around college and career readiness

Staff member of the Accountability and Targeted Assistance Unit and Office of Language Acquisition.

- Facilitated planning sessions (PIM) for schools declared underperforming by the Massachusetts Board of Education
- Awarded, administered and provided technical support for academic support services grants to 68 public school districts
- Assisted in coordination of Title III of ESEA, *No Child Left Behind Act*
- Provided technical assistance for districts implementing planning and programming for the academic success of English language learners
- Provided data analysis of student performance and demographic information for the Office of Language Acquisition

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST, *Assistant Residence Director* Aug. 1999-May 2001

Co-leadership live-in role in two -building residence hall cluster with 500 undergraduate residents. Responsible for management, student development and other Residence Life Departmental Functions.

- Recruited, trained, conducted professional development and supervised Resident Assistant staff
- Conducted judicial conferences with students
- Liaison with other University staff and residential academic program
- Supported and supervised residential programs and staff

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST, *Intern* Sept. 1998 -Aug. 1999

Graduate assistant in organizational development and human in auxiliary services at the University. Providing training and development for on and off-campus University projects.

- Organized and conducted workshops and professional development training
- Worked with auxiliary service committees to provide better service for students and staff

- Intervened in sexual harassment situations involving university employees
- Conducted leadership training with paraprofessionals in the Springfield Public School System
- Created curriculum and led leadership and diversity training with Springfield Police Department

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST, *Graduate Teaching Asst.* Sept. 1998-Dec.1998

Teaching of Education 357 *Introduction to Urban Education*, Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies.

- Assisted faculty member in course development and preparation
- Presented course material and instructed undergraduates in 50 student class
- Maintained regular office hours for students to discuss coursework
- Graded, instructed and supervised an undergraduate discussion section

AHORA-PUENTE AL FUTURO, *Director* Aug. 1996-Aug. 1998

Coordination of the youth program of *Concilio Hispano* at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. A bicultural/bilingual support and academic enrichment program for Latino youth.

- Coordinated and facilitated volunteer and tutor staff
- Acted as liaison between public school staff, institutes of higher education and AHORA
- Developed new projects and programs for youth in AHORA program
- Facilitated between funders and the AHORA program
- Conducted personal, career and academic counseling of Latino students
- Coordinated proposal and grant writing for AHORA program

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY SERVICES, *Youth Program Coordinator* Jun.1995-Aug.1996

Assisted with the coordination of two youth employment and education programs: *City Links*, a public sector pathways program for new immigrant high school students, and *Academics for Changing Times*, an AmeriCorps program.

- Supervised two teams of AmeriCorps members
- Provided leadership in after-school program implementation
- Facilitated curriculum development and created newsletter for youth, funders, and community
- Counseled and mentored at-risk high school youth
- Assisted in developing curriculum and teaching public sector leadership class for high school pathways program

MULTICULTURAL MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL, *Student Teacher* Jan.-Jun. 1995

Taught in an alternative program in the multi-cultural component of Boston English H.S. located at Roxbury Community College.

- Taught civics and American History

- Taught drama and cooking mini-courses and taught morning fitness classes
- Provided academic and personal counseling to students
- Assisted in planning of new integrated humanities curriculum

ADMISSIONS GUARANTEED PROGRAM, *Tutor/Counselor* Sept. 1994-Jan. 1995

Tutored and counseled at the J.E. Burke School in a program to encourage students to attend the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

- Tutored students in a variety of subjects during the school day at the Burke High School
- Provided personal and academic counseling to students
- Organized recreational events for students

MIT/WELLESLEY UPWARD BOUND, *Resident Assistant* June-Aug. 1994

Lived with and supervised Cambridge inner city students in a residential summer enrichment TRIO program.

