

Appendix A: Description of Selected Cross-Cutting Improvement Activities (FFY 2009)

Many of the MASSDE improvement activities are cross-cutting; they have an effect on multiple indicator areas. The MA SPP Improvement Activity charts for each indicator list the activities that relate to that particular indicator. Below is a more complete description of the cross-cutting activities.

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ARRA Entitlement Grants

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14

Massachusetts school districts allocated funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to a variety of activities designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, including but not limited to:

- professional development for special educators and general educators in inclusive classrooms, administrators, and related service providers;
- new and/or expanded programs designed for special populations such as students on the Autism Spectrum, dropout prevention and recovery, reading disabilities, etc.;
- hiring consultants to evaluate programs and practices, and provide technical assistance for designing systemic changes to improve them;
- creating positive learning environments;
- collaborating with other districts to develop and implement new programs, especially for high school students, to provide transitional services including career and college preparation;
- hiring support staff including guidance counselors, school social workers, school adjustment counselors, etc., with particular therapeutic and counseling skills for this population;
- updating technology, including low and high tech systems and equipment for direct instruction, monitoring progress, and reporting data; and
- other innovative initiatives specific to characteristics and needs of the districts.

ARRA Title II-D Technology Competitive Grants Program – MASSDE Student Support Services Unit

Indicators 1, 2, 4, 14

The purpose of this federal grant program is to improve student achievement through the effective use of technology in elementary and secondary schools. This program supports proposals that create robust, technology-infused environments that sustain the following four priority areas:

1. Projects that work collaboratively with MASSDE to create, implement, and evaluate online courses/modules for underserved high school students in alternative education, credit recovery, or credit acceleration programs. Grant recipients may adapt an online course/module, or partner with an organization to design and develop the online courses/modules that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks or the Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore). Products created must be in a format that can be shared with MASSDE; successful models will be disseminated and used by other districts.
2. Projects that create effective technology-rich environments that support existing tiered-instruction in English language arts and Mathematics. The tiered-instruction may include all three levels: core instruction, supplemental instruction, and intensive intervention on any one level.
3. Projects in which the grant recipients will work collaboratively with MASSDE's partners (e.g., WGBH Teachers' Domain, Verizon Thinkfinity) or other research-based successful models, to:
 - a. design, develop, and implement online professional development;
 - b. mentor participating teachers who are teaching in technology-rich classrooms;
 - c. support participating teachers to reflect and refine their teaching; and
 - d. select promising practices that integrate technology into curriculum and instruction.
4. Projects that use appropriate technology effectively to implement formative, benchmark, and summative (MEPA) assessments, particularly in schools that have high number of English language learner (ELL) students.

Central Massachusetts Communities of Care Positive Behavioral Interventions (PBIS) Grant Fund Code 250

Indicators 2, 4, 5

The purpose of this grant program is to support the partnership of select school districts in Worcester County with the Central Massachusetts Communities of Care Project (CMCC) to develop and implement PBIS, a tiered system for improving school climate by supporting positive behaviors throughout the school. Schools participating in the grant program receive PBIS training, associated technical assistance, and other resources from the CMCC. CMCC is a provider of care management services for youth with serious emotional disturbance, with community-based family centers in Worcester County. The priorities of the grant program are to:

- Increase the capacity of school districts in Worcester County to foster positive school climates, support positive behaviors throughout participating schools, and to reduce disruptive behaviors; and
- **Increase participating schools' ability to identify students, grades 4-8, in need of mental health services, and to respond to the need for intensive support via both internal capacity and community-based mental health providers.**

The goal of the school district-CMCC partnership is to identify at-risk students who are in need of mental health services and to reduce and/or prevent court involvement among students with emotional impairments. Participating districts receive professional development as well as onsite assistance in the development and implementation of the principles of PBIS. The training from this grant is designed to ensure sustainable implementation and long-term success of this initiative in participating schools.

Closing the Achievement Gaps Legislation

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14

On January 18, 2010, Massachusetts enacted this education reform legislation to intervene in underperforming (Level 4) schools. The schools identified are targeted for aggressive intervention that is focused on a plan developed in collaboration with the superintendent, the school committee, the local teachers' union, administrators, teachers, community representatives, and parents.

