I. Overview

Grants & Initiatives

- 596/597: This grant establishes programs with academic assistance and internships that support academic development as well as technical and employability skills. The goal of this program is to provide quality innovative and intensive instruction in English language arts and mathematics through the Accel program to students in the classes of 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 who have taken and not passed the 10th grade MCAS.

- 627/626: This grant program establishes one-stop career centers that support unique academic, employment, and career needs of post-12th grade students who need further remediation to attain the skills necessary to pass the MCAS.

- 598/593: This grant program provides academic instruction (ELA and mathematics) and support services that enable students from the Classes of 2003, 2004, and 2005 to pass MCAS while providing opportunities to higher education. In the Fall 2004, 9 community colleges across the state currently receive Academic Support grants.

- In addition, the ACU-Placer, a computerized test to place students in community colleges, allows students to receive federal funding.

- JFYNet RFP: high schools and districts may apply for the JFYNet computer-based MCAS support program (PLATO) at a reduced price. Since 2002, students who are assigned to the program have passed the MCAS at a 40% higher rate than other students in the same schools who are not assigned to the program. The grant provides for software installation, staff training to run the program, classroom assistance, and management of student progress reports. Proposals are due by 5 PM Friday, 12/3/04. For more info go to: www.jfyboston.org

"Not test prep program, but a skill building program"
II. Promising Practice Pointers & Small Group Discussion

A. MCAS Math Tutoring
   Barbara Buckley, a seasoned academic support tutor, discussed tips for tutors when a student is worlds away from knowing the skills to pass Math MCAS. She also handed out a H.S. Mathematics MCAS Tutorial Guide. Some tips she highlighted:
   1. Choose a few topics that you (the tutor) know well and the student can tackle. Barbara calls these teachable, learnable topics. It’s important to thoroughly cover fewer topics rather than just touching on a large number of topics. Review the student’s past MCAS exam and look at every question that tripped up your student to decide what to focus on. Important MATH topics: Measures of central tendency, formulas, shapes
   2. Teach concrete strategies for open-response questions. Work on at least 1 or 2 open-response questions every tutoring session. Repeat these strategies over and over and make sure students use them in the tutoring session. Be sure to really cover the use of formulas, making sure students know what each part of each formula means. Make formulas concrete by teach students the meaning of formulas through models and pictures. And emphasize how to choose the correct formula. If a student doesn’t have any idea of where to begin, have them start by defining the term in the question and write down formulas they think should be used. Have them write a note and explanation to the MCAS scorer.
   3. Become the student’s “guardian angel.” Many students who have failed MCAS feel beaten down and dejected. Praise their accomplishments and strengths. Be sure it’s not all about what’s wrong. Help them by talking about strategies to calm down during stressful situations like MCAS (suggestions included in packet). It’s a big responsibility but you have to help that student to hope and to believe in him/ herself.

B. Tips for Program Implementation
   David Degen discussed the success of academic support programs at Assabet Valley Regional Technical H.S. They began running MCAS support programs during the day because of problems attracting students during after-school. At Assabet, they can schedule 100% students in MCAS because it runs in school and is systematically supported by administrators and teachers. With the support of teachers, Degen began ‘flexible entry electives’ at Assabet HS. The first two periods of the school day are electives such as phys. ed, music, art, drama, business technology, psychology, etc. All students sign up for electives. In the first week of school, 11th and 12th graders who have not passed MCAS are pulled from the class and placed into academic support classes for ELA and/or Math. Assuming a student passes the 10th Grade MCAS retest, s/ he may re-enter the elective course mid-year. Teachers then plan for students to re-enter the course in January. The in-school schedule meets students’ needs for work, sports, and other extra-curricular obligations.

C. Small Group Discussion
   Staff shared effective practices have worked in programs. Some of the strategies and tips included:
   • Fall River Regional Tech HS conducts a vocational academic support program. Students spend ½ time in carpentry or machine shop, working on a project with
steps that relate explicitly to MCAS items and ½ time in ELA and/or Math class that links the workshop project to those MCAS items.

- Work in small groups. 1:1 is O.K. but if a student does not show, that represents lost time for a tutor. Small groups allow for more flexibility.
- Daytime pullout MCAS support classes ensures more students are served.
- MCAS Math teachable, learnable topics: measurements, shapes, probability, and measurement of central tendency. With solid understanding of these three areas, students tend to pass.
- Reduce student-teacher ratio. Schedule back-to-back MCAS periods
- Make glossary cards with students for essential ELA and Math concepts. Term goes on front, definition, example, and illustration on back.
- Do not overwhelm the students. Take it in small increments. Break down complex problems into smaller parts.
- Focus on open-response questions. Show students exemplars and stress concrete strategies in those exemplars.
- Make academic support a mandatory in-school course for 11th & 12th graders who have not passed MCAS

III. Break Out Sessions

A. Colorized Writing Process, presentation by Tom O'Toole, Patrick Daly, Allison Rena, and Anne-Marie Reardon of Waltham Public Schools

Description and Purpose
The Colorized Writing Process is a system to: a) code the grading criteria for MCAS ELA open-response questions and long composition and b) concretely teach students how to improve their writing and revision. In preparing students for MCAS, Waltham ELA teachers get students to take the time to complete their work, show & teach what proficient/ advanced writing responses consist of, teach students to show their thinking, and use concrete, visual strategies for writing. The Colorized Writing Process gives teachers and students the tools to do this.

