

# Diploma Project Toolkit

Manual for Service Providers  
A Guide for Pennsylvania Parents and Students

September 2013



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
[www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us)

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## Background of the Diploma Project

The Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) conducted a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) Review in 2011-12. The High School Graduation team was charged with identifying effective strategies for decreasing the likelihood of migrant students dropping out of high school and increasing the rate at which they graduate and pursue postsecondary opportunities.

In reviewing the results (the response rate was approximately 38 percent of 1,243 students and 843 parents surveyed), the team was particularly concerned about survey responses from migrant students who said “I don’t know” (42 percent) when queried about how many credits were required to graduate. The parent results were even more concerning. While a vast majority of migrant parents (78 percent) said that it was “Very important to graduate from high school,” nearly the same number (70 percent) had no knowledge of how many credits were required for high school graduation.

The Migrant Education Program Diploma Project was developed in response to the following need statements in the 2014 statewide *Service Delivery Plan*:

- By the end of 2016-17, **50 percent** of migrant parents (with children in grades 8-12) will demonstrate knowledge of high school graduation requirements and **30 percent** of migrant parents will demonstrate knowledge of postsecondary options.
- By the end of 2016-17, **60 percent** of migrant students (in grades 8-12) will demonstrate knowledge of high school graduation requirements and postsecondary options.
- By the end of 2016-17, **80 percent** of migrant students (in grades 8-12) who participate in the Diploma Project will receive instruction and/or complete at least one toolkit unit.

The Diploma Project brought together a diverse task force of educators including migrant parents, students, school counselors, the state bilingual education advisor, and key PA-MEP staff. Also involved were representatives from Millersville University, the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, Upward Bound and Multilingual Support from the Philadelphia School District. To ensure that both perspectives would be incorporated into the toolkit they were developing, the task force formed two separate committees: one for migrant parents; and one for migrant students. However, they emphasized that there should be a single toolkit to provide you as PA-MEP educators with a unified approach to assisting secondary students and their families.

The toolkit will be completed by September 2013 so that it can be piloted in the spring of 2014 and used statewide with migrant students and parents during the 2014-15 school year.

## **Introduction to the Diploma Project Toolkit**

The toolkit is divided into five units:

- 1) Goal Setting (Self-Assessment and Self-Advocacy)
- 2) High School Credits and Courses
- 3) Assessments
- 4) English Language Proficiency
- 5) Preparing and Paying for Postsecondary Education

At the end of this manual you will find a series of questions that serve two important purposes: first, as a framework for organizing unit information and resources, and second, as a means for assessing student and parent knowledge. All of the questions are also found throughout the toolkit to guide the instructional process.

A series of “Student Tips” and “Parent Tips” are interspersed throughout the toolkit. Even though the primary focus is on the students’ educational goals and needs, parents who actively support their child’s participation in the Diploma Project become part of the team that keeps the students engaged in the program. For this reason, the toolkit contains as many “Parent Tips” as “Student Tips.”

You will find a “Culminating Activity” and an “Action Plan” at the end of each unit. These exercises ensure that students and parents have gained new knowledge and can apply what they have learned. They are *not* meant as assessments but can be helpful in determining when the learner has completed the unit.

The toolkit and manual will be available as links on the State Department of Education PA-MEP website.

### **How Will the Toolkit Be Used?**

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is designed to support migrant educators as you engage migrant students (in grades 8-12) and their families in discussions about what is needed to graduate high school and plan wisely for postsecondary programs.

Student and parent training venues vary greatly. Student sessions typically occur during after-school, Saturday, or summer programs as well as during home visits. Access to the parents will be more limited but is likely to occur either during home visits or at Parent Advisory Council (PAC) or other parent meetings. Because of its flexibility, the toolkit can be used in a variety of instructional settings including individualized tutorials, family sessions, and as a curriculum in a larger group setting.

***Note: The toolkit is meant as a resource for PA-MEP staff to provide guidance and support to migrant students and their parents. While the expectation is that the toolkit may be made available to students and parents in part or in its entirety, it is not meant as an unsupervised handout for students or families.***

Ideally, the toolkit is designed for use beginning as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade and following a process until the student's assessed needs are met. However, the reality of the migrant lifestyle requires a degree of flexibility in how and when the toolkit is utilized. In cases where time is a consideration or where there is a targeted need, you may adapt the process, and you may select particular units or parts of units that best meet the needs of the students and their families.

