



Integrating College and Career Readiness (ICCR) Demonstration Initiative Issue Brief

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Integrating College and Career Readiness Demonstration Initiative

Implementation Year Issue Brief



Inside this Issue:

Introduction	1
Overview of Cross-District Strategies and Successes	1
ICCR Strategies	2
Cross-District Successes	3
Student Impacts	3
Personnel Impacts	4
Cross-District Challenges	6
Cross-District Factors for Success & Suggestions for Other Districts Interested in Replication	6
District Profiles and Successes	8
Chicopee	8
Gill-Montague	9
Hampden-Wilbraham	10
Northbridge	11
Weymouth	12

Introduction

In the summer of 2013, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) funded five school districts—Chicopee, Gill-Montague, Hampden-Wilbraham, Northbridge, and Weymouth—to serve as demonstration sites for the Integrating College and Career Readiness (ICCR) Demonstration Initiative. The purpose of this competitive grant program was to provide start-up support¹ to districts to build a more comprehensive approach to college and career readiness (CCR) through the creation, expansion, and integration of activities that mutually support academic, social-emotional development, and workplace readiness skills for *all* students in grades 7–12. ESE used the funding opportunity to promote the scaling up of

CCR strategies so that all students ultimately would be served, though it did not expect districts to be able to serve all students by the end of the two year grant.

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) conducted the evaluation of the ICCR Demonstration Initiative, visiting each district, conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, and administering student and personnel surveys to explore the impacts of integrating CCR into the participating middle schools and high schools. All five districts used the 2013–14 school year as a planning year and the 2014–15 school year for program implementation. This issue brief summarizes both district-specific ICCR activities and cross-district achievements, challenges, factors for success, student outcomes, and suggestions for other schools and districts planning to advance their efforts to integrate CCR education.

Overview of Cross-District Strategies and Successes

Based on recommendations from the 2012 “From Cradle to Career: Educating our Students for Lifelong Success” report,² demonstration sites were expected to increase the availability of CCR activities for all students by introducing or deepening their implementation of one or more of the following eight strategies identified by ESE in the initial Request for Proposals:

Career Development Education – All students participate in career readiness activities starting by grade 7.

Individual Learning Plans – All students participate in the development of an individual learning plan (ILP) to manage their educational and career pathways.

Massachusetts School Counseling Model (Mass Model) – Districts implement the Mass Model at the high school level, with the option to do so at the middle school level, to increase utilization of counselors in providing CCR education.

Integration of Academic and Career-Related Curriculum – Districts create and expand collaborative team time for teachers to work on the integration of academic and career-related curriculum.

Expanded MassCore – All students have the opportunity to complete an expanded MassCore, which integrates career readiness activities into a rigorous high school program of study.

Increased Student Leadership Role – Students play an active leadership role in developing and evaluating an integrated academic and career readiness system.

External Partnerships – Districts develop and expand partnerships with employers and local workforce development agencies to enhance CCR programming.

Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan – All students use the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan to set goals and assess learning when participating in workplace experiences.

ICCR Strategies

At the start of the process, ESE provided a set of tools to guide the districts' work, including a rubric showing stages of implementation for the key strategies being pursued, a self-assessment and benchmarking tool to drive each district's work, and action planning tools. Each district used these tools to identify its strengths and challenges, set goals, create work plans, and tailor individual ICCR activities accordingly. The most commonly utilized ICCR strategies across the districts are described next.

Implemented or Expanded Career Development Education Activities – The most frequently utilized ICCR strategy across all five districts and their participating schools was the development and expansion of career development education (CDE) activities, defined as career awareness, exploration,

and/or immersion. The majority of the CDE activities implemented by the five districts were career awareness activities. Examples include CCR lessons and activities integrated into advisory or the classroom (e.g., improving organizational and study skills, understanding the college search and application process, writing resumes), career interest assessments, career speakers, career days or fairs, CCR-related field trips, and career awareness family events highlighting CCR services offered. These experiences were intended to help students gain a deeper understanding of various occupations, begin to identify their own career interests, and learn about the educational steps needed to prepare for desired careers. In addition to career awareness activities, three districts introduced or expanded their existing career exploration and immersion activities, providing more in-depth, hands-on experiences. Examples include: Chicopee's expansion of an integrated career readiness unit and subsequent job interviewing event, Hampden-Wilbraham's expansion of their Hot Jobs 4 U job shadow program, and the launching of the Northbridge Career Academy.

Initiated ILP Process with a Focus on Younger Students – ESE defines the ILP as a "student-directed, multi-year, dynamic tool that maps academic plans, personal/social growth, and career development activities while taking into account the student's unique, self-defined interests, needs, and goals for the attainment of postsecondary success."³ All five districts introduced or expanded the ILP process to at least a sample of their student population, with a focus on younger students. Chicopee already had an established ILP process at both their middle and high school levels. Through the ICCR initiative, the middle schools continued to formalize and improve their ILP process and expanded ILPs to 6th grade students for the first time. The five districts utilized the following online planning tools for CCR resources and documentation of the ILP: Career Cruising, Massachusetts Career Information System (MassCIS), Naviance, and Your Plan for the Future. Under the ICCR initiative, more than 1,500 students in grades 6 through 9 initiated an ILP.

