

Delaware Narrative Report  
2007-2008

FY 08 was a time change for Adult Education in Delaware sparked by state level changes in program requirements and in personnel and more intense analysis of program data and changing demographics.

#### LEADERSHIP FUNDS

The state Leadership funds focused on five major areas:

1. Implementation of new ABE Assessment Policy and Goal Setting Procedure
2. Development/Revision of Program Accountability Tools
3. Introduction of STAR instructional components to ABE Reading instructors
4. Development of leadership skills for program administrators

Subsequent to an OVAE monitoring visit in September 2007, Delaware Adult Education focused its efforts on the development and integration of a new Assessment Policy and Goal Setting Procedures into program practices at both the administrative and classroom levels. At monthly ABE Administrators' Meetings, assessment and goal setting processes were discussed, critiqued, and piloted by local programs and state staff. These topics were re-visited with program administrators on a monthly basis throughout the year. In addition, the state leadership team incorporated the assessment and goal settings procedures into all their statewide and local professional development sessions. Program administrators were encouraged to call the State Team with any questions or insights. These concerns and findings were then shared at the following Administrators' Meeting resulting in a communal learning process and a shared commitment to the proper implementation of the Assessment Policy and Goal Setting Procedures. AIR developed NRS training materials were shared and discussed with programs to develop a common understanding of why these procedures were necessary. Consequently, programs developed a deeper understanding of how and why their data collection and analysis procedures were critical to their specific program improvement and to the state's continuous improvement process for Adult Education.

Local staff and classroom instructors were introduced to the new procedures by their program administrators and by the state staff at the annual DAACE conference and post conference, statewide trainings and onsite staff development presentations. Instructors reported that students reacted favorably to the new assessment guidelines because they wanted to objectively evaluate their own progress. We discovered that in some cases, instructors feared student failure and consequently delayed assessment. When in reality, students were eager to evaluate their progress and ready to advance to

the next level. Assessment timeframes also provided students with target dates for evaluation thereby motivating them to complete their level work.

To support the new assessment process, a policy document with supporting TABE and NRS information was disseminated to and reviewed with all programs. To ensure that local programs acknowledged and integrated this assessment change into their local processes, a new recognition system for EFL gains through Reading and Math Certificates of Attainment (COA) was developed. New applications, new certificates, and a new verification process were developed and reviewed by local programs in FY 08 and became operational in FY09. The belief that students will remain longer in programs if they experience success sooner will be evaluated over the coming year. New technology was also introduced into the COA process enabling state reviewers to verify outcomes more efficiently and adult learners to receive their award certificates sooner and more accurately. FY09 outcomes will provide evidence of the impact of the new Assessment Policy.

In response to OVAE recommendations and AIR best practices, ABE program accountability criteria was more clearly defined and procedures for determining local programs effectiveness were further clarified and formalized. The ABE Peer Monitoring Instrument, which has been in use for over a decade, was revised to include items relating to the new assessment and goal setting requirements and to eliminate redundant items. An appendix, which describes the types of documentation required for evidence of item achievement, was added to the Monitoring Instrument to provide an equitable standard by which all programs are evaluated. In addition, a desktop audit was developed to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of ABE programs. Previously, programs were evaluated on various criteria but the process had not been formalized. ABE program administrators provided input into the development of the audit. The desktop audit was used by the state in evaluating FY 08 program outcomes and in developing FY09 program improvement plans. The information gathered by this tool was used by some ABE programs in demonstrating their value to their local school districts.

To formalize reading instruction within ABE programs, the **STudent Achieving in Reading** components were introduced to reading instructors from ten ABE programs during FY 08. Reading instructors from across the state attended three training sessions presented by the national STAR trainers. Each program created an Action Plan implementing several or all four of the STAR components into program instruction. Programs reported improvements in student performance in reading and vocabulary. All ten programs will continue to implement STAR for FY 09. Depending on state funding, a state staff member will attend the STAR Train the Trainer in January 2009. Notwithstanding funding, the introduction of specific reading strategies for adults to teachers has improved instruction based on teacher feedback. In Delaware, very few ABE teachers had formal reading instruction. STAR provided them with a foundation from which to understand the reading process.

During the DAACE pre-conference, Dr. Pam Curtiss and Dr. Connie Kieffer of Wilmington University explored the topic of educational leadership with all ABE program administrators. Because of this training, administrators reviewed their current practices and leadership topics were reviewed at monthly ABE meetings. In addition, all program administrators consented to participation in a doctoral study being conducted by one of the prison program administrators concerning effective leadership traits for ABE programs. The results of this study will be shared with all administrators and future staff development programs will use these results as a basis for training.

## PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

An analysis of our data has indicated areas of strength and improvement and improved our understanding of what is occurring in programs.

### 1. Enrollment

- Delaware's ABE total enrollment was down 9% due in part to changes in our assessment policy. In FY 08, some students who would have been placed in ABE entered the Groves Adult High School instead. Since Groves is solely state funded, these students are not part of the NRS report. In addition, it was discovered that some programs were using an unapproved assessment instrument for pre-testing. As a result, these students could not be counted for enrollment. The introduction of a web based Lit Pro system will reduce the use of inappropriate assessment procedures as will the reduced funding for recalcitrant programs.
  1. A sharp decrease in the ABE Beginning Literacy Level resulted from the introduction of the TABE Literacy test which scored students higher than the TABE E Level previously administered.
  2. ASE Low also experienced a decrease due partially to the fact that students could be placed in Groves based on a combined TABE Math score rather than a 9.0 grade level in both the computation and application sections. Students previously placed in ABE due to Writing deficiencies only tested into Groves and received writing remediation in a Groves composition course.
  3. Increases in ABE Intermediate Low and Intermediate High levels were the result of using a combined TABE Math score for placement. Previously, low scores on TABE computation alone relegated learners to lower educational functioning levels.
  4. The elimination of the state developed oral assessment allowed ESL students to complete level work quicker and advance to higher EFL levels.
- The composition of the ABE program experienced a moderate change. In FY 08, 60% of English speaking adult learners participated in ABE levels and participation in ASE levels decreased to 12%. ESL participation decreased from 31% to 28% as the result of inappropriate assessment

procedures. Training in correct assessment procedures and a change in staffing has eliminated this issue in FY 09.

