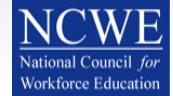




Breaking Through: *Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers*

Massachusetts Department of Education
December 13, 2006
Jerry Rubin, Jobs for the Future



Intro

- I want to talk to you this morning about an issue of critical importance to our Commonwealth, an issue you understand fully every day: providing educational opportunities for adults who lack basic educational skills
- This is an issue of great importance, both for the competitiveness of the Commonwealth, its economy and its employers, and it's an issue of fairness, equity and opportunity for our citizens.
- As we all know, more and more every day, adults in Massachusetts, and across the nation find it increasingly difficult to gain family-supporting employment without basic educational skills, and increasingly, postsecondary education.



Slide 2

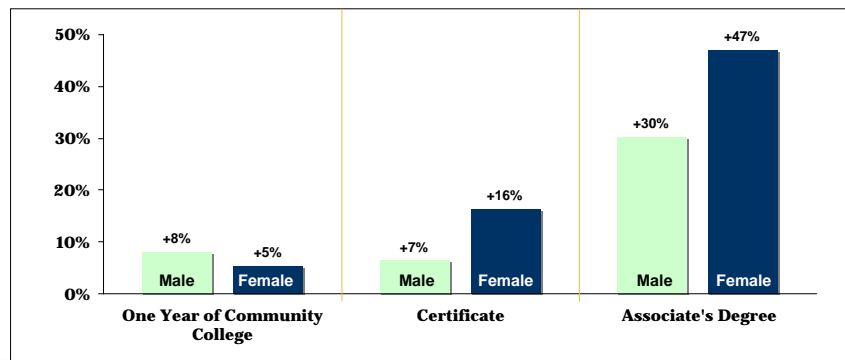


Intro

- All of you here today are on the front lines of that effort
- ABE providers have multiple missions: effective civic and community participation, family literacy, jobs-related skills, and formal education and education preparation.
- These are all laudable missions, all typically under-resourced
- Today, I'm only going to focus on one: preparing adults who are not ready to succeed in college-level work to be successful

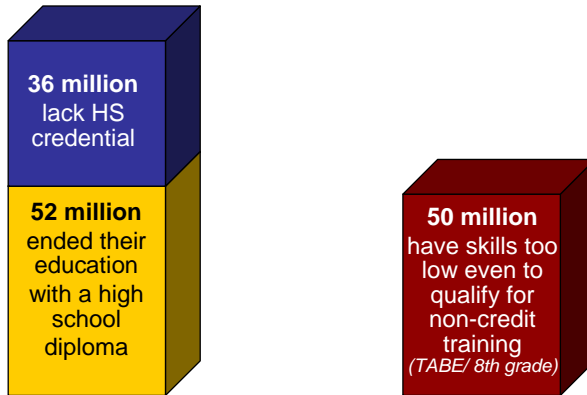
Why Worry About Low Skilled Adults and Community College ?

Community college degree programs are the threshold to family supporting wages

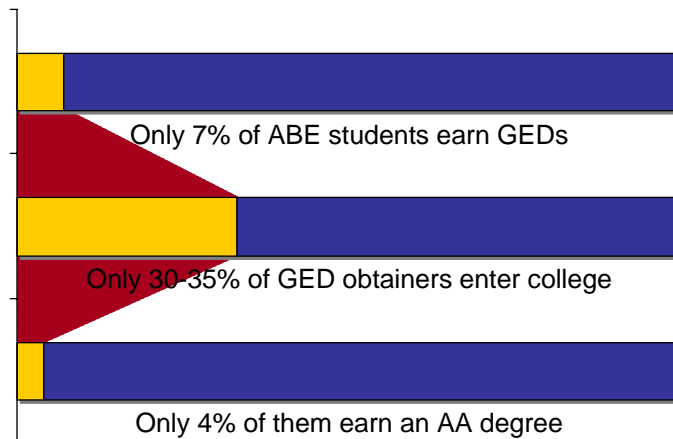


Too Many Adults Are Not Ready for College

88 million
lack literacy skills needed to enroll in college-level occ/tech degree programs

