

Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative

FY24 Legislative Report

Prepared by the Department of Higher Education
Noe Ortega, Ph.D., Commissioner
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September 6, 2024



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Letter from the Commissioner

September 6, 2024

Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report.

The Department of Higher Education has continued to expand this network of grant-funded partnerships between schools and public colleges and universities offering inclusive concurrent enrollment programs for students with severe disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22.

As we celebrate the program's 16th year in operation, we are proud of the 18 participating partnerships established to date which now serve over 300 students per year. DHE is pleased to support students with intellectual disabilities as they participate in both credit and non-credit courses alongside their non-disabled peers; develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills; improve academic, social, and functional skills; and participate in career planning, vocational skill-building activities, and community-based integrated competitive employment opportunities.

If you have any questions about the program or this report, please feel free to contact Alex Demou, Director of Constituent Services and Legislative Affairs, at ademou@dhe.mass.edu.

Sincerely,

Noe Ortega, PhD
Commissioner, Department of Higher Education

Purpose of the Report

The Department of Higher Education is pleased to submit “Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative: FY24 Legislative Report;” pursuant to Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023, line item 7066-9600 (see full text in Appendix A):

The purpose of this grant program is to build partnerships between high schools in public school districts and the state’s public institutions of higher education (IHEs) to develop inclusive concurrent enrollment programs for students with severe disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22. FY24 marked the 16th year of this program. Data used for this report are compiled from the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) program and reports submitted by MAICEI partners. Unless otherwise specified, the data reported is for the 2022-23 academic year.

This report provides information about the growth of the initiative, its impact on participating students, and identifies emerging opportunities and challenges relative to inclusive post-secondary education in the Commonwealth.

Led by a full-time MAICEI program coordinator, and with sustained investment from annual state appropriation, the MAICEI program has been able to evolve to meet the changing needs of students. Concurrently, MAICEI program partners continue to explore scalable implementation models and interagency collaborations that will sustainably help young people develop strong life skills, including the successful transition into post-secondary learning environments and community-based employment opportunities.

History of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative

The Legislature passed budget language in 2007 supporting the development of a network of grant-funded partnerships between public colleges and universities and school districts to plan, implement, and sustain authentically inclusive academic, social, and career development experiences on college campuses. The Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative provides access and supports to success in academic, social, and career development experiences for eligible students with intellectual disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers enrolled in the Commonwealth's public two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Currently, 18 MAICEI programs are providing fully inclusive services and supports to 221 eighteen to twenty-two-year-old Massachusetts students with severe disabilities who have been unable to achieve the competency determination necessary to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam. Since 2007, over 2,500 students have participated in MAICEI programs, and since 2016 when the first residence life program was established, 30 students have been able to live in residence halls in integrated settings. Students also:

- discern their own preferences, interests, needs, and strengths through Person-Centered Planning;
- become advocates for their own choices and decisions around academic, social, and work activities;
- acquire career and life skills by taking inclusive college credit and non-credit bearing courses that relate to their career goals and other areas of interest;
- access student support services, as other college students would;
- experience living on campus in the residence halls; and
- experience integrated competitive employment opportunities.

Pursuant to legislative budget language (see Appendix A), DHE developed guidelines to ensure that the grant program promotes civic engagement and mentoring of faculty in public institutions of higher education and supports college success, work success, participation in student life of the college community and provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment; provided further, that the department of higher education shall develop strategies and procedures to help sustain and replicate the existing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs initiated through the grant program including:

1. providing funds to retain employment specialists;
2. assisting students in meeting integrated competitive employment and other transition-related goals;
3. adopting procedures and funding mechanisms to ensure that new partnerships of public institutions of higher education and school districts providing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs fully utilize the models and expertise developed in existing partnerships;
4. conducting evaluations and research to further identify student outcomes and best practices;
5. and developing a mechanism to encourage existing and new partnerships to expand the capacity to respond to individual parents that request an opportunity for their children to participate in the inclusive concurrent enrollment initiative.

