



Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment: Shifting from State Funds to IDEA Funds

By Maureen Conroy, Ty Hanson, Joyce Butler, and Maria Paiewonsky

BACKGROUND ON THE ICE INITIATIVE

The state-funded Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) program, established in 2007, supports partnerships between Massachusetts high schools and public colleges. Its purpose is to offer students with intellectual disabilities, ages 18–22, who have not passed Massachusetts' high-stakes achievement tests, the opportunity to participate in college courses. The courses may be taken for credit or not for credit, with necessary services and supports as determined through the school district's special education process. The initiative also encourages student participation in typical campus-wide activities.

HOW STATE FUNDS ARE TYPICALLY USED

State funds, appropriated by the Massachusetts legislature every year since 2007, have been available to the partnerships through non-competitive grants. The majority of the state funds, considered seed money, are used to support key personnel at the college to organize and administer the ICE initiative's supports and activities. However these state funds represent only 13% of the total costs needed to develop and maintain an ICE initiative; the remaining 87% come from in-kind contributions from the college and the schools. The ICE grantees report distributing the funds as outlined in Table 1.

Figure A: Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment, Pilot Budget Distribution FY 2011

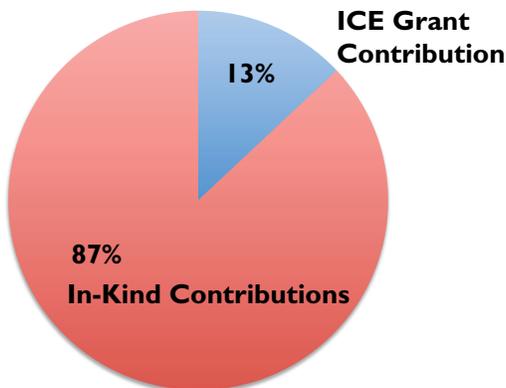


Table 1: Distributions of the 13% of Total Funding Provided by the State

Line Item	Description	Percentage
Personnel	Administration	21%
	Support staff	11%
	Contractual services	9%
	Fringe benefits	9%
Supplies and Materials	Textbooks, Assistive Technology, Instructional Materials	4%
Other costs	Tuition* and Transportation	28%
Indirect costs		6%

Source: MA DESE Report to the Legislature (2011)

* tuition waived beginning in 2011

WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Holyoke Community College (HCC) has created a partnership with six public school districts, supporting, on average of 18 students with intellectual disabilities every year. In 2009, these partners began working towards becoming a self-sustaining initiative. This required the partners to: (1) reduce their dependence on the state funds to administer the initiative, as outlined in Table 1 and (2) create a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining the responsibilities of the college and its partner schools. The MOA would specify the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds contributed by the school partners as well as the in-kind services both parties would bring to the initiative.

USE OF IDEA FUNDS TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

Many school districts believe that they are not able to use IDEA funds for postsecondary education. However, the Analysis and Comments in IDEA regulations (p. 46547) clarifies that IDEA funds may be used for a student to participate in a transitional program on a college campus, if the student's IEP team includes these services on the IEP (National Down Syndrome Society, 2012).

TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING A MOA AND USING IDEA FUNDS

Begin planning for sustainability immediately.

The partners were told from the beginning of the collaboration that this was a five-year pilot initiative. Each year, due to state budget cuts, the total budget for ICE reduced by approximately 20%. Holyoke Community College began to shift expenses to reduce the program's costs. By the third year, the college decided to talk to the school partners about establishing a MOA and gradually reducing their dependence on state grant funds. They knew the success of the initiative was dependent upon the school partners contributing to the cost of the program.

The school partners knew from the beginning it would take both commitment and resources to make this initiative sustainable. Having this conversation early on helps partners get ready to contribute to program funding, and prepares school personnel for budget and personnel changes that will likely need to be made.

Discuss the rationale for an MOA.

The rationale for an MOA at Holyoke Community College emphasized the following points:

- The students' experiences at HCC gave them the best environment to pursue their postsecondary goals and to meet the transition requirements under IDEA. This was worth the schools' investment.
- The ICE initiative helped to strengthen the school system's transition services, which were a priority.
- Contributing towards the partnership was a way to take ownership and responsibility for the growth of the initiative.

Showcase outcomes achieved with pilot funds.

