



A Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder

A Report to the Massachusetts Legislature

April 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ID/ASD), convened by the House and Senate Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Higher Education. The report describes higher education opportunities for students with ID/ASD nationally and statewide, and includes specific findings and recommendations to increase access to inclusive higher education and ensure citizens with ID/ASD have equal opportunity to reach their potential.

In 2008, the state legislature launched a new initiative to support higher education Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) opportunities for students with severe disabilities who are 18-22 years old and still enrolled in special education. The ICE discretionary grant program supports partnerships between public high schools and public institutions of higher education that are designed to further develop the academic, independent living, social, and employment skills of students with ID/ASD in order to improve their post-school success.

Although hundreds of youth with severe disabilities have been successfully included in Massachusetts college campuses throughout the state in the last eight years, this represents a small fraction of the students who could benefit from this opportunity. This year, approximately 75 young adults with ID/ASD were included in higher education through the grant program, a small fraction of the more than 3,700 students ages 18-22 with severe disabilities statewide. Individuals with ID/ASD who reach the age of 22 have even more limited access to inclusive higher education and life-long learning opportunities because they are not able to participate in Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment opportunities after they exit special education.

With limited access, too many individuals with ID/ASD have been relegated to a lifetime of sheltered work, day habilitation or languishing at home – living in poverty and dependent on government care. These deplorable post-school outcomes can no longer be tolerated. They deprive students with ID/ASD and their non-disabled peers of a fully inclusive educational opportunity, while the Commonwealth is deprived of the productive potential of its citizens who yearn to be tax-paying members of society, living and working in the community.

The Task Force members clearly heard the cry for more inclusive higher education opportunities from the parents, students, educators, and experts who testified in the four regional hearings. Further, research has confirmed that inclusive postsecondary education initiatives for students with ID/ASD have had a positive impact on student rates of employment and wages, self-determination skills, social networks, and independent living. In response, the Task Force focused on the urgent need to eliminate barriers and expand inclusive higher education opportunities for students with ID/ASD, so they have an option of going to college and reaping the benefits of higher education. The Task Force developed a series of recommendations to address the primary findings, outlined below.

Finding 1: Higher education is an important pathway to integrated competitive employment and independent living for a student population (ID/ASD) that has suffered deplorable outcomes compared to other disability groups.

Finding 2: Students with ID/ASD ages 18-22 experience barriers in their transition from high school to adult life, including lack of access to Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment opportunities in all geographic areas of the state, lack of integrated competitive employment prior to exiting high school, and lack of opportunities to acquire self-determination and independent living skills in natural environments where they will live and work as adults. MCAS requirements bar many students, and campuses lack adequate supports. Students with ID/ASD who reach the age of 22 have even more limited access to inclusive higher education and life-long learning opportunities because they are not able to participate in Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment opportunities after they exit special education.

Finding 3: Students with ID/ASD must attend an approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) in order to be eligible for Federal financial aid (i.e., Pell Grants, Federal Work Study Program, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants). Massachusetts currently does not have any approved CTPs.

Finding 4: Initial data reported by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) demonstrate the value of the ICE initiative, highlighting important student outcomes including self-determination skills, participation in career planning, vocational skill-building activities and improvement of academic, social, and other transition related skills. To date, resources have not been available to conduct a more comprehensive evaluation in order to further identify student outcomes and evidence-based practice, including practices, policies, and structures that are correlated with improved student outcomes in areas such as integrated competitive employment, self-determination, independent living, and community membership.

Finding 5: There is a paucity of information available for students, families, and educators regarding inclusive postsecondary education options available for students with ID/ASD. Students, family members, administrators, school district personnel, colleges and universities all indicated a need for increased access to information that covers a wide range of knowledge including general descriptive information on available ICE and other higher education initiatives as well as specific guidance on how to create these inclusive higher education opportunities.

Finding 6: Students with ID/ASD who live in residential options (e.g., dormitory, Greek system housing, apartments) sponsored by IHE (Institutes of Higher Education) are afforded the least restrictive environment to learn self-determination and independent living skills in the natural environment where they can learn and use the skill. However, students with ID/ASD in Massachusetts currently do not have opportunities to live on campus in dormitories with their nondisabled peers, although Bridgewater State University has launched a planning process.

Finding 7: Inclusive higher education opportunities are even more limited for adults with the most severe ID/ASD.

The recommendations provided by the Task Force address each of these findings. Implementation of these broad recommendations will require leadership and commitment from the legislative and executive branch. Many of the recommendations will require statutory changes, increased financial resources, inter-agency collaboration, and/or revised policies and practices. There are many recommendations that can be immediately implemented, while it is recognized that others will require additional time. With this roadmap, the Commonwealth can remove barriers and allow all of its citizens to reap the benefits of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Formation of Task Force

In October of 2013 the House and Senate Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Higher Education assembled a Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ID/ASD). The purpose of the Task Force was to study ways to expand new and enhance existing inclusive models of higher education for students with ID/ASD through public hearings, testimony, and research on national efforts to create access to higher education for students with ID/ASD.

An October 8, 2013 press release stated, “The Task Force (would) solicit feedback and comments from the public, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, and others about expanding opportunities for students with disabilities to be educated alongside peers without disabilities in colleges and universities.” This Task Force scheduled four public hearings across the Commonwealth (Sannicandro, 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of the Task Force is to develop a report including findings on the current status of postsecondary education for students with ID/ASD and, based on these findings, make legislative recommendations that will enhance and expand college opportunities for youth and adults with ID/ASD throughout the Commonwealth. This report is meant to be a roadmap for the Massachusetts legislature and other policymakers on how to provide students with ID/ASD and their families with state-of-the art transition services leading to improved post-school student outcomes and an overall enhanced quality of adult life where students with ID/ASD are valued contributing members of the community. The report also focuses on the importance of opening the doors to higher education and life-long learning for individuals with ID/ASD who have exited school and are no longer eligible for special education.