Increased Outreach and Collaboration with Community Partners – All districts created new partnerships and expanded existing collaborations with more than 125 local employers, post-secondary institutions, workforce development agencies, and community-based organizations to enhance CCR programming for middle school and high school students. Community partners engaged in numerous CCR-related activities, including career fairs, college site visits, workplace site visits, job shadowing, career speaker series, student and parent workshops, informational interviews, and internship experiences.

Increased Utilization of Guidance Counselors Supporting College and Career Readiness – Middle and high school counselors were integrally involved in developing and implementing new ICCR lesson plans for integration into advisory formats, initiating the ILP process, and conducting grade- and school-level career awareness events. Four of the districts reported an increase in the percentage of time that counselors spent developing, facilitating, implementing, and supporting activities within the guidance curriculum for at least one of their school levels, averaging a 10% increase.

Cross-District Successes

Student Impacts

More than 1,600 middle and high school students from the five districts completed surveys, providing feedback on CCR activities. Below is a summary of the key findings.

Strong Student Interest in CCR Education and Activities – As shown in Figure 1, nearly all middle school and high school students surveyed agreed that it is important to learn CCR skills during school. While most students reported that their school is offering ways to better develop their future education and career plans, only one half agreed

that teachers connect class work to relevant careers. Eighty-five percent of students were interested in receiving more CCR education.

Improved CCR-Related Skills, Attitude, and Awareness – As shown in the figure on the following page, more than half of all students selected “agree” or “strongly agree” for every CCR outcome measure. The largest impacts of participating in this year’s CCR activities cited by more than 80% of middle school and high school students were:

- Increased belief that continuing education after high school is important for future success.
- Increased belief that current efforts in school are important for achieving future goals.
- Increased effort to do well in school.
- Increased awareness about job and career options.
- Increased likelihood to develop short- and long-term future goals.

Importance of Initiating CCR Activities Early in Student Process – While both middle school and high school students cited substantial benefits from participating in CCR activities this year, middle school student responses had significantly higher levels of agreement than high school students with each of the following statements:⁴

Figure 1: Middle School & High School Student Survey: Level of Agreement about College and Career Readiness

