

Delaware 2009 Narrative Report 2008-2009

FY 09 was a unique year that presented many challenges and opportunities for Delaware Adult Education. Over the course of the 2008-2009 program year, numerous factors combined to affect adult education including: high unemployment rates, a state budget deficit, the election of a new governor, and changes in state agency leadership.

As employment opportunities decreased and more adults lived with the threat of imminent unemployment, the value of an education became crystal clear. Enrollment grew significantly from last year as waiting lists for programs expanded. The number of verification requests from employers and credentialing services increased consistently throughout the year. To serve larger populations with level funding, programs analyzed their instructional delivery to maximize resources. At bi-monthly administrators' meetings, programs shared their challenges and successes in an effort to provide adult learners with timely quality services that fulfilled their goals.

In addition to responding to the economy, Delaware ABE programs also focused on state goals that were identified based on needs that surfaced in the 2007-2008 program year. These goals were the targets of the state's leadership funding.

LEADERSHIP FUNDS

The state Leadership funds focused on four major areas:

1. Continuation of STAR instructional components to ABE Reading instructors
2. Development of ESL standards
3. Participation in a doctoral study regarding leadership needs of ABE program administrators
4. Infusion of technology into staff development

In 2008 - 2009, Delaware Adult Education administrators focused reading and ESL instruction. At bi-monthly ABE Administrators' meetings, the statewide First Annual Joint Summit for Instructors, Students and Administrators Conference, and local site presentations, administrators and teachers analyzed, discussed and shared information regarding instruction for lower skilled ABE learners and ESL learners. These topics were re-visited with program administrators throughout the year along with a review of the new assessment policy and goal settings procedures introduced the previous year as the result of a targeted monitoring. Program administrators were encouraged to call the State Team with any questions or insights. Issues, concerns and findings were shared at subsequent Administrators' Meeting resulting in an integrated continuous improvement process.

To support evidenced-based reading instruction (EBRI) within ABE, programs continued to use the **STudent Achieving in Reading**. In January, a state staff member attended STAR "Training of the Trainer" staff development in Washington D.C. The state staff member provided each of the original ten programs that attended STAR Institutes in FY 08 with technical assistance and instructional resources to continue STAR implementation in FY 09. In addition to this technical assistance, six days of training for new programs were planned for FY 10. STAR training provided ABE teachers with a basis for formal reading instruction which is essential for effective instruction since 95% of our teachers never participated in formal reading instruction. While integrating STAR into the ABE classroom has necessitated a "mindset" change for both teachers and students, the positive effects are beginning to be felt. One program administrated informed us that students are now asking to be included in STAR instruction based on recommendations of current students. This year instructors became more familiar with alphabetic, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies. In 2009, four prison ABE programs also conducted a strategic educational improvement project concentrating on STAR instruction which demonstrated reading improvement through test data analysis. For the coming year, the state in coordination with programs will focus on how to introduce the value of fluency skills into classroom instruction.

In the 2008-2009 program year, Delaware started the development process for new ESL standards. For many years, ESL instruction has been based on the Delaware Adult ESL Modules. After reviewing ESL standards from Maryland, Massachusetts, and New York, state staff realized that our modules needed to be updated and re-formatted. To achieve this goal and improve ESL instruction, program and state staff analyzed Delaware's ESL modules in preparation for composing new standards for each of the ESL educational functioning levels. A draft of these standards was completed in FY09 and is being piloted in FY 10. When discussing these changes, ESL instructors were enthusiastic since they were already including additional topics in their classrooms. These standards validated ESL teachers' beliefs concerning essential topics.

To facilitate instruction within ESL classes, EL/Civics web resources were added to the state literacy resource center's website, the ACE Network. These materials included a variety of instructional and informational web sites on Civics, government, the U.S. Naturalization test, Delaware museums and historical sites in addition to a listing of other state Departments of Education EL Civics/ESL websites. These resources extended the materials available to students and provided a wider variety of experiences to satisfy individual student's needs.

