



## OPENING PATHWAYS:

Strengthening Opportunities For Massachusetts  
Early Educators Who Are English Language Learners



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of Early Education and Care



*the* **cayl** institute  
*Creating Architects of Change*

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# Grant Overview

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In December 2011, Massachusetts was selected as one of nine states awarded a U.S. Department of Education *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge* (RTT-ELC) grant. The grant enabled Massachusetts to fund several initiatives, including this exploration of viable pathways for early educators who are English Language Learners to improve their knowledge and competency.

The CAYL Institute (CAYL) was contracted by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to develop a roadmap for English Language Learners (ELLs). The roadmap is intended to inform EEC, institutions of higher education, and community-based agencies about how to better support

multi-lingual educators as they navigate entry to higher education institutions, matriculation, and degree attainment.

As a grantee, The CAYL Institute produced this report, drawing broadly from the literature on workforce development, early childhood education and care, adult learners and ELLs in higher education, and post-secondary access and persistence among nontraditional students. To supplement the literature review, a series of six focus groups in three different Massachusetts regions (Central, Northeast, and Metro Boston), and a series of three webinars were held across the Commonwealth. Participants included representatives from institutions of higher education (IHEs), early childhood education practitioners, and community-based organizations engaged in early childhood education workforce development. CAYL also held two Higher Education Leadership Institutes—one in Greater Boston and one in central Massachusetts—to bring together key stakeholders in higher education and state policymakers to discuss the challenges and opportunities in moving early educators who are ELLs through postsecondary education.





Policymakers, a generation of educators, families, and business leaders across the Commonwealth have affirmed that investing in young children matters a great deal to the state’s economic vitality and social progress.

## Introduction

Massachusetts has always been on the cutting edge of child care and preschool education reform. Policymakers, a generation of educators, families, and business leaders across the Commonwealth have affirmed that investing in young children matters a great deal to the state’s economic vitality and social progress. The science of child development and early learning is clear and incontrovertible: high-quality early childhood education experiences have long-term social, academic, and economic benefits for children, families, and communities.<sup>1</sup>

Yet achieving these benefits for all children is no easy task. Early educators play a powerful role in realizing these significant outcomes. However, many early educators, though passionate and enthusiastic, are often underprepared to support the diverse and complex developmental and learning needs of children. Few have attained the bachelor’s degree in early childhood education that national studies and organizations suggest as a minimum requirement for lead teachers. Teaching young children effectively requires considerable competence and substantial responsibilities. Yet today, in the United States and in Massachusetts, most early educators receive compensation that is so low that many of them are eligible for public assistance.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 1: **Characteristics of the National Early Childhood Education Workforce**<sup>3</sup>

Program Type	% workers (n=2.2 million)	% workers with at most a HS degree	Median annual income	Turnover rate 2009-2010
Home	26	50.7	\$12,415	28.5%
Center	56	39.8	\$14,567	24.2%
School	18	17	\$27,014	13.6%

The progress Massachusetts has made in early childhood education will be sustained to the extent that we stay abreast of changing economic and demographic realities, even as we continue to push for higher standards and quality improvements. These new realities include the fact that both our young children, and the early childhood workforce supporting them, are increasingly characterized as “English Language Learners” (ELLs). While this phenomenon is occurring just under the radar of public perception, analysis of workforce trends find that it is quite real — and growing.

We begin to consider this issue by asking four questions:

1. What are the national trends impacting early educators who are English Language Learners?
2. How big is the challenge in Massachusetts?
3. What are strategies that work to support higher education for early educators who are English Language Learners?
4. What can Massachusetts do to open higher education pathways for English Language Learners?

We ask these questions because, as will be evident, these new workforce realities are not changes on the margin—they must be central to our thinking about how Massachusetts will sustain our place as a national leader in early childhood education.<sup>4</sup> A major goal is to open pathways to a college education for early educators so that increasing numbers of them can achieve the baccalaureate degree that Massachusetts aspires to as its minimum qualification for lead teachers.





## What are the national trends impacting early educators who are English Language Learners?

The early childhood education field is swiftly moving from a focus on new program development toward efforts at systems building, with the intent of bringing coherence, sustainability, and consistently higher performance to a field that has lacked all three. Along with the field's own leadership, state governments, business executives, and economists urge greater “professionalization” of early childhood education in ways that include routinely developing content standards that document what children should be learning as well as early learning standards that express what children should know and be able to do.<sup>5</sup> The acceleration of change in the field highlights several important trends that impact early educators who are English Language Learners.

- The early childhood education field is expanding, creating more employment options.
- Demographic realities provide opportunities to serve larger numbers of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Yet, rising expectations for early educators' academic qualifications, coupled with structural barriers to higher education related to English proficiency, often yield missed opportunities for both children and early educators.

### 1. The early childhood education field is expanding, creating more employment options.

#### › The number of early educators is growing.

Since 1990, the early childhood education workforce grew from just over one million to over two million workers nationwide.<sup>6</sup>

#### › Immigrants and English Language Learners are a significant part of that growth.<sup>7</sup>

In 2015, immigrants working in early childhood education are:

- Nearly 20% of the national workforce.
- The fastest growing segment of the workforce.
- Often limited (54%) in English proficiency.