Methods of Obtaining Information

In November of 2013, the Task Force conducted public hearings at four institutions of higher education in Massachusetts. Hearings were held at Bridgewater State University on Nov. 1, Harvard University on Nov. 8, Quinsigamond Community College on Nov. 15 and the University of Massachusetts Amherst on Nov. 22. These institutions were selected for their diversity of location, their representation of two-year community colleges and a four-year state university, and one private four-year university.

The Task Force invited students, parents, advocates, experts, researchers, administrators, professors, teachers and members of the public to provide testimony. Both spoken testimony and written testimony were accepted. Testimony was limited to three to five minutes, and Task Force members were able to ask questions of those who testified once their testimony had concluded. At least 45 people provided testimony over the course of the four public hearings regarding this issue, and of those who spoke, an overwhelming majority supported the current Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) initiative and called for increased access across all public institutions of higher education statewide for

all ages. Adults with disabilities, parents, college faculty, district educators, human service providers, and advocates eloquently addressed the critical importance of providing inclusive higher education opportunities, and also underscored the limited options currently available for the Commonwealth's citizens with ID/ASD.

Background

In 1972, Massachusetts enacted the nation's first special education law, Chapter 766. Responding to the widespread exclusion of students with disabilities from public schools, this legislation provided access for children who had previously been warehoused in institutions or left to languish at home. The Massachusetts law served as the model for the first federal special education law, passed in 1975. The exclusion of children from our society's most fundamental right to a public education struck a deep nerve, and lawmakers responded. Special education laws were passed to address gross inequities, level the playing field, and ensure equal educational opportunities for all citizens.

Forty years later, school systems are educating the vast majority of the state's students with disabilities in general education classes, alongside their nondisabled peers. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the K-12 system has improved outcomes and achievement of the entire student population. Despite this progress in the K-12 system, many students with disabilities are still barred from higher education. Higher education leads to a variety of personal and financial benefits, and is a vital part of establishing a successful career path and enhancing earnings over a lifetime (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; Leonhardt, 2011). Despite this fact, low expectations coupled with nominal opportunities have prevented youth with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ID/ASD) from receiving the benefits associated with higher education.

While Massachusetts acknowledges the importance of higher education for nondisabled students in personal, social, and academic growth, and recognizes increased employment opportunities and a higher quality of life for students that have access to higher education, the state excludes the vast majority of students with ID/ASD from higher education.

While students without disabilities graduate and exit high school after 12th grade, students with significant disabilities such as ID/ASD typically remain in special education until age 22. These students are left behind, as their peers move on to higher education and the workforce. Public school options for students with severe disabilities, ages 18-22, are too often limited to segregated special education programs, isolated from their peers who have graduated. High schools are designed for 14-18 year olds, and cannot effectively meet the learning needs of students with disabilities who remain in a high school setting for eight years. Twenty-one year olds with disabilities are learning alongside 14 year olds, rather than with age-appropriate, nondisabled peers.

This is a social justice issue. This is a civil rights issue. This is the right thing to do.

Testimony of Dr. Trudy Knowles, Professor, Education Department,
Westfield State University

The Federal Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has recognized the importance of higher education opportunities, stating that providing a high school student with a disability access to higher education prior to exiting special education “can be critical in facilitating the student’s transition from secondary school to college or the workforce.” OSEP addressed how participation in courses at a postsecondary institution can be provided consistent with the special education IEP transition process, utilizing federal special education dollars, as well as state and local funding (Musgrove, OSEP, 2013). OSEP also clarified that special education transition services can include work placements, with provision of aides and services that support students in work sites with nondisabled peers (Musgrove, OSEP, 2012). The federal government has underscored the need to provide college and job opportunities in the community, recognizing the growing body of evidence showing postsecondary education as a pathway to integrated, competitive employment and independent living. Research has shown that integrated competitive employment while in high school is a predictor of integrated competitive employment as an adult (Simoneson & Neubert, 2013; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering & Kohler, 2009).

Overall, the current status of education and employment for adults with ID/ASD is grim. Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) have the lowest percentage of postsecondary enrollment of any category of individuals with disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). Only 23% of high school students with ID go on to attend a two-year or four-year college (Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011). The employment outcomes are equally appalling. In 2011, 81% of people with ID were being served in facility-based and non-work settings (Butterworth et al., 2013). A substantial proportion of adults with ID have never been in the workforce (Siperstein, Parker, & Drascher, 2013). Almost all adults with ID if employed are underemployed, meaning they are not full time and earn less than the minimum wage (Siperstein et al., 2013). Getting a job that pays a living wage is the basic standard for all Americans. However, for Americans with ID/ASD sheltered work and subminimum wage is often the only option given to them. A recent survey of 11,599 adults with ID in 16 states found that only 14.7% were competitively employed (Human Services Research Institute, 2012). Further compounding these paltry employment outcomes, these individuals are not afforded the opportunity to access further education as adults and therefore have little hope of ever obtaining a real job making minimum wage or above.

Despite years of investment in special education, limited opportunities for youth with ID/ASD have prevented any substantial change in their transition and adult life outcomes. In 2011, the employment rates for transition-aged individuals (ages 16-22) were 18%, which is less than half the employment rate for people without disabilities (Butterworth et al., 2013; Siperstein et al., 2013). This gap becomes worse as people with I/DD age, with only 32% of adults ages 20-30 having employment compared to 74% of people without disabilities (Sulewski, Zalewska, Butterworth, & Migliore, 2013).

