***Massachusetts Narrative Report 2014-15***

1. ***State Leadership Funds***

Technical Assistance and Monitoring

* ACLS program specialists (PSs) provided technical assistance to programs in their caseload. They conducted site visits, reviewed program data, worked with programs on their Continues Improvement Plans, and shared appropriate resources. Program specialists also worked with the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) Professional Development centers to plan targeted intervention to low performing programs and some PSs served as liaisons to the PD centers. In PY14 there were 7 programs that received an in-depth monitoring visit followed up by a formal monitoring report that addressed their strengths, areas for improvements and, when applicable, areas that needed to be addressed through a corrective action plan.

Statewide Support and Communication

* ACLS provided a three-day New Directors training for new directors and organized a two-day Directors’ Meeting for all program directors and their leadership teams that focused on WIOA requirements, the process for developing the state plan, and future implementation.
* ACLS provided regular communication to the field through monthly mailings, webinars, and information posted on ACLS’ website.
* In November 2014, ACLS conducted regional meetings for programs to discuss WIOA legislation. The second round of regional meetings took place in May 2015 to gather feedback from programs on NPRMs.
* ACLS co-planned with the Mayor’s Office for Workforce Development in Boston quarterly meetings for Boston programs to address issues and questions related to that region.

Adult Career Pathway and Career Readiness 101 Initiative Support

* The ACLS College and Career Readiness Specialist oversaw and provided technical assistance to Adult Career Pathway programs. He also led the Career Readiness 101 initiative and was involved in collaborations with the workforce system.
* ACLS organized a Kick-off meeting in the fall for Adult Career Pathway (ACP) program directors/staff, Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) representatives, and One-Stop Career Centers (OSCC) representatives. It was an opportunity for cross-system discussions on goals and expectations of the ACP programs and provided an opportunity for regional planning and mapping out career pathways for adult learners in each region.
* ACLS also convened Adult Career Pathway Task Force that consisted of representatives from ABE, Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, and Higher Education. This group meets quarterly around providing guidance to ACP programs, discussing promising models and discussing outcomes for ACP.

ACLS Participation on WIOA Workgroups

* ACLS staff represented ABE on WIOA workgroups organized by the workforce system and engaged in policy discussions related to the implementation of WIOA and the development of the combined state plan.

Alignment with College and Career Readiness Standards

* The ACLS Curriculum Development Specialist provided guidance to ACLS staff, programs and PD centers regarding curriculum development, alignment with CCRSAE, and provided direction for the annual CCR conference for teachers. In FY15 programs were required to submit to ACLS a curriculum scope and sequence aligned with CCRS for one level of instruction.
1. ***Performance Data Analyses***

Core Outcome Measure: Educational Gain

PY14 Negotiated and Actual Performance Standards

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Education Level  | PY14 Target | PY14 Actual | Above/Below Target |
| Beginning Literacy ABE | 39% | 27% | -12 points |
| Beginning ABE | 38% | 32% | -6 points |
| Low Intermediate ABE | 36% | 31% | -5 points |
| High Intermediate ABE | 30% | 26% | -4 points |
| ASE Low | 24% | 16% | -8 points |
| Beginning Literacy ESOL | 46% | 43% | -3 points |
| Low beginning ESOL | 60% | 57% | -3 points |
| High Beginning ESOL | 53% | 52% | -1 point |
| Low Intermediate ESOL | 48% | 49% | +1 point |
| High Intermediate ESOL | 41% | 42% | +1 point |
| Advanced ESOL | 33% | 32% | -1 point |

Massachusetts was not able to meet the set targets for 8 levels. In analyzing ABE/ASE level completion rates, we believe our use of the MAPT may be contributing to our performance relative to other states that use other tests. 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 approved ABE assessments.

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 13 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 gap motivated us to develop a test that aligned with our commitment to standards-based instruction. As a result, the MAPT can be considered more rigorous than 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, 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.

Massachusetts has adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education and is in the process of revising the MAPT to align with the new standards. The revised MAPT will be deployed on July 1, 2017.

We were surprised to see that our ESOL EFL completion rate dipped slightly in PY14 and have not yet found any explanation in our data. In Massachusetts, programs can use the BEST Plus, the TABE Clas-E Reading, and the Clas-E Writing to assess their students. Although Massachusetts did not meet four EFL targets for ESOL, we exceeded the national completion rates overall.