Closing the Early Literacy Gap for Students with Disabilities – Fund Code 297

Indicators 6, 7, 8, 12

The purpose of this competitive grant opportunity is to support the development of strategic literacy action plans to enhance and align educational systems, curriculum, and instructional practices across public preschool and/or kindergarten programs, Head Start, and community-based early childhood education programs. The strategic action plans help to ensure that all programs serving students with disabilities, ages 3-5, are effective, engaging, developmentally appropriate, and designed to create seamless transitions across environments and into the next phase of the students' education. District study teams assess current language and literacy strategies and practices, literacy intervention and differentiated strategies, and ways to use information from students' IEPs to support language and literacy across the curriculum and in the school environment.

Collaboration between MASSDE's Curriculum and Instruction Math Office and Special Education Planning and Policy Development Office (SEPP)

Indicators 3, 5

With input and guidance from the urban superintendents, the Massachusetts Urban Math Liaisons network (Mathematics directors providing guidance and support in Mathematics in Massachusetts public schools) identified the supporting students with disabilities in Mathematics as a critical priority in the urban districts. In response to this need, the Math Specialist Support group dedicated its meetings to developing a district level collaboration between special educators and math specialists. The learning objectives for the collaboration include:

1. creating sense-making opportunities regarding the necessity of, and resources for, promoting the belief that students with disabilities can learn rigorous Mathematics and deserve a chance to learn high quality and higher order Mathematics;
2. developing an understanding of what contributes to students with disabilities having difficulty learning Mathematics, by exploring research findings and listening to experts on the subject;
3. articulating necessary practices and strategies to support students with difficulties in Mathematics, and identifying strategic customization of instructional practices; and
4. identifying district and school structures and supports for students with disabilities learning Mathematics, including professional development, coaching, curriculum needs, policy, and time for collaboration.

Collaboration with Federation for Children with Special Needs

Indicators 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13

MASSDE has a longstanding relationship with the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), the Parent Training and Information Center federally funded to provide free information, support, technical assistance, and workshops to Massachusetts' families who have children with disabilities. FCSN provides training and technical assistance to families throughout Massachusetts on behalf of MASSDE. Training topics include:

- Transition from Early Intervention to Special Education
- Parents' Rights
- IEPs
- The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
- Transition 101
- Understanding My Child's Learning Style

FCSN is a key partner of MASSDE in writing and implementing the State Personnel Development Grants. Responsibilities of FCSN include the developing and providing instruction for 3-credit graduate level courses for Massachusetts educators on ways to work with parents. Additional responsibilities include the creating self-guided modules for parents and families on successful transition for middle and high school students, and developing alternate version of these modules for special populations such as Spanish speakers. Staff from FCSN facilitates collaboration between district staff and parents through the A.P.P.L.E. model. Also, FCSN participates in the state stakeholder input opportunities, assists in developing MASSDE technical assistance documents, and has included MASSDE staff as presenters in the annual *Visions of Community* conference.

Collaboration with Stakeholders

All Indicators

Special Education Advisory Council (SAC) – The SAC is a group of parents and professionals charged under federal and state special education laws to provide policy guidance to MASSDE on issues affecting special education and related services for students with disabilities within the Commonwealth. The SAC's responsibilities include:

- advising MASSDE on unmet needs within the state in the education of students with disabilities;
- providing public comment on proposed rules and regulations for special education;
- advising MASSDE on developing evaluations and corrective action plans; and
- assisting in coordinating services to students with disabilities.

Statewide Special Education Steering Committee – Stakeholders from across disciplines, including parent, educators, administrators, advocates, and agency representatives, meet annually as members of the Steering Committee to:

- review baseline and current data (618 data and monitoring data);
- identify areas in need of attention; and
- plan for improvement activities.

Community/Residential Education Project – Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (MDDS)

Indicators 5, 13, 14

The Community/ Residential Education Project was developed through an interagency agreement between MASSDE and MDDS. The project's goal is to facilitate effective transitions from school life to more independent life within the community of students receiving publicly funded special education services who also meet the MDDS eligibility criteria for services. This goal is accomplished by supporting less restrictive, more cost effective residential options, special education services, and community based supports.