Transition age youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder have the highest rates of social isolation, disconnection from work and school, and residential dependence compared to other youth with

developmental disabilities. For example, youth with autism are much more likely to experience high rates of social isolation compared to other youth with developmental disabilities, with isolation rates almost three times as high (Shattuck, Orsmond, Wagner, & Cooper, 2011). Similarly, youth on the spectrum have the “highest risk of being completely disengaged from any post-secondary education or employment” (Shattuck et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, Massachusetts is not immune to these poor post-school student outcomes. Current research supports that the best possible employment outcome for people with disabilities is integrated paid employment; meaning competitive employment — a real job earning a living wage in the community (Wehman, Inge, Revelle, & Brookes, 2007; Leuning, 2009). Yet of the 4,000 individuals ages 16-26 enrolled in the Massachusetts vocational rehabilitation system, only 25% had an integrated employment outcome (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 2011). The remaining individuals were either in segregated employment or unemployed. Further evidence of these poor outcomes comes from a review of the 16,000 students in the same age group who were served by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Only 22% of these individuals were in integrated employment while the vast majority (78%) were relegated to segregated day habilitation programs/sheltered workshops (Hart & Migliore, 2011). These student outcomes are no longer tolerable. These bleak outcomes demonstrate that there is much work to be done to strengthen the quality of services that are provided by both the Massachusetts education system and the adult service systems.

Currant Status of Higher Education for Students with ID/ASD

Massachusetts Overview

Massachusetts has long been in the forefront of the higher education movement for students with ID/ASD. Starting in FY2007, the state legislature launched a new initiative in the state budget to support an Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) opportunity for students with severe disabilities who are 18-22 years old and still enrolled in special education through their local school district. The ICE discretionary grant program supports partnerships between public high schools and public institutions of higher education that are designed to further develop the academic, independent living, social, and employment skills of students with severe disabilities in order to improve their post-school success. The college/high school partnerships provide opportunities for students to be included in college courses (credit or noncredit) and in other college life activities, with necessary supports and services. The partnerships also promote linkages to adult agencies and organizations that assist students with their transition to post-secondary education.

Through ICE, older students with ID/ASD can continue to participate with their nondisabled peers and receive the free appropriate public education to which they are entitled in public college settings, rather than face increasing isolation.

I attend the ICE program here at BSU. It is hard to put into words just what the experience of attending college means to me... At Bridgewater, I have found the confidence in myself that I had never knew existed. I am able to be myself in a way that I never was able to be in high school.

Testimony of Shelby, ICE student at Bridgewater State University

While there are a small number of public and private colleges and universities in the Commonwealth which have provided options for students with ID/ASD to attend separate classes that are located on college campuses, with different curricula designed solely for students with severe disabilities, the Commonwealth's ICE initiative has focused on expanding inclusive options for students with ID/ASD. The DESE 2013 *Report to the Legislature: Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Programs for Students with Disabilities* demonstrates the important life skills that students acquire through their full inclusion in the academic and social life of the college. The ICE initiative supports colleges to remove barriers which preclude access for students with ID/ASD, such as: requirements to pass MCAS, obtain a regular diploma, pass entrance exams in order to enroll in public institutes of higher education; pre-requisites and course requirements which limit options for students to enroll in courses with audit status; and lack of accommodations, supports and services necessary to facilitate student enrollment and full participation. Excerpts from this legislative report are highlighted below.

**Excerpts from the
2013 Report to the Legislature:
Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Programs for Students with Disabilities**

The ICE program has provided Massachusetts students with severe disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22 the opportunity to take part academically and socially in the life of the college. Through the ICE program, students with severe disabilities have had the opportunity to:

- 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;
- Participate in college life; and
- Experience integrated competitive employment opportunities.

All of the ICE programs have used the academic and social student support services already found on the college campus. The grant funds, combined with in-kind contributions and district funds, have supported the more individualized and intensive services needed for students with severe disabilities to participate fully in courses, the life of the college, and integrated competitive employment opportunities.

Professional development and technical assistance have been provided to the grant recipients in a variety of ways. Partnership members participate in professional development designed to build and sustain the ICE initiatives statewide. Individual faculty and staff members have participated

in technical assistance activities, provided by the Institute for Community Inclusion, needed to support students with severe disabilities in inclusive college courses and in the life of the college.

Course selection has been based upon student interest and is closely tied to student transition planning and career goals. The following is a sample of course offerings from FY2012 and FY2013:

- **Academic Courses:** Writing Skills II; Pre-Algebra; Foundations of Algebra; Intermediate Algebra; Cultural Diversity Issues in School and Society; Oral Communication; Advanced Fiction Writing; Conversational Japanese; Introduction to Psychology; Fundamentals of Math; Introduction to English Composition; Introduction to Special Education; Introduction to Creative Writing; Introduction to Sociology; Ancient and Medieval Art; Child and Adolescent Development; American Sign Language I; Human Communication Skills; Developmental Reading & Writing II; Financial Literacy for All.
- **Business Courses:** Principles of Marketing; Introduction to Business; Principles of Management
- **Technology Courses:** Computer Essentials; Computers and Technology; Introduction to Microcomputer Applications.
- **Courses in the Arts:** Drawing for the Absolute Beginner; Improvisation; Ceramics; Chorale; Graphic Design; Elements of Performance Arts.
- **Career Exploration & Career Courses:** Basics of Early Childhood Education; Introduction to Special Education; Essential Communication Skills for the Workplace; Job Interview Workshop; Workforce Readiness; Financial Literacy; Customer Services in the Hospitality Industry; Careers in Healthcare; Physical Activity & Health
- **Wellness & Personal Development Courses:** Connecting to Your Inner Orange Line; The Balancing Act: Juggling Work, School, & Life; Weight Training; The College Experience; Beginning Basketball I; Intermediate Basketball II; Theory and Practice of Gymnastics

The primary student outcomes of this pilot grant program over the seven years of its implementation include:

1. The development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills.
2. Participation in career planning, vocational skill-building activities, and community-based competitive employment opportunities.
3. The improvement of academic, social, functional, and other transition related skills.

The primary [program] outcomes of this grant program over the seven years of its implementation include:

1. The clear demonstration that students with severe disabilities can successfully complete inclusive credit and non-credit college courses, participate meaningfully in the life of the campus, and make progress towards their individual educational and career goals.
2. The transformation of belief systems and raising of expectations on the part of higher education and school district educators, families, and students.
3. The building of bridges between the historically disconnected systems of school districts and higher education, to create improved information exchange, understanding, and systems alignment.