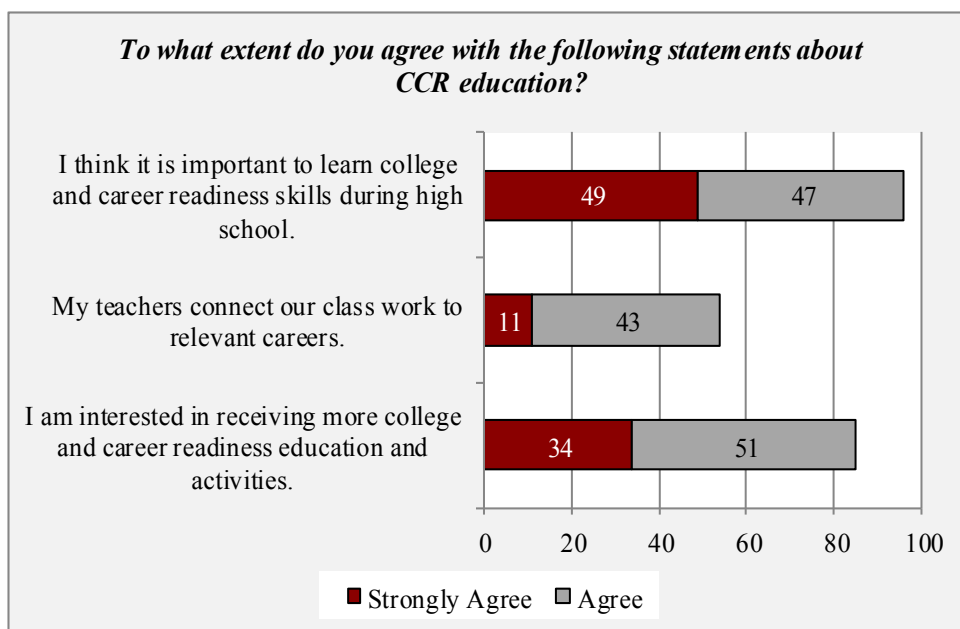
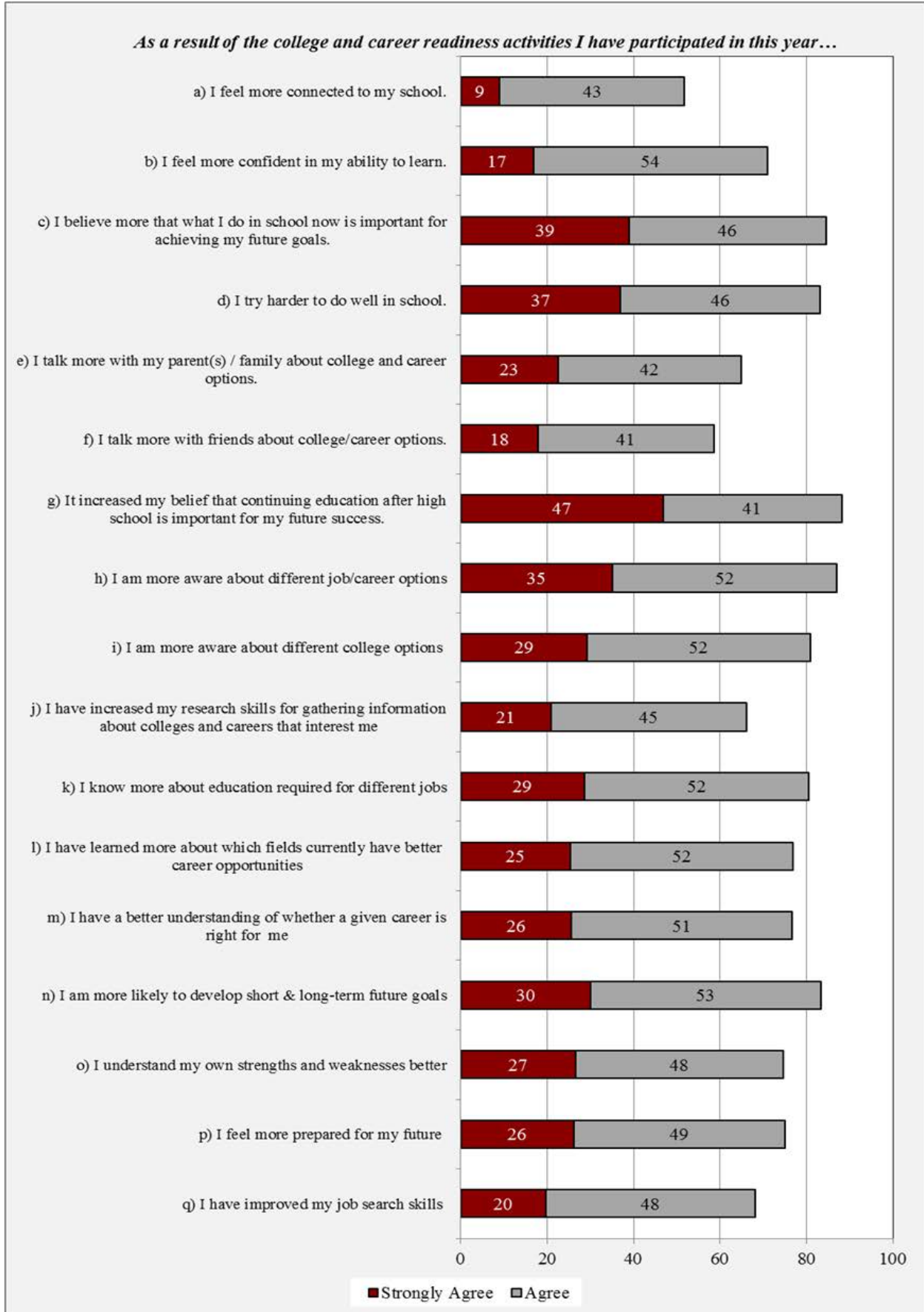


Figure 2: Middle School & High School Student Survey: Impacts of Participation in CCR Activities



As a result of the college and career readiness activities I have participated in this year...

- I believe more that continuing education after high school is important for my future success.
- I believe more that what I do in school now is important for achieving my future goals.
- I try harder to do well in school.
- I feel more confident in my ability to learn.
- I am more aware about different job and career options.
- I am more likely to develop short- and long-term goals for my future.

Importance of Work-Based Learning Activities in High School – Approximately 200 high school students participating in career immersion activities—including internships, co-op learning experiences, career academies, and senior capstone projects—completed a brief survey about the impacts of these experiences. Approximately 80% reported that their participation led to increased professionalism, communication skills, teamwork skills, and workplace-specific knowledge, as well as useful mentoring and guidance about education and career opportunities. Across every measure, students enrolled in these more in-depth, hands-on career immersion experiences reported stronger impacts than the 11th- and 12th-grade students receiving CCR-awareness activities who were not enrolled in career immersion experiences.

The following student quotations further illustrate the benefits of work-based learning opportunities.

Participating in [an] internship has benefited me greatly. I have learned what it is like to be in a real working environment with job responsibilities and skills. It has helped teach me how to improve my communication skills and how to work well with others on the job. Week after week I feel more and more comfortable and prepared for college and the opportunities that will meet with me in the future.