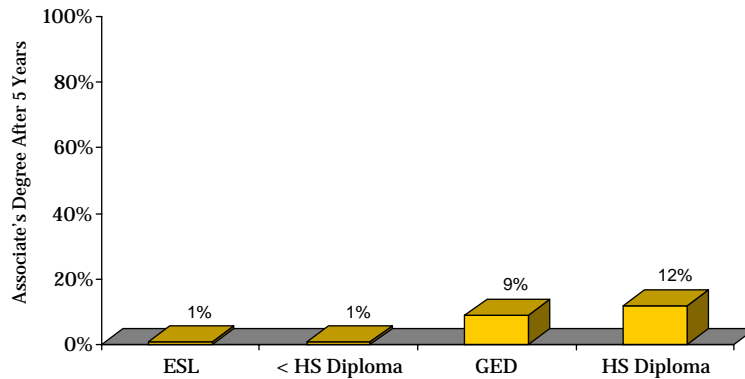


Few Low-Skill Adults Make It to and Through College



Low-Skilled Student Completion Rates Are Very Low

- Example from Washington State: cohort entering community colleges in mid 90s.



Four Barriers

- Programs for low skilled adults (ABE, ESL, GED, Workforce, developmental ed) are profoundly disconnected
- The pace is slow in many programs
- Programs lack connections to the labor market
- Support services are unavailable to most pre-college students

Four Synergistic High-Leverage Strategies Increase Access and Success

- 1 Re-organize pathways and colleges:**
Establish links among programs so that low-skilled, low-income students can navigate them easily for advancement
- 2 Accelerate Learning:**
Help students learn more and faster and complete programs more quickly
- 3 Labor market payoff:**
Offer students intermediate credentials, jobs, and other quick economic payoffs
- 4 Comprehensive Supports:**
Help students develop realistic plans and provide supports that keep them enrolled and attending, particularly through difficult transition points

Re-Organize Pathways and Colleges

- Create an institutional focus on success for low income, low skilled students by aligning programs and funding to create clear paths from low basic skills to degree programs
 - Connect ABE/ESL/ASE and workforce programming to mainstream college programs
 - Eliminate the “shadow college”
 - Connect developmental education to both pre-college and occupational/technical degree programs
 - Provide students with clear road maps from multiple entry, exit, and reentry points to help them navigate

Innovative Pathways ABE to College Transition Project

- Project supported 25 transition programs partnered with more than 40 post-secondary institutions in six New England states
- Comprehensive college transition model that aims to bridge the gap between a GED/EDP and college level work through instruction and counseling
- Programs operated in CBO's, public schools, community colleges and prisons
- Results: 69% of graduates had enrolled or were expected to enroll in postsecondary, far higher than typical GED graduates

Innovative Pathways Jefferson County CC (KY)

- Partnership between Jefferson County CC and ABE provider/school district
- Agreement that all enrollees in CC with a COMPASS score under a specified cutoff is assigned to ABE, above the cut-off to CC Developmental Ed. Students are “dually enrolled”. Funding is transparent to student.
- ABE curriculum is delivered at CC, enhanced with “pre-college” skills: research, report writing, etc., students skip part of dev ed, and go into college classes
- Students are provided with wrap-around supports
- More than 4,000 students “dually enrolled”, 77% go on to take for-credit classes, college increased enrollment of GED grads by 9%

Innovative Pathways IBEST (WA)

- I-BEST pairs ESL/ABE and professional-technical instructors in the classroom to concurrently provide students with literacy and workforce education and skills
- Supported by state 1.75 FTE funding formula
- Pilots, several of which are directly linked to career education pathways with AA degrees
- I-BEST students earned 5x more college credits and were 15x more likely to complete workforce training programs than traditional ESL students

Innovative Pathways South East Arkansas CC

- Career pathway program for training CNAs and moving to LPN (WAGE)
- Students testing below 6th grade on TABE are placed in “WAGE prep”, delivered by ABE provider
- Once they test at or above 6th grade level they can begin the WAGE program at the college