We have the following strategies for addressing performance in this core outcome measure:

* We strongly believe that teacher quality is the most important factor in student learner and that investing in practitioner professional development will result in improved learning outcomes. ACLS will continue to work closely with SABES to ensure that there are enough intensive and high quality PD offerings by in assessment, curriculum, and instruction. We will also work with program directors to ensure that direct service staff are accessing PD as required and needed.
* We will continue to encourage programs to test ABE students in both ELA and Math at all levels. Starting in PY16, we will have a new online data management application that will make it easier for programs to enter scores and plan post-tests. We anticipate that testing in both areas will impact performance.
* We are revamping our state accountability system. The current performance standard for student progress is based on meaningful gain rather than EFL completion. The new system, which will be piloted in PY16 and take effect in PY17 will replace the meaningful gain standard with EFL completion standards.

Follow-Up Outcome Measure: Secondary Credential Obtainment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | PY14 Target | PY14 Actual | Above/Below Target |
| HS Diploma / HS Equivalency Cred. | 76% | 83% | +7% |

Massachusetts matched with ETS (HiSET) for the high school equivalency cohort.  Massachusetts’ data matching protocols enabled matching of several data fields regardless of whether a social security number is provided, assuring valid and reliable data.

Follow-Up Outcome Measure: Post-Secondary Education / Training

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | PY14 Target | PY14 Actual | Above/Below Target |
| Entered Postsecondary Ed/Training | 20% | 9% | -11% |

58% of the PY14 Entered Postsecondary Education/Training Cohort were ESOL students who exited while enrolled in the three Beginning ESOL levels. While they had high school credentials from their native countries, they have not obtained the English language skills to be able to successfully enter postsecondary education in the United States.

ACLS used data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). We submitted data to NSC in early December to ensure that as many student enrollments as possible are counted within 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. Unfortunately, NSC data is drawn only from colleges and university and does not include training programs that Massachusetts ABE students might attend.

Massachusetts has taken concrete steps to improve performance of this measure:

* We are developing a memorandum of understanding between our office and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to match ACLS student data with DHE. We believe that NSC does not capture all our post-secondary enrollments.
* ACLS is developing a new program performance standards that will incentivize outcomes.
* We are looking into ways to capture students who enroll in trainings.
* We are supporting the integration of college and career readiness standards throughout the ABE system with clear policies and intensive, high quality professional development.

Follow-Up Outcome Measures: Entered and Retained Employment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | PY14 Target | PY14 Actual | Above/Below Target |
| Entered Employment | 36% | 44% | +8% |
| Retained Employment | 49% | 51% | +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. MA exceeded the set targets for both entered employment and retained employment.

1. ***Integration with Other Programs***

PY14 was the first year of a three-year, Adult Career Pathways (ACP) program that was developed and administered in collaboration with workforce development to support students’ career goals and strengthen their preparation for employment and postsecondary education including training. Each workforce partner identified one or more priorities specific to each region, and agencies developed their ACP programs to address those priorities. A total of 40ACP programs in all 16 local WIB regions provided services to students.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

In October 2014, ACLS hosted a Kick-Off Meeting for all ACP partners. The purpose of the meeting was to review goals and expectations for the programs, identify means for incorporating ACT Career Ready 101 into programs, and provide opportunities for sharing among the programs. In addition, time was provided for regional teams to work together to map out the career pathway systems in their regions.

Local workforce agencies partnered with ACLS in the administration and oversight of the ACP program. Workforce partners convened their regional ACP Working Groups on a quarterly basis to monitor progress, share information, and provide a forum for discussion and problem-solving.

ACLS continued to be advised by its ACP Task Force. The Task Force was made up of members from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Office of Community Colleges, Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, and ABE ACP Programs.

In PY14, ACLS joined Moving Pathways Forward’s (MPF) Supporting Career Pathways Integration project, a national initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE).  MPF provides technical assistance to ACLS on strengthening key elements of the state’s career pathways system.  The priority components ACLS chose for the initiative were identifying industry sector(s) and engaging employers, strengthening education and training, and measuring system change and evaluating system performance.