For the schools, having the state funds allowed them to pilot new and innovative transition practices, including enrolling students in college classes. It also bought them some time for reallocating their resources. For the college, have the state funds also produced important outcomes. The development of the ICE partnership strengthened the college's relationships with neighboring school districts and highlighted how the college could benefit a new student population in the community.

When partner high schools observed how quickly students were benefitting from their college classes and campus activities,

“One college student who is currently supported by ICE cornered me in a school hallway when she was in 5th grade and said, ‘I want to be able to go to college, make that happen,’ and I said ‘OK.’ I didn’t even know about HCC, but she had a vision and I needed to find a way to make it happen.”

—Joyce Butler, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

When seed money is not available

Even when seed money is not available to develop an inclusive postsecondary education initiative, some of the strategies that proved successful for the ICE initiative may still be useful.

- Start conversations with partners early and often.
- Showcase the results of similar inclusive postsecondary education initiatives from nearby states or regions.
- Discuss the rationale for an MOA and for using IDEA funding. Make sure the rationale help to connect the intended use of the funds to existing goals for both entities.
- Invite key personnel from the college and from the sending schools to participate in MOA planning and discussions.
- Be transparent about the budget.

they were very happy to contribute towards the initiative. Asking for an MOA that allocates IDEA funding to support the initiative the first year of a partnership may not be successful, but once partners see what students are getting out of the experience, it's easier to engage in these conversations.

Include key personnel from the college and schools in MOA planning.

At the college, discuss the MOA with the grants coordinator and the comptroller, who is responsible for supervising financial agreements. Ultimately, the comptroller signs off on the agreement and can provide helpful feedback on the language and protocols for such agreements with community partners.

At the school level, it's important to keep key staff informed about the college-school partnership. This includes the parents, school staff, building principal, the IEP team chair, and school administrators. For MOA discussions, including the use of IDEA funds, it is highly recommended to keep the school



Allison Rohan knew in 5th grade she wanted to go to college. Eight years later, she is a student at Holyoke Community College.

committee members and the district superintendent informed. Be prepared to highlight specific student outcomes from attending college.

Plan for reduced state support.

As state funding was reduced, all partners had to consider how to be more efficient about costs as

we planned the MOA. For example, one big cost was transportation. The schools agreed to find ways to help the students learn to use public transportation, thereby reducing the overall cost of students traveling to college. South Hadley Public Schools decided early on not to take funds for transportation. Instead they began acclimating their students to using public transportation from the start of the initiative. Every year that the state budget was reduced, new ways to tap into existing resources were identified on campus so that we could maintain quality services and supports for the students. By the 6th year of the initiative, we were sustaining the program without any support from the state.

Be transparent about the budget.

Establish monthly partnership meetings that include college partners and special education directors from the school systems. These meetings allow all participants to discuss the true costs of the program, identifying essential costs and possibly ways to offset expenses. Having this perspective far in advance, when there is no financial impact yet on the partners, makes it easier for everyone to think through the MOA calmly.

Having all partners in the room together, including all the representative special education directors, is very helpful in planning the MOA. These players have insights into what language is best, what responsibilities make sense for all partners, and what common policies they should have to

support students at college.

Review the final agreement about cost-sharing.

Ultimately, the MOA reflected an agreement between Holyoke Community College and its school partners to share the costs of an inclusive concurrent enrollment initiative, including the clerical and administrative support. The special education administration in the district committed to paying for the administrative costs of the initiative by dividing the costs by the number of students participating in the initiative. They agreed that even if student enrollment decreased, they would commit to supporting the initiative. Table 2 outlines how the partners allocated their funding resources.

THE BOTTOM LINE? DO IT!

Having a MOA benefits all partners. The HCC partnership is still going strong because each of the partners were engaged in the process of creating an MOA that reflected their commitment to students accessing a college experience.

REFERENCES

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011, March). *Report to the legislature: Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment partnership programs for students with disabilities*. Retrieved from www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/0311icep.pdf

National Down Syndrome Society (n.d.). IDEA state action plan. In *National Down Syndrome Society, legislation and initiatives*. Retrieved from www.ndss.org/Policy/Legislation-and-Initiatives/

Timing is Crucial

Schools put budgets together early in the calendar year. So have conversations about using IDEA funds for college partnerships as early as possible.

