**Massachusetts FY14 Federal Report Narrative**

1. **Describe the major activities supported with State Leadership funds during the reporting period and the extent to which these activities helped you in implementing the goals of the State plan. Specifically describe activities related to the implementation of career pathways.**

PY13 was the final year of a two-year, $3.5 million Adult Career Program (ACP) that was developed and administered in collaboration with workforce development to support students’ career goals and strengthen their preparation for employment and postsecondary education. The programs served 1,288 students, including 746 ABE students and 542 ESOL students.

The goals of the Adult Career Pathway (ACP) programs were to support adult learners with career related goals and to strengthen their preparation for further education and training. The priority was to assist students in acquiring the academic skills, career readiness skills, and information necessary to gain access to a career pathway.

Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) partnered with Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) in the administration and oversight of the ACP program. Workforce partners implemented these grants and offered multiple contributions to ensure the success of the ACP program:

* Defined regional workforce priorities to assist ABE programs to develop programmatic strategies to build students’ academic skills as well as their understanding of workforce needs.
* Provided input in the proposal review process about each proposal’s adherence to the requested design elements.
* Sub-contracted with the community adult learning centers for each ACP program to assure adherence to the approved program design. The approved design had to address the regional workforce priority or priorities. Further contract agreements identified the terms and conditions of contract procurement in the region to assure that each ACP initiative is in compliance with federal, state, and local requirements.
1. **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:** We are pleased to have met and exceeded our overall FY14 target for ESOL (above target overall by 7 percentage points). In analyzing our actual ESOL percentages for each EFL level, Massachusetts improved in five of the six ESOL levels between 1 to 3 percentage points. We did not, however, meet our overall ABE target. See Table 1.

Table 1: FY14 Negotiated and Actual Performance Standards

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Education Level**  | **FY14 Target** | **FY14 Actual** | **Above/Below Target** |
| Beginning Literacy ABE | 39% | 25% | -14 points |
| Beginning ABE | 38% | 32% | -6 points |
| Low Intermediate ABE | 36% | 33% | -3 points |
| High Intermediate ABE | 30% | 24% | -6 points |
| ASE Low | 24% | 15% | -9 points |
|  |  |  |  |
| Beginning Literacy ESOL | 46% | 45% | -1 point |
| Low beginning ESOL | 60% | 61% | +1 point |
| High Beginning ESOL | 53% | 54% | +1 point |
| Low Intermediate ESOL | 48% | 49% | +1 point |
| High Intermediate ESOL | 41% | 44% | +3 points |
| Advanced ESOL | 33% | 35% | +2 points |

**ABE GAINS**

We are very concerned about our general continued low EFL completion rates for the ABE/ASE levels, and outline some probable causes. FY14 was our first year in implementing the CCR standards; while a number of programs are beginning to understand and incorporate them, most ABE programs need more professional development. Although a number of professional development offerings were provided in FY14, particularly in math, there is still an acute need in the field for in-depth training. Also, Massachusetts re-bid our entire professional development system this past year, and the number of the PD offerings was somewhat limited because the PD providers were to a great extent engaged in responding to the RFP.

In analyzing our poor showing in the ABE/ASE level completion, we believe our use of the MAPT may be both helping and yet separating us from how other states are measuring the gains of ABE learners. There are a few significant differences in the way MAPT test was designed and is implemented that we believe make the MAPT relatively more rigorous than other ABE assessments used in the country.

First, the MAPT is very closely aligned to our ABE reading and math content standards. Each test item is keyed to measuring a specific benchmark in our Massachusetts ABE Math and Reading Curriculum Frameworks. In comparison, the TABE 9/10 items and score scale were changed very little from the former TABE Forms 7/8 used 12 years ago. In 2002, Massachusetts undertook a formal analysis of the alignment of the TABE 7/8 reading and math test items with our reading and math curriculum framework standards. We found that the TABE only covered a little over 50% of what Massachusetts deemed important for what learners should know and be able to do. This large gap was the motivation for us to develop the MAPT to better align our assessment with the standards-based instruction we believed to be vital. However, the MAPT might be considered to be a more rigorous tool by which to show gain, in comparison to the TABE 9/10.

Second, the MAPT has three panels of test items, akin to Test Forms such as TABE 9/10 or CLAS-E Forms A/B. Because MAPT is a computer adaptive test, however, learners never see the same set of test questions more than once. With an item bank of 3,200 test items covering both content areas, it would be virtually impossible for learners to see and remember the test items.