I have made contacts in the career I am interested in. I have also received guidance in the college process from my mentor and a recommendation letter from my mentor. I have

learned what is required of workers in my field and have really gained far more knowledge into a day in the life of my mentor. I also was hired.

I have gained so much experience in the field that I wish to participate in. It has been so rewarding to get myself into the work force and meet many new people. I have loved each and every minute of it and cannot wait to start my career. It has confirmed all my goals for me and made me work hard to achieve them.

Personnel Impacts

As a result of the ICCR initiative, personnel at both the middle and high school reported increased support for integrating CCR into the school experience. The most frequently noted impacts include:

Increased Support from Key Stakeholders for Implementing ICCR Activities – Participation in the ICCR grant resulted in increased support from multiple stakeholders—district and building administrators, middle and high school counselors and teachers, and parents—for adding or deepening the implementation of CCR activities in the middle and high schools, with the largest impacts reported for guidance counselors and district administrators. At both middle and high school levels, personnel stated that counselors increased their support for implementing ICCR activities, with approximately two-thirds reporting that their support increased ‘to a great extent.’ For example, at the middle schools, counselors often took the lead in creating CCR lessons for implementation in advisory periods and implementing ILPs with students. Similarly, all personnel reported increased support from district administrators, with approximately one-half reporting that their support increased ‘to a great extent.’ Strong district administrator support enabled grantees to implement new CCR initiatives—such as Hampden-Wilbraham’s development of a whole-school advisory program and Northbridge’s development of a Career Academy—with confidence about program sustainability.

Strengthened Communication and Collaboration between Middle School and High School – All districts included representatives from both their middle and high schools on their ICCR team. Almost

all team members reported that participation in the ICCR initiative resulted in increased communication about promoting college and career readiness between the middle school and high school, with approximately half describing changes in communication as increased ‘to a great extent.’ For example, the middle school and high school guidance departments in Gill-Montague created a joint guidance vision and mission statement in order to enhance vertical alignment of CCR activities and improve the use of school counselors. Weymouth created the CCR Vertical Articulation Team to convene at least one representative (teachers, principals, deans) from each grade level from Pre-K through 12th grade to discuss how to fuse CCR into daily teaching habits. Nearly all middle school ICCR personnel reported that increased communication and collaboration led to improvements in students’ transition between middle school and high school.

Cross-District Challenges

Several common challenges were cited across districts. The most frequently identified challenges to advancing the ICCR initiative include:

Available Time – Finding available time for planning, scheduling, and adding CCR education and activities into the already busy school day.

Support from School Building Administrators – Gaining active support and buy-in from school building administrators to prioritize and promote implementation of CCR activities.

Support from Teachers – Promoting understanding and support from teachers of the importance of integrating career development education into the classroom and advisory period.

Consistent Implementation – Ensuring consistent implementation of CCR activities across participating staff.

Underlying all of these challenges was the universal and primary concern of longer-term sustainability. The question of whether these ICCR initiatives could survive over time without additional funding was a mainstay in ICCR team discussions and decisions.

Cross-District Factors for Success & Suggestions for Other Districts Interested in Replication

The ICCR teams commonly identified a number of key factors for the successes of their early implementation efforts and offered key lessons learned that would assist other districts in advancing CCR initiatives. Their suggestions are summarized below.

Include a Planning Period – All districts noted the inclusion of a planning year as a critical element of their success. The extended planning period enabled all teams to be strategic and realistic about their selected ICCR strategies and modes of implementation, and provided time for small-scale piloting of career readiness initiatives. The planning year also supported collaboration and team building within and across schools and between districts, and allowed planning team members the opportunity to gather input from and educate key stakeholders on the importance of integrating CCR cohesively and systematically into the middle and high school experience.

Be Inclusive – Personnel suggested being as inclusive as possible during planning stages. This begins with promoting ICCR efforts to a wide array of stakeholders—administrators, teachers, counselors, students, parents, and community—across all school levels. Then find out what key stakeholders want and include those common themes in the ICCR plan. Educating and engaging stakeholders early and often will increase the likelihood that planned activities are realistic, effective, and sustainable.

Assemble a Motivated and Diverse Planning Team with Clear Leadership – All districts noted the importance of having dedicated and motivated planning team members along with strong leadership on ICCR planning teams. Challenges often occurred when there was not an identified team leader at each school to help propel support for ICCR activities. Therefore, all teams designated at least one person to serve in a decision-making role. Consistent collaboration among members and defined roles and

responsibilities were viewed as essential to success. In addition, several respondents noted the importance of diverse stakeholder representation on planning teams to offer varying viewpoints. Respondents also noted the importance of a commonly held belief about the importance of CCR and the related positive impacts on students.