### 2. Demographic realities provide opportunities to serve larger numbers of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

#### › Growth in the linguistic diversity of the early childhood education workforce mirrors the population of the children served.

Since 2000, 57% of the total population growth in the US took place among immigrants and their children, and nearly 30% of all young children under six have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English.<sup>8</sup>

#### › Growth in the number of children who are dual language learners and immigrants puts a spotlight on the need to better serve them.



- *Achievement gaps are evident early in life.*<sup>9</sup>

Well before kindergarten, sizeable and persistent achievement or developmental gaps exist among children, often because of issues tied to race, class, ethnicity, and linguistic diversity. Children who are dual language learners are already behind their peers on measures of school readiness when they enter kindergarten, as well as reading assessments at the end of kindergarten and first grade. These achievement gaps are still evident in third grade. By middle and high school, more than half of these children, despite having been in schools for more than six years, lack proficiency in academic English.

- *Use of home languages can support children's growth.*

There is evidence that using home language supports academic growth in these children. Spanish speaking preschoolers, for example, have higher English and math scores when they received more instruction in Spanish, or when they attend pre-school before they enter kindergarten.

**3. Yet, rising expectations for early educators' academic qualifications, coupled with structural barriers to higher education related to English proficiency, often yield missed opportunities for both children and early educators.**

### **As the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) noted:**

*At all levels of early childhood education, there is a shortage of... teachers who are experts in strategies for helping students master a second language. Developing effective approaches for addressing these teacher supply problems is an increasingly pressing matter.*<sup>10</sup>



➤ **There is growing consensus that early educator qualifications must be raised.**

The recently released report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation”<sup>11</sup>, both reflects and sets the aspirations for early educator academic qualifications in the United States today. The report offers recommendations “to build a workforce that is unified by the foundation of the science of child development and early learning and the shared knowledge and competencies that are needed to provide consistent, high-quality support for the development and early learning of children from birth through age eight.” Given this stated purpose, IOM calls for “phased, multiyear pathways to transition to a minimum bachelor’s degree requirement with specialized knowledge and competencies for all lead educators, meaning those who bear primary responsibility for the instructional and other activities for children in formal care and education environments.”

➤ **Still, there are historic, ongoing tensions about rising qualifications, specifically as they relate to the field’s commitment to a diverse workforce.**

There are sensitivities to the fact that even the most accomplished Asian, Black, and Latino professionals in the field repeatedly express a sense of marginalization and isolation.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, diversity is often framed as both an asset and a hindrance to the field’s advancement. The nation’s changing demographics, and the desire for the field’s professionals to reflect the diversity of the children and families being served, drive many to defend low occupational entry requirements as a defining feature. Significantly the fastest growing segments of the workforce, immigrant workers and their children, have lower levels of overall educational attainment than their native-born peers.<sup>13</sup>

There is a paradox. On one hand, early educators who are English Language Learners enter the profession with a valuable asset – their home language. On

the other hand, regardless of educational attainment, English language proficiency is a strong indicator of overall economic standing among immigrant workers in the US. English proficient immigrant workers have higher earnings than those who are English Language Learners, and they are less likely to be unemployed, have greater civic involvement and social connections within their communities, and raise children with greater academic and economic success.<sup>14</sup>

➤ **Open pathways to higher education are often more difficult to find or navigate for English Language Learners.**<sup>15</sup>

The IOM report recognizes the challenge of the baccalaureate recommendation by further suggesting that improving higher education and ongoing professional learning, as well as strengthening qualification requirements based on knowledge and competencies, is part of the pathway to fulfill its aspirations. Without significant support from institutions of higher education, an individual’s capacity to bridge the gap between limited English language proficiency and college-level proficiency is exceedingly difficult. Despite increased enrollment, racial, economic, and linguistic minorities have disproportionately lower college completion rates. Traditional university structures and supports are typically unprepared to serve “nontraditional” students – those much more likely than their peers to be first-generation college students, attend college part-time, support dependents, and have lower socioeconomic status and higher unmet financial needs.<sup>16</sup>

Early educators who are limited English proficient occupy a place on the periphery of higher education that puts them at “ultra-high risk” for failure. Beyond having many of the characteristics of all linguistic minorities, these individuals often participate in fragmented and unaligned occupational frameworks that focus on non-credit continuing education, including certification programs, work-based training and for-credit continuing education. A strong tradition of alternative professional development within the field of early childhood education can add even more complexity,

and academic dead-ends, for the English Language Learner.<sup>17</sup>

A 2015 Study from the Migration Policy Institute describes structural and individual barriers for English Language Learners in early childhood education as follows:<sup>18</sup>

- The field of early childhood education offers a low premium on educational attainment and few incentives for low-income workers to increase their qualifications.
- 80% of immigrant early educators are employed in home or family-based settings, suggesting that they may be isolated from information or programs about higher education opportunities.
- The pathway for English Language Learners in early childhood education is particularly daunting as they begin the journey with lower educational attainment than native-born peers.
- Nationally, nearly 20% of the immigrant sector of the early childhood education workforce is both limited English proficient and lacking in a high school diploma.
- Of immigrant early educators, nearly one-half live below 200% of the federal poverty line, compared to less than 25% of native-born early educators.<sup>19</sup>

For this staff, the financial and structural systems of higher education added to limited English proficiency, limited academic preparation, low socioeconomic status, and their work and family responsibilities, pose significant barriers to access and thrive in postsecondary education.





