

**Title II - WIA
Montana Narrative Report 2007-2008
December 2008**

1. Describe successful activities, programs and projects supported with State Leadership funds and describe the extent to which these activities, programs and projects were successful in implementing the goals of the state plan.

The Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education Data System (MABLE)

Phase I of MABLE was moved into production as of June 30, 2007, focusing on data entry. During the 2007-2008 program year, Phase II development of the student information system focused on the integration of the NRS tables and the addition of reports. Enhancements to the data system paralleled the revised state assessment policy, which now aligns more accurately with the National Reporting System. In order to ensure that program staff could see the linkage between the developments in MABLE and the state assessment policy, five regional trainings were held requiring directors, instructors, and data entry personnel to attend. There were 77 people from across the state who participated in the trainings that were held during October and November 2007. Prior to the trainings, a draft of the revised assessment policy was sent to all adult education program staff, providing time for individuals to become familiar with the new requirements and accountability measures before attending training. The trainings were divided into two parts: first, a comprehensive walk through of the assessment policy; second, enhancements to the data system were demonstrated. This format allowed participants the opportunity to readily see the alignment between policy and the data system. Following the formal presentations, participants had computer time to work with the new features of the data system. The trainings concluded with the whole group discussing concerns and garnering ideas on what additional enhancements to the data system would be beneficial. New features and reports in the system included: student by criteria report, attendance validation, home-page monitoring of goal setting and testing, assessment validation, default classes to track assessment, counseling and instructional hours separately, assessment only report, a student comments report, and the NRS student list. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) also modified the NRS tables so that program sites can view reportable and non-reportable students. The inclusion of the reports is ensuring that the data in the Montana student information system are valid and reliable, as well as providing the framework for program management and improvement. In order to ensure adherence to the revised policy and new data entry requirements, ongoing professional development continued throughout the program year. At the state directors' meeting in January one main agenda item was policy and data entry. In February, representatives from each program participated in a teleconference scheduled to review policy, share and discuss how everyone was using the new data system, and address concerns and questions. Participating staff were asked to return to their program sites, and using the train-the-trainer model, bring all the information presented during the teleconference to everyone at their site. Each trainer submitted an Assessment Policy Review Verification form to the state upon completion of their site's training. A second teleconference was held in April to once again provide an opportunity for adult education programs to share their successes and challenges with the new data system, as well as introduce desk monitoring. Desk monitoring was added to assist programs in tracking core goal completion, level completion, pre-post testing, goal setting and retention.

Throughout the program year, ongoing communication on data system updates was maintained through a director's message that appears after logging into MABLE. This apprises the field of updates to the system and validates their efforts in maintaining data quality. Ongoing technical assistance is provided through e-mails and telephone calls, and the programming staff continues to work on the list of enhancements that have been generated by the field.

The required improvements in the state's student information system will allow the state and local programs to make informed decisions regarding allocation of funds, professional development, instruction and assessment.

Assessment training coincided with MABLE and policy trainings. BEST Plus training was held February 13, 2008, with 28 instructors and ESL volunteers attending. Two regional TABE trainings were held, one in the eastern part of the state on April 1, 2008, with 33 participants attending. The training in the western half of the state on April 2, 2008, had 27 participants. These assessment trainings were necessary, as through the regional MABLE trainings, the state became aware of the fact that many instructors across the state were in need of TABE and BEST Plus training. Additionally, all program directors, not involved in testing and instruction, were encouraged to attend in order to enhance their understanding of the importance of standardized testing and the role they can play in supporting students and staff. These trainings brought state staff into compliance with the Assessment Standards and Guidelines requiring that only trained staff may administer the state approved assessments. The state is now confident that the integrity of the tests is being maintained, which is critical in the collection of valid and reliable data. Through the combined policy and assessment trainings, local adult education programs have a clear understanding of standardized testing and the accountability that goes with being an Adult Basic and Literacy Education provider.