The value of ESL classes to adult learners was demonstrated through student program evaluations. Alicia stated that her ESL instructor helped her to improve the critical language skills needed for her work in a local medical clinic which serves a largely Hispanic population. Poon, a recent immigrant, informed her ESL instructor that because of the ESL program, she was able to obtain a driver's license and a job in a local hospital's cafeteria. Roberto thanked his ESL instructor for helping him to become more independent on his job. Prior to participation in ESL classes, he had to rely on others to translate work orders and communicate with supervisors. Roberto can now speak up for

himself, is saving money to bring his family to the States, and is studying for his citizenship test.

In 2009 for the first time, the OAASIS Student Conference and DAACE Professional Development Conference were combined to allow both students and teachers to participate in a common learning experience through a joint summit. The keynote speaker, Dr. Gary Eyre, presented information on nationally recognized ABE leadership projects inspiring both instructors and students to become part of a continuous improvement process. As a follow up for program administrators, a Prison Education administrator centered his doctoral dissertation on diagnosing and remediating the needs of current adult education program managers. As a result, a staff development program covering the identified needs was developed with additional input from administrators. Presentation of these training sequences is planned for 2010.

To expand staff development opportunities, a Moodle platform for Internet delivery was developed and several training courses were piloted. This alternative method of staff development reduced traveling costs and increased training time for programs.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

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

- Enrollment

Delaware's ABE total enrollment increased by 17% in the 2008-2009 program year. This was due partially to Delaware's weak economy and high unemployment rate. In FY 09 as in previous years, some students who could have participated in ABE/GED chose instead to enroll in the state funded James H. Groves Adult High School. In contrast to last year however, all programs used only stated approved assessments. This was verified by program peer monitorings and on-site technical assistance sessions. Several patterns did emerge this year.

1. ABE Beginning Literacy continues to be a very small portion of our student population because most lower skilled students are scoring at a 2.0 GLE or higher.
2. ASE Low experienced a slight increase because students, especially those between the ages of 19 and 29, needed to gain a secondary credential for employment or training opportunities.
3. Consistent with past experience, approximately 50% of our students placed at the ABE Intermediate Low and Intermediate High levels. These are the levels that also experience the greatest number of EFL gains.
4. The ESL program experienced a 4% increase in enrollment from the previous program year with an increase in both male and

female participants. Interestingly, all ESL levels experienced a similar number of students enrolling. In 2009-2010, we will explore this further to determine if a feeder system has been developed in which students are returning to ESL programs in subsequent years.

5. The composition of the ABE program experienced a slight change from 2008. In FY 09, 75% of adult learners were placed in ABE levels representing an increase of 3% over the previous year. ESL participation increased by 4%.
6. ABE enrollment patterns also indicated an increase in both male and female participation across all ethnicities except Asian which experienced a slight reduction. In FY 10, we will continue to monitor this trend and its connection to the state's changing economic forecast and new workforce requirements.
7. In the 2008 – 2009 year, 40% of TABE pre tests placed students based on a lower Reading score and 60% of students were placed based on a lower Math score. With the introduction of the LACES system in 2009, a deeper analysis of testing data will be possible so that areas of instructional need within programs can be more readily identified.

- Age of Students

In FY 09, 44% of all ABE students continue to be between the ages of 16 and 24. However, an additional 44% were between the ages of 25- 44, an increase of 1% from last year probably due job uncertainty. In contrast, there was a slight decrease of 1% in learners aged 44 years and older. To ensure that all program best served their adult learners, we continued to explore innovative practices for different age groups by retaining the “Innovations” component of every ABE Administrators’ meeting. In response to differing student needs, some programs restructured their instructional delivery systems by including block scheduling, accelerated learning opportunities, or a combination of traditional and distance learning opportunities. Two of our programs have developed partnerships with their districts so that the names of parents without a secondary credential identified when registering their children for school are forwarded to the district’s Adult Education Program for follow up.

- Educational Functioning Level Gains and Continuations

In FY 09, our programs experienced a slight increase in the percentage increasing levels from 47% to 49%. Thirty one percent (31%) of students remained within in a single level over the course of the program year which is a 5% decrease from the previous year. The 2009 separation rate averaged 20% which was higher than the 16% rate in 2008.