## How big is the challenge in Massachusetts?

### Massachusetts mirrors many of the national trends.

- The early childhood education field is expanding, and has greater participation by early educators who are immigrants with multiple home languages.
- Massachusetts has a high need for early childhood education services that address the needs of dual language learners.
- There are numerous gaps in the capacity of the Massachusetts institutions of higher education (IHEs) to serve the long-term needs of the early childhood education workforce, English Language Learners in particular.

**1. The early childhood education field is expanding, and has greater participation by early educators who are immigrants with multiple home languages.**

› **The early childhood education and care workforce has grown by two-thirds (from 27,000 to 45,000) over the past 25 years.**<sup>20</sup>

- Forty percent of this growth came from immigrant workers.
- Immigrant workers now comprise about 20% of all early educators in the Commonwealth.
- 55% of immigrant early care and education workers are ELLs.

- Of immigrant early educators who are ELL, the majority are women (97%), Hispanic (48%), and over 40 years old.
- English Language Learners now make up at least 13% of all educators in Massachusetts.

› **Although many languages are included, there are several primary languages that can be identified in Massachusetts' early childhood education workforce:**<sup>21</sup>

- 47% Spanish.
- 8% Portuguese.
- 7% Haitian Creole.
- 6% Chinese.

› **Early educators who are English Language Learners are concentrated in family or home-based care.**<sup>22</sup>

55% of immigrants are in family-based or private home care, compared to 29% of native-born peers. Family-based providers are often the least educated and compensated segment of the early childhood education workforce. For many families, the cultural and linguistic continuity between home and out-of-home experiences is a primary reason for choosing family child care.

**2. Massachusetts has a high need for early childhood education services that address the needs of dual language learners.**



The diversity of the early childhood education workforce mirrors the diversity of children and families in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts is one of the top 10 states for immigrant children, with approximately one-quarter of young people under 18 classified as immigrants. Thirty percent of children under six live in households that speak a language other than English.<sup>23</sup>

Today's early educators are faced with the complex responsibility of educating young children who speak a wide variety of languages and represent varying cultural traditions. Creating learning and social-emotional environments, meaningful family engagement, and instructional strategies to support learning outcomes aligned to state standards and core curriculum is an essential competency for early educators. Those who are English Language Learners can demonstrate these competencies and can be powerful drivers of

quality. It is also essential to recognize their strong and enduring connections with families—witness the depth and sustainability of family child care.

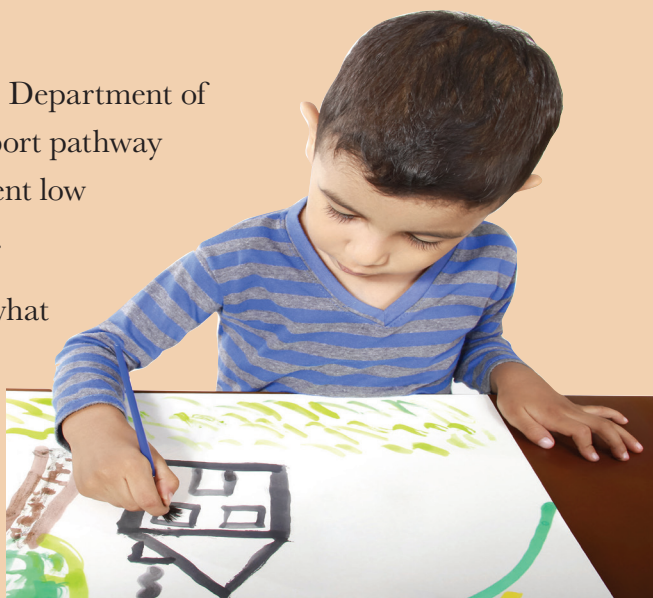
**3. There are numerous gaps in the capacity of the Massachusetts institutions of higher education (IHEs) to serve the long-term needs of the early childhood education workforce, English Language Learners in particular.<sup>24</sup>**

In 2010, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and the Head Start Collaboration Office initiated a two-phase inventory project to map IHEs across the Commonwealth that provide early childhood education and related degrees as part of their B.A. mandates in their workforce development systems. The project was designed to better understand the types of degree programs available to early

## Voices from the Field – Gaps in Higher Education

Representatives of IHEs who participated in CAYL's focus groups and leadership institutes identified numerous gaps in the policies and practices of Massachusetts' IHEs that inhibit their ability to serve the needs of early educators:

- Lack of alignment between current professional development options that provide CEUs and credit-bearing work that can lead to an associate or bachelor's degree. There is currently no agreed upon standard for translating CEUs to meaningful college credit.
- The inability to access funding through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to support pathway programs for early educators due to persistent low wages in the early childhood education field.
- Lack of agreed upon standards regarding what outcomes we want for children and how to best prepare educators to be effective in the classroom. Limited research on effective educator preparation practices.





educators in different regions of the Commonwealth and the various supports offered in these programs to serve nontraditional students. The study included 28 two- and four-year IHEs offering 14 associate's degree programs, 9 B.A. programs, and 11 master's programs.

