Massachusetts is one of the 10 states selected to participate in New Skills for Youth (NSFY), an initiative enhancing state efforts to increase the number of learners across the country who are prepared for success in both college and career. NSFY is a $75 million national initiative developed by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group.

Since the launch of NSFY, the Massachusetts team has laid the groundwork for new or enhanced college and career readiness initiatives. This effort included defining high-quality career pathways, developing new frameworks for work-based learning (WBL), and streamlining career pathways to align with postsecondary education requirements.

In 2018, the main areas of focus in Massachusetts were:

- **Expanding access to high-quality college and career pathways (HQCCPs):** Following the design of the HQCCP criteria in 2017, the NSFY team is designating and helping schools to implement new career pathways.

- **Securing equitable outcomes for all learners:** Massachusetts is working to identify and address regional and socioeconomic inequities that lead to limited access to HQCCPs for some students.

- **Implementing My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP):** Working with school-based teams of administrators, faculty and counselors across the commonwealth, the Massachusetts NSFY team is helping to implement a new framework for college and career advising that focuses heavily on student-led goal-setting and planning.

**The Massachusetts Context**

Improving college and career readiness in Massachusetts has required coordinated efforts among multiple agencies to better understand the commonwealth’s labor market needs and subsequently align educational offerings to ensure that students are college and career ready upon high school graduation. Career Technical Education (CTE) in Massachusetts is primarily delivered through Career/Vocational Technical Education school districts, which are funded through General Law Chapter 74. However, these institutions are able to serve only a small population of students across the commonwealth.

In the 2016-17 school year only 21 percent of secondary students in Massachusetts were enrolled in a career pathway. To close the access gap, the Massachusetts NSFY team saw the need to expand the reach of HQCCPs beyond those available through Chapter 74-funded programs. The NSFY team launched a new HQCCP designation process in 2017, establishing two new kinds of college- and career-ready pathways that can be delivered in the traditional high school setting. One option, early
Grade 9-12 College and Career Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTE Pathways (Chapter 74)</th>
<th>Innovation Pathways</th>
<th>Early College Pathways</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Occupation Focused</td>
<td>Industry Sector Focused</td>
<td>College Readiness Focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on technical skill building</td>
<td>Emphasis on applied learning and work-based experiences</td>
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Retrieved from [http://www.doe.mass.edu/cttc/ccr/hqccp/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/cttc/ccr/hqccp/)

college pathways, provides students with the opportunity to complete a minimum of 12 college credits in high school. The other option, called innovation pathways, helps students gain skills in high-demand industries through WBL and integrated coursework. Both early college and innovation pathways must be aligned with five key design principles and include certain educational components to earn an HQCCP designation.³

The HQCCP initiative has benefited from strong leadership and commitment to workforce education. Governor Charlie Baker established a cross-agency leadership team in 2015 called the Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC) to plan workforce and education policy. In the first two years of NSFY, the Massachusetts team built on the foundations laid by the Baker administration, working with the WSC to better establish labor market priorities by developing workforce blueprints for seven “super regions” across the commonwealth.⁴ All designated early college and innovation pathways, along with Chapter 74 programming, are required to align to the regional needs identified in the blueprints.

Expanding Access to HQCCPs

In 2018, the NSFY team began implementing the newly designated early college and innovation pathways, helping Massachusetts work toward its goal of expanding access to high-quality career pathways throughout the commonwealth. For the 2018-19 school year, nine individual early college programs were designated, enrolling a total of 1,386 students across five regions. While early college options existed in Massachusetts prior to NSFY, they primarily took the form of dual enrollment (e.g., taking courses at a community college while in high school). NSFY has worked to expand early college options with the designation of these new programs and subsequent agreements between postsecondary institutions and high schools, allowing students to earn college credit for courses they take in high school.⁵

As of August 2018, Massachusetts had also designated new innovation pathway programs in seven districts across the commonwealth. At the start of the 2018-19 school year, 446 students in five regions were enrolled in innovation pathway programs. These programs provide strong connections between schools and local employers and provide opportunities for learners to engage in WBL and rigorous coursework in subjects such as engineering, health care and information technology.⁶

Adhering to the same key principles and components as the early college and innovation pathway designations, Massachusetts also designated 34 new Chapter 74 pathways in 2018.

Massachusetts expects to award a second round of career pathway designations in March 2019 and is now examining options for the use of current funds and the generation of sustainable funding for career pathways expansion throughout the commonwealth.

