

The background of the page is a light, warm-toned image. In the upper left, a dark graduation cap (mortarboard) is shown from a high angle, with its tassel hanging down. In the lower right, a single, dark metal key is positioned horizontally. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a focus on educational symbols.

***Strategies for Transitioning
Adult Education Students
To Postsecondary Opportunities***

*Developed from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education's
State Director of Adult Education Listserv*

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Executive Summary

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) sponsored a Listserv discussion from July 21, through August 1, 2008, among state directors of adult education. Twenty-four state directors joined the discussion, representing the four geographic regions of the nation almost evenly. Seven states in the northeast, five states in the south, six states in the midwest and six in the west participated. The discussion, moderated by OVAE staff, posed questions to state directors to help better understand which states are developing transition models and the implications these models have for future policymaking. OVAE is using the information contained this discussion to create the agenda for a meeting and will select states at the forefront of transition to participate. Both the discussion and upcoming meeting address technical assistance needs that states identified during the April 2008 National Conference for State Directors of Adult Education that OVAE held in New Orleans. Trends emerged from the rich discussion generated on the Listserv. Contributions came from state directors of adult education in the agency designated by the state's governor as responsible for administering statewide policy for the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)*.

The most widespread and important development reflected by all the state discussants was that traditional goals for adult education, such as learning to read or even earning a General Educational Development (GED) credential, have been extended to the 21st century goal of transitioning to participation in postsecondary education. That goal could include some college attendance, specialized training certificates, associate degrees or even bachelors' degrees from colleges permitted to award them under state law. Other trends include creating routes to postsecondary training when building or expanding statewide adult education systems, using data on learner performance to guide that process, working for representation for adult education on state and local employment and education boards, and designation of specific personnel at the local level who plan or conduct transition activities at least part time. The discussion revealed a framework emerging among states and their local adult education programs that is creating and supporting services that adult education students need to make successful transitions to postsecondary opportunities.

Questions Considered

OVAE staff moderating the discussion posed several questions to frame it, some of which were drawn from the discussion as it developed and progressed. States considered the following questions:

- How does the state adult education office assist adults in successfully transitioning from adult education to postsecondary education?

- How closely do your offices work with postsecondary institutions, for example, senior staff, advising, admissions, and financial aid offices, to assist adult students attempting to transition into postsecondary education?
- Do you have a strategy for connecting with postsecondary education and continuing education associations? Do you have an advocacy campaign that encourages postsecondary education institutions and their representative associations to address this important need?
- Are states sharing best practice transitions models with local programs? If so, what are the components of those models? What criteria are states using to identify best practice models for transitioning students from adult to postsecondary education?
- How are states addressing the issue of college readiness in postsecondary transitions?
- Are states using transitions specialists? If so, what do these transitions specialists do? What has been the state's role in defining these job qualifications and responsibilities?
- To what extent are adult education services provided through the community college system with articulation across the colleges? How is this continuum a benefit or a challenge to state policymaking?
- What are some other examples of how states are using data to shape transitions initiatives and policies?

Review of State Strategies

This discussion flowed among participants from 24 states as they addressed the questions posed by the moderator and responded to each other. The text below summarizes in an abbreviated form each state's contribution made by state directors of adult education from the agency each governor designated as responsible for administering statewide policy for adult education. States are listed alphabetically.

Arkansas Uses Range Of Tools to Promote Transition

The adult education division of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) encourages transitions from adult to postsecondary education using a variety of tools described below:

- ADWE is a partner in the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), a comprehensive project to improve the earnings and educational attainment of the state's low-income adults eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). CPI funds two-year colleges to develop career pathways programs that assist TANF-eligible adults in earning marketable education credentials for immediate entry into high-demand occupations. CPI includes GED, adult education, job readiness, basic academic preparation or remediation, and postsecondary programs associated with high-wage, high-demand occupations. CPI students receive intensive support services.
- ADWE is adopting a performance-based formula that provides incentive funding to adult education programs for each student who enters postsecondary education and training.
- ADWE requires adult education programs to set a benchmark of 25 percent or higher for GED graduates whose goal is to enter postsecondary education. Success in meeting this benchmark is part of the annual evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency programs must pass to receive state adult education funding.
- ADWE requires local adult education programs to encourage students to continue their education and training after earning a GED.