The project provides greater flexibility in service delivery based on individual support needs. Supports are provided to participants and their families to increase the family's capacity to care for their child in the home, and/or increase the participants' and families' capacity for effective interactions within the home and with the community. Students participating in this project may return home from residential education placements, or utilize the project to obtain a diverse array of supports in their home communities as an alternative to an initial residential special education school placement.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Training Project

Indicators 3, 5, 11, 13, 14

The CSPD Training Project was developed as a response to requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) 97 that required states to develop a multifaceted approach to personnel development under regulations for CSPD. To fulfill this obligation, MASSDE's Special Education Planning and Policy Development Office (SEPP) instituted a series of training activities to supplement ongoing personnel preparation activities that are provided within school districts and other agencies.

The CSPD Training Project presently consists of three components:

1. Training Modules: SEPP offers training units to assist school districts and other agencies in providing high quality professional development on special education related topics. The units consist of annotated PowerPoint Presentations, and in some cases, supplemental handouts. Topics include:
 - a. The Massachusetts IEP Process
 - b. A Principal's Role and Special Education in Massachusetts
 - c. Is Special Education the Right Service?
 - d. Transition From Adolescence Into Adulthood in Massachusetts
 - e. The Massachusetts Transition Planning Chart and Effective Transition Planning
 - f. Specific Learning Disabilities: Eligibility Determination under IDEA 2004
2. CSPD Trainers: SEPP has contracted with a limited number of trainers who receive ongoing training on the CSPD Training Modules. CSPD Trainers work with groups of 50+ individuals in public schools, and approved special education schools. Requests for training for groups larger than 50 people serving multiple districts and/or agencies are given priority.
3. CSPD Districts: The 40 largest districts in Massachusetts may send the districts' professional development provider to training sessions on the modules. It is an opportunity for participants to affect MASSDE work (including the development of new modules) and network with colleagues.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summit

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 8

MASSDE holds an annual Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summit to:

- share MASSDE resources for strengthening curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- identify needs for future development of curriculum resources and technical assistance; and
- build capacity of the MASSDE, districts, and schools through regional partnerships.

District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs) – MASSDE Center for School & District Accountability
<p><i>Indicators 2, 3, 4, 5, 13</i></p> <p>During FFY 2009, MASSDE opened six regionally based DSACs to help identified districts and their schools use professional development and targeted assistance to improve instruction and raise achievement for all students. DSACs use a regional approach that leverages the knowledge, skills, and expertise of local educators to address shared needs through an emphasis on expanding district and school capacity for sustained improvement. Focused professional development offerings are directed at building essential knowledge and skills of educational leaders and teachers in major content areas and for key student groups. In FFY 2009, the professional development offerings designed to help educators improve the outcomes for students with disabilities included graduate level courses on <i>Universal Design for Learning, Creating Positive Learning Environments, Youth Development and Self-Determination, and Transition Planning</i>. Additionally, Mathematics Specialists focus on helping general and special educators develop the necessary skills to help improve the Mathematics skills of students with disabilities.</p>
Dropout Prevention and Recovery Workgroup – MASSDE Urban & Commissioner’s Districts Unit and Secondary Support Services Unit
<p><i>Indicators 1, 2, 4, 14</i></p> <p>The Workgroup is supported by both the Urban and Commissioner’s Districts unit and the Secondary Support Services unit of MASSDE. The Workgroup is made up of 18 urban districts whose combined number of student dropouts represents almost half of the total number of students in the Commonwealth who drop out of school. This year, the group expanded its outreach to 77 urban districts that had at least one school with a dropout rate that exceeded the state’s rate. One hundred and thirty-three high schools that met this criterion. The Workgroup’s focus is on facilitating the sharing of promising practices among districts, and supporting districts’ team activities through face-to-face meetings and webinars. Districts host the meetings, which usually include a short, formal presentation of the host districts’ initiatives and opportunities to observe the activities described, brainstorm ideas and resources, and provide support and technical assistance to each other.</p>
Dropout Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Website – MASSDE Student Support and Secondary School Services Unit
<p><i>Indicators 1, 2, 4, 14</i></p> <p>The website describes information and resources including an extensive collection of dropout reduction related articles/reports, other websites, dropout data overview information, and descriptions of state activities. New promising practices are added as they are developed and evaluated.</p>
Early Childhood Special Education Professional Development
<p><i>Indicators 6, 7, 8, 12</i></p> <p>In FFY 2009, MASSDE and the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (MEEC) co-sponsored two training series and a Special Education Professional Development Summer Institute for public preschool and kindergarten staff and other early childhood professionals working in programs that serve young students with disabilities. The series’ offered 2 training days focused on strengthening knowledge and skills of administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals. The first series addressed inclusion of young children with a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum. The second series focused on issues related to behavioral health and ways to address challenging behaviors in order to create meaningful inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities.</p>
Early Warning Indicator Index (EWII)
<p><i>Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 14</i></p> <p>Using a statistical regression model, MASSDE developed a predictive tool to identify students at risk for not graduating in four years or less of high school. Based on middle school data (grade 7 and 8), ninth graders</p>