Rural Adult Education Cooperative (RAEC) Grant funds, combined with state leadership dollars, provided the opportunity for Montana to launch a distance learning pilot project in January 2007, as a means to increase Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) student numbers, connect with the workforce, assist with employment, and increase educational opportunities for students in rural communities. The Distance Learning Pilot Project consisted of pilot teams from three very small ABLE programs and their existing satellite programs. The three programs were experiencing either a decline in student numbers or no significant increase in student numbers. The ABLE program teams included: Lewistown (Roundup-satellite), Hardin (Crow Agency-satellite), and Miles City. The overarching goal of the pilot project was to build the infrastructure for long-term distance delivery on a statewide basis. With this in mind, the pilot project was the first step in the distance delivery process. The pilot project began with the teams completing a two-day training with Leslie Petty, Project Ideal consultant, and Mary Grott, Missouri GED Online representative. Following the training, pilot teams worked for four weeks completing Project Ideal assignments to prepare for the Montana distance delivery model. Through the assignments, each pilot site completed demographic profiles and analyzed their communities in order to identify potential employer/agency partners and unique strategies that would create meaningful ABLE/workforce partnerships. Orientations were planned, promotional

packets were created, and flyers and brochures were printed during this planning stage. When the planning and preparation stage was completed, each ABLÉ program director made appointments with interested employers to discuss encouraging their employees to enroll in an ABLÉ program. An invitation to a GED Online orientation, an information packet, and a needs assessment were left with each employer. An important component of the needs assessment was to ask the employers how they would support and encourage their employee to obtain a GED. Identified support included wage increases, use of a work computer and paying for the GED. In all three pilots, orientations were well attended, as employers encouraged employees to attend. The paradigm shift for this pilot project was the aggressive partner outreach. Without this component, distance learning would have become another curriculum option. Instead, distance delivery energized staff, introduced ABLÉ to the community (although the programs had been in existence for several years), and increased student enrollment. There were 40 students enrolled as distance learners, 14 of the students spent 51 percent or more of their time online and seven of the 14 earned their GED, with an average of 73 percent of their learning time online.

The most significant unintended consequence was the increase in traditional students, as many of the individuals that came to the orientation came to learn about the GED Online, and after completing a student learner survey they decided to enroll in the program as a traditional student. Overall enrollment in Miles City increased 59 percent, Roundup 58 percent, and Crow Agency 23 percent. Throughout the pilot project, the instructional staff and directors had ongoing support through regularly scheduled conference calls, state staff assistance in the form of on-site help with outreach activities, and technical support from Missouri GED Online. The pilot project demonstrated that new outreach and instructional strategies can be integrated into an existing program by reallocating existing resources. In September 2008, the pilot project was introduced to state directors and staff at the annual Adult Education Data Quality Conference. The pilot project teams presented a comprehensive overview and shared materials developed during the development of the RAEC Grant distance delivery model. The distance learning presentation ended with an invitation to the 17 remaining programs to review the distance learning material and consider integrating distance learning into their curriculum. Eight of the 17 remaining programs submitted an application and will participate in distance learning training in January 2009. The state application required a commitment to adhere to the pilot project model, as the initial data demonstrates the model is a viable option for meeting the needs of employers and our under-skilled, employed workforce.

The second annual State of the State Directors' Meeting was held on January 29, 2008, with all 20 program directors in attendance. As at the first annual meeting, a major objective of the meeting was to analyze mid-year statewide and program data in order to compare these data to last year's data. The state facilitated an in-depth discussion on enrollment, education gains, core outcomes and performance targets. In addition to data analysis, day one of the meeting included Assessment Policy training, reviewing the proposed program self-assessment for 2008, and discussing future professional development needs. Day two of the meeting was spent on the development of a mission statement and possible statewide strategic plans that would support the new mission statement. Moving from autonomous programs to a statewide delivery system is the objective of the directors' meetings, and the activities throughout the two days are geared to

sustain this perspective.

The October 18-19, 2007, Character Education Conference provided training in research-based motivational interviewing and an overview of Ruby Payne's work on understanding the Framework of Poverty. Fifty-seven adult educators alongside over 200 K-12 educators attended this conference. The purpose of the conference was to bring instructors from select K-12 Native American schools and adult educators together to explore the commonalities of working with students from poverty, as many of the state's adult education programs are located in or near communities where the K-12 schools have successfully implemented Character Education. Through a Character Education grant, targeted Native American K-12 schools have made significant progress in improving low socioeconomic students' academic performance, attendance and retention. The adult educators were invited to glean from the successes of the secondary schools and apply specific strategies to their adult education instruction. Day one of the conference began with a presentation on the history of the Character Education grant, specifically, how the schools had moved from being caught up on trying to do what doesn't work better to a new way of working with students, family and community. In the afternoon of day one, a trained Character Education facilitator led a workshop with the adult educators to help them define the barriers for adult students and identify possible solutions. The goal was to determine how programs could change and more readily give students the tools to make education gains, attend class regularly, and achieve identified goals.

