



**POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS OF YOUNG ADULTS:
SYSTEM IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES IN ADULT EDUCATION**
In-Depth State Profiles

October 28, 2010

Submitted by

NATIONAL COLLEGE TRANSITION NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In March 2010, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation contracted with the National College Transition Network (NCTN) at World Education, Inc. to investigate the field of adult education to postsecondary transition in 17 states as part of an overall strategy to double the number of low-income adults who earn a college degree or credential with genuine marketplace value by age 26. Through interviews with state adult education directors and staff, the NCTN created state summaries that identified transition initiatives and activities within each state, their specific processes, strategies, and policy levers. To provide a greater, more detailed analysis of a subset of the states (Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington State), the NCTN conducted further interviews and data gathering from the state directors' counterparts in postsecondary education as well as program staff in the field.

The remainder of this paper contains in-depth profiles created for Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington State. Summaries of the interview information from Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont can be found in *State Profile Summaries*.

This entire study is titled, *Postsecondary Success of Young Adults: System Impact Opportunities in Adult Education*. Additional documents for this study, including *Findings and Recommendations*, are available on the NCTN website at www.collegetransition.org.

In-depth State Profiles

GEORGIA

I. OVERVIEW OF THE GEORGIA ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 2008, the Department of Technical and Adult Education was renamed the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), to reflect a vision of creating a more integrated educational and career pathway system. This change acknowledged adult education, administered by the Office of Adult Education (OAE), as one of three legs in this system, sharing a critical role in creating economic opportunity through career and educational pathways with Technical Education and the Quick Start workforce training program.

Thirty technical colleges comprise the majority (79%) of adult education providers, but adult education services are also provided by five school districts (16%), one college within the University System, correctional facilities, and community-based organizations, the latter of which primarily provide ESOL services.

Adult education funding is derived from a mix of federal WIA Title II (48%), state (45%) and local (7%) funding sources. The average cost per student is \$367, and is calculated by dividing the total adult education allocation by the total number enrolled students.

Table 1 Funding Sources for Adult Education in Georgia

Funding Sources 2008-2009		
Federal: \$14,409,252 48%	State: \$13,242,791 45%	Other (local): \$2,064,676 7%
Average expenditure per student: \$367		

II. YOUTH IN ADULT EDUCATION

In 2008-2009, the Technical College System of Georgia served a total of 75,487 students in its ABE, ASE, and ESOL programs. Forty-six percent of these students were between the ages of 16-24: 14,788 were 16-18 years old, and 20,101 were 19-24 years old. Of these younger adult students, only 16% of 16-18 year-olds and 10% of 19-24 year-olds were enrolled in ASE, which is the level that would most directly benefit from transition programs. The majority of 16-18 year-olds (58%) and 19-24 year-olds (53%) were enrolled at the intermediate adult basic education level. Twenty-two percent of students between the ages of 16-18 and 19% of students ages 19-24 enrolled in the two lowest literacy levels. Twelve percent of younger adults ages 16-24 were enrolled in ESOL services.

Of the 7,343 adult learners who received a GED or an adult high school diploma in 2008-2009, 69% (5,048) were between the ages of 16-24. This number is greater than the number of young adults enrolled in ASE because it includes young adults who may initially place at a lower educational level and still achieve a GED or Diploma by year's end.

Table 2 Educational Levels of Youth in Georgia’s WIA Title II-funded Programs

Youth in Adult Education			
Total ABE/ASE/ESOL population served: 75,487			
16-18	19-24	Total young adults	% of population served
14,788	20,101	34,889	46%
Program levels for young adults ages 16-24			
ABE	ASE	ESL	
26,370	4,345	4,174	

The TCSG Office of Adult Education serves adults aged 16 and older but does not administer programs or blend funding streams at the state level specifically for young adults. Some local providers collaborate to tap into funds earmarked for youth or tailor programs specifically for young adults, however.

In 2008, the TCSG Office of Student Affairs partnered with the University System of Georgia to receive a U.S. Department of Education College Access Challenge Grant. Seven technical colleges use this funding to implement GED and UP, a program that provides targeted support to GED graduates, ages 18-24, enrolled at the college. Outcomes from this program are not yet available.

III. CURRENT ADULT EDUCATION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

By elevating the status of adult education, the TCSG Commissioner promoted collaboration among stakeholders within the system that has yielded significant system-wide changes. For example, the Office of Adult Education and the Office of Student Affairs worked together to revise admissions and course coding policies to permit students to enroll jointly in adult education and postsecondary courses. Alleviating this major system barrier at the state level enables local collaborations to focus on the design and implementation of transition services.

In 2008-2009, of the 3,115 adult education students who set enrollment in postsecondary education or training as a goal, 57% (1,176) achieved this goal. Of those who achieved this goal, 53% (945) were between the ages of 16-24 years.

The focus on transition to postsecondary is still fairly new and the numbers of students interested in postsecondary education are still small. As programs intensify efforts to raise student aspirations and increase their capacity to prepare and support students, the demand for transition services is expected to grow. At the local level, it can be challenging to make the case to postsecondary partners for developing transition supports when the numbers are still so small at each college. But the adult education system clearly understands that the way to build the demand is to put the services in place.

In January 2010, the Office of Adult Education formed a Transition Task Force to develop a set of recommendations for a uniform set of college transition program elements (see JumpStart description below) to be implemented more systematically across the state. The

recommendations were released in the spring of 2010 and are incorporated throughout this profile.

JumpStart. In 2007, TCSG launched the JumpStart transition initiative with the goal of addressing barriers and challenges to transition and provide the skills and opportunity for increased numbers of adult education students to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. JumpStart accelerates progress towards technical college certification by allowing ASE students to dually enroll in postsecondary courses prior to completing their GED. OAE recommends that students who test at an 8th grade level equivalent in math and reading and students close to completing the GED be referred for JumpStart advising services and dual enrollment. At the same time, OAE's goal is to infuse elements of JumpStart into all levels of adult education. The statewide goals of JumpStart are to:

- provide a welcoming environment for the thousands of students enrolled in GED preparation programs;
- equip college personnel to effectively serve nontraditional students;
- provide effective recruitment and transition services that address barriers and challenges, with an emphasis on educational advising offered by transition specialists;
- explore ways to align adult education curriculum with the curriculum required for college-level work;
- develop a marketing campaign to brand adult education as the place to go to “jumpstart” steps to employment and careers;
- create a mechanism to allow joint admission in a technical certificate program to students nearing GED completion; and
- promote the use of the HOPE GED Grant.

HOPE GED Grant. Administered by the Georgia Student Finance Committee, the HOPE Grant provides a \$500 one-time voucher to any resident who completes the GED after 1993. The voucher can be used towards educational expenses at an eligible postsecondary education institution. Eligibility requirements do not include a minimum number of credit hours, so students can use it even when enrolled less than half-time. Over \$2.4 million was spent on the program during FY 2009 by 4,890 students, 3,567 of whom enrolled in one of Georgia's technical colleges, where tuition for most programs is \$40 per credit.