The study found that degree-granting programs are available across the state, but the options for early educators are limited in terms of the number of programs available and the capacity of those programs to serve additional students. Only 15 of the 28 IHEs surveyed offer degrees with an early childhood education concentration, with elementary education as the most common “related” degree program. There is also a lack of understanding in how individual courses align with EEC's eight core competency areas. Only 57% of two-year colleges and 71% of state colleges in the study reported that their programs were aligned with early childhood education core competencies.

In general, the Mapping Study illustrates that opportunities for higher education for early educators are limited, even when they are native English speakers. The study further reported that supports for non-traditional and ELL students—including alternative course schedules, multi-lingual classes, mentoring, and guidance—were more common in two-year institutions than four-year institutions, but it is unclear from the data the extent to which these supports are coordinated across departments. The barriers facing early educators who are English Language Learners are much greater given the lack of coordinated supports to serve them in IHEs.

For example, immigrants who are English Language Learners in Massachusetts have relatively lower levels of educational attainment. Immigrant workers are three times more likely to lack a high school diploma and about twice as likely to lack a bachelor's degree or higher than their native born peers.

For Massachusetts's immigrant early educators over the age of 25 (8,400):<sup>25</sup>

- 14% lack a high school diploma.
- 37% have a high school diploma or GED.
- 17% have some college credit.
- 12% have associate degrees.
- 21% have bachelor's degrees or higher.

Opening pathways to higher education for English Language Learners in the field of early childhood education will require intention and will take time.





## What are strategies that work to support higher education for early educators who are English Language Learners?

In Massachusetts, thousands of children are cared for and educated everyday by early educators who are English Language Learners. The social, academic, and economic success of these children is tied closely to the competency of their teachers. Teaching competency, however, does not necessarily require English proficiency. Learning to speak English takes years, but the child must be cared for and educated right now. We can't wait for the teachers to learn English before they have opportunities to strengthen their skills or improve

their practice. What strategies might be more effective in helping them to achieve higher levels of educational attainment?

### **Evidence from Research on Successful Strategies**

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, building the capacity for systemic change requires comprehensive wrap-around supports that include the following strategic activities and best-practices:



TABLE 2: **Building Capacity for Systemic Change**

<b>Leadership Commitment</b>	Building commitment among all stakeholders is essential for strategic resource allocation and public policy development. Commitment from institutional and organizational leaders is more likely to foster the cross-agency/interdepartmental coordination needed to align systems of adult basic education and higher education. Leadership efforts support transparent articulation and transfer agreements, credit for prior learning, and competency-based education initiatives.
<b>Partner-Driven Initiatives</b>	Effective programs to support adult ELLs as they enter and persist in higher education are partner-driven and supported by broad coalitions of community-based organizations, businesses, government agencies, and institutions of higher education. Specific outcomes for ELLs must be integrated into the formal outcome goals of individual partners with adequate resource allocation and incentives to achieve those goals.
<b>Improved Data Use</b>	Data analysis provides the foundation for identifying gaps in existing education and workforce development systems and tracking the progress of students through occupational training or academic programs. Longitudinal data systems are needed to track participants over time through workforce development and education systems and into the workforce. Such data are essential for building commitment, engaging stakeholders, targeting scarce resources, and continuous program improvement.
<b>Student Engagement</b>	ELLs entering postsecondary education often struggle when adjusting to college life. These students are most successful when they feel connected to a school community, valued for their contributions, and supported in their social and academic development as students. Engaging adult learners in a holistic way is more likely to build or strengthen their intrinsic motivations to persist through degree attainment.
<b>Comprehensive Supports</b>	Both academic and non-academic supports are needed, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cohort programs and peer learning networks.</li> <li>▪ Counseling — career, academic, and life planning.</li> <li>▪ Academic advising and tutoring.</li> <li>▪ Flexible options - alternative class schedules, locations and delivery methods.</li> <li>▪ Financial assistance - direct aid for tuition and expenses, grants, and work study.</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	Fostering instructional practices should build on students' inherent motivations and life experiences, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dual language and native language education programs.</li> <li>▪ Bilingual faculty.</li> <li>▪ Curricula relevant to students' long term career and life goals.</li> <li>▪ Prior learning assessments and individualized learning portfolios.</li> <li>▪ Competency-based education.</li> <li>▪ High expectations.</li> <li>▪ Culturally-responsive classrooms.</li> <li>▪ Active and collaborative learning.</li> </ul>

## Pockets of Progress in Massachusetts are Aligned with the Research

Within Massachusetts, there are diverse pockets of progress being generated in concentrated regions and programs. Here are a few examples:

- **Colleges of Worcester Consortium**, comprised of four four-year IHEs and one community college<sup>26</sup>, worked together to expand access and supports for students working toward degree completion.<sup>27</sup>
- **Quinsigamond Community College**, a member of the Colleges of Worcester Consortium, developed a dual language program for early educators working toward an associate degree. The pilot program provided early educators working in family-based settings with courses taught in both English and Spanish, depending upon the needs of individual learners. Classes are structured to develop learners' understanding of early childhood education content in their native language while continuing to build their English proficiency.<sup>28</sup>
- **North Shore Community College's** Early Childhood Development department developed a career pathway program for Hispanic ECE workers in Lynn that provides options for both associate degrees and transition to bachelor's degree programs. Using a variety of state grants, the Early Childhood Development department collaborated with the ESL department to create an "on ramp" into for-credit programming for low skilled ELL workers in early childhood education settings.<sup>29</sup> ESL coursework is contextualized with early childhood education content and the program embeds comprehensive supports that are coordinated across departments within the college. Students are placed in cohorts to provide peer learning and support, and Achievement Coaches provide proactive advising to students. The Achievement Coach provides a single point of contact for students to better access services within the college, and coaches generally provide an "intrusive" model of support to ensure students stay on track.<sup>30</sup>
- **Urban College of Boston** developed training programs for early educators that provide Continuing Education Units (CEUs) that can transfer to credit at the college if participants continue on a degree tract.
- **Urban College of Boston**, in partnership with **Head Start, ABCD, and Learning Works**, (funded through Head Start) crafted The Professional Enrichment Early Childhood Education (PEECE) program. The program created a seven-tiered model designed to help ELL students move from pre-college level work through bachelor's and graduate level work. Dual language supports are provided to participants in both Spanish and Chinese. Using the career pathways framework, the program provides a logical pathway for students who can enter at various levels depending upon their prior experience or education and exit at numerous levels depending upon the long-term career and educational goals. Students who enter without a GED complete that requirement first before moving to earn a **National Child Development Associate (CDA)**<sup>TM</sup> credential. Students who earn the CDA can matriculate to an associate degree program in early childhood education at Urban College, and articulation agreements with **Lesley University** allows students to transition to bachelor's or master's level programs.<sup>31</sup>

These Massachusetts programs are critical to the development of the field of early childhood education. However, few are institutionalized, and each tends to rely on intermittent funding and/or innovative leadership at the local level.



## What can Massachusetts do to open higher education pathways for English Language Learners?

Informed by research findings in this report, the following considerations are offered for stakeholders and policymakers engaged in efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education and expand educational opportunities for early educators who are English Language Learners.

### Voices from the Field – Strategies to Support Adult Learners and ELLs

Leaders in the early childhood education field in Massachusetts, including representatives from IHEs who participated in CAYL focus groups, identified the following strategies to better support adult learners and ELLs access and persist in postsecondary education:

- ELLs and adult learners not only need academic supports to succeed in higher education, but emotional supports based on strong relationships and connection to broader community, with mentors and advisors following a case management model.
- Build the capacity of leaders in community programs to mentor and guide educators toward a career pathway as well as provide outreach to ELLs and their families about career opportunities.
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESL coursework must be aligned with early childhood education content. Building competencies in quality early childhood education practices must occur as individuals are building their proficiency in English.
- Bridge gaps between CEUs, certification programs and degree programs to create a more transparent and sequenced process to advance along a career pathway.
- Develop a statewide system to translate foreign transcripts into credits leading to an associate or bachelor's degree.
- Provide mechanisms for translating prior learning (including CEUs, demonstrated competencies and learning portfolios) into college credit.
- Develop statewide articulation and credit transfer policies.
- Develop welcome centers and workforce training centers at IHEs to coordinate supports for immigrant and ELL learners. These programs should provide translation services to assist students with admissions and financial aid.



## Recommendations

These six recommendations are intended to work together, not as individual parts, to accelerate progress for early educators who are English Language Learners.