Securing Equitable Outcomes for All Learners

Ensuring equitable access to HQCCPs throughout the commonwealth has long been a priority for Massachusetts, and NSFY has helped shed light on the reasons for regional and socioeconomic inequities. Equity is a pillar of the Massachusetts team’s NSFY work, playing a particularly strong role as
the first guiding principle in the HQCCP designation process. According to a joint agreement by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education, an HQCCP “should prioritize students underrepresented in education enrollment and completion,” and programs should include specific structures to help eliminate barriers to participation. This effort might include the coverage of postsecondary tuition costs, more open enrollment processes that allow students to participate regardless of prior academic performance, and increased support for students to aid their entry into HQCCPs. To gain funding and official designation for new career pathways, sites must demonstrate a commitment to equity, as well as a plan to promote equitable outcomes. Massachusetts has withheld designation from applicants that have not sufficiently demonstrated a commitment to equity and offered technical assistance to help them strengthen their plans.

Massachusetts’ goal is to ensure equitable access to and participation in HQCCPs. The team has prioritized outreach to low-income students, students with disabilities and English learners — traditionally the populations with the lowest graduation rates, academic outcomes and higher education enrollment — to ensure that they have the opportunity and support to participate in high-quality programs of their choosing. Additionally, the NSFY team has partnered with Vanderbilt University to conduct a study on supply and demand for career pathways throughout the commonwealth, with a particular focus on equity and access.

Recognizing that buy-in at the local level is key to promoting equitable access to HQCCPs, Massachusetts has made addressing issues related to equitable access and implicit bias a priority during its college and career advising workshops for counselors. Massachusetts also recognized that promoting equity as a priority throughout the entire education system is critical to amplify the impact of its equity efforts. To help achieve this goal, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education staff have participated in extensive diversity trainings. Additionally, early recipients for new early college and innovation pathway designations have been particularly helpful in setting examples for future applicants to follow, with equity promotion plans included in many of their applications.

Local Spotlight: Worcester Public Schools

In fall 2018, Worcester Public Schools (WPS) began enrolling students in its new innovation pathway programs. WPS received designation and was awarded $140,000 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for four pathways: Allied Health, Information Technology, Civil Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing. Each pathway is designed to prepare students for in-demand sectors in Massachusetts and equip students with industry-recognized credentials. Students in the programs must complete college and career readiness courses; two technical courses; at least 100 hours of a paid internship or capstone project; and two courses that qualify as college level, such as Advanced Placement or dual enrollment courses.

To help students meet these requirements, college and career readiness instructors provide support to students as they complete their academic coursework and internships, and industry partners help find summer internships for students.

In its innovation pathways application, WPS included a plan to promote equity. WPS’ focus on equity is reflected in the enrollment data for its innovation pathways. As of September 2018, 54 students are enrolled in the pathways. Of those 54 students, 23 are English learners, nine currently receive special education services, 25 are female, 19 belong to a racial minority, and 41 belong to an ethnic minority.
Implementing MyCAP

In October 2018, Massachusetts began delivering a training program for high school administrators, counselors and other educators on a new college and career advising framework. Massachusetts has recognized that many students require additional support at the school level to better understand the career options available to them. To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed a new college and career advising framework to help schools restructure their services and better reach all students with deeper supports.

A key component of this new framework is MyCAP, a student-directed, multi-year process and planning tool that helps students in the commonwealth make informed decisions about their futures. MyCAP allows students to map their academic plans; document personal and social growth; and engage in career development activities consistent with their unique, self-identified interests, needs, and goals for the attainment of postsecondary success. Implementation of MyCAP is a requirement for designation of all new HQCCP programs. This approach engages school-based leadership teams in workshops and trainings three times a year to ensure that all faculty — not just career and guidance counselors — understand the framework.

Massachusetts is aiming to provide at least half of high schools in the commonwealth with training on the new college and career advising framework and MyCAP by the end of the NSFY initiative.

Looking Ahead

In 2019, the final year of the NSFY initiative, Massachusetts’ focus will be on ensuring sustainability of the progress made thus far. This work will require continued communication with the Baker administration — which succeeded in its 2018 re-election bid — to secure funding for designated HQCCPs, trainings and staff. The NSFY team is evaluating projected costs and preparing funding requests for the 2020 fiscal year.

By the end of the initiative, Massachusetts is aiming not only to maintain the rigor and quality of newly designated HQCCPs, but also to designate and ensure equitable access to new career pathways. Meeting this goal will require continued buy-in at both the school and community levels to ensure that proper support systems are in place for college and career advising and local CTE and WBL opportunities.
Acknowledgments

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2 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Office for Career/Vocational Technical Education. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/cte/