Build Awareness and Support for CCR Initiatives

– Promoting the idea that college and career readiness is essential for students and should permeate all aspects of education is a critical but slow process. It is important to gather support from all key stakeholders—administration, teachers, parents, students, and community—to ensure that the initiatives are realistic, effective, and sustainable.

Gain Administrator Support – All districts emphasized the importance of gaining support and buy-in from both district-level and building-level administrators. They recommended involving district and building administrators from the beginning to get their input and to gain a sense of how to tie ICCR efforts into the school culture and school improvement plan. Administrator buy-in and support are crucial for effectiveness and sustainability, particularly when implementing new initiatives.

Utilize Students and Parent Volunteers – Identify parent volunteers to champion the CCR initiative. Invite these parent volunteers to present their support at school board/committee meetings, faculty meetings, and open houses. Solicit and utilize feedback early and often from student representatives across all involved grade levels, leading to improved CCR services and greater student support.

Foster Strong Communication and Collaboration between the Middle School and High School – A strong middle school-high school connection is critical for success.

Build Open Communication and Well-Defined Roles across Grade Levels – Open communication and well-defined roles and responsibilities for staff across roles and grade levels is critical. This will lead to a CCR plan that develops more coherently for students and reduces duplication of activities across roles and grade levels. Identify key teachers to partner with who can help promote CCR.

Develop a Comprehensive Plan – Develop a coherent and developmental flow from at least middle school entry to high school graduation. Then, sequence the plan by grade level using existing resources and what could be expanded with additional resources. It is important to ensure that a solid CCR program is implemented across each grade level for all students. Keep goals clear and measureable so successes can be celebrated.

Offer Strong CCR Activities in Middle School – Middle school students are highly engaged and interested in CCR initiatives. CCR activities at the middle school level may lead to better preparation as students transition to high school.

Build On Established Activities and Relationships – ICCR personnel highlighted the importance of building on established activities and relationships as a means to garner additional buy-in and support. Work with already existing structures or programs within the school, such as advisory, faculty meetings, classes, or clubs. Furthermore, participants discussed that piloting activities with established collaborators and dedicated partners or teachers is helpful prior to implementing on a large scale.

Make Direct Links between Academics and Future College and Career Options – Faculty need to communicate with students about “why they are doing what they are doing,” in order to build students’ understanding that school is relevant to their future.

Partner with Community Businesses and Organizations – Utilize community partners in as many career awareness, exploration, and immersion activities as possible. Students respond favorably to hands-on interactions with representatives of local employers, colleges and universities, and community organizations. These opportunities inspire students with an array of potential future opportunities.

Build Workplace Readiness Foundation Skills – ICCR personnel and their local employer partners point to the need for students to improve their workplace readiness foundation skills. Employers noted that they can teach students specific work skills but students need to learn to act, dress, and communicate professionally outside of the workplace.

District Profiles and Successes

Each of the districts implemented numerous CCR activities across their middle and high school grades. This section highlights a few of each district's successes.

Chicopee School District

Four schools—Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, Edward J. Bellamy Memorial Middle School, Chicopee Comprehensive High School, and Chicopee High School—serving nearly 1,500 6th-through 8th-grade students and nearly 2,500 secondary students participated in the ICCR initiative. Prior to the grant, Chicopee maintained numerous long-standing career readiness initiatives at the secondary level, including career centers operating at each high school, a career and technical education (CTE) program, a well-established ILP process, and an internship program. Chicopee's primary goals were to create a shared CCR system that increases college and career awareness at the middle school level; to strengthen connections between Chicopee's participating middle schools and high schools; and to streamline, systematize, and expand currently available CCR activities.

ICCR Activities. Chicopee used the majority of its ICCR funds to hire two CCR assistants, one housed at each of the participating middle schools, to work closely with middle school guidance counselors to streamline current CCR efforts and assist in piloting and/or expanding career readiness activities.



Bulletin Board, Chicopee

Interviewees reported that placing the CCR assistants at the middle school increased communication and collaboration across roles within the two middle schools, as well as between the two middle schools and high schools; it also expanded CCR education opportunities for middle school students. Examples of new CCR activities at the middle school include: a weekly lunch-time guest speaker series reaching over 500 students; an improved ILP process expanded to include 6th-grade students; and funded college field trips for 6th-grade students. In addition, school-specific ICCR web sites, newsletters, and bulletin boards were developed to promote awareness and discussion about the importance of college and career planning to both students and their parents. A middle school guidance counselor said,

The ICCR grant has given the school the ability to create a more in-depth college and career readiness curriculum for the middle school population. It made students more aware of career choices, utilizing and navigating Career Cruising, and made a direct connection from middle school to high school transitions.

Guidance counselors were able to work on more meaningful topics with the students that made a direct impact.