from several urban districts are grouped according to five at-risk categories designated by degrees of risk. The findings are distributed to the appropriate districts to allow them to design targeted, student-centered interventions. This project will be made available to all districts in FFY 2010.

Educational Proficiency Plans (EPP) – MASSDE Student Support and Secondary School Services Unit

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14

An EPP is an educational planning tool to be developed for the subject area(s) in which a student does not score at least 240 or above on the grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). An EPP includes:

- a review of the student's strengths and weaknesses based on MCAS and other assessment results, coursework, grades, and teacher input;
- the courses the student will be required to take and successfully complete in grades 11 and 12 in the relevant content area(s); and
- a description of the assessments the school will administer to the student annually to determine whether s/he is making progress toward proficiency.

The EPP requirement is intended to increase the likelihood that students graduating from high school have the requisite skills needed for postsecondary success. Students are encouraged to and supported in taking challenging courses that will better prepare them for postsecondary educational or career opportunities. For students with disabilities, MASSDE recommends that students' IEPs are used to assist in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in the learning environment as the EPP is developed.

Emergent Literacy Grant

Indicators 3, 5, 6

In order to increase districts' capacity to support all learners in emergent literacy, the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) provided training to educators and parents in the use of research-based, universally-designed technology for developing literacy skills in early learners, especially those with cognitive disabilities, in an inclusive environment. During the three years of the project (2004-2006), seventeen school districts that were involved in the Massachusetts Comprehensive System of Personnel Development participated in the "Universally-Designed Technology for Literacy" project. For more information, see <http://madoe.cast.org/>.

Federal School Turnaround Grants

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8

These USED competitive grants are for states to use to assist the lowest performing schools. Districts with one or more Level 4 schools are eligible to apply. MASSDE awards grants based on the plans districts develop under the Closing the Achievement Gaps legislation. Districts applying for the grants are required to choose one of four prescribed intervention models and demonstrate capacity to implement that model effectively over three years. The four models are:

1. Turnaround
2. Transformation
3. Close/Consolidate
4. Restart

To date, MASSDE has identified thirty-five schools in nine districts as Level 4.

Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission – MASSDE Student Support and Secondary School Services Unit

Indicators 1, 2, 14

In August 2008, the Massachusetts State Legislature passed [An Act to Improve Dropout Prevention and Reporting of Graduation Rates](#), which established a Commission to make recommendations in 10 topic areas. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (MEOE) released the final Commission report,

[Making the Connection](#), in October 2009. The report includes findings and recommendations in four main areas: 1) new statewide expectations; 2) early identification; 3) effective prevention, interventions, and recovery; and 4) responsive reforms and budget priorities.

Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Programs for Students with Disabilities

Indicators 5, 13, 14

This state-funded pilot grant program is designed to build and expand partnerships between high schools in public school districts and partnering state public institutions of higher education to offer inclusive concurrent enrollment opportunities for students with significant disabilities, ages 18-22, in credit or non-credit courses that include non-disabled students. These partnerships will result in improved systems that better serve students with disabilities and support their college and work success.

The partnership programs are designed to: 1) promote and enhance academic, social, functional, and employment skills and outcomes; 2) provide opportunities for students with severe disabilities to participate with their non-disabled peers in inclusive credit or non-credit courses; and 3) promote students' participation in the student life of the college community.

As part of the improvement and expansion of these programs, partnerships continue to develop their programs to include individualized community-based integrated employment opportunities that align with participating student career goals and course selection.