California Implements Statewide Transition Initiative

The California Department of Education (CDE) has begun a statewide three-year initiative to improve the transition of adult education students to postsecondary education and training. A comprehensive statewide needs assessment and strategic planning project for adult education in California is under way, and CDE will examine state-level partnerships as well as local collaborations between adult schools and community colleges. The adult basic education initiative is a component of this project. Transition programs and articulation agreements were designed and implemented at the local level before the statewide initiative was created. Noteworthy "bridge" programs currently exist at some sites and others have created articulation agreements. Some programs are co-located at adult schools or on community college campuses because community colleges and adult schools serve the same population.

Connecticut Establishes Training Program Improvement Projects

The Connecticut Department of Education has awarded 17 competitive Transition to

Postsecondary Education and Training Program Improvement Project Grants of approximately \$45,000 each. Eight grants went to newly participating programs this year. Grantees meet three times each year to share promising practices. Adult education in the state is administered through the K-12 system, and the grants enable programs to connect with local community colleges, for example, by providing dual enrollment for adult education high school credit and community college credit courses (mainly developmental education). The state adult education program, with initial funding from the Nellie Mae Foundation, is aligning math curricula to limit adult education students' need for developmental math when entering community colleges. Nellie Mae provided funding for six years for three sites to teach adult education graduates study skills, math and computer skills.

Delaware's WIA Incentive Funds Identify Transition Strategies

Delaware is using a portion of its incentive grant awarded under the *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA) to identify strategies to help adult education students transition to college opportunities. The state education department has funded seven adult education programs to create practices helping students enter postsecondary education. Promising practices include: touring colleges, providing specific counseling about college entry, accompanying students to application offices, helping students investigate entrance exams, and ensuring that all instructors discuss postsecondary options during classes. WIA incentive funds also have supported accelerated intensive instruction for potential GED examinees and a transitions workshop for GED achievers that provided information on postsecondary opportunities. One program used community funds to reimburse students' community college application fees when they returned with enrollment forms.

Program administrators have been looking closely at why more students are not transitioning to postsecondary education. Administrators identified the lack of funds for upfront costs such as application fees, tuition, books, or child care as a major challenge for adult students. Adult learners who lacked funds to support college expenses in the year after completing their education could not access Delaware's SEED scholarship, which is available for all graduates with at least a 2.5 high school grade point averages. The state education agency also identified students who entered postsecondary opportunities, and initiated data matching with the state's P-20 Council. The Lieutenant Governor's Interagency Council on Adult Literacy held a summit to develop a coordinated process that will assist adult learners in transitioning. Discussions on promoting adult students' transitions to college are continuing in 2008.

Georgia's WIA Incentive Grant Helps Pilot Transitions

Adult education in Georgia is housed in the same system as the state's technical colleges and works closely with technical education and student services to make transitions to

postsecondary opportunities for adult education students barrier free. The Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia has made transition to technical programs a priority for the state's college presidents, incorporating it as part of their annual report card. The Technical College System of Georgia used WIA incentive grant funds in 2007 to create an accelerated learning program that provides adult education students with intensive instruction to complete the GED. The program supports adult education student transitions with extra counseling and tutoring as students acquire the GED or Georgia Work-Ready Certificate. The state education agency is requesting state funds to replicate this program in 33 of its technical colleges statewide. Several colleges have employed transition specialists to work with adult education students. Georgia provides a \$500 voucher to GED graduates to use for enrollment in postsecondary programs. This is paid for through the HOPE grant program. The professional development program for adult education providers includes sessions on transition to post secondary for adult education students.

Georgia also has a state-level Jump Start Committee, established by the state board, focused on transition program efforts that include accelerated GED, dual enrollment in adult education and technical certificate programs, transition support specialists and academic and support services for students once enrolled in the technical colleges. The state education agency has developed a process to identify potential candidates for dual enrollment and a system to track them as they move into technical course work. The state also is developing a system of placement testing for students in adult education to ensure that they are not burdened with unnecessary payments for developmental coursework.

Idaho Moves Toward Regional Transitions

The Idaho Department of Adult Basic Education (ABE) is administered through the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education (PTE). Collaboration between ABE and state institutions is streamlining the recruitment and transition process for students who want to attend college. Regional adult basic education programs are partnering with Idaho's community colleges and universities to provide a continuum of instruction that prepares adult education students for postsecondary education.