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION REQUIRED
1. Recognize that addressing the needs of early educators who are English Language Learners has an educational, economic, and social value for Massachusetts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Build on our assets.</b> As the numbers of young children who are dual language learners increases, Massachusetts must have a sense of urgency about meeting their needs. Since so many of these children are in family child care with English Language Learners, it is essential to recognize and support these early educators as an asset.</li> <li>• <b>Leverage economic opportunity.</b> Understand the link between opening educational pathways for ELLs and economic development. The early childhood education workforce is a significant economic driver for the Commonwealth with an estimated 45,000 workers who provide direct care to young children, as well as IHE faculty and staff, and the employed families who rely on educators so that they may work.</li> <li>• <b>Offer more and better opportunities to learn English.</b> Research is clear that English proficiency is a leading indicator of social integration, educational attainment, employment, earnings, and the academic success of children.</li> </ul>
2. Elevate the early childhood teaching profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compensate early educators equitably.</b> Professionalization of the early childhood education workforce must include compensation reform to ensure that early educators are paid wages commensurate with their skills and knowledge, education level, and experience.</li> <li>• <b>Explore options for creating a Birth-to-Eight (B8) licensure system for early educators.</b> Given the limited capacity of Massachusetts' IHEs to serve the growing demand of early educators to attain an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education, coalitions of IHEs, early educators, and regional Educator and Provider Support (EPS) networks have been pushing for a Birth-to-Eight licensure system to create an aligned pathway at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels.</li> <li>• <b>Articulate and pilot a career pathways program specific to existing early educators.</b> Pathway models have worked in other fields (such as healthcare and manufacturing) that have successfully moved the lowest skilled and lowest paid workers—many of which are immigrants and ELLs—to professional certificates and postsecondary degrees. Pathways should be aligned with existing career lattices to provide workers a clear roadmap to certificates and degrees that have payoffs in terms of career advancement and higher salaries.</li> </ul>
3. Engage stakeholders in collaborative work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Incentivize partnership-driven efforts that give voice to early educators who are ELLs.</b> Promote strong collaborative work across all stakeholders to provide opportunities to help early educators who are ELLs achieve long-term career goals. Together, ELLs, state policymakers, and private funders can strengthen the capacity of regional education and workforce development systems and build trust among all stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration across state agencies is essential.</b> Build on existing policy initiatives to strengthen education, workforce development, and improve collaboration across state agencies. Advocates should engage Massachusetts' recently formed Workforce Skills Cabinet that focuses on building a coalition of advocates, businesses, government agencies, and community groups to address the gaps between labor market needs and the skills of working adults. The cabinet is well positioned to move the state toward a more coordinated effort and scale existing programs that are working for adult learners.</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION REQUIRED
4. Support innovation and strong networks between two- and four-year IHEs.	<p><b>Incentivize community-based agencies, IHEs, and state agencies to create a plethora of innovation grants to determine what works and accelerate progress.</b></p> <p>Pilot projects should incorporate the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transparent statewide articulation and credit transfer agreements.</li> <li>▪ Viable system of prior learning assessments, based on validated evidence of learning, which lead to college credits and are portable across institutional borders.</li> <li>▪ Competency-based models of education and training that reflect early childhood education as an occupation based in practice.</li> <li>▪ Stackable credential and degree programs that provide clear and meaningful steps toward a postsecondary degree.</li> <li>▪ Comprehensive bridge programs that support nontraditional students' transition to two-year IHEs and between two- and four-year IHE programs.</li> <li>▪ Promotion of consistent standards and transitional pathways.</li> </ul>
5. Use local and state data to inform improvements in policy and practice.	<p><b>Base accountability metrics on outcome data that tracks individual learners as they progress along a specific career pathway over time.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scale existing programs that have some evidence of effectiveness to serve more students and strengthen networks so that the institutional knowledge generated by these programs is captured and shared broadly.</li> <li>▪ Longitudinal data collection must shape how limited resources are invested to scale existing programs, create new programs, and improve the practices of faculty and staff who work with nontraditional adult learners.</li> <li>▪ Effective data sharing between community partners, IHEs, and state agencies is critical in strategic communications that engage stakeholders in collaborative work.</li> <li>▪ Expand outcome measures to focus on the broader goal of moving ELLs toward degree attainment rather than year-to-year benchmarks, which are limited in value.</li> </ul>



## Let's finish the job we started!



New immigrants and their children are playing an increasingly important role in our nation's economic, cultural, and social development. These realities are shaping efforts to support the professional growth of the early childhood education workforce and the quality of early childhood education for all children in Massachusetts. Building a professional workforce that is both culturally and linguistically competent is crucial to ensure that all children have access to high quality early childhood education that supports success in school and in life. Creating robust and sustainable pathways for Massachusetts' cultural and linguistically diverse early educators is about improving outcomes for all children in the Commonwealth.

What is at stake here? We must recognize that no matter how motivated, English Language Learners in our workforce face steep odds navigating a career pathway to the aspirational bachelor's degree. It takes many years for them, given their status as adult learners, to earn steps in the career ladder such as CDA and an associate degree. Therefore, timelines for attainment must be realistic and achievable.

This growing workforce is increasingly segregated in same-language communities and low-skilled positions, depriving young dual-language learners of linguistic and cultural supports that can help them succeed. The potential gains for these children—in terms of improved health, a decreased achievement gap, and stronger long-term outcomes—stand to benefit all of us.

These changing realities represent a challenge and an opportunity for the Commonwealth. We are not strangers to change: we created the Department of Early Education and Care, the first such agency in the nation, and pioneered the roll out of model language standards for English Language Learners in early childhood. Based on extensive research and lessons learned in other states, we know there are effective ways to create stronger educational and career pathways for these early educators.

Implementing these strategies starts with the commitment of political and higher education leaders. Collaborative work across many Massachusetts agencies, with the voice of English Language Learners, is needed to mine local and regional data, target outreach initiatives, offer comprehensive supports, and create flexible higher education teaching and learning options. Regardless of what language these educators speak, we all must realize that they touch the lives of tens of thousands of children growing up here—children whose school readiness matters to us all.

Given the complexity and cross-departmental nature of the challenge, and how much is at stake for the future of both our children and the early childhood education workforce, we advise the creation of a task force to better realize the aspirations that Massachusetts has set forth: a highly qualified and competent early childhood education workforce that can provide the best possible start in life for all children. Let's finish the job we started, face current realities, and create the synergy that will keep Massachusetts a leader.

## APPENDIX I — Glossary of Terms

**Adult Basic Education (ABE)** Courses to teach the basic skills of reading, writing, and math to adult learners.

**Child Development Associate (CDA)™** A nationally recognized credential in early childhood education offered in multiple languages and based on competency standards that guide early educators as they work toward becoming qualified teachers of young children.

**Continuing Education Units (CEUs)** A measure used in continuing education programs. In Massachusetts, one CEU equals 10 hours of instruction.

**Dual language learners (DLLs)** Young children (aged 0-5) in early childhood education settings who come from non-English speaking homes and backgrounds and are in the process of developing literacy and fluency in both their primary language and English.

**Early Educators** Individuals who work with children aged 0-5 in family-, center-, and school-based early childhood education settings; also referred to as the early childhood education workforce.

