

## Massachusetts Narrative Report 2011-2012

### A. Describe successful activities, programs, and projects supported with State Leadership funds and describe the extent to which these activities, programs, and projects were successful in implementing the goals of the State Plan.

In FY 2010, ACLS<sup>1</sup> completed a strategic planning process that identified three overarching goals for the state's ABE system: ensure that adults needing basic education have *access* to services; increase system *effectiveness and quality*; and, prepare students for success in their *next steps*: in college and further training, at work, and in the community. Continuing to build a standards-based ABE system is one of the objectives under the "Increase System Effectiveness and Quality" goal. We have been working on content standards for both students and teachers in FY12, as well as on a competitive RFP to re-bid the entire ABE system in Massachusetts.

- **Align Content Standards with CCSS:** In FY 2012, Massachusetts has used State Leadership funds to align our content standards with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We have crosswalked the existing content standards of the Massachusetts ABE Mathematics/Numeracy Curriculum Framework and the Reading Strand of the ABE English Language Arts Curriculum Framework with the Common Core State Standards, and identified revisions needed to align our ABE standards with the CCSS. We are also currently revising the Writing Strand of the English Language Arts Curriculum Framework for ABE to align with the Common Core State Standards. A new draft ABE Science Curriculum Framework for students is also currently under development. State Leadership funds support the significant state staff time dedicated to overseeing and guiding this work.
- **Align Professional Standards with Curriculum Framework Content Standards:** With the curriculum frameworks aligned with the CCSS, Massachusetts began in 2010 to align the ABE professional standards (which are generic, non-content-specific) with the Curriculum Frameworks. Accordingly, we are developing Professional Content Standards in Mathematics/Numeracy, ESOL, Reading, and Writing. SABES has a staff person or consultant in each of the 5 regions focused on aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment, with the content standards, and professional development is expected to be aligned with standards. SABES and ACLS are working together to encourage the use of the ABE professional standards requirements to strengthen teaching and learning.
- **Align Grant Programs with Strategic Goals:** Finally, much of FY 2012 was dedicated to the development of the first multi-year competitive RFP in seven years. This release was the first opportunity to align an RFP with our new state strategic goals for ABE referenced above. With 35 percent of each applicant's score based on prior performance, the RFP was a major opportunity to use performance standards to identify where the system is doing well and where it needs improvement, and to ensure that funding supports high quality services. This was a major focus of state staff throughout the year.

---

<sup>1</sup> The state office; "ACLS" refers to the office of Adult and Community Learning Services, the unit within the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE, the "eligible agency") charged with managing state and federal adult basic education funding and overseeing service delivery.

**B. Describe any significant findings from the eligible agency’s evaluation of the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the core indicators of performance.**

- **Core Indicator #1:** Overall, Massachusetts met its negotiated performance measures, and exceeded them by one percentage point. The percent of enrolled students in each education level that completed the level, the negotiated target, and the number of percentage points above or below the target is listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: FY12 Negotiated and Actual Performance Standards

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>FY12 Target</b>	<b>FY12 Actual</b>	<b>Above/Below Target</b>
Beginning Literacy ABE	31%	21%	- 10 points
Beginning ABE	36%	31%	- 5 points
Low Intermediate ABE	36%	34%	- 2 points
High Intermediate ABE	25%	24%	- 1 point
ASE Low	21%	14%	- 7 points
Beginning Literacy ESOL	44%	42%	- 2 points
Low Beginning ESOL	65%	56%	- 9 points
High Beginning ESOL	61%	50%	- 11 points
Low Intermediate ESOL	45%	48%	+3 points
High Intermediate ESOL	36%	39%	+3 points
Advanced ESOL	40%	34%	- 6 points

While we are pleased to have met and slightly exceeded our overall target, we did not meet a number of the targets for educational gains at the NRS Educational Functioning Levels. Most disappointing is the decrease in percentage points for the Beginning Literacy ABE, and Low and High Beginning ESOL levels. Although Massachusetts serves just 175 students at the Beginning Literacy ABE level, we need to improve in this area. To do so, Massachusetts is currently revising the ABE Reading standards and benchmarks and continues to provide professional development in implementing the standards to ABE teachers at all levels. We were fortunate to have the expertise of national reading experts Drs. Mary Beth Curtis and John Strucker advising us on the revision and resulting PD.