- Supervised and led workshops
- Provided discipline and daily supervision to youth
- Assisted in academic and personal counseling

EDUCATION:

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST

Doctoral Candidate in Educational Policy Research and Administration

Coursework completed May 2000

Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, Educational Leadership and Policy, February 2001

HARVARD UNIVERSITY 1997

Graduate School of Education, course work

Alternatives to Violence

School Based Services, Theories and Practice

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT BOSTON 1995

Graduate School of Education, Masters in Education/Secondary Education Certificate

FRAMINGHAM STATE COLLEGE 1992

Bachelor of Arts in American History

CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE 1989

Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts

- Presidential Scholar

CERTIFICATION:

Massachusetts Department of Education Teaching Certificate, History and Social Studies, grades 9-12

OTHER EXPERIENCE:

AmeriCorps Front-line Supervisor Training and Conflict Resolution Training
Chair, Concilio Hispano Technology Committee
Member of *Iniciativa* transitional board, 2004
MCAS Tutor, Malden High School, 2002-2003
Latino 2000 Steering Committee for Common Ground's reorganization of *Concilio Hispano*
Pilot Outcomes Project of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Search committee for Superintendent of Cambridge Public Schools, 1997
Academics for Changing Times Advisory Board
International Baccalaureate Study Group, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School
Pre-practicum at Boston High School and Madison Park High School, Boston, MA
English tutor, Cape Cod Community College

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS:

"*The Miseducation of Latino Students*", ABC's of Equity Conference, Cape Cod C.C., 1998
"*Multicultural Middle College High School*", MATSOL Conference, 1995
"*Building Latino/a Achievement*" Lesley College, Building Peaceable Schools, 1998 and 1999
Just A Start Cambridge Graduation, 1998
"*Dealing With Difficult People*" Springfield Police Department, 1999
"*Emotional Intelligence and Diversity*" Springfield Police Department, 1998-99
Diversity 101, University of Massachusetts Resident Assistant Training, 1999-2001
Numerous Massachusetts Department of Education presentations concerning accountability, AYP, English language learner policy, high school redesign, college and career readiness educational policy and the use of data for school and district improvement planning

Robert C. Curtin
Email: rcurtin@doe.mass.edu

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), May 2006

Institute for Educational Leadership – Washington, DC and Northeastern University – Boston, MA

Master of Arts, Political Science, May 2001

Northeastern University – Boston, MA

Bachelor of Arts, Government, May 1999

Clark University – Worcester, MA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Malden, MA

Manager, Data Analysis and Reporting

February 2008–present

Supervisor, Data Analysis and Reporting

February 2004–February

2008

- Manage the Data Analysis and Reporting unit that is comprised of seven state employees and one contracted employee
 - Responsible for meeting the majority of the internal and external data analysis requests made of the Department, which includes meeting all the Federal reporting requirements, processing student-level data requests, and the development and release of major reports, such as the graduation, dropout, and grade retention reports
- Active participant in planning for future data collections to meet analytical and reporting needs, which includes regular collaboration with the Data Collection unit, the Information Technology unit, and senior staff at the Department.
- Serve as the Massachusetts Coordinator for Federal data reporting – through EdFacts and the Consolidated State Performance Report – resulting in consistent recognition from the U.S. Department of Education for Massachusetts as a leader in timely and accurate reporting
- Responsible for calculating Federal entitlement and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant allocations – Titles I, IIA, IID, IV, V, and IDEA
- Represent the Department on a number of key groups, including:
 - *Chairperson*, Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC) General Statistics Standing Task Force for the U.S. Department of Education, January 2009–present
 - *Appointed Member*, EIMAC General Statistics Standing Task Force for the U.S. Department of Education, October 2005–January 2009

