Adult Basic and Secondary Education

The Challenge

The demand for Adult Basic Education (ABE) services in Texas are high. In the 2010 American Communities Survey, one-year estimates of educational attainment, 3.6 million Texans qualified for adult education services and only 99,802 were served. Texas received $53.4 million in federal funds for ABE Texas in 2010-11, with the state providing the required 25 percent matching funds for a total of $67.3 million. With more and more jobs requiring some level of postsecondary education, it is critical to promote ABE programs to get Texans on a path to careers in high demand fields or to successfully transition to postsecondary programs. The potential to meet economic needs through the alignment of ABE and workforce is vast, however limited funding has led to a severely underserved adult population.

ABE Administration

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has federal and state fiduciary responsibility for ABE in Texas. Under an agreement with TEA, Texas LEARNS, an entity of the Harris County Department of Education, provides technical assistance, program oversight, and professional development management to 55 providers of ABE in Texas. In 2007, the 80th Texas Legislature approved a General Appropriations Rider requiring the TEA and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) collaborate to develop and implement immediate and long-range coordinated action plans to align ABE and postsecondary education. The THECB now houses several programs in the Division of P-16 Initiatives that aim to improve the participation and success of lower skilled adults in postsecondary education and work training programs. These include the ABE Innovation Grants (ABE-IG), the Developmental Education Demonstration Projects (DEDP), the Intensive College Readiness Programs for Adult Education Students (IPAES), and the Transitions Project.

According to Texas LEARNS, the number of students served has declined over the years despite increased funding levels due to higher rates of student retention and improved program quality.

* Includes Federal TANF that flows through Texas Riders.
** The student number reflected does not include the Windham ISD incarcerated adults as reported to the U.S. Dept. of Education starting in 2011.
**ABE Innovation Grants**

The **ABE-IG** pilot programs are designed to establish career pathways for ABE students who score at the high intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) level (literacy/reading) or low intermediate basic education level (reading). Adult education students take career/technical training courses concurrently with adult basic education support classes which are contextualized to the training course (e.g. Math for Welding). The support classes are taught by adult basic education faculty, by developmental education faculty, or by the certificate instructor and an ABE or developmental education faculty member. The ABE-IG institutions partner with community adult education providers (federally funded and non-federally funded), local workforce solutions centers, area non-profits serving adults, and continuing education programs on the college campus to provide integrated basic skills support and technical training that leads to a state, national, or Level 1 certificate in a high demand or targeted occupation in their local area. Evaluation of these programs began in fall 2011 and will continue through 2012-2013.

**ABE & Developmental Education Demonstration Projects**

The **DEDP institutions**, all of which have ABE-IG programs, align adult basic education with developmental education. The goal in this alignment is not to position adult education programs as a pathway into developmental education, but to identify lower skilled adults in developmental education and provide them with augmented student and academic support services including academic advising, career counseling, intensive, accelerated instruction focused on reading, writing, mathematics, and college success, and contextualized developmental education coursework integrated with a technical training certificate (e.g. English for Specific Purposes – Health Professions or Mathematics for Welding). Evaluation of these programs began in fall 2011 and will continue through spring 2012.

**Intensive College Readiness Programs for Adult Education Students**

The **IPAES grantees** assist recent GED graduates and adults with high school diplomas who have been out of school three or more years into postsecondary education and/or certificate training programs. The purpose of these intensive programs is to determine if short-term and accelerated academic instruction and support can improve transition to college, college persistence, and success for adult education students who are underrepresented in college enrollment rates and at-risk of dropping out from college. A successful IPAES provides academically at-risk students opportunities to gain skills associated with college persistence and success in first and second-year college courses. Specifically, these programs provide an intensive learning opportunity focusing on an accelerated college and career readiness curriculum in writing, reading, mathematics, and college success. These intensive, accelerated college readiness programs eliminate or reduce the amount of time adult learners may be in developmental education while improving their academic readiness for the rigor of college courses. Twelve programs were funded in 2010-2011 and ten were awarded continuation funds in 2011-2012. Since summer 2010, 479 adult education students have successfully completed an intensive program. During the 2010-2011 school year, all but one program reported significant increases in student scores on the mathematics section of the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) with an average student increase of 18 points between the pre- and post-THEA. An analysis of the successful transition of this cohort into and through postsecondary education, including the rate of successful completion of developmental education and college-level coursework, is underway. Ten grantees were awarded in FY 2012.

**Transitions Projects**

The **Transitions Project** at Texas State University-San Marcos conducts research on best practices in adult education and developmental education alignment with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and postsecondary transition and success of adult basic skills students. There have been **three phases** of their work. The first phase consisted of a literature review on transitions and the development of a survey and focus group questions designed to discover how the 55 federally funded adult education programs in Texas were addressing the transition of adult education students into postsecondary education and/or working training programs. The survey of the providers and the focus group questions were conducted during Phase II of the project as well as a 96-hour online professional development opportunity on building a bridge between adult education programs and postsecondary education using the cross-disciplinary standards from the CCRS. An analysis of the differences between the Texas Adult Education Standards and Benchmarks and the CCRS was also conducted. In Phase III, the Transitions Project will utilize the research it has already completed and data from the first year evaluation of the IPAES grantee institutions to develop a framework for a successful eight week bridge program for adult education students. This framework will be disseminated to ABE programs, community college developmental education programs, and other interested parties through the Texas Center of Adult Literacy and Learning (TCALL), THECB Adult Education website, Texas LEARNS, and TEA.
Jobs for the Future

Most recently, the THECB contracted with Jobs for the Future (JFF) to provide technical assistance and support to the ABE Innovation grantees in FY 2012 continuing through FY 2013. JFF will provide technical assistance in 2012 to 14 community and technical colleges currently holding adult education innovation grants, and to 10-15 additional programs expected to be funded in spring FY 2012. The JFF team will visit each institution and provide each with a customized technical assistance plan and guide institutions as they work through the plan; JFF will provide professional development to grantees on (but not limited to):

✓ Contextualization of workforce training curriculum and GED
✓ Career counseling
✓ Case management advising
✓ Acceleration of basic skills/technical training

In addition, JFF will provide the THECB documentation of best practices across institutions in order to provide institutional and/or state policy recommendations to support scalability and sustainability of best practices.

For more information:
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