The state's plan includes providing adults with basic skill levels high enough to attain college entry and complete the first year of a technical training program. Adult education is working with PTE to design an ABE pathway or pre-career cluster to provide another point of access to postsecondary education for adult students. This effort focuses on health professions, a critical area of job shortages and employment opportunities statewide. Idaho's Workforce Development Council is concentrating its efforts on this career cluster in coming years. State ABE officials are working closely with PTE to create content standards for ABE to ensure that the levels of math, reading and writing taught in ABE programs meet entry requirements for technical training. Local programs also use the career cluster information in advising students who have the goal of entering postsecondary education.

Current transition efforts in local Idaho ABE programs include:

- Administering a college entrance exam before students leave adult education to ensure adequate preparation for college enrollment.
- Co-advising students with a Center for New Directions, college student services, and workforce training partners to help students persist in postsecondary transition.
- Integrating college transition courses into adult education so that students consult with both college and adult education advisors to promote successful transitions. Courses introduce skills including: basic keyboarding, time management, learning styles, developing and managing goals, study skills, test-taking strategies, and navigating the college system.
- Providing enhanced math classes in main centers and outreach sites to help adults move from adult education to postsecondary opportunities, even when transition programs are minimal.
- Offering free tuition for the first postsecondary class in which a GED student enrolls. Two Idaho community colleges provide full first-year scholarships to one or more high-scoring GED students.
- Helping students maneuver through the college application process and their first semester of classes by working with an adult basic education mentor. This strategy is being explored by one program but has not been fully implemented at this point.

Indiana Affirms Transition Commitment

Indiana has affirmed its commitment to achieve collaboration on transition between adult education and the community college system. State and local staffs from adult education and the college system are exploring ways to collaborate, resulting in a pilot project that co-locates adult education at two community college campuses that have a remedial laboratory. Local pilot programs are cross-training staff, making direct referrals, and collaborating to help students successfully transition to community college study. Indiana also received a Joyce Foundation Shifting Gears grant (other Shifting Gears recipients including Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin) focusing on degree completion and workforce preparation. Achieving consensus for taking the pilot project statewide could expand it in many ways. Adult education is seeking additional state money and other grant opportunities to support this effort. The state also is working on data-sharing agreements, state policy development, and possibly legislative activity.

Iowa Makes Transition a Priority

Postsecondary transition is a high priority at both the state and local levels in Iowa. The state's community college system provides adult literacy services, and adult education programs are well connected with the credit side of the state's 15 community colleges. Iowa's state-level adult education program is housed in the same division as its career technical programs and workforce preparation. Adult education participates fully in discussions of career and technical education and career pathways. The state also is tracking family literacy programs to determine how well students are moving through the educational system. An existing articulation provides students with easy access to transition services when they are ready to move from adult education to postsecondary opportunities. Each community college has developed strategies to assist students with postsecondary transition, including the use of transition counselors, small student cohort groups linking students with similar needs as they progress, scholarships for GED graduates, and visits to career and technical programs.

Maine Legislation Promotes Adult Transitions

The Maine State Department of Education (MDOE) supports adults transitioning to postsecondary education through two major policy initiatives. MDOE received state funding to build on successful pilot and grant-funded programming by establishing 22 college transitions efforts through local adult education programs. MDOE provides leadership, professional development activities, oversight and technical assistance for comprehensive college transitions programming. MDOE also revised its enabling legislation and state funding guidelines during the last legislative session. The revision focuses on allowing costs associated with transitions programs to be included under the state funding formulas. College transitions were written directly into state statutes for the first time. The state adult education office provides leadership, vision and technical support.

Maine has used a variety of data sources to support adult education and transitions programs. Data indicate that despite Maine's solid high school graduation rate this success may not continue at the postsecondary level. The state also has the lowest college graduation rate in New England. Nearly three thousand adults graduate from Maine's adult education programs each year, and the majority indicate an interest in entering postsecondary education. MDOE uses performance data to demonstrate that adult education has a successful and effective education delivery system. The data-driven process has opened the door for adult education representation on a number of state-level task forces and initiatives such as the state's Compact for Higher Education.