Career Readiness Initiative (CRI)

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, its Department of Career Services, and the Departments of Higher and Elementary and Secondary Education, 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.

In December 2014, the CRI hosted its first series of regional meetings. The purpose of the regional meetings was to provide updates on the Initiative, allow participants to hear from programs already using the system, and allow time for questions. In the spring of 2015, the CRI hosted another round of regional meetings that focused on incorporating blended learning models into programs and 50 ABE programs received ACT Career Ready 101 licenses.

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)

ACLS ensured ABE stakeholder representation on all sixteen workforce boards. The representatives were charged with promoting adult education at their regional meetings and keeping their adult education colleagues informed of workforce development activities. ACLS was also represented on the State’s WIB and its subcommittees. In addition, ACLS convened the 16 ABE LWIB representatives on a quarterly basis to discuss strategy, share information, and problem-solve.

Collaborations with One-Stop Career Centers

ACLS outstations local ABE program staff in career centers across the state. Out-stationing staff assist with intake, assessment, and referral services.

1. ***English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program***

In PY14, the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) unit of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided EL/Civics instruction grants to sevenESOL programs serving 854 students. Grant recipients included both local education agencies and community-based programs across Massachusetts. All programs have developed a wealth of EL Civics-based resources, activities and instructional materials as well as successful approaches to teaching EL Civics. In addition, EL/Civics curricula integrated civics content areas such as health, government, consumer issues, employment, and American culture at every instructional level. Numerous examples of program activities and services are provided here:

Civic Participation

Statewide, all EL/Civics programs integrated civics and civic participation in their offerings. Civics content took a variety of forms, responding to different learner needs and interests as students learned how local, state and federal governments function. All curricula were in place for students to become knowledgeable about the three branches of government, the electoral system, and the rights and responsibilities embedded in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.

Programs integrating EL Civics into ESOL gave immigrants a firmer footing in the U.S. by teaching U.S. history and culture to understand how the democratic form of government was originally conceived. Further, by means of theme based curricula, students were able to learn the importance of civic engagement at all levels in a democratic society.

The Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Framework for ESOL, a resource for all EL Civics programs, offered several strands that provided resources to support the integration of civics into ESOL instruction. Using this resource, teachers found they were better able to support the goal of developing educated, civic-minded students who became increasingly more confident in taking action for positive changes in their neighborhoods and communities. Students reported thinking of themselves as knowledgeable and active community members putting to good use their improved English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Students gained English communication skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the US society as heads-of-household and as citizens.

Across the ESOL levels, teachers selected texts and supporting materials that highlighted US culture and current events. American social, political and cultural issues as well as current advances in science and technology connected academic content to real world fluency.Throughout the year, teachers used relevant current events and holidays to integrate civics instruction into their classrooms.

United States History and Government

EL/Civics services ensured that students increased their knowledge regarding the branches of governments, the balance of power among the branches and elections in general. Students learned about and discussed the U.S. Constitution and, through the pages of history, the reasons for various amendments. Most programs had students conduct mock voting using simplified sheets that help them understand the ballot questions.

The reading and writing foundations that took place in these classes explored themes of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution/Bill of Rights, Women’s Suffrage and the national anthem. There were numerous lessons and opportunities to explore in depth the state and federal governmental structure, citizen’s rights and responsibilities, taxes and municipal government and services.

Learning the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship including the Naturalization Process

Students researched the naturalization process. The curricula integrated topics such as the necessary documentation, the waiting process, the Citizenship exam, the Citizenship interview, and the swearing-in process. In addition many programs also held informative workshops on the naturalization process.

Students navigated the systems as they went on field trips that familiarized them with vital community resources and frequently took actions in their own communities. Students were asked to think critically about the world around them. Students identified and wrote about an issue of concern in their communities and then identify what parts of the system were connected to their needs.

In these and in other ways, students demonstrated enormous benefit from the EL Civics instruction that programs provided. Students were pleased with their increased English language skills and more adept at applying what they learned to solve community problems. Finally, students reported that what they learned about community participation was applicable to their work and other life goals.

1. ***Secondary School Credentials and Equivalencies***

In Massachusetts, high school drop outs (anyone 16 years of age or older)  have the option of taking the high school equivalency approved test, ETS/HiSET®, and receiving the state High School Equivalency Credential  or completing an adult/external diploma program and earning a local school district diploma.