- *Advisory Board Member*, Just for the Kids – Massachusetts, October 2004–present
- *Chairperson*, EIMAC General Statistics Subcommittee for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), May 2006–May 2008
- *Member*, National Center for Education Statistics Task Force on Dropouts and Completers, February 2004–July 2005
- Co-authored the successful application for a \$6.0 million Federal Longitudinal Data System (LDS) grant, which includes three main components: 1) SIF (School Interoperability Framework) to create a transactional data submission system, 2) Inter-state data sharing, and 3) Inter-agency data sharing.
 - Serve as the Department lead on the inter-agency data sharing portion of the LDS grant, which includes working with the Executive Office of Education, the Public Consulting Group (PCG), and other state agencies on the Readiness Passport Project
- Developed individual inter-agency data sharing agreements between the Department and the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Transitional Assistance to provide student-level to the other youth serving agencies
- Co-developed the application for a state Information Technology bond to expand the Student Information Management System (SIMS) to collect course enrollments, completions, and marks
 - Participant in the policy and implementation planning for the SIMS expansion
- Co-led the development of the high school graduation rate methodology, which was used for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations beginning in 2007
 - As a result, Massachusetts is currently recognized as a national leader on high quality, transparent cohort graduation rate methodology
 - Regularly share expertise on the development and use of a graduation rate methodology for Massachusetts constituents, other states, and the U.S. Department of Education
- Supported the development and implementation for the Massachusetts Education Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS) to collect demographic data and work assignment information on individual public school educators
- Participated in the policy development with the Department of Higher Education for the School to College Database, resulting in a data management system to allow Massachusetts to track the performance of public school students that enroll in Massachusetts public post-secondary institutions

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Malden, MA

Title I Data Analyst

January 2002–February 2004

- Conducted data analysis and wrote annual dropout data reports and grade retention data reports
- Provided technical assistance to Department staff and school districts on Federal Title I data, dropout data, and grade retention data
- Responded to numerous data requests from internal and external constituents

The Center for Comparative Democracy, Northeastern University

Boston, MA

Research Analyst

September 1999–June 2001

- Served as a research analyst in the development of many projects including four manuscripts published by Dr. William Crotty
 - The Politics of Presidential Selection (2000)
 - Ireland on the World Stage (2001)
 - [America's Choice 2000: Entering a New Millennium](#) (2001)
 - The State of Democracy in America (2001)

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Proficient with Microsoft Office Programs – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access
- Proficient with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
- Proficient with the Cognos Data Warehousing Tools

Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary
Education, 75 Pleasant St,
Malden, MA 02148, 781-338-3205
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Rachelle Engler Bennett

Current
Position

Ten years **MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education** MA
Work within a unit that partners with schools and other organizations to help students succeed in school and be prepared for higher education, rewarding employment, and responsible citizenship.

Director of Student Support

CURRENT MANAGEMENT / POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Shape policy, supervise seven staff, and manage six programs and a \$30M budget that serves tens of thousands of students through more than 800 grants that focus on addressing the achievement gap in schools across the state. Programs include:
 - *Academic Support, Alternative Education, state and federally funded Out-of-School Time, Community Service Learning, and Safe & Supportive Learning Environments.*
- Facilitate the work of the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Taskforce, designing and implementing a framework and assessment tool for schools, and making recommendations to the state house on the topic.
- Implement two major evaluation systems that demonstrate effective programmatic outcomes.
- Oversee approximately 70 professional development sessions each year.

COMMUNICATIONS / TECHNOLOGY

- Provide content and updates for the unit web-site.
- Present at in-state and national conferences.
- Edit staff writing, design tracking systems, and shape reports and publicity materials.

PROGRAM DESIGN

- Oversaw the initial implementation of four Department programs:
 - *The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (FY03-present) for approximately 20,000 students in more than 40 low-income and low-achieving communities each year.*
 - *Supplemental Educational Services, a federally-required state-wide tutoring program for thousands of students from low-income families in dozens of low-*

- *The Certificate of Mastery component of the 1993 Education Reform Act, an award for high school students that includes a tuition waiver to state schools (FY01-03).*
- *The first Capitol Forum in Massachusetts, a civic education program designed by Brown University for high school students and teachers (FY01).*

PAST LEADERSHIP

- Chair of the National Title V Documentation Committee (since FY05-07).
- Department Liaison for the Parent and Community Education and Involvement Advisory Council to the Board of Education (FY02-FY06). Helped revise all Council Guidelines (FY04).
- Coordinated dropout prevention youth focus groups and summary report (FY06-FY07).
- Co-facilitated the Department’s Priority Objective Math Team (FY04).
- Served as Commissioner’s designee on the Governor’s Task Force on Youth Mentoring (FY01).