The second day, Dr. Christine Fiore, University of Montana psychology professor, conducted a one-day training on motivational interviewing which is a questioning approach for instructors and counselors to use with students to help them overcome the ambivalence that often keeps them from making desired changes in their lives. The goal of the training was to give adult educators the skills to help students free up their own resources for change. Educators can use the process during intake, instruction, and through ongoing goal setting sessions. At the conclusion of the training, participants understood the principles of motivational interviewing, how it helps people change, and how it can be implemented in adult education. Additionally, participants were given time to practice the technique.

Each ABLE team was charged with taking the information from the Character Education grant and motivational interviewing strategies back to their site to develop a short-term and long-term plan articulating how they will implement solutions to barriers and integrate motivational interviewing into their existing practice. Five follow-up Google Chats were scheduled to support programs in their efforts. One follow-up Google Chat was well attended. ABLE program directors and staff have been asked to review their progress in implementing programmatic changes through the desktop monitoring feature in the student information system.

During the 2007 program year, Montana LINCS evolved into a resource to support statewide professional development activities. Following the Reading is the Bridge Conference hosted by the state in June 2007, the state determined that the reading research-based activities and methodologies from Bridges to Practice that were presented by Dr. John

Kruidenier and lead instructors needed to be sustained through job-embedded, ongoing professional development. Montana LINC S became the vehicle promoting statewide ongoing discussion on the implementation of research-based instruction. The state contracted with Norene Peterson, a state ABLE instructor, who has worked on the LINC S Web site since it began as a collaborative effort between the Northwest Consortium and NIFL. The original site was developed to provide a variety of services. The vision for a new use of LINC S was to transition from teacher resources to the hub for continuous professional development using the Reading is the Bridge Conference as the springboard. Prior to leaving the conference, participants were advised that beginning in September they would receive a bi-monthly e-mail reviewing one of the components of best practice presented at the conference. The bi-monthly update would focus on the theme of the month (i.e. phonemics). The format would be consistent each week: a review of one concept learned, a snippet on the research supporting the concept with related links for further reading, a link to lessons supporting the concept, and an e-mail link to submit questions and/or insights on the theme of the week. The average number of hits per day on the Reading is the Bridge link went from four in October 2007 to 26 in April 2008. This increase confirms that instructors across the state are actively continuing in the professional development process. Overall, MTLINC S appears to be a success with an average of 741 visits per day. The main page is averaging 201 visits. From that page people can go a variety of directions to find what they are wanting. At that point many may just bookmark the page they find most useful.

The LINC S will continue to provide support as instructors receive bi-monthly updates from the LINC S Web site.

Monthly *Shop Talks* modeled after the *Shop Talks* conducted by the U.S. Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the state directors of adult education were held throughout the program year. Regularly scheduled talks involving the state staff and all program directors were used to disseminate information, promote instructional leadership and provide technical assistance to ensure accountability. In addition to the *Shop Talks*, two teleconferences were also scheduled during the program year. It was determined that teleconferences were an effective way to supplement *Shop Talks* as a means of sharing important information for program improvement.

The National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC) continues to be a source of information and support for the state director and for the state. The connection to the NAEPDC has allowed the state director to learn from and network with colleagues nationally and regionally on issues that are important for successful state administration. The benefits of this type of affiliation are increased confidence in running the state program, access to important information that can benefit the state, and support for the often-challenging task of managing this program.

2. Describe any significant finding from the Eligible Agency's evaluation of the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the core indicators of performance.

The transition to a new Web-based data system makes data analysis across time problematic, as in conjunction with going to a Web-based data entry system was increased accountability in measuring student progress. MABLE is establishing a new baseline of data that will more accurately measure consistent outcomes for all students. In looking at the data from this program year, it is important to understand that the new student information system includes a more comprehensive, rigorous, systemic approach for measuring student progress. Prior to 2007, instructors typically entered one pretest assessment in the data system as the primary area of instruction, posttested in the identified primary area of instruction, and used this data to capture an education gain. Comparing data between ABLE programs appeared to be challenging with this data entry system in place, as it was obvious, the definition of primary of instruction varied between programs. With the completion of the Web-based system, assessment data for each student must include a locator and pretest in language, reading and mathematics. The system automatically determines the primary area of instruction, which is the content area where the student must make an education gain. The new holistic approach to measuring a student's academic need has required changes in instructional practice, intake, and goal setting. Considering increased assessment time and required modifications to instructional practice, significant dips in the percentage of students making an education gain were anticipated. The chart below shows, the adult educators embraced best practice and were able to meet student needs as defined by a more comprehensive approach to student assessment. In the chart below, it can be noted that performance actually increased in two areas, was maintained in one area, and dropped between 5 and 2 percent in the other three areas, which are not major fluctuations.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 06-07</u> Old DATA System	<u>PY 07-08</u> New Web-Based System
ABE Beg Lit	40%	47%
ABE Beg Basic	45%	40%
ABE Int Low	42%	39%
ABE Int High	36%	34%
ASE Low	36%	38%
ASE High	50%	50%