A large proportion of EFL gains occurred within the Intermediate Low and Intermediate High levels which align with the majority of our student placements. The average hours of participation for this year are 83.4 hours per student. ABE students stayed approximately 85 hours while ESL students remained for an average of 65 hours. In the coming year, we will be monitoring student attendance hours to determine which type of instructional delivery retains students the longest.

- Performance Outcomes

On the core indicators, the acquisition of GEDs increased by 19% from FY 08 to FY 09 resulting in over 800 adult learners receiving their GEDs this year. Postsecondary education and training outcomes also increased probably as a result of the new workforce that is requiring higher educational levels and more specific skills training. However, the number of students who met their employment and job retention goals decreased this year. After analyzing our data, we discovered that students who had set employment as a goal did indeed obtain a job but did not retain the job into the third quarter after exiting the program. We were unable to determine if this decrease was due to business closures, workforce reduction in some companies, or initial temporary job placements.

We continue to perform a data match with Delaware DOL and have established a process for data matching post secondary placements with the Delaware Higher Education Commission.

Despite these decreases, some students did successfully find employment. Carmen, one of our distance learning students, shared that because she was able to obtain her GED through an online ABE program, she was able to secure a position in a local dental office. She added that with her four children and three prior unsuccessful attempts at obtaining her GED, virtual ABE instruction was the solution she needed to advance into a good paying job that supported her family.

- Integration of Title II Activities

During 2008-2009 program year, the One Stop Assessor Project continued to be funded developing an integration of services with the Department of Labor through the one stop system. This project assessed over 625 students in preparation for specific skills training. ABE staff assessed Department of Labor (DOL) candidates on the TABE to determine current academic skill levels to determine they were sufficient for the upcoming training. The ABE assessors worked with DOL case managers to explain the significance of the TABE results and their impact on future training. If candidates were found to be lacking in academic skills, DOL case managers referred the clients to ABE programs for remediation and subsequent re-testing for training opportunities. Approximately \$70,000 in ABE services were dedicated to this effort.

In 2009, ABE also worked closely with child care licensing. Recently, Delaware radically changed its licensing requirements in an effort to provide pre-K children in day care facilities with increased school readiness skills. As a result, all child care

workers new to the field must have a GED or diploma to obtain a job. ABE programs partnered with licensing to offer academic refreshment classes to those workers who were already employed and were grandfathered into the new licensing requirements.

In addition, Adult Education is a key partner in the Governor's Prison Re-entry Plan which is revising current community re-integration processes to support a lower recidivism rate. The Departments of Labor, Correction, Health and Social Services, Housing and Education have revised service provision to integrate agency information into a transition plan that will be developed prior to the offender's release.

For the first time ever, Adult Education made a presentation on services and student outcomes to the Workforce Investment Board and State Board of Education. With the new Secretary of Education, we are hoping to strengthen our relationship with the WIB and the State Board.

- EL/Civics Activities

In 2008, EL/Civics funded the creation of a web resource on the Adult Community Educators Network website. The resources were targeted for teachers and ESL students and addressed three topics:

- History, Civics and the Naturalization process with websites for teacher resources in government, American history, the Naturalization Test, Civics lesson plans and activities, teaching Civics, and other teacher and student resources
- Other state ESL/EL-Civics activities.
- Museums and historical sites in Delaware. These points of interest, if relative, were linked to the 100 Naturalization questions.

Nine programs received EL/Civics funding that targeted 763 students in ESOL programs. However, all students receiving ESL instruction benefited from this project since all ESL classes have integrated EL/Civics instruction into their lesson plans. These resources allow ESL instructors to more easily incorporate EL Civics instruction into the regular ESL classroom. Students who demonstrated their knowledge of the EL/Civics content by passing the 100 Nationalization questions, in a verbal or written format, continued to receive the Citizenship Certification of Educational Attainment. Ana, one of our ESL students, used her newly attained language skills to expand her business and while applying for citizenship. Roberto was also able to garner a job promotion while studying for the Naturalization test as a result of participation in an ABE program.