Massachusetts FOCUS Academy (MFA)

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 14

MFA is a federally funded five-year grant (SPDG) that builds upon the previous successes of Project FOCUS and Project FOCUS Academy (PFA). The grant program provides online professional development opportunities and leadership institutes to educators, families, and other stakeholders on a variety of topics related to instructing students with disabilities, with a particular focus on middle and high schools. Course offerings include *Universal Design for Learning; Positive Behavioral Supports; Family Engagement; Post-Secondary Transition; Differentiated Instruction; Collaborative Teaching Model; and Generalist Transition Courses I and II*. A new course in FFY 2009 entitled *Teacher-Leadership* is designed to prepare participants to assume leadership roles in their schools as demonstrated by their design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development activities that increase the capacity of the district in one of the focused content areas described above. Candidates are invited to participate based on their completion of all of the courses offered in one of the content areas, and a recommendation from the instructor(s). The MFA courses are research-based, have the rigor and expectations of three or four credit graduate level courses, and target areas that increase teacher effectiveness and affect student outcomes.

Massachusetts Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools

Indicators 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14

Section 19 of Chapter 321 of the Acts of 2008 required the creation of the Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools. Since January 2009, the Task Force worked to create a framework for supportive school environments, and developed a self-assessment tool to improve educational outcomes for students with behavioral health needs and to assist school environments in fostering effective collaboration with community based behavioral health providers. The framework addresses areas such as school leadership, professional development, access to behavioral health services, effective academic and non-academic supports, family engagement, and referral policies and protocols. The self-assessment tool measures schools' capacity to address students' behavioral health needs and to identify issues and areas that need further state and/or local support and focus.

Massachusetts Online Resource Library

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14

MASSDE/SEPP is developing an online Resource Library to highlight OSEP Funded Technical Assistance and Dissemination Resources and other online resources. This resource is designed to provide evidence-based practices in professional development. The library will include information on the IRIS Center; Access

Center: Improving Outcomes for Students K-8; Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS); National Center on Response to Intervention; and the NASDSE Professional Development Series. Topics will include, but are not limited to:

- Co-Teaching Model
- Differentiated Instruction
- Transition Planning
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Response to Intervention
- Accommodations
- Role of the Paraprofessional
- Supervising the Paraprofessional
- Disproportionality in Special Education

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) Professional Development Series

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14

NASDSE, with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), offers the NASDSE Professional Development Series. These conferences bring nationally recognized experts to the states using technology, providing an affordable means of quality personnel development for a variety of stakeholders. Experts provide important information on high-interest topics to audiences that include state directors of special education, state agency staff, local administrators, teachers, related service providers, higher education faculty, families, and other stakeholders.

Conference topics that are made available via satellite, streaming video, and/or DVD, have included:

- Seclusion and Restraint: The Impact of Federal and State Policy on the Classroom
- Healthy, Physically Fit and Ready for Action: Addressing the Physical Education and Activity Needs of Individuals with Disabilities
- Connecting Educational Standards to Student Learning Plans
- Policy to the Classroom

Preschool to Grade 3 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Alignment Project - Fund Code 264A & 264B

Indicators 5, 6, 7, 8, 12

The purpose of this three-year grant program is to identify and support strategies and resources to increase districts' capacity to improve the quality of education and inclusion of children with disabilities by aligning and coordinating curriculum, instruction, and assessment from Preschool to Grade 3.

Planning grantees (264A) research, discuss, and document their strategies, training, and progress within and/or across the age span, with a focus on how students with disabilities access the general curriculum. The teams bring together early childhood educators, elementary school staff, special education professionals, administrators, and parents to explore the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in inclusive classrooms; identify best practices to support all students along the pre-K to grade 3 continuum; and prioritize areas of strength and needed improvement.

Teams in the continuation year (264B) implement 2-3 strategies that have been identified during the planning year as a means of strengthening inclusion practices and building a continuum in the early elementary grades. FFY 2010 will be the final year of funding for Fund Code 264B; best practices and outcomes will be reported and disseminated statewide.

Procedures for Timely Verification of Correction of Noncompliance

Indicators 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16

Using updated guidance from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and other technical assistance sources, MASSDE reviewed and revised procedures for verifying correction of noncompliance for

the above-referenced indicators in accordance with OSEP Memorandum 09-02 from October 17, 2008.