In an effort to increase student awareness and parent engagement, the ICCR team launched a new district-wide event, 'Choose Your Future: College and Career Planning Night,' at Chicopee Comprehensive High School. Approximately 100 families with children enrolled in grades 6–12 attended the event to learn about college and career opportunities available during and after high school. The event also offered a small career exploration fair for students, with professionals available from various fields such as medicine, business, and engineering.

At the secondary level, Chicopee streamlined and expanded prior efforts. For example, building on a long-standing relationship with a single teacher, the ICCR team collaborated on a career readiness program directly integrated into the 11th-grade English course. During the 2014–15 school year, the ICCR team expanded their partnership to work with two English teachers, reaching approximately 100 11th graders. During a three-week period of class time, participating teachers made consistent, direct

connections between typical course work and employability. They also taught work readiness and interviewing skills, resume writing, and how to search for and select prospective colleges. Students attended a culminating career fair event where they interviewed with potential employers. All students surveyed by UMDI reported finding this career readiness unit useful, with nearly 90% describing it as ‘very useful.’ Nearly all students (94%) believed that participation improved their chances of being hired in the future.

Gill-Montague School District

Located in the same building, Great Falls Middle School and Turner Falls High School together serve approximately 460 students, many of whom are low-income. Prior to receiving the ICCR grant, the Gill-Montague school district had a limited number of CCR activities. There was not a continuum between the middle school and high school, and related activities were not provided at every grade level or to all students within a given grade level. At the high school, most of the CCR services were college planning. Through the ICCR initiative, Gill-Montague’s focus was to expand and introduce grade- and school-level CCR activities more comprehensively into grades 6–12.

ICCR Activities. Using Mass Model implementation as a guiding focus, the ICCR team provided all students with increased access to CCR services. As a first step, the middle and high school guidance departments created a joint vision and mission statement and developed a master calendar of counseling activities that they posted on the school website. The team also surveyed key stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents—to learn about areas of key importance to address.

The grant really helped us expand some of the things we already had in place ... and it allowed the middle and high school guidance counselors to work closely together to make plans and support ... the transition to high school and the idea of exploring CCR early, so kids understand what they need to do to have the life they want.

Gill-Montague used their existing advisory periods as the primary means for implementing career

development education and reaching all of their students. At the middle school, monthly CCR topics were integrated into the existing Circle of Power and Respect (CPR) program. Examples of monthly CCR topics included goal setting, stress management, College is Cool awareness month, diversity, and peer pressure. Distinct lesson plans were created for each grade level to reduce duplication and improve implementation in future years.

At the high school level, the ICCR team worked with the established advisory team to create CCR lesson plans for each grade level, which were implemented through their existing 30-minute, weekly advisory period. The advisory schedule was modified into the following five-week topical rotation: college and career readiness, academic check-in, fun, anti-bullying, and team-building lessons and activities. Sample CCR topics included post-secondary planning, completing a college application, test-taking strategies, career cluster inventories, resume preparation, and financial aid. The majority of CCR lessons utilized MassCIS resources. In addition, Gill-Montague piloted the ILP process with 9th-grade students, with activities primarily occurring during the advisory program. While older students accessed MassCIS resources on paper, 9th graders registered and conducted assessments (such as career cluster and learning styles inventories) online, creating their own e-portfolio that will travel with them through high school. In addition, 9th graders met with their guidance counselors multiple times to create a four-year plan and participate in a 9th-grade seminar.



UMass Field Trip, Gill-Montague

ICCR grant funds were also used to increase early student exposure to post-secondary options. Specifically, college visits were provided to all 6th-, 8th-, and 9th-grade students. Nearly 90% of students surveyed rated these college field trips as useful, with more than half as ‘very useful’.

Early college visits, though very expensive and time-consuming to organize, have been great in helping students visualize themselves at college and have a sense of what college is “really” like. It helps students see the purpose of school.

Finally, Gill-Montague hosted a week of CCR-awareness activities for their middle and high school students. Activities included college door-decorating contests, student and staff college dress-up day, lunch-time college and career trivia games, a field trip to a college fair for 11th graders, and a career fair for students in grades 7–12. At the career fair, 40 area businesses and organizations set up booths in the high school gym to discuss careers and college options with small groups of students.

Hampden-Wilbraham School District

Three schools participated in the ICCR initiative, serving 260 5th–8th graders at Thornton Burgess Middle School, more than 500 6th–8th graders at Wilbraham Middle School, and nearly 1,200 secondary students at Minnechaug Regional High School. Prior to the ICCR initiative, Hampden-Wilbraham offered minimal college and career awareness activities at the middle school level. At the secondary level, Hampden-Wilbraham had numerous CCR activities in place, including an annual career fair, a strong partnership with River East School-to-Career Inc., Hot Jobs 4 U career exploration opportunities, and a well-established internship program. Hampden-Wilbraham’s primary goals were to expand existing initiatives and launch a coordinated and comprehensive scope and sequence of career development education benefiting all students in grades 5–12.