IV. POLICY LEVERS

Planning and Partnerships

Transitioning adult learners to postsecondary education is a stated priority. The emphasis on creating an integrated technical college system that supports adult learner transition is reflected in the Georgia State Score Card for Adult Education. The TCSG Commissioner has included student transition from adult education to postsecondary education as a performance measure on the Score Card for which each college president is accountable. Therefore, each has an interest in creating a seamless, collaborative transition process. The Score Card can be viewed at <https://kms.dtae.org/portal/>.

Adult education-to-postsecondary education state-level joint planning. The Offices of Adult Education, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs; College Presidents' Council; and State Board have worked together on significant system reforms that support adult education transitions. They revised the TCSG admissions and course coding policies to enable adult education students to dually enroll in a technical certificate program while completing their GED credential. The Transition Task Force recommends that TCSG establish a state level Adult Education-to-Postsecondary Education Transition Initiative to encourage similar inter-departmental collaboration at each local college so that adult education students have consistent access to all college services, regardless of location.

Longitudinal tracking of student achievement across adult education and postsecondary education systems. TCSG created specific coding in the enrollment data system to identify and track adult education students who are dually enrolled through the JumpStart initiative. There is no tracking system in place to follow students beyond postsecondary education into employment, but this is planned for the future.

Cross-sector planning group for out-of-school youth. Cross-sector planning takes place through the Association of Education Agency Heads (AEAH), mandated and sponsored by the Governor. The State Director for Adult Education serves on the AEAH Implementation Team.

Assessment and Advising

College testing and placement are guided by uniform cut scores and procedures. A statewide minimum college placement test score has been established for admission. TCSG has a standardized curriculum for developmental course sequences and a minimum placement score. Individual colleges can determine which courses are offered on their campuses. One of the projects recommended by the Transition Taskforce is that the Office of Adult Education and the technical colleges develop a protocol or policy to address curricular overlap and create a shared assessment process. Practitioners observe that it is difficult to implement statewide transition curriculum standards without an alignment of adult education curriculum, developmental curriculum, and college level coursework.

Advising and career counseling. Although advising and counseling services are not addressed specifically in the Task Force recommendations, they are implied through the recommendation to develop a "combined Advising and College Preparation model" for statewide implementation.

Comprehensive Supports

Equal access to college supports for adult education students. A principal component of JumpStart is to provide a welcoming college environment for adult education students. The colleges are not required to issue student identification or give access to campus services to students who are not enrolled in credit courses. However, the vast majority of colleges issue student identification to adult education students so they can access all the resources.

Financial incentives for students. The HOPE voucher is a one-time grant of \$500 that GED

graduates can apply towards college expenses.

Accelerated Learning

State-wide model or approach. JumpStart outlines a menu of activities that might best be characterized as an Advising model directed towards high ASE level students approaching GED or diploma completion. The Transition Task Force recommends that the Office of Adult Education develop a more comprehensive model that combines advising with college preparation or career pathways. Adult education programs are not yet required to provide transition services. However, a 2009 survey administered by the Office of Adult Education found that almost two-thirds of its 30 programs implement some combination of JumpStart activities.

Dual adult education postsecondary education enrollment. Adult education students may enroll in eligible technical certificate programs while continuing to prepare for the GED; however, they must have their GED by the time they complete their technical program to receive a certificate. Some adult education program staff observed that not all students are ready for dual enrollment. It can be a tremendous challenge to meet the demands of two courses of study and many students abandon GED preparation once they enroll in their technical courses.

Curriculum alignment between adult education and postsecondary education. The Transition Task Force recommends that TCSG Office of Adult Education conduct a gap analysis between the current adult education curriculum framework and practice and the requirements for college level coursework as evidenced by COMPASS/ASSET test cut scores. Further, the Transition Task Force recommends that the Office of Adult Education establish a state level position to support and coordinate curriculum enhancement and alignment efforts.

Academic Skill Building. The Transition Task Force recommends refocusing professional development to prepare for delivering effective transition programming and instruction in core academic areas aligned with Common Core State Standards and the GED 2010 test. The Task Force also recommends the creation of an Adult Education certification for Georgia teachers.

Funding Mechanisms

College reimbursement for integrated adult education at the same FTE rate as comparable credit programs. Georgia Adult Education is not funded through an FTE formula.

Public funding for transition programs. JumpStart transition services are allowed under the Office of Adult Education funding guidelines but funding levels have not been increased to cover the services. The Transition Task Force recommends that the Office of Adult Education fund mini-grants to support the launching of transition program components. It also recommends that OAE provide a full- or part-time Transition Coordinator for every adult education program but does not specify whether OAE would simply allow this use of funds or increase award amounts to support it.

In conclusion, Georgia is at the beginning stages of formulating a statewide transition model or set of standard practices and curriculum. The Transition Task Force recommends the state takes steps to investigate, standardize, strengthen, and institutionalize effective transition components, including curricular alignment between adult education and postsecondary education. It will be important to follow the implementation of these recommendations. However, sufficient funding is needed to implement both the state level coordination and local programmatic components of the recommended comprehensive transition program model.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FIELD **Implementing the Georgia JumpStart Initiative**

Griffin and Flint River Technical Colleges

At Flint River Technical College, transition efforts primarily focus on encouraging students to take further educational steps and advising them on how to navigate their way to enrollment in credit courses. Adult secondary level students who are ready for college enrollment are the main focus of the advising and navigation services. However, all students are invited to presentations given by the offices of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, which play a critical role in the transition process.

As of July 2010, Southern Crescent Technical College is the new name of Griffin and Flint River Technical Colleges which, when combined, will span ten counties. Griffin enrolls 2,000 adult education students per year and Flint River enrolls another 800 adult education students. The expansion in region and student numbers is particularly significant for Flint River, which grew four times in size as a result of the merger. As a smaller college, Flint River relied more on recruitment from adult education into its credit programs than a larger college might. It will be essential for the effective collaboration at Flint River to be translated and implemented at the larger, merged college. In the year prior to the merger, 51% of the GED graduates at Flint River transitioned to postsecondary education programs at the college, exceeding the target set by the college. The rate dropped to 36% during the year of adjustment and expansion.

South Georgia Technical College

South Georgia Technical College serves 1,200 – 1,400 adult education students per year at 15 sites. From the start, instructors promote adult education as the first step in the educational pathway and give every student a packet with information about the college and the programs it offers. Instructors work with each student to devise an education plan based on their goals, interest, and test scores. When students are at 4th-6th grade level equivalent, the staff intensifies attention toward helping a student think about college options. Fifty-nine percent of GED graduates went on to enroll in college classes for the 2009-10 academic year, exceeding the target goal set by the college.

At the more rural sites, transportation is the greatest concern, second to the cost of attending college. Instructors encourage students to enroll in the college's online course offerings and invite them to use the computers available at the satellite adult education sites.

NORTH CAROLINA

I. OVERVIEW OF THE NORTH CAROLINA ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

North Carolina stands out as having possibly the oldest community college based adult education system in the country. Adult education, called Basic Skills in NC, has been part of the mission of the North Carolina Community College System since its founding in 1963. In 2008, the system served 121,708 ABE, ASE, and ESOL students age 16 and older through a network of 58 community colleges and 25 community-based organizations, many of which operate in multiple sites. The community colleges serve 97% of the Basic Skills students. Whether they are community college based or not, the Basic Skills programs are often located off campus and may not be well integrated into the life of the community college.