Verification activities include:

- (1) if needed, changing, or requiring each district to change, policies, procedures and/or practices that contributed to or resulted in noncompliance;
- (2) for noncompliance concerning a child-specific requirement, requiring each district to submit updated data demonstrating that each district has corrected each individual case of noncompliance or completed the required action, although late, unless the child is no longer within the jurisdiction of the district; and
- (3) requiring each district to submit updated data for review to demonstrate that each district is correctly implementing the specific regulatory requirements (i.e., achieved 100% compliance).

When data reflects that each instance of child-specific noncompliance has been remedied, and that the district is 100% compliant with the specific regulatory requirements, MASSDE notifies the district in writing that it has verified correction of identified noncompliance.

Project FOCUS Academy

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 14

In the fall of 2004, MASSDE was awarded a three-year U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) funded State Improvement Grant (SIG) - Project FOCUS Academy (PFA). Project FOCUS Academy was designed to develop professional development programs to help students with disabilities build sound career goals and learn skills to ensure successful postsecondary outcomes. As part of the SIG, MASSDE worked with educators from selected high schools. The project's design required study groups from high schools to participate in face-to-face and distance-learning professional development opportunities in the areas of:

- Transition/Post-Secondary Outcomes;
- School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports;
- Universal Design for Learning; and
- Family Participation.

The distance-learning model was offered through MASSDE's Massachusetts Online Network for Education (MassONE).

Revision of “Is Special Education the Right Service?” (ISERS)

Indicators 3, 5, 6, 9, 10

The ISERS document offers guidance for practitioners and parents on how to:

- identify students with disabilities;
- be knowledgeable of updated regulations and characteristics of disabilities;
- define appropriate services and interventions; and
- ensure a responsive general education environment for all students.

Revision began in March, 2009 with the convening of Disability Workgroups composed of experts in each of the areas of disability to review the current document for accuracy and relevance in light of new research and current practices.

Revision of “Ten Step Guide for Comprehensive Educational Assessment of Students with Visual Impairments”

Indicators 3, 5, 6, 11, 13

The “Ten Step Guide”: 1) recommends types of assessments that are useful in making a determination of eligibility for a student with a visual impairment for the initial eligibility determination or three-year reevaluation; 2) helps to ensure a common understanding of the purpose and complexity of conducting the specialized educational assessment of students with visual impairments; and 3) provides resources to help educators meet the unique needs of students with visual impairments, and to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

Members of the Vision Impairment Disability Workgroup, working with other experts in the fields of diagnosis, treatment, education, and training of students with visual impairments, have collaborated to revise the “Ten

Step Guide” to reflect updated regulatory information and include best practices. The revised guide includes a new section describing the “hidden” characteristics of a vision loss that affect academic and social factors. Understanding these characteristics will enable non-vision specialists to facilitate meaningful inclusion and participation of students with visual impairments throughout the school day. The revised document will be re-formatted for use as a web-based resource.

Secondary School Reading Grant

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14

The Massachusetts Middle and High School Reading Initiative project began in 2002 with the development of the Massachusetts Secondary Literacy Framework. This framework includes three key components: reading instruction for all students, additional intervention programs for struggling readers, and a comprehensive reading assessment system. The model's school-wide approach is based on eight fundamental principles: (1) involvement of all staff in literacy instruction; (2) a focus on reading across the content areas; (3) multiple interventions for struggling readers; (4) professional development for all staff; (5) adequate time for reading and writing in the school schedule; (6) flexible grouping patterns; (7) assessment that drives instruction; and (8) leadership support and guidance.

Recipient schools receive small planning grants to form reading leadership teams and to develop a school profile of current practices and a related school action plan. For three succeeding years, schools then receive small grants to implement one or more elements of their action plans. In addition to receiving a small grant, schools come together in network meetings three times a year to discuss current research on adolescent literacy and share their efforts to improve adolescent literacy achievement. Members of the Reading Leadership Team at each school (which consists of a cross-section of staff, including representatives from all content areas and special programs) attend these meetings.

