Early Education: Strategies for Learning

MASC/MASS 2014 Joint Conference

Wednesday, November 5, 2014

Chris Martes
Kelly Kulsrud
Strategies for Children (SFC) works to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education, enter kindergarten ready to succeed, and become proficient readers by third grade.

The challenges facing the Commonwealth’s young children and families are enormous.

Too many children enter kindergarten behind, and too many never catch up.

Our population of young children is increasingly diverse and poor. And there are too many uncoordinated programs and systems working in silos to support young children, resulting in a lack of systemic progress on their behalf.
In Massachusetts

- MA frequently outscores all other states on national tests.

- MA is #1 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 4th and 8th grade reading and math.

- MA 4-year high school graduation rate continues to increase:
  - 85% of students in the 2013 cohort

- So...what is the problem?
Third Grade Reading Proficiency in Massachusetts
MCAS 2014

- 57% (38,921 students) Proficient or Above
- 43% (29,362 students) Below Proficient
Third Grade Reading Proficiency in Massachusetts, Achievement Gap by Income

% of students scoring proficient or above

- % of non-low income students proficient
- % of all students proficient
- % of low income students proficient

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Third Grade Reading Proficiency, MCAS 2014

2014 Third Grade Reading MCAS
% of students proficient or advanced

- Less than 50%
- 50 - 64%
- 65 - 79%
- 80 - 100%
- Data not available

Statewide, 57% of all students scored proficient or above, and 43% scored below proficient, on the third grade reading Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in 2014.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
For more information, info@masseducation.gov

Source: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
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Three-quarters of children who struggle with reading in third grade will continue to struggle in school.

Children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times less likely than their peers to graduate from high school by age 19.

Only 85% of Massachusetts ninth graders finish high school four years later. The average high school dropout in Massachusetts costs taxpayers an estimated $349,000 more over his/her lifetime than the average high school graduate.

WE KNOW
The Achievement Gap at Age Three

Researchers grouped children into three socioeconomic status groups based on occupation: “Professional,” “Working Class,” and “Welfare.” Groups strongly correlated with parents education levels and family income.


1,116 words
(Children in professional families)

749 words
(Children in working class families)

525 words
(Children in welfare families)
Many Reasons to Invest in Early Education

- A child’s brain grows most rapidly from birth through age 5.
- High-quality early education improves school readiness and achievement.
- Low-income children who participate in high-quality early education are:
  - 40% less likely to need special education or be retained a grade.
  - 30% more likely to graduate from high school.
  - Twice as likely to go to college.
- Improved child outcomes help lower public costs:
  - Education, health care, social services
- Investments in high-quality early education for low-income children yield an estimated 10-16% rate of return.

For brain research see: Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development by Rima Shore (NY: Families and Work Institute, 1997)
WE MUST Ensure High-Quality Experiences in All B-8 Settings

Language-rich homes

High-quality infant-toddler services

High-quality pre-k

High-quality full-day kindergarten

Birth to Grade 3 alignment

High-quality instruction and professional development
Highlights: A Strong Policy Foundation

- Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (FY05)
- Early Childhood Educators Scholarship (FY06)
- Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) pilot program (FY07); formal establishment of UPK in state law in 2008
- $250 million Race to the Top in 2010
- Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in 2011
- $50 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant in 2011
- Full-day kindergarten enrollment currently 87%, up from 38% in 2000
- An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency passed in 2012
- Legislature increases investments in early education in FY14, FY15, beginning a return to pre-recession funding levels.
- EEC applies for $60 million federal Preschool Expansion Grant, designs new model for funding and implementing pre-k in high-needs communities.
Pre-K: Exciting Momentum

Other States

Court-mandated pre-k in Abbott districts. Evidence shows program narrows achievement gaps through 4th and 5th grade.

Two of the nation’s largest state-funded pre-kindergarten programs. Children attending demonstrate better kindergarten-preparedness in reading, math and social skills.

Major expansion of “transitional kindergarten.”

60% increase for pre-k in 2013, to serve 16,000 more children.
Pre-K: Exciting Momentum

Local Level

**San Antonio and Denver:** local sales tax dedicated to pre-k

**Boston:** K1 public/private partnership, and new research showing impact on math, literacy and language skills.

**New York City:** Major expansion of pre-k, enrollment up to 51,000 in Fall 2014, future goal of 70,000.
Policy to Practice Linkage: Ensure High-Quality Experiences in All B-8 Settings

- Language-rich homes
- High-quality infant-toddler services
- High-quality pre-k
- High-quality full-day kindergarten
- High-quality instruction and professional development

Birth to Grade 3 alignment
Challenges Impeding Impact

• B-8 landscape: segmented and fragmented
  • 0-3, PreK, K-3...