This year, we have contracted with Dr. Curtis and Dr. Amy Trawick (a national STAR trainer and ABE reading expert, as well as other national writing consultants, to revise our ABE writing standards, and provide professional development for ABE teachers in reading and writing. Dr. Strucker also continues to provide professional development on reading instruction for teachers. Our reading and writing standards are in the process of being aligned with the Common Core State Standards, as are standards for mathematics/numeracy.

We continue to train additional programs in the use of evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI, as reflected in the STAR training). Massachusetts has required that all programs train their intermediate level teachers in STAR and use it in classroom instruction by 2017. The attention we have given to revising reading standards and to STAR appears to be having

somewhat of an impact in the fact that our percentage points for Low and High Intermediate ABE levels decreased at a lower rate when compared to the other levels.

ACLS continues to place emphasis on having programs use their students' test score data. The Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT) for Reading and Math allow programs to see the number of items students responded to correctly and incorrectly, and while test questions are not visible, each test question is aligned to a specific ABE reading or Math Curriculum Framework benchmark. Thus, teachers can analyze what areas of standards-based instruction needs additional work in class, and ACLS provides ongoing PD on the topic. Also, ACLS is beginning this year to develop guidelines and materials for programs to be able to better analyze and use test results for improved instruction. Rather than "teaching to the test," ACLS wants to ensure that teachers can appropriately use the information to improve students' understanding of what they are learning.

Massachusetts met and exceeded its target in two of the six ESOL levels, in Low and High Intermediate ESL. Of particular concern to us, however, were the large decreases in Low and High Beginning ESOL. Two separate factors may have contributed to this decline. First, Massachusetts adopted the TABE CLAS-E Writing Assessment in FY11 to assess the writing skills of limited English proficient adults. In FY11, assessment staff and Adult Basic Education (ABE) practitioners experienced a number of serious problems with the validity and reliability of the TABE CLAS-E, which we detailed in our federal report last year. ACLS remains convinced that the problems highlighted in the July 2011 report to Dr. Dann-Messier were the result of deficiencies in test design and scoring procedures. In hopes of mitigating those challenges, Massachusetts adopted the CLAS-E Reading assessment in FY12, and programs continue to find that the CLAS-E Locator misplaces about one third of students tested in either Reading or Writing tests. The placements for these students are in a lower than appropriate test level, and thus students score at the top of the range and then are unable to show gain in subsequent tests. This deficiency and others mentioned previously continue to cause unstable scores that we believe do not reliably reflect ESOL learners' gains.

Another factor which may have contributed to disappointing gain percentages overall is that ACLS issued a new cycle of grant funding for programs offering ABE and ESOL services for FY2013 through FY2018. Programs applying for this grant—of which many were currently funded ABE and ESOL programs—spent many months completing their grant applications, and so it is likely that less attention was paid to other important tasks in the program.

On the positive side, Massachusetts exceeded its target for adults who entered Postsecondary Education or Training by 27 percentage points. In FY2011, the number of Massachusetts students who entered postsecondary education or training was 54%, and so our current FY2012 numbers have increased 8 percentage points from the previous year. This increased number of students in this category for FY2012 may be attributed to the fact that ACLS has heightened its attention toward increased college and career expectations for students. This goal is one of three which is a focus of our ABE Strategic Framework for 2010-2015<sup>2</sup>. ACLS is engaged in a number of initiatives with workforce and higher education partners to help programs be ready to support students in meeting these expectations. Additionally, many

---

<sup>2</sup> The three goals are: 1. Ensure that adults needing basic education have access to services; 2. Increase system effectiveness and quality, and 3. Prepare students for success in their next steps: in college and further training, at work, and in the community. From *Facing the Future: Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education 2010-2015*, page 2 <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/sp/FacingTheFuture.pdf>.

program staff are very aware of the impact that the new GED test in 2014 will have on ABE students, and began this year to increase the rigor of their curricula and instruction.

