



MASSACHUSETTS
BUSINESS ALLIANCE
FOR EDUCATION

Race to the Top

Priorities and Recommendations

Adopting internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace

Massachusetts must build upon our strong curriculum frameworks, and ensure that the Common Core Standards Initiative benchmarks are as rigorous and complete as our current standards. We have a chance to increase the rigor of the education our students receive, particularly in high school, by requiring that districts awarded Race to the Top funds adopt *MassCore* graduation prerequisites as the minimum requirement for a diploma. We encourage consideration of similar reforms recommended in MBAE's report *Educating a 21st Century Workforce: A Call to Action on High School Reform*, to align curriculum with the demands of college and career, reform the high school model, establish early college high schools and work-based and service learning options, and increase access to career counseling and guidance support as promising initiatives that can be advanced dramatically with creative incentives funded through Race to the Top.

Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals

Educator effectiveness is the foundation for achieving all other goals. MBAE, as a member of the Working Group for Educator Excellence, is committed to its proposed comprehensive system of standards, supports and accountability necessary to build a strong cadre of professional educators. We support use of pilot and feasibility studies as part of an aggressive strategy to sustain and enrich a system that attracts talent, supports development of effective educators, and positions them for maximum impact on raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps. Authority to assign staff based on performance and organizational need, rather than seniority, to place effective educators in high-poverty schools and hard-to-staff subjects, must be part of the plan. Incentives and differential compensation for those willing to take on the toughest tasks should also be incorporated into Race to the Top proposals.

Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices

Massachusetts has already made tremendous progress in building a comprehensive data system. Essential next steps include translating available data into publicly accessible and clear information; and expanding the use of such data to inform and improve both instruction and curricula throughout the entire educational system. This involves measuring, reporting, and using data to ensure that "every child graduates ready for college and a career," by developing assessments not only of content knowledge but also of critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills. Our performance measurements must also ensure that college and career readiness courses are universally available to our state's students at equivalent standards of rigor.

Turning around our lowest-performing schools

The state's new accountability system, now clearly aligned with assistance services in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has the potential to support rapid and sustainable results in our lowest-performing schools. Ensuring that this system has sufficient resources to operate at scale—particularly for the lowest-performing schools and districts—is a high priority. Stimulus funding could help us fully implement our accountability and assistance system, assess its efficacy and impact, adjust as necessary, and establish a successful intervention and turnaround process. We also believe that aligning state and federal definitions of low performance would better position Massachusetts to demonstrate leadership on the most intractable issues in education reform.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

MBAE endorses the recommendations in the report *Tapping Massachusetts' Potential* to make STEM a priority. Race to the Top can help double the number of STEM graduates and qualified STEM teachers by 2020, and represents a vital source of support for efforts to motivate students to pursue STEM courses and careers.