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 onDecember 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 portfolios as well as required district work and criteria. There are four local school districts that support Adult/External Diploma Programs in Massachusetts

1. ***Adult Education Standards***

Massachusetts formally adopted the CCR standards for adult education (CCR standards) in October 2013 and mandated ABE programs to begin using the CCR standards 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 CCR standards and level-specific standards where applicable and supportive of English language learners' next steps for college and/or careers. Massachusetts’ goal is to sustain a standards-based system that guides curriculum, instruction, and assessment by July 2018.

To help local programs succeed in implementing college and career standards, ACLS has structured a timeline with clear benchmarks and created a number of supports:

ACLS developed clear policies that articulate ACLS’ goal of having all programs implement a standards-based curriculum to guide their instruction. This goal has been broken down into more manageable steps. In PY15, programs are required to submit to ACLS a sample scope and sequence for one class level and all programs have received feedback and recommendations for further curricular work. ACLS also used the submissions to gauge the professional development (PD) needs of teachers and directors in PY15, and to provide exemplar samples of a standards-aligned scope and sequence. Targeted PD has been developed to address needs such as using the curriculum model of “backwards design” and using the CCR standards and Instructional Shifts to guide rigorous class work. Use of the CCR standards is emphasized in all levels of required training, including the SABES Foundations for New Staff, New Directors’ Orientation, and at the annual ABE Directors’ Conference.

Massachusetts’ involvement in the 2015 CCR Standards-in-Action initiative has also helped programs’ implementation of the CCR Standards. In PY14, our state piloted the first set of tools and made revisions to our sustainability plan. In PY15, ACLS will begin integrating the CCR Standards-in-Action tools into existing Math and English Language Arts PD. The tools are very practical and support teachers’ use of the CCR standards to provide high quality instruction. Massachusetts’ coach for the CCR Standards-in-Action initiative, Meredith Liben, has also helped state staff to think through the importance of ensuring that teachers and directors have a solid understanding of how to use the CCR standards so that their curriculum materials will be rigorous. We are putting into place additional supports for teachers who have yet to embrace the value of the CCR standards. For example, unpacking the standards and Instructional Shifts is a part of all curriculum trainings.

The ACLS Professional Development Specialist guides the Massachusetts’ professional development (PD) system known as the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES). This system consists of eight core statewide PD Centers and two statewide PD Support Centers for system coordination and communication. The eight PD Centers focus on the PD areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics and Adult Numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Educational Leadership and Strengthening ABE Programs, Education and Career Planning, Distance Learning and Technology Support, MA ABE Assessments, and Using SMARTT and Cognos. The priorities of this statewide PD system include:

* strengthening curriculum and instruction in full alignment with the CCR standards, and
* developing and supporting educational leadership within our funded ABE programs in order to fully implement the CCR standards.

Other PD system priorities directly aligned with CCR standards implementation are (a) investing PD resources in content expertise and (b) strengthening educator effectiveness with a range of PD offerings and support of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration in order to increase educators’ professional learning and improve educator practice.

The second annual ACLS and SABES CCR Conference on “Implementing the CCR Standards in the ABE and ESOL Classroom” was held on December 8, 2014. This day-long conference targeted expanding our collective efforts to fully align curriculum, instruction, and program design with the CCR standards for adult education. In addition to focusing on increased academic rigor and the resulting instructional shifts needed to teach Mathematics and English Language Arts, the conference provided information on strategies for implementation at the program and ABE/ESOL classroom level, and plans for further professional development support.

Numerous PD offerings were developed and provided across the state via face-to-face, online, and program-based venues and covered such topics as: leadership to support implementation of the CCR standards; curriculum scope and sequence and instructional units; instructional strategies and formative assessment; ESOL professional standards; aligning lesson plans to the CCR standards; and teacher supervision and evaluation.

In June 2015 Massachusetts was selected to receive technical assistance through the LINCS English as a Second Language Professional project (ESLPro). TA received through this project will help the ESOL PD Center improve its capacity to provide online PD support to ESOL teachers in order to increase the impact of PD on educator practice and adult ELL language learning. More specifically, this will be accomplished by engaging practitioners in online communities of practice that focus on “rigor in adult ESOL”.