It is possible to analyze performance data in two different ways. First, in addition to meeting federal performance standards, Massachusetts has its own set of ABE performance standards around student attendance, average attended hours for students, pre/post test percentage, learning gains made using meaningful gain measures, and goals set and met.<sup>3</sup> In looking at these data for 2012, 86% of programs met or exceeded their performance standards, up 3 percentage points since FY 2011. If the programs which were not funded to provide ABE services in this new 5 year cycle are removed from the overall number of programs, the percentage meeting or exceeding their performance standards rises to 93%.

Secondly, when comparing FY 2012 gains in terms of core indicator 1 to those of FY 2011, the decreases seem less stark (see Table 2). In particular, there are increases in most of the ESOL levels.

Table 2: Comparison of FY 2011 to FY 2012

Education Level	FY12 Actual	FY11 Actual	Difference
Beginning Literacy ABE	21%	28%	- 7 points
Beginning ABE	31%	32%	- 1 point
Low Intermediate ABE	34%	39%	- 5 points
High Intermediate ABE	24%	25%	- 1 point
ASE Low	14%	16%	- 2 points
Beginning Literacy ESOL	42%	43%	- 1 point
Low Beginning ESOL	56%	55%	+1 point
High Beginning ESOL	50%	50%	Same
Low Intermediate ESOL	48%	45%	+3 points
High Intermediate ESOL	39%	38%	+1 point
Advanced ESOL	34%	34%	Same

- Core Indicator #2:** ACLS used wage record information provided by the state’s Department of Revenue (DOR) for the employment measures. The state office requests the data from DOR quarterly to update wage information in the ABE data system. The target was exceeded for “Retained Employment”, but was not met for “Entered Employment”. ACLS used data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for the first time and exceeded the target for “Entered Post-Secondary Education or Training”

<sup>3</sup> For more information, please see [http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy12fc340\\_345\\_359.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy12fc340_345_359.pdf)

Table 3: FY 2012 Negotiated and Actual Performance

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Above/Below Target</b>
Entered Post-Secondary Education or Training	35%	84%	+ 49 points
Entered Employment	35%	31%	- 4 points
Retained Employment	35%	69%	+ 34 points

- Core Indicator #3:** Again this year, Massachusetts implemented data matching with Oklahoma Scoring Service for the GED goal, downloading information monthly. Massachusetts' data matching protocols enable matching of several data fields regardless of whether a social security number is provided, assuring valid and reliable data. The survey method is used only for the secondary school diploma goal, which represents about 10% of the students for this core indicator. 2012 results fell short of the target by two percentage points.

Table 4: FY 2012 Negotiated and Actual Performance

**C. Describe how the eligible agency has supported the integration of activities sponsored**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Above/Below Target</b>
Obtained a GED or Secondary School Diploma	70%	69%	- 1 point

**Title II with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Include a description of how the eligible agency is being represented on the Local Workforce Investment Boards, adult education's involvement on the State Workforce Investment Board, the provision of core and other services through the one stop system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the one-stop delivery system.**

In FY2012, ACLS both maintained and significantly expanded collaborative strategies with the state's workforce development system to assist students attain goals related to college and career readiness. ACLS and the local workforce office continue the practice of jointly monitoring local funded programs and supporting ABE staff out stationed in career centers. This year, we have developed more coordinated systems, stronger communication mechanisms, and options for greater academic and employment success for adult students through a jointly-developed RFP. This RFP highlighted local workforce board priorities to be integrated with ABE or ESOL instruction. In addition, our Policy to Performance effort began to offer models of regional program development again coordinated with workforce board priorities, One-Stop Career Center services, and community college involvement. The multi-year competitive RFP referenced above included a sharp focus on college and career planning in student advising services. The RFP and related policy reflects the advice of a task force of

advisors in ABE programs convened by ACLS to make recommendations on the manner in which these services should be delivered.

### **1. Expansion: Policy to Performance (P2P)**

In FY 2012, ACLS continued to expand its interagency effort through the Policy to Performance technical assistance award from the U.S. Department of Education (OVAE). The Policy to Performance Task Force is aligned in mission with the prior grants where previously identified barriers were addressed that inhibit the successful transition of ABE learners to post-secondary education. In FY 2012, the previously identified barriers were addressed by piloting new strategies to result in the stronger success and persistence of adult students. Ultimately, the goal is to re-vision the ABE system to meet the challenge of future decades where adults will need to attain educational levels beyond the GED to gain employment with family sustaining wages.