The core Basic Skills services (adult basic education, adult secondary education, and ESOL) are funded through WIA Title II at \$16 million, matched with State funds of \$68.8 million, a considerable 80% of total funding. This combination yields a cost per student around \$600.

Table 3 Funding Sources for Adult Education in North Carolina

Funding Sources 2008-2009		
Federal: \$16M (22%) 20%	State: \$68.6M (80%) 80%	Other: Ready for College grant from OVAE \$ 733,865 (2008-2010)
Average expenditure per student: around \$600		

II. YOUTH IN ADULT EDUCATION

North Carolina Basic Skills students are young with low academic skills. Nearly half of the students (44%) served by the NC Basic Skills system were 24 years old or younger: 21,070 were 16-18 years old and 24,413 were 19-24 in 2008. The skill levels of most of these young adults were below the secondary level with only 18% of the 16-18 year-olds testing at the ASE level. The majority (68%) tested at intermediate ABE level and 15% at the two lowest literacy levels. The academic skills of the older youth, ages 19-24, were even lower with 20% at the two lowest literacy levels, 69% at intermediate ABE level, and only 11% at the ASE. These figures do not include the 926 ESOL students, ages 16-18 year-old, or the 7,150 ESOL students ages 19-24.

Table 4 Educational Levels of Youth in North Carolina’s WIA Title II-funded Programs

Youth in Adult Education			
Total ABE/ASE/ESOL population served: 121,708			
16-18	19-24	Total young adults	% of population served
21,996	31,563	53,559	44%
Program levels for young adults ages 16-24			
ABE	ASE	ESL	
32,404	14,236	6,919	

In 2008, 5,805 young adults ages 16-24 achieved their GED or adult high school diploma. This represents roughly 13% of the total number of students served in this age cohort in Basic Skills programs. It is the pool of young adults who can most immediately benefit from improved college and career readiness services. Most community colleges require adults of any age to participate in GED instruction prior to taking the GED test. In 2008, 86.5% of the test takers passed all five GED tests, the seventh highest passing rate in the country. The state also requires young adults to attend at least 60 hours of classes per month to retain their drivers’ license. At least one Basic Skills program has struck an agreement with the local school district to require school age youth to wait six months before they can enroll in a GED program; instead, youth are encouraged to return to high school.

III. CURRENT ADULT EDUCATION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

North Carolina’s focus on statewide alignment of adult education with postsecondary education is at the planning stages. As discussed below, many policy levers are being considered by community college system leaders. While Basic Skills is a long-standing unit in the community college system, coordination and curriculum alignment with developmental education currently exist at a handful of colleges, but not at the system-level. Data are not tracked across the two systems except in rare privately funded cases for a small cohort of students. Local community colleges have a lot of autonomy, so efforts to improve transitions from Basic Skills to college programs take hold where there are incentives and/or encouragement from the college’s leadership.

Funds are not available to enable programs to provide more advising, academic instruction, or wrap-around services but efforts are under way to redirect a portion of existing funds to pilot a new program model, called Basic Skills Plus. The State Basic Skills Office has also used federal WIA incentive funds to underwrite adult education-to-college pilot projects.

The state’s National Reporting System (NRS) data from 2008 reflects the limited system level emphasis on adult education to college transitions: only 692 or 12% of the GED/high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education or training. Since the NRS only captures outcomes for people who set this goal, the pool of college enrollments from Basic Skills may be larger. There is clearly room for improvement in raising the aspirations and college readiness of

North Carolina's young adults in the Basic Skills system. Nevertheless, pockets of innovation and impressive achievement for this cohort do exist with potential for scale-up.

Initiatives

State Developmental Education Policy Team. In 2009, a developmental education reform effort was launched under the leadership the President of the NC Community College System. Called SuccessNC, it is spurred by North Carolina's participation in grant-funded Achieving the Dream and Postsecondary Success initiatives. A 34-member State Developmental Education Policy Team includes the NC Superintendent of Public Schools, chairperson of the Governor's Education Cabinet, members of the State Board of Community Colleges, System Office administration staff, Chief Academic Officers, Developmental Education faculty, and Student Services administrators. Policy levers pertain to alignment, innovation and redesign, placement and assessment, and data and performance measures. Policy levers outlined in the Developmental Education Initiative (DEI) work plan that could benefit Basic Skills students are related to assessment, placement, and developmental education redesign.

Ready for College. In 2007, The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) awarded four grants to implement projects on improving adult secondary education to achieve successful transitions to postsecondary education for out-of-school youth aged 18-24. The North Carolina Community College System was one of the recipients. Five community college-based Basic Skills programs received funds to implement an aspect of college readiness, such as contextualized curriculum, peer mentoring, outreach and recruitment, or enhanced counseling. North Carolina received a no-cost extension to implement the project through September 2010.

Adult Education to Postsecondary Education Pilot Programs. The State Basic Skills Office used \$200,000 of its WIA Title II incentive funds to award grants to 10 Basic Skills programs (nine college-based and one community-based organization) to develop and implement pilot programs that run through December 2010. Outcome data is not yet available.

Breaking Through. Davidson County Community College (DCCC) Basic Skills Department is a "learning college" partner in the national Breaking Through demonstration project of Jobs for the Future. As part of this project, DCCC developed an approach to contextualizing adult education curriculum around career clusters. The Basic Skills Department Director has presented on the topic to adult educators in the state and nationally. The program tracked student outcome data over two years and found that 80% of the students who participated in instruction contextualized around career clusters transitioned to college credit programs.

IV. POLICY LEVERS

Planning and Partnerships

Transitioning adult learners to college-level courses and certificate programs is a stated priority. It has not been codified as a state priority but it is reflected in the initiatives discussed above and in training offered to programs by the Basic Skills Office

Adult education-postsecondary education joint planning at the state level. Joint planning is limited to the State Developmental Education Policy Team that is primarily focused on reforming developmental education and alignment with high schools. Adult education-postsecondary education joint planning currently takes place mostly at the local level at colleges when the college president and the rest of the leadership encourage it.

Longitudinal tracking of student achievement across adult education and postsecondary education systems. The five OVAE-funded Ready for College programs have been tracking student data through Developmental Education. The State Developmental Education Policy Team is looking to institute performance measurement and data tracking across the system. This tracking system will include measures of Basic Skills Pathways programs.

Joint professional development for faculty and staff is a common practice in the system. The State Basic Skills Office sponsors professional development for Basic Skills instructors on an ongoing basis, some of which is on how to prepare adults for college and career readiness.

Assessment and Advising

College placement and testing is guided by uniform cut scores and processes. Many colleges have a floor on placement testing so that students assessed at 8th grade and below are automatically referred to Basic Skills. The State Developmental Education Policy Team is considering a recommendation to the State Board of Community Colleges to establish a statewide policy mandating placement in adult education for students who test below the high school level. Currently, the North Carolina community college system uses statewide cut scores for entry into credit courses. Developmental Education has standardized course numbers and descriptions, but local colleges can determine which cut score they will apply to each course.