To support MAICEI initiatives in FY24, DHE administered three types of grants for program development, quality assurance and accountability, and sustainability:

- one-year planning grants for both residence life and non-residence life opportunities of up to \$100,000 per grant;
- five-year non-residence life implementation grants of up to \$200,000 per grant; and
- grants designed to support the design and implementation of residence¹ life experiences for program participants.

In addition, DHE also coordinated the MAICEI state advisory committee, fostered program partnerships, developed informational resources, contributed to the design of system-wide evaluation strategies, and helped organize professional development opportunities informed by practitioner research and studies conducted through UMass Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion.

Participating Institutions

MAICEI maintains an active presence on 18 of the 29 public institutions of higher education in Massachusetts. For academic year 2022 - 2023, there were ten community college campuses with MAICEI programs, six state universities, and two UMass campuses. These include the following:

Campuses:

Bridgewater State University

Bristol Community College

Bunker Hill Community College

Cape Cod Community College

Fitchburg State University

Framingham State University

Holyoke Community College*

Massachusetts College of Art & Design

Massasoit Community College

Mass Bay Community College*

Middlesex Community College

Northern Essex Community College

Roxbury Community College

Salem State University

¹ The first residential life implementation grant was awarded to Bridgewater State University for Academic Year 2016-2017. The second residential life implementation grant was awarded to Salem State University for Academic Year 2022 – 2023.

Westfield State University

UMass Amherst

UMass Boston

*These campuses did not receive FY24 funds because they have established self-sustaining programs

Residence Life

In FY16, Bridgewater State University was awarded a first-phase implementation grant to organize and create the administrative and training infrastructure to support residence life opportunities on that campus starting in Fall 2016. Five students were served through their residence life program for the 2017-2018 academic year, eight students were served for the 2018-2019 academic year, nine students were served for the 2019-2020 academic year, ten during the 2021 – 2022 academic year, and nine during the 2022 -2023 academic year. Salem State University was awarded funding for a residence life program and during the 2021 – 2022 academic year, 4 students were living on campus during that time and there were 4 students living on campus during the 2022 - 2023 academic year. The Department of Higher Education has awarded an additional six planning grants for campuses wishing to accept MAICEI students.

Sustainability.

Most partnerships are funded through MAICEI grants, which enable institutions to stand up initial programming. In FY23, Holyoke Community College and Mass Bay Community College, completed the grant-supported planning and implementation cycle, and are now partnering with school districts to offer MAICEI programming on their campuses without MAICEI funding. All campuses participate in a planning year before they begin accepting students into their programs. Westfield State University and Bridgewater State University are finalizing their transitions to self-sustaining models, meaning they are no longer utilizing grant funds but continuing to provide student supports. Students with IEPs may receive transportation and other supportive services under the terms of their IEP, supported by K-12 funding streams.

As part of the grant application procedure, applicants must include proposals for the study and development of transition plans to achieve self-sustaining status. Program sustainability continues to be a driving force behind campus program innovations.

Participating School Districts

The number of partners a college campus program may have is generally decided in the initial grant-making phase. Campuses are required to identify at least two school districts that have both a need for MAICEI services and students who could take advantage of the program. As MAICEI programs are heavily dependent on collaboration between campus and school district partners, strong leadership at both institutions is needed to ensure that each campus program serves its students as effectively as possible.

School district participation has increased significantly; the program has seen growth from 39 active districts participating in FY11 to 150 in FY24².

Student participants in MAICEI take a wide variety of classes in different fields and disciplines. In Fall 2022 alone, MAICEI students took 269 discrete classes ranging in topics from Introduction to Marketing to Computer Science Principles. Most popular are visual and performing arts classes, which accounted for nearly 40% of all classes taken.

Although all types of pedagogical styles are represented in class selection, students most frequently selected courses featuring small group learning environments (e.g., Introduction to Business, Critical Thinking, and Human Growth & Development) and applied learning classes (e.g., Wellness Programming, Design Fundamentals, and Human Biology) which link academic work closely to practice.