Previous Experience

Six years **ELNA (Education and Leadership for a Nonviolent Age)** MA
A school collaboration that promotes social responsibility in young people through the development of student leadership skills among middle and high school students.

Executive Director

- Organized 20 conferences, including over 350 workshops for 2,500 students.
- Coordinated day-long Forums for teams of students, teachers, and administrators.
- Collaborated with superintendents, teachers, and students of ten school districts.
- Administered budget and managed several hundred stipended and volunteer positions.
- Represented the organization externally, through presentations and publicity.
- Added an annual conference for middle school students.
- Initiated an annual week-long Summer Student Leadership Institute. Trained two 1998 participants to coordinate the second institute.
- Significantly increased student involvement in planning and leading projects and events.

Six years **iEARN Computer Network** INTERNATIONAL

A non-profit global network that enables teachers and young people to use the

Internet to collaborate on projects that enhance learning and make a difference in the world.

Regional Contact and Trainer

- Invited and traveled to Pakistan to train the first teachers in that country to use the network.
- Designed and led teacher training sessions, in Melbourne, Australia and New England.
- Facilitated a conflict resolution presentation with students from numerous countries for an international audience of approximately 250 teachers and students.

Four years **Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.** MA

A consulting group that partners with organizations for higher operational performance by developing work cultures that tap into peoples' knowledge, experience, and skills.

Project Partner

- Wrote 40 page reports on Domestic Partner Benefits and Work-Life Balancing for firm members and clients such as Mobil Corporation.
- Helped design a meeting place for young women of color in Nashua, NH.

One year **Los Niños** MEXICO

A bi-national organization that creates opportunities for children and their families to participate in the development of their communities.

Community Partner

- Worked in Spanish, training women to teach their peers about basic nutrition.

Education

- ***Brown University***, B.A., Development Studies, focusing on Latin America, GPA: 3.5
- ***The School for International Training in Chile***, one semester, GPA: 3.7
- ***Northeastern University & The Institute for Educational Leadership***
-- *Education Policy Fellowship Program*, 2005-2006

Additional Skills

Microsoft Office; Mediation Training; Spanish Skills

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION INITIATIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job Description: 0.5 FTE High School Graduation Initiative Program Evaluator

Brief Summary of Duties and Responsibilities:

Working under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, the High School Graduation Initiative Program Evaluator will coordinate all facets of program evaluation including state-led activities. Evaluation findings will be used to measure progress in meeting grant goals, continuous program improvement and U.S. Department of Education reporting.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Design and review surveys and other data collection tools.
2. Coordinate the planning, delivery and monitoring of research and evaluation projects associated with the High School Graduation Initiative Program implementation.
3. Coordinate the development of reports and project performance tools for high schools participating in the High School Graduation Initiative Program.
4. Collect and report data.
5. Review all RFPs and RFRs to ensure that sufficient data is collected from responses to evaluate progress in meeting grant goals.
6. Produce evaluation reports of various High School Graduation Initiative Program projects.

Key Required Competencies:

1. Ability to understand, interpret and make professional judgments about complex analysis and research methodology.
2. Ability to produce sophisticated, thoughtful interpretations of research findings.
3. Ability to collect, present, and analyze data accurately and objectively.
4. Ability to use sound judgment in handling analytical and logistical challenges.
5. Ability to effectively work with internal and external stakeholders.
6. Strong oral and written communications skills
7. Creativity, thoroughness and attention to detail.