When choosing which students might benefit from the Diploma Project, it will be important to assess as many students as possible in order to ensure that you are working not only with students who are at risk of dropping out, but also with those who may be progressing well in school and need support for their postsecondary aspirations.

On MIS2000 you will be asked to enter on a per unit basis whether a student (and his or her parent if appropriate) has A - Been Assessed, I - Received Instruction, and C - Completed the Unit. There is also a T - Tested Out category for students and/or parents who, after being assessed, are well informed on a unit's contents.

## Tips for PA-MEP Staff

- Consider how much time you and your team will have to dedicate to the Diploma Project. Allow ample planning time to review each unit, identify local/regional requirements (e.g. required course credits), seek out supplementary resources and activities, and translate materials if needed.
- Before involving students, determine the best way to introduce the Diploma Project. A Power Point or handout clarifying program details and what can be accomplished through participation might be an appropriate way to get potential students and their parents interested.
- In determining which units to cover, consider the student's grade level, school performance, motivation, educational goals, and missing credits, in addition to the likely amount of time that you will spend with the student.
- The Diploma Project is not designed to provide two entirely separate tracks for the students and the parents. It is best to determine the student's needs first, and bring the parents in to support the units you have determined are needed by the student.
- Use the unit-based questions in the following section of this *Manual for Service Providers* to guide your conversation. The corresponding pages in the toolkit are listed after each question. The first section has questions for students, and the second section has questions for parents. Go beyond "Yes" and "No" answers to determine which elements of the unit are already familiar to the student and his or her parents and those units that will require the most time and effort.
- Modify the questions as appropriate. If parents are uncomfortable with answering the scripted questions, have a more informal discussion that will allow you to gather the information you need. Frequently, the students have gleaned more information than their parents from school counselors, teachers, or friends. On the other hand, parents may have been introduced to information in a parent or PAC meeting. Bring both parties on board.
- If including parents in the process is not feasible, make every effort to keep them informed of their child's goals and progress particularly in key areas such as career choices and graduation requirements. Encourage parents to become an active member of their child's "Planning Team."
- If appropriate, pages of the Toolkit may be used as "homework" assignments for students and/or their parents. This strategy is particularly useful if you have limited access (e.g. home visits) to your students and/or their parents and want to maximize the time you spend with them.

**Questions for Students**  
**(Corresponding Toolkit pages in parentheses)**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Date of Administration \_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 1. Goal-Setting**

1. Have you been involved in any activity that has helped you to identify your strengths, challenges and interests? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 2-3)

If Yes, describe activity:

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2. Have you chosen a career to pursue after high school? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 5)

If Yes, which career(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you know whom to ask for assistance in planning for your future? Yes\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_ (page 7)

If Yes, who? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the main benefits of continuing your education after high school? (page 9)

Please share your thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are the possible paths you can take that lead from high school to a career? (page 10)

Please share your thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Are there any college preparation programs available in your school or district?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 10-11)

If Yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Unit 2. High School Credits and Courses**

1. Do you know how many credits you need to graduate from high school? Yes\_\_\_\_  
No\_\_\_\_ (pages 13-14) If Yes, how many?\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you know which courses you should take this year? In order to graduate?  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 13-14) Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_  
If Yes, which ones? (This year)\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(In order to graduate)\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you missing credits? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ I don't know\_\_\_\_ (page 15)  
If so, are you aware of specific ways you can make them up while you are still in school?  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_  
If Yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you having problems keeping up with your assignments and/or succeeding in your  
classes? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 15)  
If Yes, where have you gone for help? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 3. Assessments**

1. What exams are given in high school and in which years are they given? (pages 17-18)  
No knowledge \_\_\_\_\_  
What student knows \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you plan to attend college? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If Yes, are you aware of the college admission exams that you need to take and in which years you need to take them? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 19)

If Yes, please describe schedule of exams \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 4. English Language Proficiency**