The interagency P2P group is now fully engaged and has had success in FY2012 by following up on regional coalitions started at a statewide Summit on College and Career Readiness in June of 2012. The Summit brought together regional teams of ABE providers with local workforce representatives to identify how stakeholders in each region could work together to promote a broader educational mission and more effectively connect ABE to post-secondary education, specifically to community colleges. At that Summit, an incentive to such regional planning was the announcement of regional grants to support local efforts. As a result of a \$3 million increase to the state ABE line item, eight grants were made, and projects were begun in FY2012.

### **2. Expansion: New Grant Program to Support College and Career Readiness (Adult Career Pathways)**

In FY 2012, ACLS convened a joint working group with the workforce development partners to develop a new grant program (to be implemented in FY 2013) to support eligible adult students' career-related goals, and strengthen their preparation for employment opportunities and/or occupationally specific education and training programs. The working group represented a significant change to collaboration with the workforce system. Previously, ACLS had partnered with the 16 workforce board regions by awarding approximately 12% of the regional allocation for ABE services through the local workforce entity. This approach resulted in too little integration with what the workforce boards defined as the most pressing skill needs in their areas. In planning for the FY 2013 competitive RFP, ACLS convened regular meetings with a targeted group of workforce board directors and ABE staff. These meetings increased our understanding of where ABE and workforce skill demands converge in each region. As a result of these meetings, in FY 2013, Massachusetts will be awarding \$3.5 million to services that integrate ABE and ESOL instruction with priorities identified by our local workforce partners through the new "Adult Career Pathways" grant program.

### **3. Appointments of ABE Representatives to Local Workforce Investment Boards:**

ACLS works with chief elected officials and local workforce investment board (LWIB) executive directors in each region to appoint representatives of ABE to the 16 regional boards, ensuring that ABE has a seat at the table and a voice in regional planning. An ABE program director is chosen to participate on the LWIB and to keep other ABE program directors in the region informed of workforce development activities. All sixteen regions have ABE representatives on their LWIBs.

**4. Collaborating with One-Stop Career Centers:** In FY 2012, ACLS contributed approximately \$450,000 to support the state's One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) network, and close to another \$100,000 to support local ABE program staff out-stationed in the career centers in 15 of the 16 regions to conduct intake, assessment, and referral services. Because of the unique needs of the Boston region, with 23 funded ABE/ESOL programs, a variation called "the navigator strategy" has been implemented to serve the needs of the three One-Stop Career Centers in Boston. One region, Metro South/West, has elected not to pursue this strategy. Memoranda of Understanding exist between DOE and the 16 workforce development regions.

**5. Prioritizing Workforce Development Strategies in Community Adult Learning Centers in the FY 2013 to FY 2017 grant cycle:** ACLS prioritized Workforce Development in FY 2005 RFP to engage ABE programs in integrating and/or coordinating services with training vendors, workforce boards, and career centers to help students to improve their readiness for employment, move up on the job, identify career paths, and/or to build their occupational skills or awareness. A primary coordination strategy throughout this multi-year funding period (which ended in FY 2012) has been to direct 12% of regional funding for ABE programs through the regional workforce system. (This approach will be replaced in FY 2013 by the new Adult Career Pathways grant program described above.) In FY 2012, the continuation RFP again prioritized coordination with workforce development; however, it required more specifically coordinated strategies to prepare students for the workplace of the future by targeting regional industry or career-readiness priorities in the ABE/ESOL services provided. The requirement of programs to emphasize education and career advising was another expansion of traditional services intended to prepare students more effectively for a future that includes post-secondary education leading to employment with the potential for career pathways leading to family-sustaining wages.