Missouri Mounts Transitions Task Force

The Missouri State Department of Education established a transitions task force last year to examine how local adult education programs were helping students transition to postsecondary education opportunities and determine how successful local transitions efforts were in enrolling adult learners in postsecondary programs. The task force is identifying promising practices and using nationally recognized instruction strategies to develop guidelines and practices that enhance existing or establish new transitions components. A transitions resource package has been developed and is being incorporated as a link on the state's adult education and literacy (AEL) Web site for use by teachers and students. Task force members have met with representatives from the Missouri Community College Association to discuss postsecondary transitions and have been encouraged by the association's interest in working with AEL to improve enrollments in postsecondary education. The task force will also be developing marketing material that supports our efforts.

Minnesota Conducts Three-Year Transition Initiative

Minnesota's adult education system is investing state dollars to increase local capacity to transition adult education students to postsecondary education and training. Adult basic education is delivered statewide at over 500 sites located in public schools, workforce centers, community and technical colleges, prisons and jails, libraries, learning centers, tribal centers, and non-profit organizations. Programs voluntarily formed 52 administrative consortia to maximize efficiency and share resources. Each consortium will receive a share of the \$400,000 available this year. Programs will align student testing, curricula, and referral to expedite transition, expand co-location with providers of other services, integrate study skills into basic skills classes, and learn more about postsecondary transition strategies. The state adult education office is supporting local efforts with best practice models, workshops and technical assistance. The initiative, begun in 2007, runs through 2010. The state education agency also is subsidizing awarding a minimum of \$5,000 per year per ABE consortium to support postsecondary transition. The state supports local efforts with best practice models, workshops and technical assistance and a Transition Advisory Committee that includes local program staff as well as individuals from Minnesota's postsecondary system. The state has developed closer relationships with the postsecondary system, working jointly to improve referral and assessment between adult basic education programs and postsecondary institutions.

Montana Focuses on Adult Career Pathways

The Montana Adult Basic Education Office is in the initial phase of a collaborative with the state's Department of Labor and Office of Higher Education. The collaboration will develop and implement an adult career pathways model. This project requires interagency service coordination and partnerships with workforce training providers and employers representing the specific career clusters. Plans include initiatives such as career and pathway advisement, skill assessments and professional development. Achieving the following milestones will accomplish these goals:

- Award an adult career pathways curriculum model grant to a two-year institution
- Develop career pathways advisement publications and integrate career pathway information into the Montana Career Information System used by Montana's Job Service Offices
- Develop statewide skill and aptitudes assessments for use in career counseling for adults, and
- Design and convene adult pathways institutes for practitioners.

New Mexico Boosts Statewide Transition Goals

New Mexico's adult education program is housed in the state's Higher Education Department (HED) and receives cabinet level support. HED is making new efforts to increase the number of students transitioning from adult to postsecondary education. The state has a new goal of increasing by 10 percent the number of students who set and achieve the goal of this transition during the current program year. The state will set aside some federal adult education funds to reward programs for performance based on the transition goal. New Mexico also has:

- Established a Lottery Success Scholarship that covers eight semesters of tuition for all New Mexico high school graduates including GED.
- Sponsored a July 2008 forum on Transitions for the ABE and Dev Ed Community.
- Formed a task force and strategic plan around transitional studies.
- Conducted a longitudinal study of GED grads in two programs
- Promote and advocated transitional services with college administrators and ABE directors.

The state has set aside some adult education funds to establish a college and career transitions project and made a proposal for matching foundation funds that is currently

pending. HED expects the initiative to provide immediate results as well as create systemic changes.

Ohio Creates Transition Framework And “Stackable” Certificates

The Ohio Department of Education’s Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) Office is working with an ABLE transitions task force to determine how the state’s adult education system can best prepare adults for postsecondary education and employment. One outcome of the work is a new transitions framework based on researching programs being implemented in other states. The framework has two components – instructional services and support services. Local programs will use this framework to develop their own models to support students transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.

The state also is developing a “stackable certificate” program using a basic skills and an advanced skills certificate delivered by the ABLE system. Competencies validated by these two certificates were developed by aligning ABLE content standards with Ohio College Readiness Expectations and the state’s K-12 standards. Content experts from each of these groups completed this work and external panels are validating the competencies.