Third, the MAPT is administered on an Internet-based platform hosted by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. As students complete a MAPT test, their scores are sent electronically via a nightly transfer from the University’s platform into ACLS’s SMARTT MIS database system. Thus, programs do not (and cannot) enter test scores themselves. As a result, programs have no potential ability to cull low student test scores or remove scores where students did not make EFL completion. While we are pleased with the reliability of our test scores and we did not set out to hold ourselves to a higher standard than other states, we know our data transfer system of MAPT scores has no comparison in other states.

We are currently in the process of revising the MAPT for Math and MAPT for Reading tests to align them with the College and Career Readiness standards for adult education. The revised MAPT will be operational on July 1, 2017.

In order to improve our ABE learning gains overall, we will redouble our efforts to have programs do better at post-testing as many students as possible. To that end, we have recently implemented an aid in the SMARTT MIS database so that each program can view a list, sorted by test, of students who have received 65 hours of instruction[[1]](#footnote-1) since their last test. This link is on the first page of the database. Below is a screen shot of the Welcome page to SMARTT in which this link appears.

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| Welcome to SMARTT (version 2.7.1.1)  |  |
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| **Students Needing a Post Test:** | [**Students with 65+ Hours of Attendance**](https://smartt.doemass.org/smartt/StudentSearchSrv?loadPage=PostTestReminderReportSrv) |
|  |  |
| **Students Exit List:** | [**Students with no attendance for two months**](https://smartt.doemass.org/smartt/StudentSearchSrv?loadPage=ExitReminderListSrv) |

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**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. ACLS uses data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for data matching as enrollment information from our Transition to Community College programs. We submitted data to NSC in early December which is more closely aligned to when they receive data regarding student enrollments within academic terms occurring toward the end of the reporting period.  Our ability to capture outcomes has improved since new processes have been introduced ensuring that the entry of student exit dates into our database are more closely aligned to their last date of attendance.   These newly introduced processes were in the form of an auto exit policy which changes a student’s enrollment status in cases where there has been a substantial lapse of three or more months in terms of their attendance.  This increases the likelihood for obtaining an NSC matching record with a postsecondary enrollment date that is later than their date of entry into the cohort .

Table 2:  FY 2014 Actual Performance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Actual** |
| Entered Employment | 39% |
| Retained Employment | 74% |
| Entered Post-Secondary Education or Training | 13% |

**Core Indicator #3:** Massachusetts implemented data matching with Oklahoma Scoring Service for the first part of the year and then matched with HiSET for the second part of the year for the high school equivalency cohort.  Massachusetts’ data matching protocols enable matching of several data fields regardless of whether a social security number is provided, assuring valid and reliable data.

Table 3:  FY 2014 Actual Performance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Actual** |
| Obtained a Secondary School Diploma | 76%  |

**3. Describe how you have integrated activities funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Describe your efforts to develop or advance career pathway systems that include career and technical education, postsecondary education, employers, and economic and workforce development. Include a description of how your agency is being represented on the State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, the provision of core and other services through the One-Stop system and an estimate of the AEFLA funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system.**

**Career Readiness Initiative (CRI)**

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, its Department of Career Services, the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the consortium of fifteen community colleges represented under the [Transformation Agenda](http://www.masscc.org/partnerships-initiatives/redesigning-community-college-education-and-training) have jointly developed the Career Readiness Initiative (CRI) to improve the education and career readiness services provided within the state to help individuals obtain and retain gainful employment.

The New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) offered a set of two webinars each for the Math and the Reading Instructional Shifts. The math webinars, presented by a team of math educators, introduced the three instructional shifts defined in the College and Career Readiness Standards for Math. The facilitators explained the shifts and why they have been highlighted, discussed their implications for math instruction, and shared concrete lesson examples.

The English Language Arts webinars introduced the three instructional shifts defined in the College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts: Complexity (of text and task), Evidence (from text), and Knowledge (from nonfiction text). Facilitators explained the meaning and purpose of each shift and examined how each shift guided instructional decisions in the classroom. Concrete examples of lessons that integrate the shifts were presented for high levels (webinar 1) and low levels (webinar 2).

One exciting component of the CRI is making ACT Career Ready 101 licenses available to adult education programs free of charge. ACT Career Ready 101 is a self–paced, online career exploration and academic remediation system available to an unlimited number of users. It brings together courses from both ACT KeyTrain and the ACT Soft Skills Suite. Through the KeyTrain component, the program prepares users for the *ACT* WorkKeys and the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). The NCRC is a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and a level of workplace employability skills.

**ABE Representation on the State and Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs)**

The Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) unit ensures ABE stakeholder representation on all sixteen LWIBs. The representatives are charged with promoting adult education at their regional meetings and keeping their adult education colleagues informed of workforce development activities. ACLS is also represented on the State’s WIB and its subcommittees.