• Short term funding cycles
  • Grant cycles 1-2 years

• Insufficient programs and supports
  • Lack a sustained, intensive support
Our Partnership with Communities

Massachusetts Third Grade Reading Proficiency Learning Network

A statewide network committed to aligning research, policy and practice to move the needle on third grade reading
National, State, and Local Momentum

- Boston
- Holyoke
- Pittsfield
- Springfield
Network’s Desired Outcome

To better align, integrate, and implement research, policy and practice to ensure that all Massachusetts children in our communities, ages birth through eight, have access to high-quality early education, enter elementary schools ready to succeed, and are able to read proficiently by the end of third grade.
Momentum in Communities

- **High-Quality Early Education Access**
  - Pre-K Implementation

- **School Readiness**
  - System Linkages and Transition Support
  - Knowledge Building

- **Third Grade Reading Proficiency**
  - Knowledge Building
  - Strategic Planning
  - Implementation

- **Political Engagement**
Targeted Support to Address Challenges

- Ensure strategic and diverse composition of community teams
- Leverage initial progress on b-8 strategic plans
- Facilitate analysis to revise and refine literacy efforts/supports
- Lead communities toward strategic resource choices—time, money, human capital
- Ensure alignment between local work and state-level policy

MA Learning Network
Drafting the Birth to Age 8 Policy Agenda

- **Data**
  - SASIDs
  - Sharing
  - Key indicators / measurement

- **Funding**
  - Access / Quality
  - Costing out
  - Mechanism / streams
  - State budget opportunities

- **Leadership / Structure**
  - Superintendent / Mayor / Governor
  - EEC/ESE/DHE/EOE
  - Dedicated position in community
  - Coalition

- **Alignment**
  - B-8 Grants
  - Standards / Assessment
  - Transitions
  - Gaps in services
  - Shared professional development

- **Local opportunities**
  - Space / buildings
Momentum in Communities: Springfield
Third Grade Reading Proficiency, 2001-2014
Massachusetts and Five Cities

% of students scoring proficient or above

Source: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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### Key educational benchmarks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Springfield</th>
<th>Massachusetts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of third graders who score proficient or above in reading on MCAS</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students graduating high school within four years</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
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### Early education and care

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
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<th>Massachusetts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of children under age 6 with all parents in the labor force</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of preschool-aged (3-5 yrs) children</td>
<td>6,654</td>
<td>224,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of preschool-aged children enrolled in an early education program</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of public school preschool programs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of licensed center-based programs</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of licensed family child care providers</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>7,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of programs that are Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Classroom Quality grantees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Opportunity to Leverage

- Bankruptcy of a private early education and care provider serving 380 children
- Advocacy and urgency to ensure the building continues as a key early education provider
- Purchasing of the center and building by the city last summer
- Partnership between Superintendent Warwick and the early education community to ensure a mixed delivery system
- Current status
- Symbolic of the critical nature of the issue and the partnership across systems
Momentum in Communities: Holyoke
Third Grade Reading Proficiency, 2001-2014
Massachusetts and Five Cities

% of students scoring proficient or above

Source: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
WE MUST

Ensure High-Quality Experiences in All B-8 Settings

Language-rich homes

High-quality infant-toddler services

High-quality pre-k

High-quality full-day kindergarten

Birth to Grade 3 alignment

High-quality instruction and professional development
Holyoke Early Literacy Initiative (HELI): Theory of Action

Driven by Holyoke Public Schools

HELI GOAL:
Rapid & Sustained Improvement in Early Literacy as measured by the 3rd Grade ELA MCAS

HELI Partners
Continuous alignment and program improvement to contribute to better outcomes

WORKGROUPS
(Collective, productive, synergized)
Targeted Support to Address Challenges

Ensure strategic and diverse composition of community teams

Leverage initial progress on b-8 strategic plans

Facilitate analysis to revise and refine literacy efforts/supports

Lead communities toward strategic resource choices—time, money, human capital

Ensure alignment between local work and state-level policy

MA Learning Network
Quality program design leads to better early literacy outcomes for children and positive impacts that extend into adulthood.

HPS schools & district departments (ELL, Special Ed, ELA)

Community-Based programs & supports
Catalyzed by Superintendent Paez’s sense of urgency and partnership, programs are being scrutinized and revised to ensure impact.

- In-school and after-school tutoring programs
- Summer learning efforts
- Home Visiting

Every stakeholder is engaged and acting intentionally.

- YMCA
- Public Library

Schools are strengthening and strategically aligning partnerships with community members.

The Mayor and the local delegation are prioritizing these issues, demanding commitment, and advocating for resource allocation.
Opportunities for Action

To accelerate these efforts, School Committees should consider...

- Redefining school-community partnerships to reflect intentional partnerships focused on outcomes and the b-8 landscape;
- Assessing the current resource allocation in the b-8 arena and understanding the overall community landscape from b-8;
- Scrutinizing budgets to redirect resources into programs focused on outcomes;
- Working with local legislators to encourage a greater investment in early education across the commonwealth.
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