**6. Professional Development Activities:** ACLS provides the majority of its professional development opportunities through funding the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES). SABES supports ABE programs in areas related to workforce development. Workshops and other activities were offered in 2012 to assist programs understand and be ready to implement services that would be integrated or coordinated with the workforce development system and with post-secondary educational options. SABES staff coordinated meetings to acquaint ACLS program directors and staff at One-Stop Career Centers to facilitate development of better understanding of career center services, of training options and vendors promoted by the one-stop centers, and to build stronger relationships with career center staff. SABES centers also develop the capacity of programs to engage in the workforce development coordination by offering workshops on targeted topics (e.g., integrating job readiness in the ABE/ESOL curriculum), convening meetings with ABE program staff and workforce development staff, and by offering technical assistance to specific programs. A revised guide book and an accompanying training were offered again this year on *Integrating Career Development in ABE Classroom*. SABES has worked with ABE programs to introduce the both Job Readiness and Career Awareness concepts and classroom strategies on a program-wide basis. In FY 2012, continued trainings on this tool were promoted and delivered. In addition to recruiting practitioners to learn about the tool at workshops, SABES worked to deliver this training to individual programs where all teachers and counselors would benefit from learning how to infuse career awareness throughout the program.

**D. Describe successful activities and services supported with EL Civics funds, including the number of programs receiving EL Civics grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.**

In FY'12, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided EL/Civics instruction grants to ten ESOL programs. Grant recipients included both local education agencies and community-based ABE programs across Massachusetts. Funded programs were located in both urban and rural settings with the predominant populations served found in urban and suburban settings with high immigrant concentrations. One thousand and twenty nine (1,029) ESOL students were served.

Some specific program activities are listed below:

- 1. Political Discourse:** Many programs hosted visits by elected officials including a US Congressional Representative and the Governor. Several programs planned lessons around visiting their local City Hall and visiting the State House where students met with elected municipal and state officials. Many programs visited the Massachusetts State House on Adult Literacy Awareness Day and on Immigrants' Day. All programs participating in these events prepared students for their visit through lessons that taught a deeper understanding of the political process. Students usually met with their locally elected officials and engaged in a dialogue on issues of interest to them. A number of programs used semester-long weekly readings of local newspapers to follow current events of interest to the students. One program's students participated in the May 2012 visit of the Governor of Massachusetts to their program.
- 2. Civic Engagement:** Statewide, most programs made effective use of lessons on voter registration, education and political campaigns. One program promoted student involvement in community volunteer activities. One program visited a Senior Center to learn about the services they offer to clients. The visit led to a program collaboration with the Senior Center to offer ESOL instruction and support on site for seniors. Another program supported students' participation in a public hearing gathering input concerning proposed changes in public transportation fares and services.
- 3. Financial Literacy:** Across the state, most programs included a curriculum unit on Financial Literacy. Topics generally covered are making a budget, balancing a checkbook, creating an emergency fund account, avoiding credit card fraud and predatory lending, teaching children to be money smart, and saving for a college education.
- 4. Public Information:** Statewide all programs introduced students to their local libraries where they applied for library cards and explored local resources that were offered at the library, such as story circles for children and free or reduced tickets to local attractions. Other programs invited speakers from local public service agencies to present information on how to access health care providers, local legal services, and citizenship and immigration services. Many programs invited representatives from their local police, fire, and school departments to address students' concerns about current community issues. Some programs collaborated with

the local One Stop Career Centers to facilitate the sharing of information on jobs and job training availability to students. The latter included visits to the programs from career counselors who talk to students about job placement, training workshops and career exploration services.

Some unique curriculum projects are listed below:

1. **Civics and Naturalization:** Several programs offer citizenship classes or workshops that integrate U.S. History and civics with English language instruction and the naturalization process. Topics include the overall INS citizenship process, eligibility, the application process, and the citizenship interview. A number of programs hold mock interviews for students engaged in citizenship preparation. Programs maintain collaborations with local organizations that support immigration and the naturalization process. One program hosted an AmeriCorps volunteer placed through the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition to greatly expand naturalization services in the program. Many programs include recognition of new citizens at their annual graduation ceremonies. One program hosts a July 4<sup>th</sup> naturalization ceremony every year that has become an annual tradition in the town.
2. **Local History:** As Boston is rich in local history that connects intimately with U.S. history, one program designed a project that used local field trips to primary historical sites to teach units on the Pilgrims, Puritans and native people and the Abolitionists and the Civil War, with a national park ranger guided tour of Beacon Hill, the African-American museum and the African Meeting House.