The basic skills certificate will show achievement through the 8.9 level (NRS Level 4) in math, reading and writing, and the advanced skills certificate will show achievement through the 12.9 level (NRS Level 6) in the same three subject areas. Assessment and resource alignment projects will continue throughout the next two years. A stackable certificates program pilot is developing the two certificates, working on college/work-ready certificates and other credentials offered by ABLE, and working on technical certificates that are industry recognized. Pilots programs will contextualize technical skills within academic certificates. The state plans to use WIA incentive funds to help build the capacity of the ABLE system to implement the ABLE transitions framework and stackable certificates.

Oregon Builds Adult Learner Pipeline

The Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development has created a Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Work Initiative (OPABS). The initiative will build a pipeline of adult basic skills learners well prepared to enter postsecondary education, training programs and jobs in high-wage, high-demand careers. The initiative represents a basic skills system change that is sustainable and develops formal connections to postsecondary education as well as to one stop centers. The project has two components, development and pilot testing. Development of the

OPABS initiative began in fall 2006. Initial development sites for pre-bridge, bridge, and college/career awareness courses were selected through a competitive process. The state also identified a site to develop college advising modules. Work during the development phase focused on course design as well as benchmarking academic skill levels to college-entry level career, technical and transfer program courses. OPABS courses integrate academic and occupational content, focusing on Oregon high-wage, high-demand occupations. Colleges created lesson plans for each course under the guidance of education consultants. Development and preliminary piloting of term 2 courses began from January through March 2008 at the six initial development sites. Advising modules were pilot-tested in spring term 2008. Refinement of all courses continued through summer 2008. An RFP for the second phase identified additional sites to conduct expanded pilots of the pre-bridge and bridge courses during the fall 2008 and winter 2009 terms and test integration of components at the college sites. Final revisions of the courses and modules will be completed in summer 2009. Products from the expanded pilot activities will include lesson plans for each course constructed on a standard format for easy replication at other colleges, a teacher's guide for each course, and advising modules to enhance college and career readiness.

Pennsylvania Creates Career Gateway Program

The Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) of the Pennsylvania Department of Education supports transitions to postsecondary education and training through its Career Gateway program. Career Gateway began as a two-year pilot project to develop systems to improve support for adult education students by coordinating resources of the Departments of Education and Labor & Industry with support from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). The project was supported by PHEAA and WIA incentive funds. Career Gateway was focused on improving performance within and between the systems. It assisted adult basic education programs with development and documentation of materials and procedures to support the transition of adults to postsecondary education and training. Local workforce investment boards provided services and financial support including career counseling, case management and individual training accounts. External education consultants conducted a formative and summative evaluation of the project.

ABLE funded five agencies to provide transition services to 100 adult learners for program year 2005-2006. The agencies' goal was to assist at least 50 percent of these learners in transitioning to postsecondary education and training. ABLE funded five more agencies in program year 2006-2007 with the same enrollment and transition goals. Over the two-year period, 205 learners were enrolled and 101 transitioned to postsecondary education and training. Sixty received individual training accounts from their local PA CareerLinks.

ABLE learned a substantial amount about transition, especially about partnering to

leverage resources and achieve success, by the end of the second year of the pilot. Project staff captured that knowledge in two professional development courses, one for administrators and one for teachers. Each offered participants skills, materials and procedures to increase their effectiveness in supporting transition. Staff also created a Career Gateway curriculum. Pilot agencies' stories and the documents they developed and used were gathered into a tool kit. The state indicated that the most enduring product of the project is building relationships between agencies with very different missions that managed to find common goals. Trust built through those relationships will continue to create a climate where positive outcomes for learners can occur.

A program year 2007-2008 \$4.9 million increase in Pennsylvania's adult and family literacy education budget expanded Career Gateway, allowing ABLE to continue the pilot programs at a reduced rate and fund ten more agencies to build capacity in transitioning adult learners to postsecondary education and training using the skills, materials, and procedures acquired during the pilot.

Rhode Island Creates Transition Endowment

Rhode Island's postsecondary education assistance authority has endowed a program offering financial aid to adult students transitioning to college, but who only have time to take one course each semester. Financial aid for part-time community college students is rare. Rhode Island eases postsecondary transition by providing up to \$3,000 to these students over a two-year period for tuition, fees, and out-of-pocket expenses. The state education agency has created transition targets and milestones for student performance and programs identify projected performance on those targets. Milestones mark progress not only through taking appropriate college readiness assessments, and completion of an associate degree, but also to transfer to a four-year institution. The state agency reviews local progress toward these goals on a quarterly basis. The state and local programs use data on specific milestones to assess what might be behind better- or worse-than-expected performance.