Some colleges are administering the college placement test to GED students and gathering data to see if this practice results increases the college readiness of students. Basic Skills instructors are expected to use test results to gear instruction to shore up students' academic weaknesses.

Advising and counseling adult education students transitioning to postsecondary education. Advising services are being implemented at some local programs as part of the initiatives discussed above or with special funding from other sources.

Career awareness and planning for adult education students, especially regarding high demand occupations. The Basic Skills Office uses the NC JobsNOW One-Stop Career Centers as one resource to provide career awareness and planning for Basic Skills students. Some local programs use the Career Key website developed by a North Carolina professor to help students with career planning and choosing the right course of study in college (see <http://www.careerkey.org>).

Comprehensive Supports

Wraparound supports for transition students provided directly or through local collaborations are available through special grants and partnerships, and may be covered in the base funding of ABE, ASE, or ESOL.

Adult education students do not always get equal access to college supports for adult education students (e.g., advising or counseling, library, computer labs, tutoring). These services currently vary from college to college.

Accelerated Learning

Dual adult education-postsecondary education enrollment. While dual enrollment is not a reality yet, the State legislature enacted a provision to create a new Basic Skills Plus program that would entail co-enrollment in Developmental Education, non-credit occupational training, or a credit certificate program while completing the GED. The program design also provides advising and wrap-around support services for students. The request is not for new funds but rather repurposing of up to 20% of the State Basic Skills allocation. The legislature has enacted the provision so a Basic Skills Plus task force will be formed to establish details for piloting different program models at rural and urban colleges. The North Carolina Community College System received a Wal-Mart grant to support seven pilot colleges to pilot different program models.

Curriculum alignment between adult education and postsecondary education. The Governor and State Board of Education have signed off on the national Common CORE standards with the eye toward better alignment of high school graduation standards with college readiness standards. The Common CORE standards articulate academic skills that students need for success in college and careers [www.corestandards.org]. The State Developmental Education Policy Team is now discussing realigning Basic Skills programs the same way.

Academic skill-building for college readiness. The Basic Skills Office sponsors numerous trainings on contextualizing teaching around career clusters.

Funding Mechanisms

College reimbursement for integrated adult education at the same FTE rate as comparable credit programs. The college-based Basic Skills programs earn FTE's much like other college programs and their funding is equitable with other college programs. Unfortunately, this level of funding does not yield adequate resources for services such as advising; college advisors' case loads are typically well over 1000 students.

State funding mechanisms for transition program development. The State Basic Skills Office dedicated \$200,000 of WIA Title II incentive funds to make grants to 10 programs to pilot college transition service.

OVAE-funded initiatives. North Carolina received \$733,865 to participate in OVAE's Ready for College initiative that funds five transition programs in the state.

Private foundation initiatives. North Carolina participates in Breaking Through and Achieving the Dream, and Postsecondary Success initiatives funded by the following foundations: Bill and Melinda Gates, C.S. Mott, Ford, North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline, and Lumina. While Basic Skills students stand to benefit from the reforms advanced by all these initiatives, only Breaking Through involves Basic Skills students directly.

Student-level funding. Scholarships and financial aid specifically for GED recipients or part-time students currently only exist at a few local programs that raise funds from private sources, such as Piedmont Community College's Pathways program.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FIELD

Among the statewide programs flagged by the State Director of Adult Education as exemplary in serving youth were Backpacks to Briefcases and Pathways to Employment.

Backpacks to Briefcases

Backpacks to Briefcases is one of five North Carolina sites funded by OVAE's Ready for College initiative at Davidson County Community College with one on-campus site and three satellite sites. The program serves 18-24 year-olds who are within 6-8 months of graduating with a GED or adult high school diploma, and have consistently high attendance records.

Students in this program receive assistance with admissions, financial aid, career planning and goal setting, study skills, test-taking skills, and general college knowledge. The program introduces students to five certificate programs offered by the college, each one being featured on a different day: Automotive Technology, Medical Assistant, Pharmacy Technology, Heating and Air Conditioning, and early Childhood Education. In addition, students tour the college and meet with deans and program directors. Upon entering the program students receive a backpack and upon completing and enrolling in college, they receive a nylon briefcase and a water bottle.

Backpacks to Briefcases served 76 students in 2008 of whom 76 percent completed the program and enrolled in postsecondary education or training. The program is in its second and final year, ending September 30. However, the college has committed to continuing to fund it.

Pathways to Employment

Pathways to Employment program has served youth ages 16-26 with federal WIA Title II funds since 1996. The program combines vocational training with integrated Basic Skills and vocational instruction. However, since Title II funds cannot be used for postsecondary level occupational instruction, the Pathways programs lack adequate funding for the occupational component and for support services such as advising. The State Basic Skills Office funds 4-5 Pathways programs a year.

Central Piedmont Community College (CPC) operates the largest *Pathways to Employment* program in the college's Community Development Department. In designing *Pathways*, CPC collaborated with the County Department of Social Services to research local industry and employment needs to ensure that the training programs were focused on high demand career tracks. The goal is to train students for jobs that pay above the minimum wage and that represent the first rung of a career ladder. In addition to a career planning and job readiness course, the program offers the following career tracks clustered for three skills levels:

Basic Pathways

1. Medical Reimbursement Specialist
2. Medical Office Administrative Procedures

Pathways

3. Office Information Systems Specialist/Receptionist
4. Customer Service Specialist
5. Heating and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
6. Welding Technology
7. Developmental Disabilities Specialist
8. Pharmacy Technology

English Language Learners

9. Certified Nursing Assistant
10. Applied Electrical

It is an intensive program at 32 hours per week over an average of 15 weeks for a total of 450 hours of instruction. *ESL Pathways* students typically take courses part-time for up to 24 weeks. Students who do not have a GED or high school diploma must be within six months of receiving one or obtain a qualifying admissions score. The program requires 80% attendance and grades of 80% and higher to graduate.

The program uses a learning community model with a curriculum that is contextualized around the career clusters for native and non-native speakers of English. The Basic Skills instructor learns the technical material and integrates that content with instruction in English as a Second Language, reading, math, financial literacy, communication, and other employability/life skills.

In 2007-2008, the program served 318 students. In spring 2009, 750 students applied for 96 openings. The *Basic Pathways* participants finish with 9 to 12 credits towards an 18-credit continuing education occupational certificate. The *Pathways* certificate programs have an 80% completion rate. On average across all CPC *Pathways* programs, 72% of graduates find work in their chosen profession within six months of graduation. As of one recent report, 81% of 343 participants were employed after six months and 77% after one year, with an average wage of \$10.50 an hour.

If a *Pathways* participant is able to continue studying full-time once *Pathways* support ends,

they may be eligible for need-based student aid, and can apply for CPCC's college-funded "JumpStart" program. However, the majority of *Pathways* graduates need to work full-time to support their families rather than finish the occupational certificate or study to pass certifying exams. Once working, students struggle to finance their tuition on entry-level incomes and may not be able to get tuition assistance if they can only study part-time. For example, a medical reimbursement specialist must pass an advanced coding exam for certification that costs \$300, the course which costs \$75, and the books at \$300-600.