In spite of increased rigor, for the most part, meeting performance targets continued. This new baseline suggests that the instructors have been able to use the data system requirements to effectively guide instruction.

To maintain an upward trend it is incumbent upon the state and local programs to determine what strategies are contributing to success and build on this foundation. Along with identifying the instructional strategies that are working, the state must work with local programs to ensure that research-based instructional strategies are being integrated into existing practice. Research-based activities, combined with current best practice, will provide a framework for ongoing student success.

Although the new assessment policy did not require instructional changes for ESL educators, the BEST Plus training did remind everyone of the importance of adhering to the requirements of the standardized test. However, Montana's ESL population remains very small, causing the data to vary significantly from year to year. Data does validate education gains for a large number of ESL students. With only 208 ESL students and wide swings in enrollment in each performance area, comparisons from year to year are difficult.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 06-07</u> Old Data System	<u>PY 07-08</u> New Web-Based System
ESL Beg Lit	37%	44%
ESL Low	85%	47%
ESL Beg High	56%	38%
ESL Int Low	68%	57%
ESL Int High	54%	54%
ESL Advanced	39%	56%

The outcomes in the core areas are listed in the table below.

<u>Outcome Measure</u>	<u>PY 06-07</u> Old Data System	<u>PY 07-0</u> New Web-Based System
Entered Employment 4	44.1%	47%
Retained Employment	34.1%	41%
GED or Sec Diploma	53.4%	61%
Post Sec	40.1%	61%

Transferring to a new data system and changes to the assessment policy changes did not require altering the goal setting process, but data indicates that the policy trainings, as well as desktop monitoring, may have heightened awareness on the importance of ongoing goal setting and identification of correct goals, which may account for the increased performance in all core goal areas. In addition, the emphasis on comprehensive assessment could be a factor in appropriate goal setting. Core goal outcomes point toward GED attainment as the primary goal for most students. Since this is not aligned with the ABLE mission of transitioning students beyond the GED to postsecondary or into the workforce, the state examined core goal outcomes further. Data analysis supported this assumption. Selecting appropriate goals beyond the GED will be a focus for the next program year.

A new baseline for measuring the effectiveness of Montana ABLÉ programs has started with the 2007 transition to a new data system. Although minimal dips in percentages of students making an education gain occurred in some ABLÉ performance areas, the percentage of students succeeding in meeting performance targets exceeded percentages in all areas in 2005-2006. This demonstrates the adult educators made the transition to a Web-based system with minimal negative impact on student learning. Diligent review of the revised assessment policy and ongoing MABLE trainings may have laid the foundation for the smooth transition. The state will continue to work closely with program directors and instructional staff to continue to focus on increasing the number of students attaining an appropriate core goal(s) and making academic gain.

3. Describe how the Eligible Agency has supported the integration of activities sponsored under Title II with other adult education, career development and employment and training activities. Include a description of how the eligible agency is being represented on the local Workforce Investment Boards, adult education's involvement on the State Workforce Investment Board, the provision of core and other services through the One-Stop system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop Delivery system.

The state Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch has appointed the division administrator of the Career, Technical and Adult Education Division a full voting member of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), representing ABLÉ. The state ABLÉ program director was appointed by the governor in January 2008 to serve on the Youth Council, which is part of the Workforce Committee System. The Youth Council is responsible for coordinating and researching the most current workforce information related to youth education and employment for the purpose of making recommendations to the SWIB. The Youth Council quarterly meetings are designed to augment the vision and mission of the SWIB.

In addition to the Youth Council, the state ABLÉ program director serves as a member of the State Agency Management Team for Workforce Development (SAM), which was developed to address the issues around state agency consolidation and coordination with work force development programs. Pertinent information addressed at SAM meetings is shared with the SWIB and local community management teams (CMT). Conversely, pertinent information from the SWIB meetings is shared with the SAM. All ABLÉ program directors are required to participate in the activities of the local CMTs. The flow of information between the various entities strengthens meaningful partnerships and continues to positively contribute to the local work force development efforts.