South Carolina Uses Transition Specialists

Each adult education program in South Carolina has a staff transition specialist responsible for working with students who are interested in postsecondary education. Transition specialists help students identify a college they want to attend, conduct college tours, assist students in applying to colleges, help with the financial aid process, and provide anything else needed to help students enroll in college.

Texas Creates Action Plan

Texas legislature has ordered a study of adult education and the development of an action plan to transition adult basic education students to postsecondary opportunities. The initial study will be ready in the fall 2008 and an action plan will follow.

Utah Encourages Transition

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) is involved in promoting adult education statewide, but does not have a current transition practice or policy in place. USOE encourages local programs to follow best practice and assist students with transition to postsecondary opportunities or training, but the focus and extent of local assistance varies. Adult education programs are active members of one of the seven regional workforce investment boards and have a strong voice at the table in making decisions and reinforcing the importance of adult education including in transition services. Six other regional workforce boards have minimal recognition and coordination with adult education programs and the services provided to the community and shared clients. The state adult education office is assisting local programs in their continued efforts to establish and implement partnerships including transition services to postsecondary education and training venues.

Vermont Seeks Sustainable Transition Models

Vermont's efforts have resulted from local initiatives and state-funded programs. Local providers have secured grant funds to help develop college transition models based on a partnership between the Community College of Vermont (CCV) and Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). The resulting services have proved successful for students, but have not yet demonstrated financial sustainability. The state is continuing to look for a sustainable model that can be replicated statewide. Vermont has created a high school completion program administered through the adult education system. Students who identify postsecondary education as a goal can use the program as a transition vehicle. This model is financially sustainable because the funding is on a reimbursement basis. It serves a limited number of students and does not necessarily include the extensive support available through the model developed in partnership with CCV and VSAC.

West Virginia Partnership Moves Transitions Ahead

The West Virginia adult education office is involved in a collaborative effort among the

local hospital system, adult basic education and a community and technical college in Institute, West Virginia. The program, Pathways to Nursing, won an award for innovation from the Southern Regional Growth Policies Board, and currently is working with a third student cohort. The state reports that participation in the Pathways to Nursing program has significantly improved the passing rate on the Nursing Entrance Test (NET) as well as the percentage of students placed in higher math and English classes, bypassing developmental classes.

The state provided the example of its most successful collaboration, which is among West Virginia State Community and Technical College (WVSCTC), Kanawha County Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC). Kanawha County ABE screened and prepared students for NET for the associate degree program at WVSCTC. The population included eligible hospital employees who wanted to advance, adult education students, and eligible candidates from the community. ABE assessed applicants as well as developed and delivered a curriculum to prepare applicants for NET. WVSCTC obtained grant funds from several sources. An initial grant was awarded by the Department of Labor. The community college also provided funding, and the current funding source for the program is a grant from the Benedum Foundation. This program is allowing successful candidates who both pass NET and are selected for the program at WVSCTC to receive full tuition and fees if they agree to work for three years after graduation at CAMC at the current market wage.

Other adult basic education programs on the campuses of most of the community and technical colleges in the state use various models based on collaborative efforts between adult education and the developmental departments of the colleges.

Wisconsin Analyzes Data From College “Transition Pipeline”

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) has created an ongoing pipeline analysis of adult education students' college transition data to better understand where the “leaks” occur and where additional intervention is needed. The analysis is being done in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS). It will allow WTCS to better recognize “momentum points” that need to be measured, accounted for and potentially rewarded. Data gathered will focus on adult basic education students over 25 to determine how their needs can be better met. The state expects the analysis to result in improving the continuum of services provided as students transition from adult education and postsecondary opportunities to the workforce. WTCS also has:

- Altered guidelines for the ABE-to-college state-funded competitive grant program to encourage applications that support Wisconsin’s Regional Industry Skills Education initiative, including:

- Developing and delivering curricula and services to more effectively transition students from adult basic education (ABE) and English language learning (ELL) to postsecondary occupational courses (including integrated team-taught ABE/postsecondary occupational classes)
 - Chunking larger postsecondary programs into smaller sequenced modular pieces supported by local business, industry and labor, and
 - Increasing collaboration among colleges, ABE programs and local workforce development boards.
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- Included language in the largest state-funded ABE grant program to encourage delivery of a curriculum reflecting an adult school-to-work education continuum. Funded projects should incorporate curricula focusing on applied and contextual academics fundamental to entry into occupational programs, concurrent or coordinated delivery of academic, occupational and workplace readiness courses, and bridge programming.
 - Used AEFLA state leadership dollars to bring teams of ABE and postsecondary occupational staff together to learn about integrated instructional outcomes and team teaching methodologies to help ABE students transition to postsecondary studies
 - Used Joyce Foundation funding to begin focusing on workforce innovation embedding short-term postsecondary certificates into larger associate degree programs so that low-skilled adults have a manageable "landing point" in the education sequence that allows them to access productive, higher-paying employment
 - Created a cross-agency team of staff from the Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Technical College System (including adult education staff), University of Wisconsin Center on Wisconsin Strategy, and a leading Workforce Development board to identify local and state policy changes required to support this innovation
 - Provided staff development on adult basic education to postsecondary transition as a recurring topic
 - Made promoting adult basic education to postsecondary transition a strategic goal in the college system.

Trends and Issues

Several trends and issues emerged as themes as states participated in this discussion over several days. The most important trend was the consensus among all state directors that the outcome of adult education is no longer limited to building basic skills or even

earning a GED or certificate. The field framed issues around adult education as a key element in the transition to postsecondary education for a large majority of its students.

All of the discussion's themes appeared to incorporate this consensus. The most frequent theme involved the "implementation of state-level transition pilots" described by eight states (Connecticut, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont). Groups of seven states discussed each of two themes "using data to inform transition policy and practice" (California, Iowa, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Wisconsin) and "providing support for adult education to postsecondary transitions through professional development activities" (Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin). The third most frequent theme was "using task forces or advisory groups to guide transition initiatives" (Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio and Wisconsin). "Building transition partnerships at the state level" emerged as a theme in five states (Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Vermont). Four states (Connecticut, Indiana, Rhode Island, Wisconsin) mentioned "integration of transition activities with non-AEFLA funded projects."

Less common topics that were equally interesting included "revising curriculum and or courses" (Connecticut, Oregon and Rhode Island), "creating transition outreach materials" (Missouri and Rhode Island), "systemic challenges to transition" (Indiana and Utah), "using transitions specialists" (Illinois and South Carolina), "stackable credentials" (Ohio and Wisconsin), "scholarships and fee waivers" (New Mexico and Rhode Island). Unique ideas included "revising state assessment policy to measure 'college readiness'" (Rhode Island), "dual enrollment" (Connecticut), and "negotiating data-sharing agreements to support transition" (Illinois).

Expectations for Next Steps

OVAE's Listserv discussion not only produced key trends, but also captured an emerging national framework that is promoting and expanding postsecondary transition opportunities for adult education students. Learning English or earning a GED is no longer perceived as the final outcome of federal and state investments in adult basic education—or of students' investments in themselves. The crystallizing framework revealed states' expectations for their transition activities as well as for the continuous improvement of transition efforts in local adult education programs. The discussion suggests some of the field's expectations for future activities including:

- ✓ Raising community college leaders' awareness of adult education's key role as the cornerstone of college opportunities
- ✓ Forging partnerships with colleges to share staff and facilities as well as provide other mutual support

- ✓ Establishing increasingly ambitious goals for the number and percentage of adult education students who will make successful transitions to postsecondary education
- ✓ Adopting data systems to track students throughout the educational system
- ✓ Collaborating with colleges in planning which institutions can best provide the range of services students need in order to move through adult education and transition to postsecondary education successfully
- ✓ Taking the initiative to help adult education create a seamless curriculum and articulated assessment and placement systems that link adult education to postsecondary education and the world of work
- ✓ Creating clear policies that guide how developmental and adult education can work together to optimize college readiness.
- ✓ Establishing leadership networks in adult education to promote understanding of partnerships with community colleges and take the initiative in strengthening those links
- ✓ Seeking additional public and private resources to expand adult education services to make sure all graduates have the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century workplace

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