CPCC employs a full-time *Pathways* coordinator, an Academic Specialist, and a full-time Social Worker is provided through a partnership with the County Department of Social Services. CPCC leverages numerous community partnerships and resources to fortify services to *Pathways* participants and make as many student scholarships available as possible.

OHIO

I. OVERVIEW OF THE OHIO ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 2009, the administration and governance of Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) was transferred from the Department of Education to the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR). The transfer was seen as a key step in implementing the Ohio Board of Regents' 10-Year Strategic Plan for Higher Education (2008-2017) toward the goal of successfully transiting more adults into postsecondary education or training through a seamless and transparent University System of Ohio.

ABLE services are provided by school districts, vocational schools, community and technical colleges, correctional facilities, community-based organizations, and adult workforce centers. In FY 2010, the number of ABLE grantees was reduced from 118 to 68 to increase efficiency. However, ABLE administrators are committed to maintaining a diverse delivery system that includes and values community based organizations and the types of wrap-around services they can provide. As a result, almost a third of the grantees are community consortia.

In FY 2009, ABLE funding was derived from a mix of federal WIA Title II (55%), state (31%), and local (14%) funding sources. There is no comprehensive state plan to integrate or blend funding streams across agencies but programs obtain additional funds through local contributions and contracts.

In FY 2009, the average expenditure per ABLE student was \$503. This is calculated by adding the federal, state, and local funds available to support instruction and dividing by the number enrolled.

Table 5 Funding Sources for Adult Education in Ohio

Funding Sources 2008-2009		
Federal: \$13,963,823 55%	State: \$7,876,701 31%	Other (local): \$3,590,000 14%

II. YOUTH IN ADULT EDUCATION

In 2008-2009, the Ohio ABLE system served a total of 50,537 students through its ABE, ASE, and ESOL services. Forty percent of these students were between the ages of 16-24: 4,931 were 16-18 years old and 15,469 were 19-24. Of these younger adults, only 25% of the 16-18 year-olds and 21% of the 19-24 year-olds were enrolled in ASE, which is the level that would most directly benefit from transition programs. The majority (55%) of students, ages 16-24, enrolled at the intermediate ABE level and 17% of enrolled in the two lowest literacy levels. Six percent (6%) of younger adults ages 16-24 were enrolled in ESOL services.

Table 6 Educational Levels of Youth in Ohio’s WIA Title II-funded Programs

Youth in Adult Education 2008-2009			
Total ABE/ASE/ESOL population served: 50,537			
16-18	19-24	Total young adults	% of population served
4,931	15,469	20,400	41%
Program levels for young adults ages 16-24			
ABE	ASE	ESL	
14,634	4,463	1,303	

In 2008-2009, 6,592 students between the ages of 16-24 obtained a GED or high school diploma. This number is greater than the number of young adults enrolled in ASE because it includes young adults who may initially place at a lower educational functioning level and still achieve a GED or diploma within the reporting period.

The ABE system serves adults ages 16 and older but does not administer programs designed specifically for young adults. Some local ABE providers offer programs specifically for young adults and may tap into funding specifically for youth services at the local level.

III. CURRENT ADULT EDUCATION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The move to the Ohio Board of Regents has elevated ABE as one of three key sectors of the University System of Ohio. All three sectors - ABE, Adult Workforce Centers and Community/Technical Colleges - are charged with working together to achieve the vision reflected in the Ohio Board of Regents’ 10-Year Strategic Plan. Furthermore, this move offers an opportunity for Ohio to leverage and blend WIA Title II funding with other OBR resources to benefit adult learners and create a seamless and transparent University System of Ohio.

In 2008-2009, 3,577 ABE students entered postsecondary education or training and 40% (1,409) were between the ages of 16-24. Of the 3,894 students who set postsecondary education as a goal, 90% met that goal by the end of the reporting period (3,518). The additional 59 students represent those who entered postsecondary education without setting the NRS goal.

In 2008, prior to ABE’s move to OBR, a Transitions Task Force was formed with representatives from ABE, the Department of Education, the Ohio Board of Regents, Adult Workforce Education, and faculty and staff from ABE programs and colleges. The charge of the Task Force was to identify gaps between ABE and postsecondary education and work, and recommend solutions. The Task Force released the Ohio ABE Transitions Framework in 2008. The Framework outlines the instructional and support services that programs should provide to address the skills and attributes that students, regardless of ABE level, will need to succeed in the workforce and in postsecondary education. The Framework can be found at <http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/transition/Transitions-Framework.pdf>.

There are many complementary initiatives underway within the University System of Ohio that provide opportunities to improve communication and integration between systems at the state and local levels.

Stackable Certificates. In September 2009, Ohio ABLE launched the first three Stackable Certificates to document and recognize student progress and transition at pre-college skill levels. The purpose of the ABLE Stackable Certificates, which are awarded through local ABLE programs to qualified adult learners, is to prepare adults for accessible pathways to postsecondary education and training that have value in the labor market. The certificates are not yet recognized by employers or colleges, though this is a goal for the future, but they serve as valuable milestones of academic and English language progress for students.

The primary goal of the first implementation year (2009-2010) was to gather data on the assessments used to document progress and issue certificates. Unlike many states which mandate the use of one or two National Reporting System-approved assessments, Ohio allows providers to select from a broader menu of federally approved tests. To issue a certificate, ABLE programs are required to assess students using two different assessments selected from this menu to verify that they have achieved the required competencies. The double assessments required in this phase are the main impediments to issuing more certificates to eligible students because they are time consuming for staff and students. The ultimate goal is to identify a single, well-aligned assessment for each level of attainment and eliminate the requirement for double testing.

Further description of the Stackable Certificate concept can be found in a 2008 report from Community Research Partners, [http://www.communityresearchpartners.org/uploads/publications/Ohio Stackable Certificates Models for Success.pdf](http://www.communityresearchpartners.org/uploads/publications/Ohio_Stackable_Certificates_Models_for_Success.pdf) and in the memo of guidance issued to ABLE programs <http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/stackable/Stackable-Memo-Guidance.pdf>

Shifting Gears. The Ohio Board of Regents is one of five states participating in Shifting Gears with funding from the Joyce Foundation. The ultimate goal is to expand educational pathways and economic opportunities for low income adults by establishing standards based on best practices for educational services by Adult Basic and Literacy Education, Adult Workforce Centers, and Community and Technical Colleges. Shifting Gears has created the impetus to develop a cross-system policy agenda by engaging multiple stakeholders, including all three sectors of the University System of Ohio as well as the Governor's Office, and the Departments of Development and Job and Family Services. For more information on Ohio's Shifting Gears plan, see <http://www.shifting-gears.org/state-progress-ohio/65-state-progress-ohio.html>

Developmental Education Initiative (DEI). Five Ohio community colleges are participating in this three-year national effort funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation for Education. The goal is to develop and implement a mix of policies and practices to change the delivery of developmental education to improve overall postsecondary outcomes and achieve OBR's Ten-Year Strategic Plan.