**English as a Second Language (ESL)** Any class or program designed to build the English literacy skills of ELLs.

**English Language Learners (ELLs)** Individuals who have either been assessed or have self-identified as limited English proficiency; these individuals often come from non-English speaking homes and backgrounds, but can be both native born or immigrant.

**General Educational Development (GED)** A system of tests that measure proficiency in math, science, social studies, and English for the purpose of assessing an individual's ability to earn a high school equivalency credential; GED preparation refers to classes and programs designed to prepare individuals to take the GED tests.

**Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)** Two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities offering a broad range of educational credentials, including workforce certificates and academic or applied associate, bachelor's, and post-baccalaureate degrees.

**Postsecondary Education** Formal education offered after high school (secondary) that can lead to specific degrees or credentials; also referred to as higher education.

## APPENDIX II — Career Pathway and Guide

### Multiple Entry and Exit Points

**Entry points:** The pathway supports the entry of adult learners of different abilities and skills (well-prepared, low-skilled, ELL, etc.) at multiple points along the pathway depending upon their competency, English literacy level, educational history, and training. Entry points are dependent upon assessments of prior learning, portability of relevant credentials earned, and any institutional-specific requirements.

**Exit points:** The framework supports multiple exit points at successfully higher levels that lead to self or family sustaining employment and advancement along career lattice levels. Exit points must align with subsequent entry points to support seamless transitions within the pathway.

Prior learning assessments (PLAs) at every entry point should capture competencies developed through work experience and professional development training (CEUs, CDA, etc.), and translate those skills and knowledge into credit that can be applied toward higher levels of credential or degree.

### Prior Learning Assessments, Learning Portfolios and IPDPs

The career pathway supports educators' continuous learning, reflection, and professional growth through the use of prior learning assessments (PLAs), learning portfolios, and individualized professional development plans (IPDPs)\*:

**PLAs:** Consistent and non-duplicative assessments of learners' skills, knowledge, and readiness to enter academic programs. Assessments are used to determine eligibility for college credit based on a learner's competency (i.e. CLEP exam), earned professional development CEUs, credentials (i.e. CDA), and/or certifications, and degrees from foreign institutions.

**Learning portfolios:** Learners continually reflect upon and document their growth as educators. Portfolios include documentation of a learner's education and training (both college credit and CEUs), work experience, and supervisory reviews. Portfolios also include documentation of formal assessments required for postsecondary admissions and placement.

**IPDPs:** Guided by their PLAs and their learning portfolios, educators work with supervisors to create a professional development plan that supports educators in attaining higher levels of competency and educational credentials.

*\*IPDPs are included in the requirements of QRIS.*

### Education, Professional Development, and Advising

The pathway supports interconnected and transparent education and training programs that provide individuals a progressive step-based process to advance to successively higher levels of education and employment. These features vary depending on degree program and education level. Education and training programs offer approaches to teaching and learning that support adult learners and ELLs (i.e. contextualized curriculum, dual language education, native language instruction, bilingual faculty, culturally-responsive classrooms, and active and collaborative learning). Program include:

- **Transition/bridge programs:** easily accessible programs that provide basic skills development (GED, ESL, workplace literacy, and math skills) to bridge academically and linguistically underprepared students to credit-bearing work professional development (PD): includes CEUs and in-service training hours that reflect EEC core competencies
- **College level credit:** competency-based curriculum aligned with academic and quality standards structured and sequenced into credit-bearing modules or "chunks" that can be "stacked" together to fulfill credential, certificate, or degree requirements.
- **Assessments:** formal assessments required for postsecondary admissions and placement (i.e., ACCUPLACER and TOEF).
- **Advising:** college and career advising should inform students about portability of credits, credentials (i.e. CDA), CEUs, etc. between institutions of higher education.



## APPENDIX II — Career Pathway and Guide

### Comprehensive and Individualized Support Strategies

Nontraditional students, including adult learners and ELLs require comprehensive supports across their educational pathway to persist in and complete postsecondary education. Research suggests that supports should be targeted to participant needs and that supports provided can become more individualized as students' progress through higher levels of educational attainment. Strategies that have been found to support persistence include:

- Language supports, including ESL courses contextualized to ECE content, dual language education, and native language instruction.
- Academic advising and tutoring.
- Career and personal guidance and/or case management models.
- Coaches and mentors (language-specific option).
- Cohort programs and peer learning communities.
- Flexible options, including alternative class locations, schedules, and delivery methods.
- Financial assistance for tuition and fees, childcare expenses, and transportation, etc.
- Assistance with the use of technology.

*\*The literature on career pathways suggests that the intensity of required supports is greater at the lowest levels of the career pathway. Adult and low-income learners, underprepared learners, ELLs and immigrants are often enter at the lowest levels of the pathways.*

### QRIS and Career Lattice Alignment

**QRIS alignment:** The career pathway is designed to move adult learners and ELLs to higher levels of educational attainment and competency, with the goal of increasing the number of early educators with bachelor's or higher level degrees. Current QRIS educational mandates require progressively higher percentages of classrooms staffed by educators with bachelor's at the higher QRIS program levels.