1. Were you tested for English language proficiency (WIDA ACCESS for ELLs) this year?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 22-24)

If Yes, at which proficiency level are you? 1 — Entering; 2 — Emerging; 3 — Developing;  
4 — Expanding; 5 — Bridging; 6 — Reaching

2. (If student is an English language learner (ELL), ask:

What kind of English as a second language (ESL) instruction do you receive and how often?  
(page 25) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. (If student is an English language learner, ask:

What type of testing accommodations do you receive in your classes and on state exams?  
(page 25) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you think that maintaining your home language is important? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

(page 23) Please explain your answer:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Unit 5. Preparing and Paying for Postsecondary Education

1. What type of postsecondary school or program would you like to attend? (pages 27-32)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which funding sources are available to help you pay for college or continuing education?  
(pages 34-38) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of assistance would be most helpful to you in the areas of planning for and financing your post-high school education?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Diploma Project Reporting by Unit

A — Assessment; I — Instruction; C — Completion

T — Tested Out (Student does not need Diploma Project training and/or support)

Unit 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 5 \_\_\_\_\_

### Notes and Additional Resources

**Diploma Project Toolkit Questions for Parents**  
**(Corresponding Toolkit pages in parentheses)**

**Parent/Guardian Name(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Name and Grade Level** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Administration** \_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 1. Goal-Setting**

1. Has your child been involved in any activity that has helped him or her to identify his or her strengths, challenges and interests? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 2, 4)

If Yes, describe activity:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Has your child chosen a career to pursue after high school? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

(page 6) If Yes, which career(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you know whom to ask for assistance in planning for your child's future?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 8)

If Yes, who? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the main benefits of your child continuing his or her education after high school?

(page 9) Please share your thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you aware of the possible paths your child can take that lead from high school to a career? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 10)

If Yes, share your thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Are there any college preparation programs available in your child's school or district?  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 10-11)

If Yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

## Unit 2. High School Credits and Courses

1. Do you know how many credits your child needs to graduate from high school?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 13-14)

If Yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you know which courses your child should take this year? In order to graduate?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 13-14)

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If Yes, which ones? (This year) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(In order to graduate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is your child missing credits? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ I don't know\_\_\_\_ (page 15)

If so, are you aware of specific ways he or she can make them up while he or she is still in school? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If Yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is your child having problems keeping up with his or her assignments and/or succeeding in his or her classes? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ I don't know\_\_\_\_ (page 15)

If Yes, where have you and/or your child gone for help?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 3. Assessments**

1. What exams does your child take in high school and in which years are they given?

No knowledge \_\_\_\_ (pages 17-18)

What parent/guardian knows

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2. Does your child plan to attend college? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If Yes, are you aware of the college admission exams that your child needs to take and in which years he or she needs to take them? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 19)

If Yes, please describe schedule of exams \_\_\_\_\_

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**Unit 4. English Language Proficiency**

1. Was your child tested for English language proficiency (WIDA ACCESS for ELLs) this year? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (pages 22-24)

Have you received the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Report this year?

(School districts send this report at different times after January -- no later than May)

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ (page 22)

If Yes, at which proficiency level is he or she? 1 — Entering; 2 — Emerging;

3 — Developing; 4 — Expanding; 5 — Bridging; 6 — Reaching

2. (If child is an English language learner), ask:

What kind of English as a Second Language instruction does your child receive and how often? (page 25) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. (If child is an English language learner), ask:

What type of testing accommodations does your child receive in his or her classes and on state exams? (page 25) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you think that maintaining your home language is important? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

(page 24) Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Unit 5. Preparing and Paying for Postsecondary Education**

1. What type of postsecondary school or program would your child like to attend?

(pages 27-32) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which funding sources are available to help your child and family pay for college or continuing education? (pages 34-37)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of assistance would be most helpful to you in the areas of planning for and financing your child's post-high school education?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Diploma Project Reporting by Unit**

A — Assessment; I — Instruction; C — Completion

T — Tested Out (Parent does not need Diploma Project training and/or support)

Unit 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Unit 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Unit 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Unit 5 \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes and Additional Resources