DEI stakeholders will identify key loss points in developmental education and determine which methods of instruction and other interventions are effective in increasing student persistence and improving student progress along the educational pathway. In addition, Ohio is implementing a performance based funding formula for community colleges according to seven student “success points” ranging from completing a single developmental education course to completing 15 credits towards a credential.

IV. POLICY LEVERS

Planning and Partnerships

Transitioning adult learners to college-level courses and certificate programs is a stated priority. A key strategy in Ohio’s 10-Year Strategic Plan for Higher Education is to “build a network of ABLE programs focused on helping adults become college ready.” The Strategic Plan is driving a cultural shift within the system as stakeholders recognize that the only way to bring it to fruition and increase the number of adults in postsecondary education is through a seamless university system.

Adult education-postsecondary education joint planning at the state level. The Transitions Task Force, Shifting Gears, and the Developmental Education Initiative have leveraged increased policy-level and programmatic collaboration between ABLE and postsecondary education. Given the variety of transition initiatives in motion, the Ohio Board of Regents recently identified a team of OBR staff to serve as the agency’s adult initiatives coordinating body. This group is comprised of all staff and consultants involved in the various initiatives. They meet on a regular basis to share information on the progress, findings, and outcomes of the work.

The vision of a seamless transition is reflected at the local level through a variety of funding guidelines and incentive grants that reward collaboration and bring partners together to improve curriculum alignment, assessment, and career pathway programming, and ensure that ABLE services are available at every campus with two-year programs.

Longitudinal tracking of student achievement across adult education and postsecondary education systems. At the state level, Ohio ABLE matches student data within the University System of Ohio to track postsecondary outcomes, with the Ohio Department of Education to track GED attainment, and with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to track employment outcomes.

Cross-sector planning group for out-of-school youth. The Ohio Board of Regents, as the administrating agency for WIA Title II, is represented on the Governor’s Workforce Policy Board and all local Workforce Investment Boards. A State Youth Council no longer exists.

Assessment and Advising

College testing and placement are guided by uniform cut scores and procedures. The University System of Ohio does not have a uniform set of cut scores or procedures for addressing the overlap between adult basic education and developmental education. The goal of the

Developmental Education Initiative is to develop formal guidelines or policies to address referrals across systems and define the process for referring students with low literacy skills into ABE programs. At the local level, relationships are increasingly in place for establishing guidelines and agreements. OBR will look to the outcomes from these local collaborations to inform potential statewide models and future policy.

Advising and career counseling for adult education students. Although these services are not funded across all programs, the Ohio Transitions Framework, Stackable Certificates Initiative, Ohio Skills Bank, and ABE Innovation Grant all promote and, in some cases, incentivize these types of services and the creation of local collaborations to provide them.

Comprehensive Supports

Wraparound supports for transition students. Although these services are not funded across all programs, the Ohio Transitions Framework, Stackable Certificates Initiative, Ohio Skills Bank, and ABE Innovation Grant all promote and, in some cases, incentivize these types of services and the creation of local collaborations to provide them.

Accelerated Learning

State-wide model or approach. The ABE Stackable Certificate approach is being implemented statewide. In addition, the Ohio ABE Transitions Framework outlines the key elements of instruction and support services, but local providers have flexibility in the implementation. In the future, ABE may promote specific models based on the most successful programs.

Dual adult education-postsecondary education enrollment. Ohio Board of Regents' policy allows for students to be enrolled at a postsecondary education institution and take up to 12 credit hours without a GED or high school diploma.

Curriculum alignment between ABE and developmental education. Investigation into this issue is taking place at the state and local levels. For example:

- The Developmental Education Initiative provides ABE and the college with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the overlap and gaps in the curriculum as well as clarify their respective roles, and improve the delivery of developmental education.
- Career and College Readiness Standards were developed but have not been implemented yet, because ABE has decided to wait for the outcomes of the Developmental Education Initiative to inform the final definitions of the competencies required to move from ABE to postsecondary education.
- An outcome of the recent convening of a subsidy task force is that a number of pilots will be launched to test a process of referring students from the college to ABE when they don't reach a certain threshold on a placement test.
- The Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education are also participating in the Common Core State Standards.

Academic skill-building for college readiness. Academic skills are emphasized in the Ohio ABLE Transitions Framework and Stackable Certificates.

Funding Mechanisms

College reimbursement for integrated ABLE at the same FTE rate as comparable credit programs. The state legislature has mandated that the Chancellor develop a plan for integrating ABLE and Workforce Development funding. To this end, a task force has been convened (referred to at OBR as a “subsidy consultation”) to consider funding formulas such as FTE reimbursements for ABLE students.

Public funding for transition program development. Ohio ABLE has been issued two rounds of WIA incentive grants in the last three years. The 2007 round of incentive funding was used to support planning and collaboration around the Ohio Transitions Framework. A second round from 2008 was recently issued to primarily support six ABLE programs that are collaborating with adult workforce centers and/or community and technical colleges (the two other prongs of the University System of Ohio) to develop and maintain career pathway program models. These are known as Innovation Grants.

Private foundation initiatives. Ohio has implemented a number of initiatives with support from private foundations. The Shifting Gears Initiative is funded by the Joyce Foundation and the Developmental Education Initiative is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

In conclusion, Ohio is engaged in a multitude of initiatives that, with effective state-level coordination, could reap important system-wide reforms to address curricular overlap and alignment towards a seamless educational pathway. While still incipient, ABLE Stackable Certificates are an innovative approach that many states are looking to replicate and learn from, so a closer look at outcomes further into implementation will be helpful to the field.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FIELD **Implementing the Ohio ABLE Transitions Framework**

Project LEARN

Project Learn of Summit County is the sole ABLE provider for the county and serves 2,000 students per year at 26 sites in greater Akron. Approximately 250 students enroll with the goal of entering postsecondary education or training. Forty percent of the student population at Project LEARN is under the age of 24.

Transition options are introduced to all students during orientation when students are asked to consider their goals beyond ABLE. Project LEARN admissions counselors are charged with promoting postsecondary education options with all students and work with classroom instructors to continually monitor and encourage realistic student goals. In addition, all

students are invited to attend career and college transition related workshops, guest speakers, and college-for-a-day events, regardless of the skill level or stated interest.

In addition to the activities offered to all students, Project LEARN serves over 250 students per year with four targeted transition programs to help students further their education and training. To enroll in transition specific courses students must place at an NRS level 5 or 6 on the TABE test. All four programs include both academic skills and student support service components, the latter of which are typically provided by a partnering organization. The four programs are:

- 1) GED Plus program for enrolled GED students who are close to completion and interested in postsecondary education;
- 2) Achieving College Success, a bridge program for students who already have their high school diploma or GED or have started but not succeeded at the University of Akron;
- 3) supplemental academic support for students enrolled in vocational training programs at the Portage Lakes Adult Career Center; and
- 4) Gen Y, a program targeting GED students under the age of 24.