Topics discussed include: Creating a School-wide Approach to Improving Reading; Assessing Literacy Needs; Vocabulary Development; Improving Comprehension; Motivation; Helping the Struggling Adolescent Reader; Content Area Literacy; and Effective Writing Instruction. Participants have had an opportunity to hear from a number of national literacy experts, including Cathy Collins Block, Dorothy Strickland, Tim Shanahan, Donald Deshler, Steve Graham, Donald Leu, and John Guthrie. Staff from project schools and other Massachusetts schools lead breakout sessions at each network meeting. These breakout sessions provide an opportunity for other project schools to learn about the promising practices that are being tried by other schools. At each meeting, school teams have a chance to meet with each other to reflect on the day's learning and to discuss implications for their schools.

Secondary Transition - TransitionWorks: Innovative Strategies for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities from School to Work – Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) 5 Year Federal Grant

Indicators 1, 2, 4, 13, 14

TransitionWorks: Innovative Strategies for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities from School to Work, is a five-year grant from USED awarded to MRC to support transitioning youth with disabilities from school to work. The program focuses on aligning existing services and developing innovative practices. As part of this initiative, vocational rehabilitation counselors are partnering with local school districts to support youth with disabilities in their transitions from school to work, post-secondary education, and independent living. MASSDE, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Urban Pride, Commonwealth Corporation, and the Institute for Community Inclusion are partnering with MRC to implement the grant activities.

Self-Assessment Disproportionality Tool for Districts

Indicators 9, 10

Incorporated into technical assistance for flagged districts with disproportionate representation in special education, this self-assessment tool encourages districts to examine their own policies and procedures regarding special education eligibility and disability definition.

<p>Sign Language Video Resource Library</p>
<p><i>Indicators 3, 5</i></p> <p>The purpose of this library project is to develop Mathematics and science/technology vocabulary reference tools that educational interpreters and teachers of students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may incorporate into instruction. Available technical assistance will include written guides and DVDs. The design of the tool will be user-friendly, and promote ready access for end users. In addition, under this project, MASSDE provides a cost-free institute for educational interpreters to improve participants' sign vocabulary in Mathematics and science/technology content areas for grades 7-12.</p>
<p>Special EDition Online Newsletter</p>
<p><i>All Indicators</i></p> <p>The purpose of this newsletter is to provide school districts with ongoing technical assistance and to prompt dialogue within, among, and between districts and MASSDE, organized around the State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators.</p>
<p>Special Education Leadership Academies and Seminars</p>
<p><i>Indicators 3, 5, 6, 8, 11</i></p> <p>As part of the Special Education Summer Institute, MASSDE annually provides two Special Education Leadership Academies. The academies provide opportunities for school district special education administrators to develop new leadership skills and to improve current skills. Academy I is open to administrators who have 1-5 years of experience; Academy II is for administrators with more than 5 years of experience. Both Academies provide professional development to administrators in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective leadership in the areas of state and federal laws and regulations; • fiscal administration; • data collection and analysis; • staff recruitment and retention; • instructional program design and improvement; and • access to the general curriculum based on the <i>Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks</i>. <p>MASSDE sponsors ongoing leadership seminars for former participants of the Leadership Academies for participants to reconnect and network with their Academy colleagues and share effective practices, policies, strategies, and products.</p>
<p>Special Education Professional Development Summer Institutes</p>
<p><i>Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14</i></p> <p>The Special Education Summer Institutes are statewide professional development opportunities provided free of charge to special education professionals. Sponsored by MASSDE in partnership with school districts, educational collaboratives, institutions of higher education, and professional associations, the Institutes are designed to support approved private special education schools', educational collaboratives', and local school districts' efforts to increase the quality of programs and services provided to students with disabilities, and increase the number of highly qualified educators working in the field of special education. SEPP collaborates with the MASSDE Office of Curriculum and Instruction to provide professional development institutes in specific curriculum content areas. Some of the Special Education Institutes topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Print: A Framework for All Learners • Assessing English Language Learners (ELL) with Disabilities • Effective Evaluation of Special Education Programs • Language and Expository Discourse • Managing Behavior in an Inclusive Classroom • Mathematics and/or Science and Technology: American Sign Language (ASL) and Other Signed Systems • Occupational Therapy Services in Educational Settings