ICCR Activities. Guidance counselors at the participating middle schools created CCR lesson plans and activities that were introduced to 5th-through 8th-grade students through their well-

established middle school advisory program, Developmental Designs. These 20-minute daily meetings focus on improving students’ teambuilding, character building, goal setting, and social skills. Counselors, students, and advisors noted a more formalized introduction to CCR that added greater structure to advisory. Furthermore, all 7th- and 8th-grade students utilized the Your Plan for the Future website for the first time to help build their ILP. Students completed career awareness inventories, worked on goal setting, and reflected on learning styles during their health class with support from their guidance counselors and follow-up discussions during advisory. ILPs currently include student-identified strengths, challenges, short- and long-term goals, and learning styles. These plans will become part of the students’ guidance record and travel with them to high school.

Another success was Wilbraham Middle school’s collaboration with Luso Federal Credit Union to sponsor two new whole-school CCR activities this year. More than 500 middle school students participated in Junior Achievement’s “JA in a Day,” which covers different topics by grade level, including preparing for the work world, improving personal finance, and identifying education and career goals based on skills, interest, and values. Luso Federal Credit Union also sponsored student banking activities.



Luso Federal Credit Union CCR Event, Hampden-Wilbraham

At the secondary level, the primary focus of Hampden-Wilbraham's ICCR initiative has been the development and implementation of the high school advisory program, Minnechaug Advisory Program (MAP). During the planning year, Hampden-Wilbraham's team garnered support from school leaders to implement this new, whole-school initiative to help build multi-year relationships between students and their advisors and to introduce CCR skills to all students. All professional staff and administrators serve as advisors, with guidance counselors linked to multiple groups so they can serve as substitutes when the primary advisor is absent. The ICCR team developed more than 100 advisory lesson plans by grade level, organized into resource binders for advisors. Primary curriculum areas are college and career readiness and character development, including topics on intellectual development, communication skills, problem solving, community and citizenship, wellness, and integrity. The ICCR team also identified a student leadership team to provide feedback on the first year of the program. Six students representing all four grades participated, meeting two times per month following the advisory period.

Parent and student input into planning advisory was most beneficial. Parents spoke at School Committee meetings and at Open Houses. Students spoke at Open House and formed a focus group that met and shared many beneficial initiatives.

Nearly three-fifths of students surveyed agreed that, as a result of advisory, they could talk with their advisor if they had school or personal problems, and three-quarters found CCR advisory lessons to be useful.

Hampden-Wilbraham also expanded their established Hot Jobs 4U career exploration services. The ICCR team organized a new Hot Jobs 4U event focused on criminal justice, serving 68 students. Student participant numbers for previously established events, focused on health care and engineering, increased by 25%, serving 150 students this year. According to survey results, nearly all students that participated in Hot Jobs 4U activities found them useful, with 80% rating them as 'very useful.'



Hot Jobs 4U Event, Hampden-Wilbraham

Finally, secondary students initiated their ILPs under this grant. Guidance counselors piloted the ILP process with 9th-grade students during small group, 40-minute developmental guidance sessions. Using Naviance, 9th-grade students completed their career interest profile and 4-year academic plan. They also identified prior classes taken and future courses and electives needed to meet desired career goals. ILPs currently include student-identified strengths, interests, short- and long-term goals, and related CCR activities. The guidance department plans to incorporate online ILP development during guidance sessions across all grades in 2015–16. In preparation for that expansion, Hampden-Wilbraham utilized the last advisory session of the year to provide all students with their high school transcripts, initiate their academic plan on paper, and discuss graduation requirements.

Northbridge School District

Northbridge is a suburban school district serving nearly 800 5th- through 8th-grade students at the Northbridge Middle School and 635 secondary students at the Northbridge High School. Prior to the ICCR grant, Northbridge offered limited career development education and planning activities. Without guidance counselors or advisory programs at the middle school, the majority of CCR activities had been sporadic and dependent on the initiative of individual teachers, rather than systematic or comprehensive. At the high school level, most of the CCR education had taken the format of college planning. As they embarked on the ICCR initiative,

Northbridge representatives noted the challenge that many of their middle school students have been choosing to attend the local vocational technical school over Northbridge High School. In an attempt to attract more of these students, the ICCR team focused on strengthening linkages between the middle and high school and introducing CCR activities more comprehensively into the middle and high schools, starting in grade 5.

ICCR Activities. Over the two-year initiative, Northbridge Middle School increased career development education for their youngest students. ICCR activities included a 5th-grade Career Fair Expo Day and research projects where all 5th- and 6th-grade students researched careers of interest in their instructional technology class. For these projects, 5th-graders completed written reports and 6th-graders completed PowerPoint presentations. In addition, all 7th- and 8th-grade students were introduced to career readiness resources through Naviance and MassCIS during their instructional technology course. This year, the ICCR team held a career fair at Northbridge High School for all 8th-through 12th-graders, partnering with more than 20 local employers and community-based organizations.