Student participation in the life of the college is a key facet of the ICE program. Participation in these experiences fosters friendships, encourages the development of social and self-advocacy skills, and increases the visibility and acceptance of the ICE program on campus. Students participated in these activities [in the summer and fall of 2012]:

Volunteering at college food bank	Animation club
Student government	Visiting the library
Basketball club	Using the computer lab
Bible study club	Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual advocates club
On campus sporting events	Socialize with friends & peer mentors
Working out at the gym	Salsa class
Zumba class	

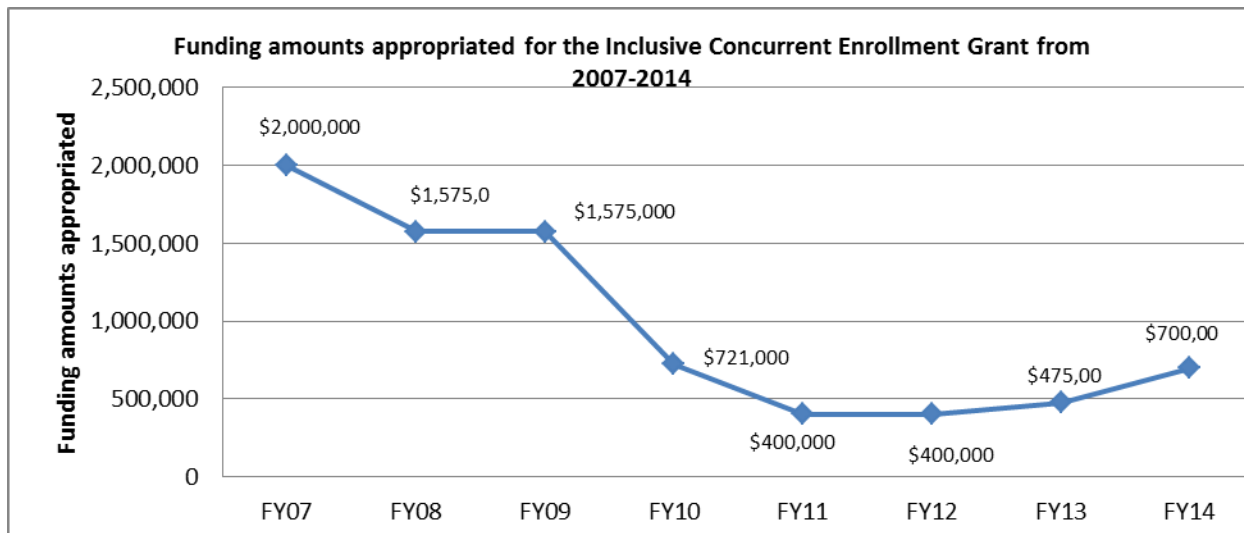
Students participated in a variety of paid and unpaid employment opportunities. Partnerships worked with each student to determine his/her preferences, needs, strengths, and interests, and then aligned course selection and work experiences to further each student's educational, career, and life goals. Students worked at these sites, among others [in the summer and fall of 2012]:

Wentworth Institute of Technology	Brockton Visiting Nurse Association
Game Stop	Heights Crossing Assisted Living Facility
Quirk Mazda	Stop and Shop
Bikes Not Bombs	Boys and Girls Club
Brighton High Copy Center	Carver Town Library
Brockton Hospital	YMCA
New England Sinai Hospital	Easton Town Offices
Hannaford	Southeast Rehabilitation Center
Roland Green Preschool	Paul Pratt Public Library
Auclair's Market	Gilmore Early Childhood Center ¹

¹ Previous years, student employment experiences included a range of options such as restaurants, fitness centers, preschools, bakeries, pet groomers, retail stores, landscaping, and art studios.

Over time, legislative appropriation for the ICE program has decreased from the FY2007 high of \$2,000,000 to a low of \$400,000, increasing to \$700,000 in FY2014.

Figure 1: Funding for the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Grant from FY 2007-2014



Source: The 188th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, <https://malegislature.gov/Budget>

Colleges and school districts often cover some of the costs through in-kind contributions for personnel such as program coordinators, educational coaches, or paraprofessionals. These personnel are important to be sure students receive necessary and individualized academic, social, and employment support.

The FY 2012 budget required the state to develop strategies and procedures to sustain and replicate the ICE partnerships, including: enabling students to meet competitive employment and other transition goals; retaining employment specialists; implementing procedures and funding mechanisms to ensure new ICE participants make use of knowledge and expertise developed in existing partnerships; expanding capacity to meet the needs of additional students in underserved areas; and providing tuition waivers.

Last year, Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013 moved administration of the ICE initiative to the state Executive Office of Education (EOE) to support expansion and coordination between DESE and the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and also required the addition of a new position in EOE, Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Coordinator (ICEC). This position, recently filled, is “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 developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion to assist new colleges and school districts” (2013 Mass. Legis. Serv. Ch. 38 (H.B. 3538)).

Faculty from Institutes of Higher Education have emphasized that inclusion greatly enhances the academic experience for the nondisabled students that take classes with their peers who have intellectual disabilities and autism. The student body not only receives a richer academic

experience, but also learns directly the tremendous value of working and participating with people with disabilities, producing better scholars and citizens.

What I found was that the [student with significant disabilities] made the course better for every single person in the class. When I was proceeding through my lectures too quickly, he would ask that I slow down a bit or repeat material. Inevitably, others in the class would point out that I was moving too quickly for them, as well. When students were asked to work in groups, I would see the student's group work particularly carefully and thoughtfully to plan for a presentation or to reexamine the material. The student also brought a sense of community, kindness, and camaraderie to the college classroom, an element that is often missing due to the diverse make-up and busy lives of university students. The class I taught was among the best courses I have ever taught. Every student learned more, participated more, and respected and valued their classmates in a way I have seldom seen. When discussing this with other professors with enrolled ICE students they reported similar surprising and consistently positive results.