- Strategies for Students with Sensory Integration Dysfunction in an Inclusive Classroom
- Sustaining Braille Proficiency of Licensed Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments
- Topics in Teaching Literacy to Students who are Deaf or Hard-of-hearing
- Special Education Professional Development Seminar for Educators of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Special Education Program Improvement Grants – Fund Code 274

Indicators 3, 4, 5, 11

The purpose of this grant program was to fund professional development activities to improve the skills and capacity of educators to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Fund Code 274 was available to all public school districts and educational collaboratives (during FFY 2005 – FFY 2007). For FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, the priorities for Fund Code 274 were:

- Priority 1 - Enhancing Induction and Mentoring Programs (*required*)
- Priority 2a - Serving Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive Settings
- Priority 2b - Curriculum Development, Instruction, and Classroom Assessment
- Priority 2c - Meeting the Behavioral and Social Needs of a Diverse Student Population
- Priority 3 - Recruitment and/or Additional Professional Development Needs as Identified by the District or Educational Collaborative (*10% max could be used for this priority*)

Almost every school district in the state utilized Fund Code 274 funds, and participated in regional professional development conferences designed to support the priorities of the grant.

Special Education Program Improvement Grants – Fund Code 249

Indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13

The purpose of this grant program is to fund professional development activities that will help to improve the skills and capacity of educators to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Its priorities are to enhance program-based induction, mentoring, and retention programs and to advance the skills of educators through professional development activities. Fund Code 249 is available to all approved private special education schools.

Priorities for FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 are: Induction/Mentoring; and Curriculum Development, Instruction, and Classroom Assessment. FFY 2008 and FFY 2009 priorities are: Educator Quality and Effectiveness: Induction, Mentoring, and Retention; Supporting Schools and Students: Curriculum Development, Instructional Practices, and Classroom Assessment; and College and Career Readiness: Secondary Transition Planning.

All funded programs must be effective, sustained, and intensive in order to have a positive and lasting positive influence on classroom instruction and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Special Education Website

All Indicators

The Special Education section of MASSDE's website provides a variety of tools, news items, and resources to districts, parents, and other stakeholders: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/>. Some of the most visited sections of the website are:

- Headlines: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/>
- Contact Us – Opportunity for external customers to request information/ask questions: specialeducation@doe.mass.edu
- Grants: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/grants.html>
- Training: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/training.html>
- Forms and Notices: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/>
- Special Education Program Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/programplan/>
- Special Education Data: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/special_ed.aspx

Trauma Sensitive Schools Initiative – MASSDE Student Support Services Unit

Indicators 1, 2, 4

This MASSDE initiative focuses on the needs of students who have experienced or witnessed trauma by assisting with reducing the barriers that may affect academic performance, classroom behavior, and relationships that result from trauma. MASSDE is working to bring “trauma sensitive” practices to schools across the state through annual trainings and technical assistance that incorporate best practices and strategies for creating a safe supportive school environment where all students can learn, and where students are held to high expectations.

Work-Based Learning Plans (WBLP) for Students with Disabilities – MASSDE Student Support, Career & Education Services

Indicators 2, 4, 13, 14

The Massachusetts WBLP is a diagnostic, goal-setting and assessment tool designed to drive student learning and productivity on the job. It was developed by the MASSDE through an interagency collaboration of employers, educators, and workforce development professionals. Through work-based learning experiences, students have an opportunity to learn about various career areas and try different work styles, find out what type of work they enjoy, find out how they learn best in a workplace setting, and find out what natural supports are available. Students learn and practice basic foundation skills and begin to develop life-long career skills.

Beginning in March 2009, SEPP collaborated with the MASSDE Connecting Activities Office to develop a guidance document called [Using the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan In Transition Planning Activities for Students with Disabilities](#) and to enhance the [WBLP Scoring Rubric](#). The document is intended to: encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities in WBLP programs; be used as an option for individual student transition planning; and support educators, employers, Connecting Activities field staff, Workforce Investment Boards, One Stop Career Centers, and Local School-to-Career Partnerships in the implementation of quality work-based learning for students with disabilities.

Through this collaboration, MASSDE also created the [Work Experience and Transition Activities resource webpage](#). This resource lists resources, including websites, articles, and program materials, to assist in planning the work experiences and developing WBLPs for students with disabilities.