The rural nature of Montana lends itself to the One-Stop Delivery system. Although only one ABLÉ program is housed in a true one-stop delivery system, the remaining programs have established strong relationships with the one-stop in their community. Due to the small size of all Montana communities, all adult education programs are able to operate as though they are part of a one-stop delivery system. The flow of information and students between agencies is seamless and continuous. Current partnerships sustain formal and informal communication and the sharing

of resources among the agencies. Students are served efficiently and effectively. This collaboration gives our students the support they need to be successful. One-stop delivery is embraced conceptually in Montana and is in action on a daily basis.

Shared Youth Vision task force, headed by the state WIA Youth Program Manager, continued this program year. The task force was formed to bring federal agencies serving the neediest youth together to coordinate and integrate services. The state director for Adult Basic and Literacy Education, and others core team members, worked diligently throughout the program year to clearly articulate a vision and keep a Shared Youth Vision in Montana moving forward. Increasing the number of GEDs attained by the neediest youth was identified as the measurable goal for the state of Montana. To achieve the goal, the task force held monthly meetings and telephone conference calls to develop the vision, mission, and action plan for the Montana project. The action plan, based on research and statewide data analysis, was an agenda item at two Youth Council meetings. In addition, two statewide meetings, one in July and one in August, were organized to expand the number of partners committed to the Shared Youth Vision. With increased partners and the support of the Youth Council, a formal plan is being prepared for the SWIB in 2009, as the connection between the Shared Youth Vision and the economic future of Montana is understood by all partners and the next step is the support of the SWIB.

The Transition Task Force brought together in April of 2007 by the Montana Governor's office requested the participation of the State Adult Basic and Literacy Education Director and continues to meet on a regular basis. Representatives from a majority of all of the states agencies are serving on this task force, and the overarching goal is to guarantee a seamless education and support system for all disabled youth in order to transition them to the workforce, postsecondary education and a productive role in the community. The fulfillment of this responsibility is dependent upon the practical cooperation and coordination among all levels of government and between the public and private sectors. The Governor has made the work of this task force a priority for the upcoming legislative session.

In June of 2008, Adult Basic and Literacy Education, Department of Labor, and the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education submitted a WIA Incentive Grant Application describing goals and actions to develop the infrastructure for services designed to enable unemployed/underemployed adults to gain the skills necessary to attain self-sufficiency and move up the economic ladder. Work will proceed through 2008-2009.

4. Describe successful activities and services supported with EL Civics funds, including the number of programs receiving EL Civics grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.

There were five EL Civics Extension Grants for the 2007-2008 program year, and the number of students served was 208 compared to 200 students last program year. These EL Civics programs are small, but serving a diverse and high needs population. These programs have developed a variety of ways to give their students the opportunity to learn in relevant, creative atmospheres. EL Civics students in Montana participate in family literacy nights, listen to guest

speakers from the community, work with tutors in a one-on-one situation, interact with activity based software, participate in ethnic food demonstrations, go on field trips and learn from locally developed, germane curriculum that is largely hands-on, minds-on.

Collaborative partnerships have been established with local Head Start programs and public schools for identifying target adult populations. Free childcare at one program site has enabled ESL/EL Civics students to attend the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program. Another program has reached out to a local employer hiring seasonal migrant workers from Mexico; employees are provided with instruction two evenings a week during their time at the employment site.

The programs receiving EL Civic funds, as well as other programs working with the ESL population, are striving to make instruction relevant and fast-paced in order to assist students in moving into ABLE instruction, workforce, or postsecondary education. Yet, the February BEST Plus training brought several factors to light: beyond assessment training, there never has been any statewide professional development opportunities for ESL educators; ESL instructors did not feel that there was any support for their professional development; and the ESL instructors felt they were working in isolation.

Montana's population is slowly becoming more multicultural and multilingual, and, with the candid opinions expressed at the BEST Plus training, the state applied for the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition Network (CAELA) grant. The state was notified in June that a state ESL team will work collaboratively with CAELA to develop a state plan for professional development and technical assistance for instructors working with English language learners. Over the next two years, the Montana CAELA team will engage in a thoughtful process that will enhance instructors' abilities to meet the needs of ESL students and create a statewide ESL system, preparing the ABLE programs for the future demands of this growing population.