Testimony of Dr. Battaglini, Dean of the College of Education and Allied Studies at Bridgewater State University

The ICE initiative provides a cost-effective mechanism for school districts to educate students with ID/ASD. For example, school districts pay \$6,700 per year for a student to attend Holyoke Community College. By comparison, using values unadjusted for inflation, a 2009 report indicates that for FY2007, collaborative day schools cost an average of \$31,779 per pupil, private day schools cost \$50,691, and private residential schools cost \$105,206 (Deninger & O'Donnell, 2009). In addition, while many students attending college through the ICE initiative learn to utilize public transportation, districts can incur increased transportation costs for students attending traditional special education programs. Special education transportation costs, again unadjusted for inflation, ranged from \$2,605 for in-district programs to \$9,646 for private day schools per pupil (Deninger & O'Donnell, 2009). As the number of out-of-district placements for students with autism increases and with out-of-district placement most likely to occur beginning in a student's early high school years (Hehir, 2013), these costs may be expected to increase particularly for older children with ASD.

The long term cost savings to society are also significant. With limited opportunities, too many individuals with ID/ASD are unemployed and unable to live independently, dependent on government support. Estimates indicate that the state of Massachusetts expends \$1.12 billion per year for individuals with ID/DD (Braddock, 2013). Caring for an individual with autism during his or her lifetime is estimated to cost about \$3 million in the United States (Ganz, 2003), though some sources such as the Autism Society estimate this cost can reach \$5 million.

Although hundreds of youth with severe disabilities have been successfully included in Massachusetts college campuses throughout the state since the ICE initiative was launched, this represents a small fraction of the students who could benefit from this opportunity. This year, approximately 75 young adults with ID/ASD were included in higher education through the grant program, a small fraction of the approximately 3,700 students ages 18-22 with severe disabilities statewide. According to DESE, in FY 2013, of students ages 18-22, there were 1,944

students with ID, 1,086 with ASD, and 726 with multiple disabilities (3,756 total) (A. Green, personal communication, November 8, 2013).

Eight of the Commonwealth's 29 public colleges and universities² are currently including students with ID/ASD through the ICE grant program, and two additional colleges are administering a planning grant and expect to start enrolling a small number of students next year. These colleges and universities are partnering with 51 school districts and collaboratives to include students. These partnerships have provided critical vision and leadership, opening doors for a population of students previously excluded from higher education. Two of the colleges (Holyoke Community College and Massachusetts Bay Community College) no longer require grant support, and are self-sustaining with payments from partnering school districts that have found ICE to be a successful and cost-effective option for older youth with disabilities.

One student came into the program very shy and reserved, often falling silent when being asked her input or being asked what she wants to eat even. She's grown a great deal in this area. She's now comfortable navigating campus to get where she needs to go and leading the way on excursions during her free time, so she's making the decisions now, she's not just waiting for someone else to do it. She has also not only learned to budget her money and make decisions, but she's now initiating and having conversations with other UMass students over lunch.

Testimony of Rachael Hougan, UMass Amherst ICE Program Coordinator

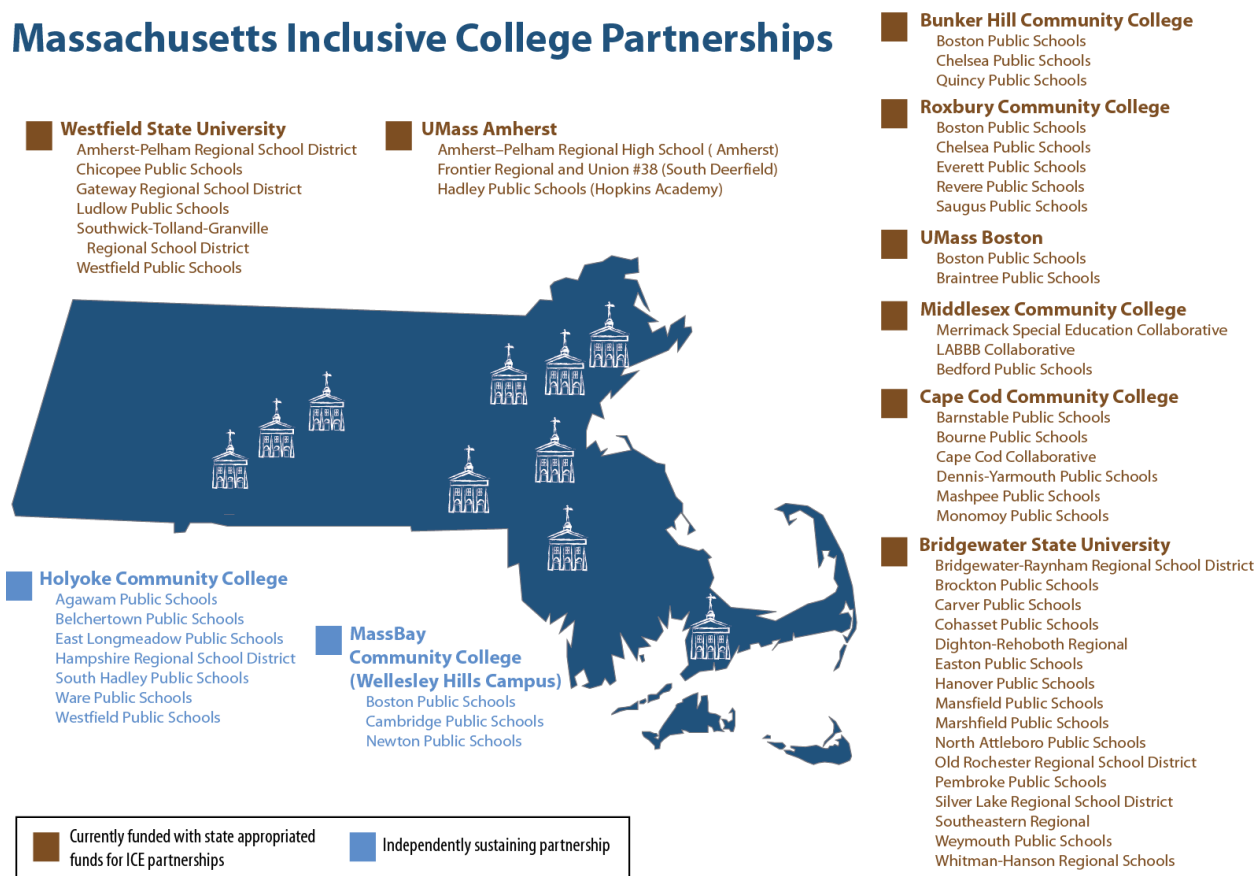
At the same time, the majority of students with ID/ASD are still precluded from higher education, with participation of only 10% of the state's school districts, charter school and collaboratives and only 1/3 of the Commonwealth's public colleges. With 29 public higher education campuses and 60 additional accredited private institutions (AICUM, 2014) there is tremendous capacity to increase inclusive opportunities for students with ID/ASD.