- More women participated in classes than in FY 07 with a 6% and 4% increase in Black and Hispanic women respectively. While discussing Adult Education with community agencies, agency reps also noted the same trend citing the worsening economic situation as a stimulus for more women going back to school to get better jobs or to enter the job market if their spouses' jobs are threatened. With the decoupling of the federal Math and Reading scores and the state writing requirements, it is hoped that these learners will be able to remain in class until an EFL has been attained in at least one area.

## 2. Age of Students

As in the past, a large number of younger students are entering ABE programs. In FY 08, 44% of ABE participants were 16 to 24 while an additional 43% were ages 25 to 44. There was a slight increase of 1% in learners 44 years and older. We continue to explore innovative practices for different age groups by formalizing an "Innovations" discussion at each ABE Administrators' meeting. Through this sharing, programs have re-formatted their delivery systems for FY 09 by providing block scheduling and accelerated learning opportunities. For FY 09, we will be working with DOL to create new connections for dislocated workers and older adults to access ABE services.

## 3. Educational Functioning Level Gains and Continuations

Average program attendance increased by 2% to 85.8 hours per student. All ESL levels in addition to ABE Beginning Literacy and ASE Low levels experienced an increase attendance. Due partially to our new Assessment Policy, EFL completions increased by 9.7% over FY 07; EFL completions and advancements to higher levels increased by 13%; and separations before EFL completions decreased by 4%. We found that a clearly defined assessment process positively impacts learner outcomes and student retention while also decreasing unproductive separations. More programs also integrated educational software into their instructional processes freeing up more of the instructor's time to work with individual students on specific areas of need and enhancing the instructor's ability to monitor individual student work.

Delaware met or exceeded 9 of our 10 performance targets. We did not achieve the performance target for ASE Low. We have found that a significant proportion of GED students tend to leave the program immediately upon passing the GED. Hence, they don't post-test on the TABE resulting in a lost EFL gain. This year, programs that required TABE post-assessments prior to GED testing were able to record EFL gains; while others lost the level gain. In FY 09, programs are closely monitoring their ASE Low performance levels for this issue.

#### 4. Performance Outcomes

Delaware exceeded all of its core performance targets while increasing the number of students setting these goals. The number of students setting an entering employment goal increased by 27% while the number setting a retained employment goal increased by over 490%. The number of students setting the goal of obtained a GED or diploma dropped by 4% while the number of students setting postsecondary education or training goals increased by 46% over FY 07.

The goal setting procedures developed because of the Federal monitoring re-opened a statewide discussion of common definitions and reporting mandates. Local programs monitored their goal setting processes more closely and integrated goals discussions into the classroom/guidance process ensuring that a focus on goal completion as well as EFL gain was maintained.

Local programs have developed individual strategies for checking which adult learners have transitioned to post secondary opportunities. Also for the first time, we are working with the P-20 Council to develop a process for data matching adult education students with higher education registrations. Currently, however, not all higher education institutions within the state contribute to the P-20 database.

The economic forecast for Delaware is dismal for the coming year. Our unemployment rate is rising as the banking, construction and auto industry lays off more workers. The state is anticipating lower employment rates up to the end of 2010.

#### 5. Integration of Title II Activities

During FY 08, Adult Education has worked more closely with the Department of Labor and the Delaware Economic Development Office. The WIA One Stop Assessor Project, a collaborative effort between the Department of Labor and the Department of Education, continued with WIA Incentive monies. The Delaware Workforce Investment Board provided additional monies later in the year. To date, this project has resulted in 59 assessment sessions statewide with 288 DOL clients being tested and 282 clients receiving a joint DOL/DOE report on skills. One hundred and nine of these 282 clients qualified for DOL training. If examinees did not attain adequate scores for entry into training programs, DOL case managers referred them to ABE programs for remediation and subsequent re-testing. While the Secretary of Education is a member of the Workforce Investment Board, Adult Education presented to the WIB for the first time ever in October. Delaware has only one WIB. We have also initiated a new Prison Re-Entry Project with the Department of Labor and the Department of Correction tracking released inmates who have participated in Prison Education Programs as they re-enter their communities. We are currently in the first phase of this project and working through inter-agency barriers to sharing information. Through our Interagency Council on Adult Literacy, we are working on a process to share data between state agencies within the confines of each agency's confidentiality requirements.

#### 6. EL/Civics Activities

To facilitate instruction within ESL classes, an EL/Civics Teacher Tool Kit. This kit includes a variety of instructional and informational materials, web sites, and updated materials for the new Naturalization Test. This tool allows ESL instructors to more easily incorporate EL Civics instruction into the regular ESL classroom. Training was provided to all ESL and EL/Civics instructors at the spring 2008 Tri-Annual ESL/EL Civics meeting. Implementation of the EL/Civics Teacher Tool Kit began in September 2008. The immediate response during the training from the teachers, who are part-time employees in ESL programs, was very positive because the kit provided resources and strategies these teachers did not possess or have time to research. Eight programs received EL/Civics funding that targeted 892 students in ESOL classes.