Credit & Audit

MAICEI students have the option of taking any class for credit or on an audit basis, just like their non-disabled peers, subject to the content of their IEP. Variability across campuses is common; some campuses have more students taking classes for credit than others. However, because all MAICEI students are eligible for student services offered to all students at participating colleges and universities, many MAICEI program students use in-class learning resources (peer tutoring, writing/math center supports, etc.) regardless of whether they are taking a class for credit or on an audit basis.

Student Employment Outcomes

Securing and retaining long-term employment is a stated goal of many MAICEI students and career development is a key objective of the program. This goal shapes much of the person-centered planning process, including course selection, credit/audit choices, and supplemental soft-skills training. Educational coaches, typically hired by the school district partners in each program, are vital to the process of aligning program and campus resources with student needs. Equally important are the career development resources which the college or university provides. The Department has undertaken work with the Institute of Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and is developing a data collection system with a focus on post-program employment data. This work will allow the Department to provide more detailed data on factors that may contribute to employment rates.

However, more analysis is necessary to better understand which factors may contribute overall to employment rates. Continued emphasis on post-program employment data collection and analysis in the new MAICEI evaluation system will help provide more context. 10% of MAICEI participants were employed prior to entering the MAICEI program, compared to a 48% rate of participation in community competitive employment while engaged in the program. Data show 38% of MAICEI students in their last semester of participation had employment lined up

² District partner data was not collected in FY20/FY21 due to the pandemic.

immediately after leaving the MAICEI program. As such, participation in MAICEI was associated with higher rates of employment for students both during and after the program as compared to prior to entering the program. A goal of the program moving forward is to increase the employment rate for departing students to the level for students during MAICEI.

Systems-Change Outcomes

Program Staffing

Each of the MAICEI grant-funded programs use similar staffing structures, including a program coordinator, half-time or full-time employment specialist, and supplemental support, if needed, for education coaches. The primary costs of educational coaches are paid for by school districts.

Educational coaches are crucial to the success of the program and its students and have the most day-to-day contact with MAICEI students. They also carry a wide range of responsibilities, including implementing IEP goals and/or participation plan recommendations issued by a referring adult serving agency (i.e., MRC and DDS), and aligning student goals with available state resources. For district partnerships, districts most often provide students with an educational coach. However, when students no longer receive district services, e.g., by aging out, institutions must identify their own funds to provide an educational coach.

Several campuses have instituted peer mentoring and coaching strategies in addition to and in concert with educational coaches. Some four-year IHEs have hired graduate assistants to serve as educational coaches – most of the graduate assistants are majoring in special education. MAICEI campuses continually provide training and technical assistance to all staff who support the students.

Campus administrators, parents, and students have praised these evolving strategies. MAICEI continues to explore new ways to bring these strategies—and their creative motivations—to other campuses and believes they represent promising opportunities to expand program utility while acknowledging financial constraints on program development.

Approximately 50% - 60% of grant funds are utilized for salaries for program coordinators, coaches, and support staff. Some coordinators work full-time, while some coordinators whose programs do not run in the summer work .8 FTE. Coordinators are responsible for day-to-day operations of the programs, including convening the Project Leadership Team, facilitating Person Centered Planning for students, consulting with educational coaches and high school liaisons, and meeting with participating and interested students and families. Additionally, 17% of grant funding was spent on student/course fees, which vary widely across campuses and increase annually.