**Collaborations with One-Stop Career Centers**

ACLS continues to expend $100,000 to support local ABE program staff for out-stationing work in career centers across the state. Out-stationing staff assist with intake, assessment, and referral services. We jointly created a confidentiality agreement form for students to sign so that we could data match employment records with the Department of Revenue. We created a screen in our data system to refer ABE students to a specific Career Center. We display on our ABE Directory a class schedule so that Career Center staff can view which programs have openings in our adult basic education classes.

**4. Describe the activities and services supported with EL/C funds, including the number of programs receiving EL/C grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.**

In FY14, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided EL/Civics instruction grants to sevenESOL 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. Seven hundred and forty-eight (748) ESOL students were served.

Some specific program activities and services are listed below:

**Civic Engagement and Naturalization:** Statewide,most programs made effective use of lessons on voter registration, education and political campaigns.

Several programs offered citizenship classes or workshops that integrated U.S. History and civics with English language instruction and the naturalization process. Topics included the overall INS citizenship process, eligibility, the application process, and the citizenship interview. A number of programs held mock interviews for students engaged in citizenship preparation. Programs maintain collaborations with local organizations that support immigration and the naturalization process. Several programs had the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition present to students on changes and developments in immigration law.

Many programs include recognition of new citizens at their annual graduation ceremonies. One program hosts a July 4th naturalization ceremony every year that has become an annual tradition in the town.

**Civics Literacy Project:** One program participated in the *Boston One City One Story* project (designed to create community around a shared reading experience) by reading the selected story for the city. The Civics instructor and her class attended the Boston book Festival where they participated in a moderated group discussion with the author. In a follow-up event, the author visited the class, gave a reading, and answered students’ questions.

**Financial Literacy:** Across the state, most programs included a curriculum unit on Financial Literacy. Topics generally covered are budgeting and savings, managing a checking account, avoiding credit card fraud, and saving for a college education. Some programs invited representatives from community banks as guest speakers to present selected topics in these areas. Some programs took field trips to local grocery stores to learn about coupons, barging shopping, and practicing conducting a financial transaction in English.

**Intensive ESOL and Civics:** Several programs designed intensive EL Civics classes that provided at a minimum nine hours of instruction per week. Courses were designed to give all levels of adult English Language Learners structured activities to maximize speaking practice. Course content was focused on college and career readiness topics.

**Political Discourse:** Many programs hosted visits by local elected officials who presented on their work and answered students’ questions. 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 elected state representatives and engaged in a dialogue on issues of interest to them.

**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. Some programs collaborated with the local One Stop Career Centers to facilitate the sharing of information on jobs and job training availability to students.

**Student Leadership Teams:** Student mentors developed bilingual resources to educate the student body and community at large about topics of significant interest to the program and local community. Mentors created PowerPoint presentations, pamphlets and flyers for use in the community and program-wide. Topics included breast cancer awareness, HIV/AIDS prevention, drug and alcohol prevention and Latino leaders.

**5. Describe your state’s policies related to how it awards a secondary school diploma or its equivalent to individuals who are no longer enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law. Include state recognized tests that are used to award the diploma as well as other criteria that may be recognized, such as competency-based or credit-based methods.**

In Massachusetts high school drop outs (anyone 16 years of age or older) have the option of taking the high school equivalency approved tests, ETS/HiSET® and receiving the state High School Equivalency Credential or doing an adult/external diploma program award by a local school district. Classes are not required prior to taking the HiSET®testing.

The ETS/HiSET® was approved as the only state recognized test for awarding the state high school equivalency credential in Massachusetts as of 2014. It is a three year contract that ends, December 31, 2016. The tests are predominately Computer Based Testing (CBT) with a few options for paper based testing (PBT) available. Individuals must score a minimum of 8 on each test and a 2 on the essay part of the Language Arts Tests, but need a total of 45 points on all 5 tests.

The Adult/External Diploma Programs are competency based models with the students having to meet the state competency determination for graduation based on the state MCAS tests or Alt. Portfolios as well as required district work and criteria.

**6. Describe progress toward implementation of CCRSAE, including whether your state has formally adopted a validated set of CCR standards**

Massachusetts formally adopted the CCRSAE in October, 2013. At that time, ABE programs were mandated to begin using the CCRSAE to develop curriculum and guide instruction. ESOL programs were also required to use the standards and benchmarks of the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Framework for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and incorporate the CCRAE standards and level-specific standards where applicable and supportive of English language learners' next steps for college and/or careers (See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/frameworks/policy-fy14-17.html>.)