The Gen Y program prepares students under the age of 24 who are studying for the GED test to enter postsecondary education. The specialized Gen Y approach includes greater integration of technology, additional field trips, and instructional techniques, such as graphic novels for reading, and blogging for writing. Students are encouraged to supplement classroom-based instruction with distance learning geared towards GED preparation.

Lorain County Community College

Lorain County Community College is the sole ABLÉ provider in Lorain County and enrolls 1,200 students per year, served on campus and at community-based outreach sites in the region. Approximately 40% (547) of students are 16-24 years old.

Starting at initial enrollment in ABLÉ and continuing throughout the year, ABLÉ program staff offers workshops to introduce all students, regardless of placement level, to the variety of postsecondary programs and career pathways available at the college and in the county to raise ABLÉ students' aspirations and get them thinking about their next educational steps.

The ABLÉ program at Lorain also offers a GED/COMPASS Prep Transitions course to help advanced ASE students with aspirations for college improve their college placement test scores. In addition to boosting math, reading and writing skills, the aim of the course is to introduce students to the range of college departments and resources, help them identify career goals, and teach job readiness skills.

WASHINGTON STATE

I. OVERVIEW OF THE WASHINGTON STATE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Washington State Adult Education has been governed by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) since 1991. Prior to 1991, adult basic skills (basic literacy through secondary level and English for speakers of other languages) was governed by the Washington State Board of Education, however their service provider network has always been through community colleges and community-based organizations, rather than through K-12 schools. Services are currently delivered through a network of 34 community and technical colleges, 10 community-based organizations, and 13 state corrections institutions. Community colleges provide about 95% of basic skills services.

According to the OVAE National Reporting System, Washington State served 64,982 students in 2008-2009 in Title II-funded programs. Students were enrolled in the following programs: 26,231 in Adult Basic Education (ABE); 4,393 in Adult Secondary Education (ASE); and 34,358 in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Of the 8,810 students who set the goal of a GED or adult diploma in 2008, 3,211 reached their goal. This number may include adults who initially placed at a lower educational level and still achieved a GED or adult diploma by the year's end. In addition, of the 13,027 Washington residents who passed the GED in 2008, the GED Testing Service reported that 71% were in the 16-24 age group. Many of these individuals did not participate in adult education to prepare for the tests, however.

For 2008-09, Washington State Adult Education received \$9,109,569 (18%) of its budget through their federal grant and \$42,594,818 (82%) from non-federal funding sources. The SBCTC distributes federal adult education funds to providers through funding regions to ensure that services are available throughout the state. The regions follow the boundaries of the community and technical colleges and each region decides what mix of educational services it needs to offer to meet the local needs: what percentage of basic skills, pre-college, academic transfer, and workforce courses. Federal funds are available in each region based on the number of residents 18 years and older without a high school diploma; the number of residents who indicated on Census 2000 that they do not speak English very well; the current level of ABE services in the area; and a mechanism for preventing fluctuation of services based on short-term shifts in the population.

Washington State uses an ABE allocations formula that provides \$6,050 per full-time equivalent (FTE) for ABE students and \$9,050 per FTE for Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) students that are served by community colleges. Washington State defines the student FTE as the equivalent of one student enrolled for 45 community college credit hours or 660 technical college contact hours in a year. Many adult education students are part-time and the system is currently over-enrolled by about 40% so an FTE typically represents much more than one student. Services provided to adult learners through community-based organizations and state correctional institutions vary and are negotiated by contract.

Individual colleges are free to arrange to provide adult education and training services through agreements with local agencies, such as the Veteran’s Administration, Office of Refugee Resettlement, etc. Information on these sources is not collected by the state adult education office.

Table 7 Funding Sources for Adult Education in Washington State

Funding Sources 2008-2009		
Federal: \$9,109,569 17.6%	State: \$42,594,818 82.4%	Other: <i>Achieving the Dream, Bridges to Opportunity, etc.</i>
Average expenditure per student: For programs delivered through the community and technical college system, the average expenditure per student is \$4,015, with expenditures for students in I-BEST programs at \$7,026. Per student expenditures vary for community-based organizations and correctional institutions.		

II. YOUTH IN ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education is the primary provider of pre-college services for young adults in Washington. Slightly under one-third of the students served in adult education are 24 years and under. Young adults in Washington State tend to need ABE services. Nearly 60% of the young adults served are at the ABE level and only 8% at the ASE level. Like other states, Washington State does not typically provide separate programming for young adults. Adult educators are deeply concerned about this group, however.

Table 8 Educational Levels of Youth in Washington State’s WIA Title II-funded Programs

Youth in Adult Education 2008-2009			
Total ABE/ASE/ESOL population served: 64,982			
16-18	19-24	Total young adults	% of population served
3,625	15,744	19,369	30%
Program levels for young adults ages 16-24			
ABE	ASE	ESL	
11,499	1,638	6,232	

In a study of the socioeconomic status (SES) of SBCTC students, the Community College Research Center (CCRC, 2006) found that age played a significant role in college attendance. Younger students, age 18-24, in the lowest SES bracket were more likely to delay entrance into college than their peers in higher SES brackets. These individuals later showed up in adult education as older adults with low skills. As older students, they typically came to college with more responsibilities and an academic gap that may have widened over time. In addition, younger students in lower SES brackets were more likely to participate in basic skills and workforce training rather than take transfer courses.

Youth from lower SES backgrounds are also less likely to pass the state's high school exit exam, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL; now being replaced with the High School Proficiency Exam, the HSPE). Many look to their community and technical college as a pathway forward. One strategy being developed is a Youth I-BEST, a youth-focused model being piloted in three locations through partnerships with local Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). WDCs arrange for highly coordinated and individualized services to address the students' needs and achieve positive outcomes. They also provide ongoing training directed at maintaining a positive work relationship between employers and youth who are hired after they complete their education. Youth I-BEST is funded through a braiding of WIA Title I and Title II, state FTEs, and local funding.

According to Washington State's Director of Adult Education, the most pressing youth issues with policy implications are:

- The population is growing but no one is tracking them. It seems that more young adults are dropping out at higher and higher rates but there is no single entity that has the whole picture.
- No one is really responsible for this youth population. Adult education has a mandate to serve the most in need so they are part of the population served; the Workforce Development Councils have the mandate to serve out-of-school youth but the money they receive is limited and it is usually used for summer employment but rarely pays for educational services.
- No one is planning for the induction of this group into the future workforce. They do not seem able to just step on to a college campus and succeed. The state is piloting programs for those who can succeed in college but are not yet changing the system to reach everyone.

III. CURRENT ADULT EDUCATION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

According to the National Reporting System for 2008-09, of the 8,098 students who set entry into postsecondary education or training as a goal, 6,400 or 79% achieved this outcome. Part of this success reflects several years of careful research commissioned by the SBCTC, culminating in initiatives that carefully apply the lessons taken from research. One of the studies, the Tipping Point Study, had a profound effect on educational and political leaders.