Accelerate Learning

- Research identified various approaches being experimented with in the field:
 - Create sequential credentials (“modules” or “chunks”) leading to degrees, rather than “all or nothing” approach
 - Use diagnostic assessments to create individualized, competency-based instruction that gives students what they need to learn, when they need it
 - Deliver short-term intensive learning programs that enable adults to make rapid progress and increase persistence
 - Contextualize course content with occupational focus to help students learn more, faster

Accelerating Learning: CC of Denver

- The Community College of Denver is piloting two experimental, accelerated approaches to delivering Developmental Education.
- One approach uses learning communities (providing support; acceleration is stressful); the other approach is self-paced.
- Six cohorts of students will move through the accelerated pipeline to degree programs in three high-demand sectors

Comprehensive Supports

Supports address students' three areas of need:

- *Academic* (closing the gap between the GED and college skill requirements, conducting research, writing papers, etc.)
- *Social/psychological* (mentors, peer support, case managers, learning communities, etc.)
- *Economic* (subsidized child care and transportation, food and clothing pantries, financial aid counseling & support, etc.)

Comprehensive Supports: PCC

- Portland Community College is implementing pilots that will test whether the provision of comprehensive supports to pre-college/developmental education students improves persistence, completion, and transitions to degree programs.
- PCC hopes that the data they collect will be positive enough to catalyze policy change at the college/state to fund supports for Dev Ed students

Labor Market Payoff

Redesign pre-college and college programs so that each stage supports job-holding and/or economic advancement:

- Program completers earn credentials valued by local employers/in strong industry sectors
- Programs/credential are sequentially arranged so they build toward occ/tech degrees
- Here in Mass: North Shore Community College: child care pathway

Breaking Through

A partnership of the National Council for Workforce Education and Jobs for the Future supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

Breaking Through

Purposes:

To research connections between adults with 8th or lower skill levels (“low skilled adults”) and occupational/technical degree programs in community colleges,

To demonstrate strategies for improving the connections, and to

Investigate state policies supporting these strategies.

Goals of the Breaking Through Demonstration (cont)

- Disseminate information about effective models/strategies and supportive state policies
- Increase awareness of and interest in the issue of low skilled adults among college leaders

Participating Colleges

Seven Leadership Colleges have been selected; they will receive multi-year grants to improve their colleges for low skilled adults:

- Albuquerque TVI,
- Cuyahoga Community College ,
- Community College of Denver,
- Owensboro Community and Technical College (KY),
- Portland Community College ,
- Southeast Arkansas Community College
- Durham Technical Community College (NC)

Participating Colleges

Fifteen Learning Colleges will be supported to attend five intensive peer learning events over the life of the initiative:

Cerritos CC (CA),	North Shore (MA),
Houston CC,	Piedmont VA CC
LaGuardia CC,	Southern Nevada CC
Mott CC (MI),	Tallahassee CC,
Northampton CC (PA)	York CC (ME)

Conclusion

- We are in an opportunity moment in Massachusetts
- Relatively speaking, the Commonwealth has invested far more in adult basic education than other states, but we have a long way to go. I'd suggest several principles for the new administration
 - Provide opportunities for all Mass adults who need basic education to have it. We can't afford not to.
 - Build stronger links between adult basic education, vocational training and postsecondary education
 - Accountability: Tie resources and support to much greater success for less educated adults to enter and succeed in college and careers
- I want to thank all of you and applaud you for the wonderful and critically important work you do.

Breaking Through

Breaking Through
Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter Post-Secondary Education and Careers

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Project Description **New Learning** **Colleges**

In the Spotlight

How can low-skilled adult learners seeking family-supporting careers navigate more efficiently and more quickly through ABE/ESOL, occupational, and degree programs to attain a degree? Answers to this and other questions are the work of *Breaking Through*, helping low-skilled adults enter and succeed in college and careers. The goal of *Breaking Through* is to strengthen and identify solutions for low-income adults by finding all strategies that create more effective pathways into and through pre-college and degree-level programs.

For more information on the project, click [here](#).

Around the country, innovative community colleges are playing a larger role in helping low-skilled adults gain the valuable skills and credentials that are the gateway to family-supporting careers. *Breaking Through*, a multi-year demonstration project, promotes and cultivates the efforts of community colleges to help low-income adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and baccalaureate programs. The project is a partnership of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education.

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