At the high school level, the ICCR team launched the Northbridge Career Academies. This opportunity enabled incoming 9th-grade students and selected 10th-grade students to apply for an academy of their choice. Thirty-nine students completed the first year of their Career Academy in one of the five following programs: business, computer design, science engineering, justice, and media broadcasting.



Justice Academy Court House Visit, Northbridge

Participating students were placed in a weekly advisory with their Career Academy teacher as their advisor for added CCR guidance and mentoring. Primary activities for first-year Career Academy students included elective courses and field trips relevant to their academy but generally reserved for upperclassmen, and initiating ILPs. As they progress through high school, Career Academy students will have increased opportunities to participate in specialized electives, career exploration activities, workforce development skills, certificate opportunities, and internship choices related to their field.

Participating in the Career Academy has given me good opportunities. I was able to visit a courthouse and go to Boston. I also get to learn more about the field of work that I want to participate in after college. It has helped me prepare myself for college and knowing what I want to do.

It has helped me figure out what direction I want to head after high school. It has also helped me enjoy school more.

It has allowed me to follow my dreams even though my grades weren't so great the previous year. I feel I have been given a second chance at going where I want and I love the career academy.

Approximately 60% of 7th- and 8th-grade students surveyed expressed interest in applying to one of the career academies in the future.

Weymouth School District

The Weymouth school district includes two middle schools and one high school. Schools participating in the ICCR grant include the Maria Weston Chapman Middle School, serving approximately 1,000 7th- and 8th-grade students, and the Weymouth High School, serving approximately 2,000 students. Prior to the grant, Weymouth maintained numerous CCR activities at their secondary level, including a CTE program, a Career Academy program for all 11th- and 12th- graders, and a Senior Capstone Project. The district, however, lacked a coordinated and comprehensive scope and sequence of CCR activities that would benefit all students starting at middle

school. As such, Weymouth focused on expanding the initiatives that were already in place and increasing college and career awareness for their younger students.

ICCR Activities. Weymouth initiated the ILP process with all 7th- and 8th-grade students. Using the MassCIS platform, guidance counselors meet twice annually with students in large groups. ILPs currently include student-identified strengths, interests, short- and long-term goals; participation in CCR activities; and student reflections on their learning plan. These plans will become part of the students' guidance record and travel with them to high school.

By implementing ILPs, students can create a plan, add to that plan and track it over time. Students seem to have a better idea of their options for the future and seem to be able to identify their own interests and strengths, which allows them to create an individual plan.

In addition, Weymouth implemented a career fair for all 8th- and 10th-grade students at Weymouth High School. The goal of the fair was to increase career awareness and exploration skills building on students' prior MassCIS and Naviance work. Over 60 businesses and employers participated in the fair, enabling students to explore professions representing 16 different career clusters. In addition, career-oriented workshops provided at the fair included: Dress for Success & Professional Communication, Resume & Interview skills, A Future in the Military, and Use of Social Media. Based on survey results, the majority of both ICCR personnel and participating students found the Career Fair to be effective and useful. Creation of the career fair also led to increased connections with classroom work and partnerships resulting in future career exploration and immersion opportunities.

After the Career Fair, we were contacted by business participants. We are making arrangements for UPS and Linden Ponds to provide presentations on their companies and then interview students for job placements! We will pilot with these two companies and then look to establish a procedure protocol and then work to grow these opportunities.



Career Fair, Weymouth

Weymouth High School also launched a Career Center, located in their high school library. The high school guidance counselors utilized the Career Center to pilot two workshops: Financial & Economic Literacy and College 101: Navigating a College Web Site. More than 100 11th- and 12th-grade students participated in these workshop series pilots. A full CCR workshop series is being designed for implementation at the Career Center for the 2015–16 academic year.

Finally, Weymouth created a CCR Vertical Articulation Team (VAT) to assemble at least one representative (teachers, principals, deans) from each grade level from PreK through 12th-grade to discuss how to integrate CCR learning into their daily teaching habits. Meetings revealed that CCR learning was happening at even the youngest levels, but that teachers may not be making these connections explicitly with their students. As a result of the grant, there is an increased understanding of what constitutes college and career readiness skills and activities at different grade levels.

Footnotes

1. ESE provided selected districts with a maximum of \$50,000 to be spent over two years for planning, developing, and implementing their ICCR strategies at the middle and high school levels. ESE also provided technical assistance resources and held five grantee meetings to bring ICCR planning team members together for work time within and between districts.
2. From Cradle to Career: Educating our Students for Lifelong Success. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, June 2012.
3. From Massachusetts Guide for Implementing Individual Learning Plans (ILP): Preparing ALL Students for Success after High School. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, June 2015.
4. Statistically significant at $p < .001$ using Mann-Whitney test.

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