In terms of our state’s progress towards implementation, we are moving forward steadily. ACLS State level staff and professional development staff first immersed themselves in understanding the CCRSAE, and were aided by attending the following:

* National Adult Education College and Career Readiness Training Design Initiative (NAEPDC, Louisville, 4/2013)
* ABE State Director’s Meeting, (OCTAE, Summer 2013)
* National Training Institute on Implementing College and Career Readiness Standards (OCTAE, Charleston, 10/2013)
* ELA and Math Instructional Shifts of the CCR Standards Webinars and Using the Standards-In-Action materials with the CCR Standards (NELRC, 2013)
* CCR Standards Implementation Institute (OCTAE, 6/2013)

This professional development for state staff helped our office to pass on what we had learned to professional development providers and to ABE teachers. It also aided us in revising our ABE professional development system to focus more on content (Math, ELA, ESOL). We have provided professional development to the ABE field via professional development specific to Math or ELA as well as two annual conferences devoted to implementing the CCRSAE in the ABE and ESOL Classroom.

 **6. Describe your state’s progress toward implementation of adult education college and career readiness (CCR) standards, including whether your state has formally adopted a validated set of CCR standards. Describe how the state has determined the standards to be representative of CCR and the timeline by which such standards will be or have been implemented by all local programs.**

We went through a process of cross-walking our existing standards beginning in 2012 and completed in the summer of 2013. For math, this process was accomplished by first comparing our ABE Math Curriculum Framework standards to the Common Core State Standards, and noting the gaps, overlapping areas, and any questions raised by the comparison. For the reading portion of ELA, STAR national trainer and ELA standards coach Amy Trawick completed a thorough analysis of the similarities and differences between the CCRSAE and the Massachusetts ABE Revised Reading Strand (2010). While the Revised Reading Strand had integrated many aspects of the draft (at that time in 2010) Common Core State Standards, we determined that the overall focus on college

and career readiness was not comparable to that described in the CCRSAE. We also had many discussions with MaryAnn Corley (AIR/TEAL) regarding the alignment of Massachusetts ABE Writing Standards to the CCRSAE, and decided to adopt the CCRSAE as a result. In participating as a Stakeholder and reviewing drafts of the ELA portion of the CCRSAE, Jane Schwerdtfeger also determined that the best way to support students in becoming college and career ready would be to adopt the CCRSAE. The CCRSAE’s Speaking/Listening and Language standards are also stronger than our own.

In terms of the timeline by which such standards will be implemented by all local programs, we have put some policies into place and supported them with professional development opportunities. In 2013, we established [policies](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/frameworks/policy-fy14-17.html) requiring programs to have a unified documented curriculum aligned to the CCRSAE (ABE) and MA ABE ESOL Standards and CCRSAE (ESOL) by the end of FY15. Program Specialists request to see these materials when programs take part in a program monitoring. We also require that all teachers receive a minimum of 12 hours of professional development each year, and have provided a great deal of intensive professional development, such as Donna Curry’s *Developing a Program-wide Math Curriculum Aligned with the CCR Standards* and Amy Trawick’s *Developing Curriculum Units Aligned to the ELA CCR standards: A Contextualized Approach. S*ome of the trainings are site-based to support teacher collaboration at the program. In addition, we are in the process of aligning the MAPT to the CCRSAE, which will be completed and the revised MAPT operational by July 1, 2017.

**Describe how the state is supporting the use of standards by local programs and State Leadership funds that are being used to support implementation.**

1. Targeted Assistance and Professional development support for all programs, but particularly for Tier 4 (lowest performing) programs
2. Implementation of a coaching model in PD for ELA, Math and ESOL

Curriculum evaluation and trainings for ABE state staff in CCRSAE and curriculum development and what to look for in monitorings and site visits

1. The recent hiring of a College and Career Readiness Specialist who oversees college and career readiness initiatives
2. ABE Directors meetings 2012-2014 that have been focused on implementing the CCRSAE
3. All PD for Math, ELA and some of ESOL geared to implementing the CCRSAE
4. Provision of resources, policy clarification and overall redesign of Curriculum web page, with presentations and visits to programs to discuss their work and provide feedback on their curriculum work so far

Development of professional content standards for ABE teachers. These standards reflect the intent of the content standards for students, but break down what it is that the teacher needs to know and be able to do in order to be an effective math/numeracy, ELA, or ESOL teacher. First, two nationally recognized ESOL professionals, Sarah Young and Amber Gallup Rodriguez, were contracted to develop ESOL professional standards.  The standards were completed in FY14, see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pd/ESOLstandards.pdf>. Professional development on the ESOL professional standards occurred in FY14-FY15. As more teachers avail themselves of these trainings on the professional standards, we expect to see student learner gains continue to rise. The ELA and math professional standards are in draft form and in the process of completion.

1. 65 hours is Massachusetts’ determination of the hours a student generally needs to show gain between a pre-test and the next test. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)