Currently, none of the IHE partnerships include students in residence life on campus, with inclusive dormitory opportunities. Bridgewater State University has demonstrated strong commitment and leadership in this area, as it is implementing a planning grant to develop structures, supports and services to start including students in dormitory living next year.

² There are 29 public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, including 15 community colleges, nine state universities, and five UMass campuses.

Figure 2: Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships 2013-2014

Massachusetts Inclusive College Partnerships

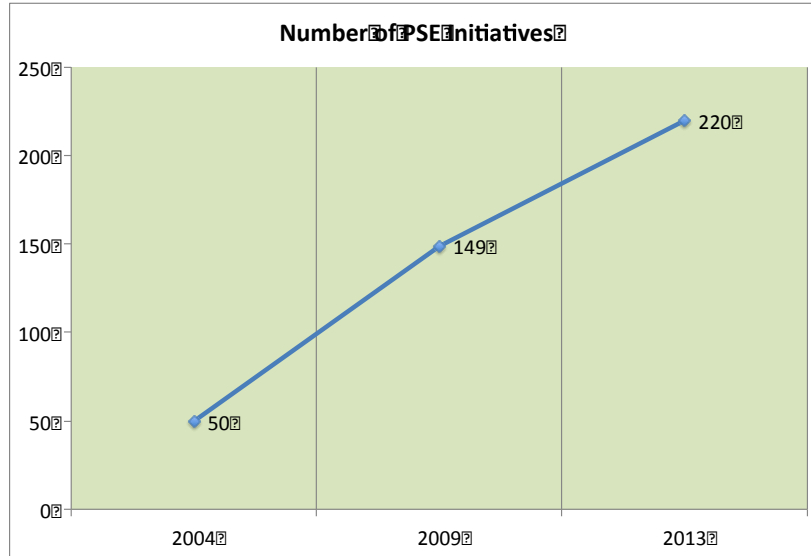


Source: Thinkcollege.net.

National Overview

Nationwide, there has been considerable growth in access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) especially since the passage of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) amendments in 2008 (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012). For the first time students with ID were included in the HEOA and were deemed eligible for Federal Student Aid and Work Study if they were in an approved Comprehensive Transition Program. There are currently over 200 postsecondary education programs listed on the Think College program database and a national survey conducted in 2009 identified over 249 PSE programs (Grigal et al, 2012). Additionally, IHE's are beginning to include students with ID/ASD in the residential life of the college or university. For example, the College of Charleston (South Carolina) is supporting students to access their Fraternity/Sorority housing, Edgewood College (Wisconsin) supports students in regular college dormitories, and Kennesaw State University (KSU) (Georgia) has created access to KSU housing for students with ID/ASD who choose to follow the same process that applies to all KSU students. A national survey conducted in 2009 revealed that 39% of 149 postsecondary education programs did support students with ID/ASD in a range of housing options (Grigal et al., 2012).

Figure 3: Number of Postsecondary Education Programs Nationally



Source: Hart, 2014.

The Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 contains several new provisions aimed at increasing access to higher education for youth and adults with ID/DD. In 2010, Congress authorized the creation of new model demonstration programs via the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) and awarded grants to 27 institutes of higher education (IHEs) to fund Transition and Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSIDs) (Figure 4 shows geographic distribution of TPSID grantees). The goal of the TPSID program is to create, expand, or enhance high-quality, inclusive higher education experiences to support positive outcomes for individuals with ID/DD. The OPE also awarded a TPSID National Coordinating Center (NCC) grant to the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The TPSID NCC has developed and implemented a comprehensive evaluation system to capture how these inclusive higher education programs are serving youth and adults with ID/DD.

Figure 4: National Transition & Postsecondary Programs for Students with I/DD



In just two years, this program has supported the creation or expansion of programs at 42 colleges and universities serving 792 students with I/DD (Grigal, Hart, Smith, Domin, & Sulewski, 2013). These students, who would otherwise have been written off to a lifetime of sheltered work or day habilitation, have been supported to take inclusive college classes, obtain career experiences through internships, and in many cases access integrated paid employment. These programs demonstrate that given the opportunity, people with ID can and will benefit from higher education. In year two of the project, students with ID enrolled in 4,806 courses and the majority of students who were enrolled in inclusive courses were enrolled for standard IHE credit (58%) (Grigal et al., 2013). This unprecedented investment has allowed these individuals the chance to access higher learning and sets them on a path to a better future. This is a stark contrast to the outcomes experienced by those not afforded these opportunities. Access to higher education via the TPSID initiatives has also demonstrated the potential impact that further learning can have on integrated competitive employment for these individuals. Balancing work and course responsibilities is a common experience for most college students, and the students with ID/DD attending TPSID initiatives are finally having the chance to show that they too are up to the challenge.