*\*The pathway addresses individual-level components that contribute to degree completion, where the QRIS standards reflect program-level requirements.*

**Career lattice alignment:** The career pathway is designed to support learners as they move through progressively higher levels of education and training that lead to meaningful credentials and degrees. The pathway provides learners with a visually progressive roadmap for moving through and achieving successively higher levels on the career lattice. Early educator core competencies can be found in the existing career lattice document.

**Compensation:** It is widely accepted that increasing education requirements for early educators will require wage levels that support the recruitment and retention of highly qualified workers. Compensation for increased educational attainment should be comparable across all sectors of the early childhood education field. Current QRIS standards reward programs for aligning educator salary levels with increased professional development.

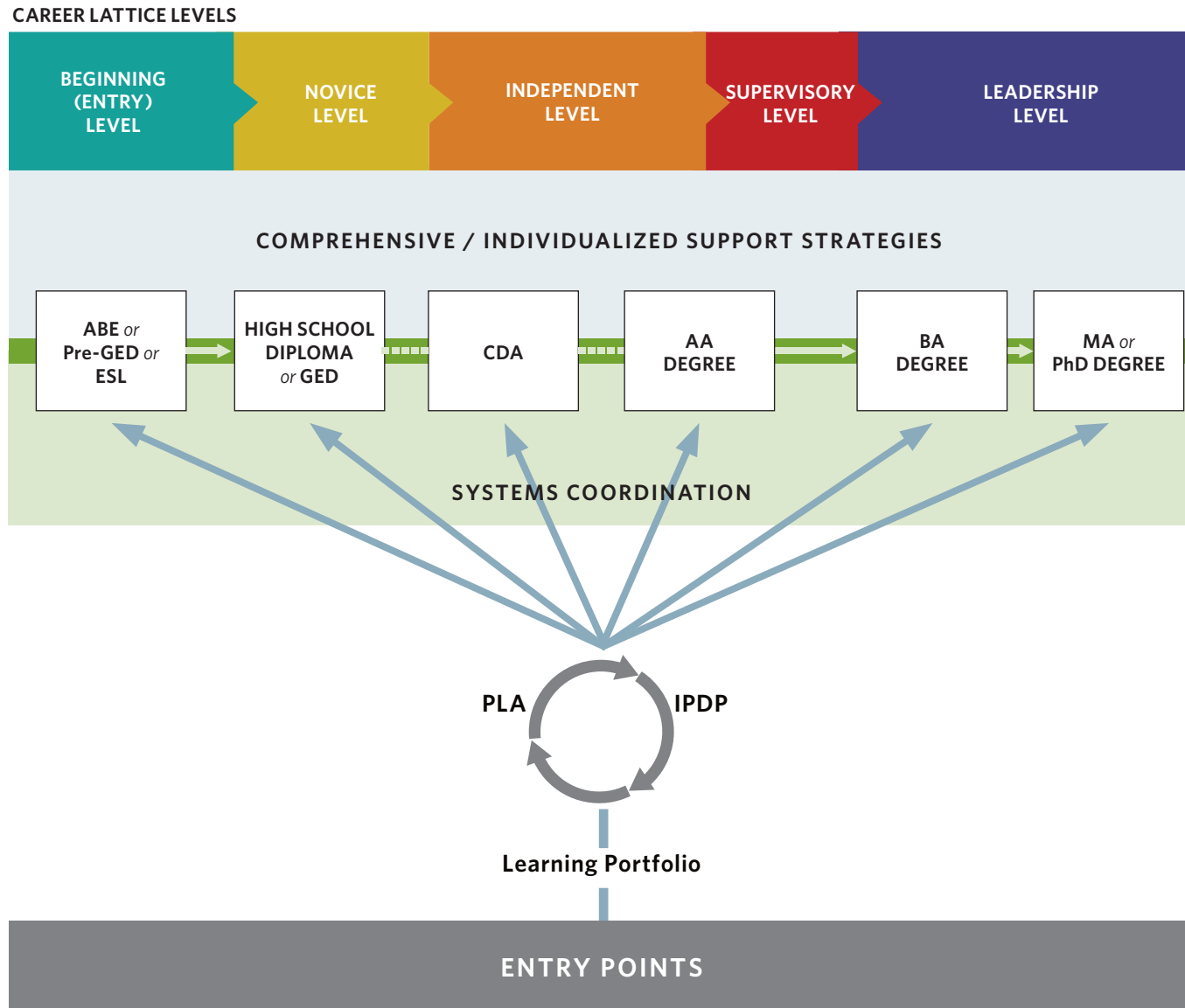
### Systems Coordination (Recommendations)

Supporting the development, quality, scaling, and sustainability of career pathways and programs requires a cohesive combination of partnerships, resources and funding, policies, data, and shared accountability measures. These include:

- Partner- and demand-driven initiatives.
- Commitment to a shared vision and strategy
- Broad stakeholder engagement.
- Alignment of state systems of education and workforce development (common standards, articulation and, transfer).
- Partner collaboration to identify, prioritize, and leverage resources.
- System partners work to implement supportive state policies, and use of data and shared measures to assess, demonstrate, and improve pathways and programs.

**Portability:** College and training credits (including CEUs) are independently verified, recognized by employers and educational institutions, and eligible for transfer between institutional borders.

## Career Pathway and Guide



## End Notes

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