Minimum Qualifications:

Applicants must have at least four years of full-time, or equivalent part-time, or professional experience in a specific or related content area, educational program or service. A masters degree or higher in an educational content area may substitute for two years of the required experience.

Preferred Qualifications:

1. Master's or advanced degree in an education-related field with emphasis on statistical methods and analysis.
2. Familiarity with statistical software packages such as SPSS.
3. Familiarity with data reporting tools such as COGNOS.
4. Experience in presenting data to various audiences.

Job Description: 1.0 FTE Dropout Prevention and Recovery Specialist

Brief Summary of Duties and Responsibilities:

Working under the supervision of the project director the High School Graduation Initiative the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Specialist will assist in the coordination of all state-led activities related to dropout prevention and recovery.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Coordinate the planning, delivery and monitoring of professional development and technical assistance for the High School Graduation Initiative Program.
2. Coordinate programmatic services for high schools participating in the High School Graduation Initiative Program and the Urban Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group.
3. Participate in internal and external working groups to support the High School Graduation Initiative.
4. Review all RFPs and RFRs and provide extensive feedback to ensure that the best possible services are available for students at-risk of not obtaining their high school diploma.
5. Help to evaluate on-going activities of various High School Graduation Initiative Program projects.

Key Required Competencies:

1. Ability to work with schools, districts, other government agencies and community partners on issues concerning student dropout and recovery.
2. Ability to work with a complex range of issues concerning academic, socio-emotional and other causes for dropping out.
3. Ability to collect, present, and analyze data and understand research findings accurately and objectively.
4. Ability to coordinate a large array of projects with multiple deadlines and outcomes.
5. Strong oral and written communications skills
6. Creativity, thoroughness, attention to detail and a willingness to work on a diverse team.

Minimum Qualifications:

Applicants must have at least four years of full-time, or equivalent part-time, or professional experience in a specific or related content area, educational program or service. A masters degree or higher in an educational content area may substitute for two years of the required experience.

Preferred Qualifications:

1. Master's or advanced degree in an education-related field
2. Familiarity with Massachusetts education reform and current dropout prevention and recovery initiatives
3. Experience in presenting information and data to various audiences

OVERVIEW OF RECENT DROPOUT REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

Timeframe	Activity
Spring 2006	ESE provided dropout prevention planning grants for targeted districts
2006-07 school year	ESE provided service-learning grants focused on dropout prevention to districts
March 2007	Statewide Graduation Rate Summit
July 2007	Released a <i>Youth Voices</i> student/dropout focus group report: http://www.doe.mass.edu/hsreform/youthfocusgroup.pdf
2007	Released first four-year HSGI School Cohort graduation rate data
Spring 2009	Regional Youth-Focused Summits on dropout prevention
Summer 2009	Launch of the first ESE webpage devoted to dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery: http://www.doe.mass.edu/dropout/
October 2009	Release of the Massachusetts Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission report: http://www.mass.gov/Eeoe/docs/Dropout_Commission_Report_10_21_2009.pdf
2008-09 SY, 2009-10 SY	Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group with the ESE and 18 urban school districts
2008-09 SY, 2009-10 SY	Early Warning Indicator Index Pilot developed and refined for the 24 urban districts
2008-09 SY, 2009-10 SY	Partnership with the Rennie Center for Education Policy and Research on forums and policy briefs on various dropout-related topics

Timeframe	Activity
2008-09 SY, 2009-10 SY	Behavioral Health and Public Schools Task Force – chaired by the ESE, includes representation from other state agencies and organizations
2009-10 SY	Grant program: “Green in the Middle” – STEM focused service-learning projects targeted at high-need middle schools feeding high schools with high dropout rates
2009-10 SY	Grant program: Development of online courses and modules for students most at-risk for not graduating on time
2010	Policy and planning grant on statewide dropout reduction strategies from the National Governor’s Association