Through a longitudinal study of basic skills students in the system, including employment data, Prince and Jenkins (2005) found that few students progressed beyond basic skills in 6 years of study while at Washington State Community and Technical Colleges. Those that did reach a "tipping point" of one year of college-level credit and a credential had a significant wage gain. This data was shared with the state legislature in 2006, prompting enhanced funding for serving basic skills students participating in I-BEST pathways at community colleges so they could reach this milestone. While funding has been approved by the legislature, in theory, the current economic climate has restricted the funding available.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training, the I-BEST Model. During the same time period as the Tipping Point Study, 10 colleges participated in a pilot of a new teaching approach that paired basic skills and college-level professional-technical instructors in curriculum planning and classroom instruction. The goal of the initiative was to increase the number of students who transitioned to college-level programs. I-BEST served 2,795 students in 2009, a one-year increase of 58%. Initial research shows that I-BEST students are more likely to continue in credit-bearing courses, earn credits toward a credential, earn occupational certificates, and make more point gains on basic skills tests than students in the regular course offerings. The model is being expanded to create a youth-focused I-BEST, a Developmental I-BEST, and an Academic I-BEST -- where adult education faculty are teamed with a faculty member teaching a commonly taught liberal arts course, such as Introduction to Psychology.

Student Achievement Initiative. The Student Achievement Initiative is a statewide accountability effort that is being developed to create an incentive system that rewards colleges for improving achievement for all students. There are four achievement measures: building toward college-level skills (basic skills gains, passing pre-college writing or math); first year retention (earning 15 then 30 college-level credits); completing college-level math (passing math courses required for either technical or academic associate degrees); and completion (degrees, certificates, apprenticeship training). These “momentum points” are used to increase the colleges’ base allotment.

IV. POLICY LEVERS

Planning and Partnerships

Transitioning adult learners to college-level degree and certificate programs is a stated priority. SBCTC has set a system direction aimed at building strong individuals, families, and state and local economies by meeting the demand for a well educated workforce. This includes allocating sufficient financial resources to make college access and success a reality for all residents, including those with basic skill needs.

Adult education-postsecondary education joint planning at the state level. State policy mandates joint planning. In addition, several new initiatives formally bring together a collaboration of basic skills, developmental, and academic transfer faculty in state-level work groups.

Longitudinal tracking of student achievement across systems. Washington State’s student record unit system tracks course-taking for all students, including college-credit, non-credit, remedial/developmental, ABE, ESOL, and GED courses. The SBCTC student database can be cross-matched with Unemployment Insurance wage data for employment outcomes.

Joint planning time and professional development between ABE and PSE faculty. Adult and developmental educators are part of the same system, the “pre-college system.” In many cases, educators teach both types of courses. Collaboration between faculty members has been encouraged, particularly in subjects basic skills students find challenging (math and writing) and is a formal part of the I-BEST model.

Cross-sector planning group for out-of-school youth. The WIA Title I-Youth/Workforce Development Councils (WDC) are funded to plan for the “out-of-school” youth population. Adult education works with the WDCs in the planning process but resources are not typically used for adult education activities or adult education students.

Assessment and Advising

College placement and testing is guided by uniform cut scores and processes. This is at a very preliminary stage. One of the activities in the 2009-2010 Work Plan for SBCTC’s Instructional Commission is to develop a system recommendation regarding college cut scores in reading, writing, and math.

Advising and career counseling ABE students transitioning to PSE. One of the six current system goals for adult education is to serve as the entry and connection point to education and vocational pathways for adults who need literacy skills. This is most vividly seen in the system-wide commitment to I-BEST. Students interested in I-BEST programs receive intensive career counseling services. All adult education students have access to the college assessment and advising services, with student services proving to be extremely helpful to adult learners.

Comprehensive Supports

Wraparound support for transition students. The state’s Opportunity Grants are available for I-BEST students and can be used for wraparound support. The funding is limited, however, with all funds allocated early in the academic year.

Equal access to college support for ABE students. Adult education students are considered full members in the college community and receive a college ID, parking, use college-wide facilities, etc. Like other college students, adult education students must pay the fees to cover these services.

Financial incentives for students. There is no specific state-wide financial incentive plan beyond grants for college courses, books, etc. If students attend college without a high school diploma or GED (allowable in Washington State), they must demonstrate their ability to benefit by enrolling in and earning 6 college credits before they can receive state financial aid. Opportunity Grants can be used to pay for these first 6 college credits.

Accelerated Learning

State-wide model or approach. The I-BEST model is available in every college for at least one career or technical program (see Spotlight on the Field).

Curricular alignment between basic skills and developmental education. I-BEST for Developmental Education is a new initiative piloting a “reverse integration model” at 10 community and technical colleges. Content faculty are placed in special support sections with basic skills instructors to help students master the skills needed to place into college-level career programs.

Funding Mechanisms

Public funding for transition programs. The primary funding mechanism for institutions to provide adult education, including the I-BEST program, is reimbursement by the state legislature via a count of the FTEs. Programs are reimbursed for I-BEST students at an enhanced rate to cover the additional expenses for teaching and other support services. Along with the state's FTE reimbursement system is the Student Achievement Initiative, a statewide accountability initiative that is being developed to create an incentive system that rewards colleges for improving achievement for all students. As mentioned earlier, these "momentum points" are used to increase the college's base allotment.

Private foundation initiatives. Six of the state's community and technical colleges participate in the Achieving the Dream initiative to develop knowledge and expand support for raising postsecondary attainment for low income students. Several colleges are part of the Breaking Through demonstration project and/or peer learning communities that focus considerable attention on policies and practices that support low income, low skilled adults in their quest for a family-sustaining career. Some of the private funders include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, College Spark Washington Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

In conclusion, clearly a state identified and supported transition model, like the I-BEST model, shows promise for basic skills students and college faculty and staff. SBCTC's commitment to documenting the model and sharing student-level data has encouraged and inspired other institutions or states around the country to pilot the model. Along with the financial challenge of maintaining this instructional model is the issue of deciding which pathways colleges can support in terms of adequate number of students, interested faculty, and receiving employers. For a more complete description of the model, see the Spotlight on the Field: What is the I-BEST model?

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FIELD
What is the I-BEST model?

Currently, key I-BEST features are:

1. At least 50% instructor overlap between adult education and vocational occupational instructors.
2. Pre- and post-testing of students with the CASAS (or Life and Work series). Student must have a pre-test CASAS score below 256 in order to be in courses coded for enhanced FTEs.
3. College-level credit for career or technical courses.
4. Student applies for financial aid as soon as they are in a college course.
5. Integrated learning outcomes must demonstrate both skill gains in literacy and technical skills.
6. Certificate programs must lead to occupations that are on the demand list of the local area Workforce Explorer system and have local data that demonstrates that actual jobs are available.
7. SBCTC must approve each program.

For a sample application, see:

http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/abepds/ibest_application_revised_april08_009.doc

The new Academic Transfer I-BEST model is being piloted in 2010-2011. Courses in the program must be college-level communication or quantitative reasoning credits as outlined in the state Direct Transfer Agreement. Program design must include adult basic education, academic transfer, and student services. See sample application at:

http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/abepds/ibest_academic_pilot_application_2009_final_000.doc

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