According to the TPSID Annual Report, during year two of the grant, 282 participating students were involved in career development activities and internships. An additional 236 students held paid jobs, and some students held 2 or 3 jobs while they were going to college (Grigal et al., 2013). The majority of students (74%) worked between 5 and 20 hours per week at their job. Eighty-two percent of the students who held jobs were paid at or above minimum wage. During

year two, 45% of employed students had never held a paid job prior to entering the TPSID program (Grigal et al., 2013). Given the choice between sitting in a sheltered workshop and doing piece work for pennies a day, these students with ID/ASD now have the chance to attend inclusive college classes, expanding their minds and their social networks by engaging in all aspects of the college community. At the same time, they have begun to access real jobs and earn real wages.

The first wave of descriptive research on higher education options for students with ID/ASD has focused on identifying the salient characteristics of postsecondary education initiatives across the country including the practices, policies, and structures that these higher education initiatives are using to support students with intellectual disabilities in college and their impact on student outcomes. Overall, there is considerable variability in the structure of these programs with some using a separate specially designed curriculum and others creating full access to authentic college courses listed in the course catalogue and the entire campus community and still other programs that offer a combination of specialized curriculum often with a focus on independent living/life skills for students with ID and some support to participate in typical courses and campus activities (Papay & Bambara, 2011; Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012).

Until recently, these postsecondary education (PSE) initiatives developed in isolation from one another without benefit of any standards or other guidance. Think College, at the Institute for Community Inclusion, at the University of Massachusetts Boston developed a standards based conceptual framework in order to better understand how these PSE programs are operationalized. Additionally, the Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks were designed to assist in guiding the development of new inclusive higher education initiatives and to enhance existing PSE initiatives (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012). These standards focus on programmatic structures, practices, and policies across academics, campus membership, career development, and self-determination and establish a conceptual framework for the enhancement of existing or development of new policies, services, and practices.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the overall findings based on the Massachusetts Task Force hearings, testimony, and research on state and national efforts to create access to higher education for students with ID/ASD. The report highlights one or more recommendations to address each of the findings.

Finding 1: Higher education is an important pathway to integrated competitive employment and independent living for a student population (ID/ASD) that has suffered deplorable outcomes compared to other disability groups.

Recommendation 1a: The Executive Office of Education (EOE), in consultation with the Department of Higher Education (DHE), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) shall develop strategies and procedures to assist students in accessing inclusive higher education, integrated competitive employment, and independent living opportunities, including but not limited to provision of education and job coaches as well as employment specialists who will support students with ID/ASD.

Finding 2: Students with ID/ASD ages 18-22 experience barriers in their transition from high school to adult life, including lack of access to Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment opportunities in all geographic areas of the state, lack of integrated competitive employment prior to exiting high school, and lack of opportunities to acquire self-determination and independent living skills in natural environments where they will live and work as adults. MCAS requirements bar many students, and campuses lack adequate supports. Students with ID/ASD who reach the age of 22 have even more limited access to inclusive higher education and life-long learning opportunities because they are not able to participate in Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment opportunities after they exit special education.

Recommendation 2a: Enact laws and policies necessary to remove barriers which limit inclusive higher education opportunities for students with ID/ASD, including but not limited to: allowing students who have not passed MCAS to enroll in inclusive credit and non-credit courses related to career goals; encouraging full participation in student life of the college community, including resident life; offering enrollment in credit and noncredit courses in audit status for students who may not meet course prerequisites and requirements; and providing supports, services and accommodations necessary to facilitate student enrollment and full participation. Prioritize enactment of H.3995, An Act Securing Access to Higher Education for People with Disabilities.

Recommendation 2b: Expand the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative for students with ID/ASD throughout the state, with full participation of the Commonwealth's 29 public institutions of higher education by 2019 and increase appropriations to support new partnerships over the next five years. Prioritize enactment of H.4015, An Act to Expand Inclusive Transition

Programs for Students with Severe Disabilities.

Recommendation 2c: The EOE, in consultation with the DHE and the DESE shall develop strategies to ensure that underserved individuals with ID/ASD have equal access to inclusive higher education opportunities, including those individuals with linguistic and cultural barriers.

Recommendation 2d: Develop policies, practices, and interagency agreements necessary to support the effective collaboration of public institutes of higher education, school committees, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and other human service agencies in order to provide supports and services required to successfully include students with intellectual disabilities and ASD in higher education after they have turned 22 and exited special education, including but not limited to maximizing federal financial participation through utilization of Medicaid waiver funds.

Recommendation 2e: EOE, in close collaboration with DESE, DHE, and EOHHS shall support partnerships funded through the ICE discretionary grant program to develop self-sustaining mechanisms and procedures to sustain and expand capacity to include students with ID/ASD in all public IHEs statewide.

Recommendation 2f: EOE, in close collaboration with DESE and DHE shall consider principles of universal design and ensure that online courses are developed in a manner which is accessible to students with ID/ASD, while ensuring that online courses are used only in conjunction with active student participation on college campuses.

Finding 3: Students with ID/ASD must attend an approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) in order to be eligible for federal financial aid (i.e., Pell Grants, Federal Work Study Program, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants). Massachusetts currently does not have any approved CTPs.

Recommendations 3a: EOE, in consultation with DHE and DESE, shall create training materials instructing state institutes of higher education and providing technical assistance on how to apply to become an approved CTP so that students with ID/ASD who have exited high school are eligible for Federal financial aid.

Finding 4: Initial data reported by DESE demonstrate the value of the ICE initiative, highlighting important student outcomes including self-determination skills, participation in career planning, vocational skill-building activities and improvement of academic, social, and other transition related skills. To date, resources have not been available to conduct a more comprehensive evaluation in order to further identify student outcomes and evidence-based practice, including practices, policies, and structures that are correlated with improved student outcomes in areas such as integrated competitive employment, self-determination, independent living, and community membership.