By colorizing writing, students 1) see in color what goes into good writing, 2) can begin to identify elements they should include in their responses and understand what each element does, and 3) receive concrete strategies to deal with abstract concepts of writing.

Some strengths of using the Colorized Writing Process to assess writing:
- Allows for self-evaluation (highlight own writing)
- Weakness and strengths are easily identified (what colors are present, what colors are missing)
- Color codes give students concrete tools to perform peer editing
- Students get clear, visual understanding of grading
- Individualized and specific feedback
- Goal setting (identify color code to work on)
To explain how to introduce this writing process to students, Waltham teachers walked through an example intro lesson. First, the teacher color codes the MCAS grading rubrics for ELA writing and teaches the codes to students. An example follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-Response Criteria</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Long Comp. Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Focus</td>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Thesis/Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition words and phrases</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Transition words and phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation:</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Commentary and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Details</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Supporting Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Language &amp; Style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the teacher hands out an MCAS question and introduces an anchor essay with a score of 1. Teacher asks why the response received a score of 1? The Colorization Process will help the group arrive at that understanding. Using highlighters on an overhead projector or on a white board, the teacher models (with student input) how to color code the sample response. This visually breaks down what the writer did in the response. The class would do this for samples answers with increasing scores. (See attached colorized anchor essays)

Some Tips for Effective Implementation

- To be truly effective, this process for analyzing writing should be used regularly and consistently in academic support classes and regular ELA classrooms. **Every time a student turns in an essay, they should colorize their own piece or a peer’s writing.**
- Modeling: introduce the Colorization process by colorizing (anchor essays, open-responses, sample essays) with your students. Only after they become familiar with the system should you move on to coloring their own writing.
- After students understand and can apply the colorization process to writing, you can move on to discuss what makes strong writing within each color code. For example, what makes a strong commentary & analysis (green) or what’s an effective thesis (pink), etc.
- When brainstorming ideas, colorize graphic organizers, such as webs, to show the elements, types of writing and students’ thinking
- Higher level groups: push them to identify and produce writing that satisfies multiple color codes (e.g. Writing that is both analysis & explanation)

B. **A Simple, Practical, and Fun MCAS-Math Prep Program**, by Armando Vierira of Brockton

1. Students are given the six topics that are always on MCAS and asked to design their own MCAS problem:

   1/ Central Tendency
   2/ Probability
3/ Ratios and Proportions
4/ Geometry and Measurement (formula sheet)
5/ Algebra
6/ Interpreting Graphs

Each topic is modeled to the students using various MCAS sample problems.

Students are encouraged to work cooperatively to design their own problem, encouraging collective brainstorming of ideas that are FUN to them -- such as sports, music, etc.

Students are encouraged to use the internet, each other, teachers, or any other resource at their disposal to research info. needed to design problem.

At the end, they have a total of 6 problems (one per topic) in order to create their own MCAS Problem Booklet.

2. Students are given a Trip Journal, which requires that they track the cost of a cross-country trip from Brockton to San Diego.

Requires use of formulas (e.g. cost of gas) and real-life math skills (e.g. determining how much to tip at restaurants).

Must develop a graph showing trip data

Scrapbook also includes writing detailed descriptions of stops as well (excellent for ELL students to further build skills)

3. Working with ELL Students
Showed a 60 second video of him standing in front of classroom of students speaking in a foreign language. Very effective -- audience bored and annoyed by end (which was purpose of showing video) of 60 seconds, which felt much longer. Then shows another video clip where he continues to speak in a foreign language but this time uses props and hand gestures to help the audience gain a better understanding of the lesson.

Three Principles that Assist ELLs:
- Increase comprehensibility
- Increase interaction
- Increase thinking skills

Techniques for Providing Comprehensible Input:
- Use visuals
- Use gestures, facial expressions, body language
- Speak clearly
- Model procedures
- Build on what students already know
- Be careful of idioms, slang, and pronouns
- Establish safe environment
IV. Updates/ Training on Academic Support Data Collection Process

Allison Ward, the Academic Support Data Specialist, presented on policies and procedures for collecting and submitting student data as applies to fund codes: 596/ 597, 598/ 593, 619/ 592, and 632/ 625. See handout for info on submission dates, directions for accessing student data and entering information, directions for completing the narrative evaluation, and Security Portal screen shots. (Most of these documents and more are posted to the Data Collection page of the Academic Support web site www.doe.mass.edu/as.)

***Allison stressed the importance of contacting her when grantees have any questions or confusions (ACSupport@doe.mass.edu / 781-338-3394).

V. RFR 619/ 592 Info. Session

For info. on the FC 619/ 592 application, see RFP posted to DOE web site: http://www.doe.mass.edu/as/grants/default.asp?fc=619 or contact the people listed on the RFP with questions.