Table 2: HCC MOA Agreement Using IDEA Funds and In-Kind Support 2011-2012

Support or Service	Description	Funding Source
6 credits per student each semester	Courses include those without pre-requisites; students may enroll for audit or for credit. Credits may be applied towards high school credit. All courses will be taught on campus by HCC faculty.	IDEA funds (school district)
Tier 1 and Tier 2 status	Tier 1: Priority students who are 18-22 year old high school students with documented intellectual disabilities who have been unable to pass the high stakes achievement tests. Tier 2: Student with a disability between the ages of 18-22 who has passed the high stakes achievement test but requires the support offered by ICE.	N/A
Tuition and fees	Tuition/Fees: The college will assess the district an annual per student fee of \$6,700.00 based on an enrollment of 18 students from six districts. Each district shall commit to this fee per opening. This yearly fee for the opening will cover tuition, up to 6 credits per semester based on course availability, salaries for 2 learning specialists each at .5 FTE, administrative assistant at .25 FTE, college fees, books, and support services.	IDEA funds (school district)
Academic advising	Students will receive academic advising to select courses, as well as a referral to disability services and the Assistive Technology Center.	HCC in-kind support
Academic support	Students will be encouraged to use academic supports available to all students on campus.	HCC in-kind supports
Educational coaching	An educational coach will accompany the student both on campus and in the classes, if needed.	IDEA funds (school district)
Transportation	District will assume all transportation responsibilities for students. All students will receive support to use public transportation options, whenever possible.	IDEA funds (school district)
Meals	If a student qualifies for free or reduced lunch, the district will be responsible to provide.	District in-kind support
Medical support	If a student has a medical protocol requiring a nurse, the district will provide such assistance.	IDEA funds (school district)
Support for students during school vacations	Students and coaches will follow the college academic calendar and are expected to attend their college courses during high school vacations. Students are expected to attend all classes even if they are auditing the course.	IDEA funds (school district)

SAMPLE AGREEMENT OUTLINE

Memorandum of Agreement for Holyoke Community College Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Partnership: Sample Outline

Agreement by and between _____ Public Schools and Holyoke Community College

Date:

Introduction to MOA

1. Purpose
2. Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment description
3. Terms: beginning and end dates
4. Provision of courses
5. Academic and support services
6. Transportation / coaches / food
7. Tuition / fees (based on number of students enrolled)
8. Payment schedule (school to college)
9. Student apportionment
10. Attendance: high school vs. college schedule
11. Campus life: student engagement in campus activities
12. Books and supplemental materials
13. ICE partnership participation: monthly/quarterly meetings
14. High school liaison
15. Enrollment criteria: required steps for all students
16. Community-based employment
17. Student code of conduct
18. Social gatherings
19. Applicable law
20. Entire agreement (only amended when agreed to by all parties)
21. Termination
22. Signature lines (Director of Special Ed; Vice President for Administration/Finance)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Maureen L. Conroy is the Director of the Holyoke Community College's Office for Students with Disabilities and Deaf Services. She initiated the Holyoke Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment program in 2007 and has collaborated with numerous local school districts to support students with ID in college. In 2011, Maureen and the HCC ICE partnership were recognized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the leadership they bring to the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative.

Ty Hanson, MEd is a Transition Specialist with the ICE Partnership Program at Holyoke Community College since 2007. Ty has developed policies and practices to support the participation of over 70 students with ID to attend college. She has focused her work on helping students to connect college and career goals, as well as promoting student self-determination, academic success and new social connections.

Joyce Butler, EdD has been an educator for 35 years. Her current position as Director of Pupil Personnel Services in the South Hadley Public Schools is to work with all staff to provide high quality educational services to all special education students, ages 3 - 21 years of age. Her vision with regard to the HCC ICE program is that all special education students have a right to access and experience the same/similar opportunities as are afforded to their peers. People learn about who they are and what they can accomplish through the educational process, and by attending a college environment. It is for this reason that the HCC ICE program is supported and valued very highly.

Maria Paiewonsky, EdD is a transition specialist at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Boston. She has been providing training and technical assistance to high schools and colleges that are establishing inclusive postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities since 2001. The majority of Maria's training materials have been co-written with professional and student partners from the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative.

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