Recommendation 4a: Allocate funds for comprehensive evaluation and research of the ICE initiative, including tracking of program policies and practices and individual student characteristics and outcomes in order to identify effective policies and practices that are

associated with positive student outcomes in the areas of: integrated competitive employment, self-determination skills, independent living and community membership. Ensure that the evaluation is designed to allow each ICE partnership to generate individual evaluation reports and allow EOE to generate an aggregate evaluation report across all ICE partnerships.

Finding 5: There is a paucity of information available for students, families, and educators, regarding inclusive postsecondary education options available for students with ID/ASD. Students, family members, administrators, school district personnel, colleges and universities all indicated a need for increased access to information that covers a wide range of knowledge including general descriptive information on available ICE and other higher education initiatives as well as specific guidance on how to create these inclusive higher education opportunities.

Recommendation 5a: The EOE, working in close collaboration with DESE and DHE shall develop an ICE website with materials on higher education options for students with ID/ASD and further disseminate written and electronic informational materials regarding inclusive higher education opportunities to parents, individuals with ID/ASD, educators, administrators, and advocacy groups throughout the Commonwealth.

Recommendation 5b: The EOE shall work with DESE to ensure that the department issues a technical assistance advisory to all superintendents, middle and high school principals, administrators of special education, general and special educators, and other interested parties regarding the importance of considering inclusive higher education options for students with ID/ASD.

Recommendation 5c: The EOE, working in close collaboration with DESE and DHE shall develop informational and technical assistance resource materials to assist educators striving to launch or expand initiatives to include students with ID/ASD in higher education. The resource materials shall address topics such as: specific planning and implementation strategies to operationalize when launching a new inclusive college initiative; effective strategies to ensure full collaboration of Disability Services staff in supporting students with ID/ASD; waiving course prerequisites; waiving entrance exams; early course registration; establishing mentoring networks; addressing scheduling differences between college and school district; and applying Universal Design for Learning principles to instruction, assessment, and syllabi creation.

Recommendation 5d: Adoption of 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, including but not limited to provision of mentoring to new partnerships.

Finding 6: Students with ID/ASD who live in IHE sponsored residential options (e.g., dormitory, Greek system housing, apartments) are afforded the least restrictive environment to learn self-determination and independent living skills in the natural environment where they can learn and use the skill. However, students with ID/ASD in Massachusetts currently do not have opportunities to live on campus in dormitories with their nondisabled peers, although Bridgewater State University has launched a planning process.

Recommendation 6a: The EOE, in consultation with the DHE and the DESE, shall take steps necessary to include students with ID/ASD in the residence life of all public institutions of higher education, with accommodations, supports, and services necessary to enable inclusive dormitory living, including but not limited to provision of financial incentives to colleges and districts offering inclusive living options.

Finding 7: Inclusive higher education opportunities are even more limited for adults with the most severe ID/ASD.

Recommendation 7a: EOE shall work in close collaboration with DESE, DHE, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and other human service agencies, parents and advocates in order to develop policies, practices, services and supports necessary to ensure that students with high support needs can successfully participate in inclusive higher education at age 18 and well into adult life.

Appendix

Testimony

Bridgewater State University Testimony, November 1, 2013

Felicia Wilczenski, Interim Dean, College of Education and Human Development, UMass Boston
Laura Vanderberg, Director of Assessment, College of Education and Human Development, UMass Boston
Kim Lourenco, Program Coordinator, Project Prove, Braintree Public Schools
Ryan Dumont, Student
Lisa Battaglini, Dean of College of Education and Allied Studies, Bridgewater State University
Mary Price, Project Director, Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Program, Bridgewater State University
Shelby, Student
Lisa Jennings, Project Manager, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy, Brandeis University, Parent
Travis Dupois, Special Education Teacher, Marshfield High School
Scott McFarland, Student
Mary Willett, Special Education Teacher, Carver High School
Paige Lawson, Student
Robbie Lawrence, Peer Mentor
Sue Boissoneault, Dean of Disability Services, Bristol Community College
Casey Thomas, Student
Chris, Student
Tim, Transitions Coordinator
Joe Wood, Parent

Harvard University Testimony, November 8, 2013 *Incomplete list from this location

Laurel Hickey, Graduate Providers Council, Suffolk University, Friendship Home
Katie Sullivan
Carol Dumas, UMass ICE Mentor
Sarah Dumas
Aimee D'Avignon, UMass Boston, College of Education and Human Development
Lois Gould, Learning Prep School
Joseph and Denise Grasty, Parents
Ann Guay, Parent
Sarah Kaplan, Boston Center for Independent Living

Quinsigamond Community College Testimony, November 15, 2013

Kathy Kelly, Director of Transition Services at Northeast Arc
John Rochford, Director of Technology for the INDEX Project, Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, UMass Medical School
Lumina Monticello, Student
Jaymie Finstein, Transitional Scholars Program, Mass Bay Community College
Cynthia Moore, Parent, Special Education Advisory Network, Northborough/Southborough SPED-PAC
Kate Myshrall, Worcester resident, Parent, Vice President of Advancement at Seven Hills Foundation

UMass Amherst Testimony, November 22, 2013

Thom Hannum, Music Department, UMass Amherst
Mary Lynn Boscardin, Professor and Chair, Department of Student Development, UMass Amherst
Rachael Hougan, UMass Amherst ICE Program Coordinator
Trudy Knowles, Professor, Education Department, Westfield State University
Cheryl Stanley, Dean of Education, Westfield State University
Lyndsey Nunes, ICE Program Coordinator, Westfield State University
Ludmila Pavlova, Staff member, Architect, University and Campus Planning at UMass Amherst, Member of SPED-PAC, parent
Brian Heffernan (and Julie Heffernan - mother), Student at Mass Bay Community College, Task Force member
Joseph and Denise Grasty, Parents
Robin Nelson, Special Education Director, Hampden Charter School of Science
Ty Hanson, Learning Specialist, Holyoke Community College

Jim Nash, Education Coach, Career Works
Brian, Student

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