Appendix A: FY2024 Budget Language

Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023, line-item 7066-9600

For a discretionary grant program to provide funds to school districts and public institutions of higher education partnering together to offer inclusive concurrent enrollment programs for school age children with disabilities, as defined in section 1 of chapter 71B of the General Laws, who are between the ages 18 and 22, inclusive; provided, that the grant program shall be limited to students who are considered to have severe disabilities and, in the case of students age 18 or 19, shall be limited to students with severe disabilities who have been unable to achieve the competency determination necessary to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam; provided further, that on a discretionary basis, public institutions of higher education may choose to additionally include students with severe developmental disabilities over 21 years of age through said grant program; provided further, that such students with disabilities shall be offered enrollment in credit and noncredit courses that include students without disabilities, including enrollment in credit and noncredit courses in audit status for students who may not meet course prerequisites and requirements; provided further, that the partnering school districts shall provide supports, services and accommodations necessary to facilitate a student's enrollment; provided further, that the department of higher education shall develop guidelines to ensure that the grant program promotes civic engagement and mentoring of faculty in public institutions of higher education and supports college success, work success, participation in student life of the college community and provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment; provided further, that the department shall develop strategies and procedures to help sustain and replicate the existing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs initiated through the grant program including, but not limited to: (i) providing funds to retain employment specialists; (ii) assisting students in meeting integrated competitive employment and other transition-related goals; (iii) adopting procedures and funding mechanisms to ensure that new partnerships of public institutions of higher education and school districts providing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs fully utilize the models and expertise developed in existing partnerships; and (iv) conducting evaluations and research to further identify student outcomes and best practices; provided further, that the department shall develop a mechanism to encourage existing and new partnerships to expand the capacity to respond to individual parents and schools in underserved areas that request an opportunity for their children to participate in the inclusive concurrent enrollment initiative; provided further, that tuition for courses shall be waived by the state institutions of higher education for students enrolled through this grant program; provided further, that the department shall maintain the position of inclusive concurrent enrollment coordinator who shall be responsible for administering the grant program, coordinating the advisory committee, developing new partnerships, assisting existing partnerships in creating self-sustaining models and overseeing the development of videos and informational materials as well as evaluation and research through the institute for community inclusion to assist new colleges and school districts; provided further, that not later than July 17, 2023, the department shall select grant recipients and shall distribute a request for grant proposals subject to future appropriation not later than May 31, 2024; provided further, that not later than January 31, 2024, the department of higher education,

in consultation with the department of elementary and secondary education, shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on education and the joint committee on higher education on student outcomes in programs funded under this item; provided further, that funds may be expended for programs or activities during the summer months; and provided further, that not less than \$2,000,000 shall be transferred to the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative Trust Fund established in section 2VVVVV of chapter 29 of the General Laws.

Appendix B: District Partners for Academic Year 2022 - 2023

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

Attleboro Public Schools
Bridgewater- Raynham Public Schools
Brockton Public Schools
East Bridgewater Public Schools
Easton Public Schools
Franklin Public Schools
Hanover Public Schools
Mansfield Public Schools
Millis Public Schools
North Attleboro Public Schools
Pembroke Public Schools
Sharon Public Schools
Somerset- Berkley Public Schools
Weymouth Public Schools

BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Old Rochester Regional Schools
Somerset Berkley Regional Schools
Fall River Public Schools

CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Barnstable Public Schools
Bourne Public Schools
Carver Public Schools
Dennis-Yarmouth Public Schools
Falmouth Public Schools
Mashpee Public Schools
Monomoy Public Schools
Nauset Public Schools
Plymouth Public Schools
Sandwich Public Schools

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg Public Schools

FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY

Holliston Public Schools
Needham Public Schools
Medfield Public Schools
Grafton Public Schools
Hopkinton Public Schools
Natick Public Schools
Westborough Public Schools

GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools
Frontier Regional & Union 38 Schools Gin
Montague Regional Schools
Greenfield Public Schools
Mohawk Trail Regional Schools
Northampton Public Schools

HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Agawam Public Schools
Belchertown Public Schools
Easthampton Public Schools
East Longmeadow Public Schools
Hampshire Regional Public Schools
Wilbraham Public Schools Holyoke Public Schools
Longmeadow Public Schools
Monson Public Schools
Springfield International Charter School Public Schools
Ware Public Schools
West Springfield
Westfield Public Schools

MASS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

Boston Public Schools
Brookline Public Schools

MASS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

*Mount Greylock Regional High School
North Adams Public Schools*

MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Braintree Public Schools
Pembroke Public Schools
Randolph Public Schools
Stoughton Public Schools*

MASSBAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Arlington Public Schools
Boston Latin School
Boston Public Schools
Blackstone-Millville Public Schools
Brookline Public Schools
Cambridge Public Schools
Framingham Public Schools
Learning Prep
Natick Public Schools
Needham Public Schools
Newton Public Schools
Nipmuc Public Schools
Northborough Public Schools
Shawsheen Valley Tech
Southborough Public Schools
Watertown Public Schools
Wayland Public Schools
Westborough Public Schools
Winchester Public Schools*

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*LABBB Collaborative
Arlington Public Schools
The Guild for Human Services
Winchester Public Schools*

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Andover / North Andover Public Schools
Haverhill Public Schools*

*Lawrence Public Schools
Newburyport Public Schools
Triton Regional School District*

QUINSIGAMOND COMUNITY COLLEGE

*Leicester Public Schools
Worcester Public Schools*

ROXBURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Boston Public Schools
Cambridge Public Schools*

SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

*Danvers Public Schools
Gloucester Public Schools
Ipswich Public Schools
KIPP Academy Lynn
Lynnfield Public Schools
Melrose Public Schools
North Reading Public Schools
North Shore Collaborative Public Schools
Peabody Public Schools
Reading Public Schools
Rockport Public Schools
Rowley Public Schools
Salem Public Schools
Saugus Public Schools
SEEM Collaborative
Swampscott Public Schools
Triton Regional Public Schools
Winchester Public Schools
Woburn Public Schools*

UMASS BOSTON

*Brookline Public Schools
Boston Collegiate Charter School
Boston Public Schools*

*Boston Preparatory
Charter
Brooke Charter Schools
Chelsea Public Schools
Dedham Public Schools
Malden Public Schools
Medford Public Schools
Melrose Public
Schools
Milton Public
Schools
Revere Public
Schools
Somerville Public Schools
Shore Educational
Collaborative
Winthrop Public Schools*

*Agawam Public Schools
Amherst Regional Public Schools
Chicopee Public Schools
Gateway Regional Public Schools
Hampden Wilbraham Regional Schools
Longmeadow Public Schools
Ludlow Public Schools
Monson Public Schools
Northampton Public Schools
Springfield Public Schools
Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional
West Springfield Public Schools
Westfield Public Schools*

WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY

Appendix C: Advisory Board Membership

Phoebe Bustamante

Coordinator, Transitional Scholars Program
Mass Bay Community College

Christine Lenahan

Coordinator, Inclusive Scholars
Salem State University

Zachary Chipman

EXCEL Employment Specialist
Bridgewater State University

Representative Sean Garballey

Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Higher
Education

Jamie Comacho

Educational Specialist, Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

Victor Hernandez

Deputy Assistant Commissioner,
Department of Developmental Services

Julia Landau

Senior Project Director, Disability
Education Justice Initiative, Massachusetts
Advocates for Children

Dianne Lescinkas

Manager of Program Development, Autism
Commission

Rebecca Davis

Federation of Children with Special Needs

Nancy Mader

Director of Transition Projects, Federation
for Children

Kathleen Meagher

High School Contact, Shore Educational
Collaborative

Lyndsey Nunes

Coordinator, Inclusive Concurrent
Enrollment Initiative
Westfield State University

Maximo Pimental

MAICEI Alumnus

Mary Price

Director, MA Inclusive Concurrent
Enrollment Initiative
Department of Higher Education

Jennifer Stewart

Statewide Transition Director,
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Charlotte "Dee" Spinkston

Adjunct Professor, Endicott College

Christopher Grimaldi

Assistant General Counsel
Department of Higher Education

Margaret Van Gelder

Statewide Director of Family Support,
Department of Developmental Services