

**Title II – Workforce Investment Act
Montana Narrative Report 2008-2009
December 2009**

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.

State Data Quality/Program Improvement Conference: A statewide conference was organized as the springboard for the Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) programs to strategize for the ensuing program year. Seventy-four participants, including program directors and designated staff, came together in September 2009 to participate in activities that would assist them in long-term planning and provided the opportunity to collaborate with other ABLE program staff. The theme of the conference was *Montana ABLE/A Rising Star*. The logo for the conference was a star with each point of the star representing a strand in the state ABLE vision: implementing distance learning, developing content standards, defining ESL professional development needs, supporting a leadership academy, and sustaining research-based instruction. Circling the star was the word "data". This was used to remind everyone that our work is based on the commitment to use valid and reliable data. Each session of the conference featured one of the strands in a unique way to keep participants engaged and enthused. It is the intent of the state to follow this conference format in succeeding years. It ensures that everyone in the state is apprised of the current work of the state with the expectation that program directors can select the areas in which their local programs will become involved and, at the same time, have an understanding of areas of activity in which they are not participants. A strong, effective adult education system will be the result of thoughtfully planned annual conferences.

Distance Learning: A major initiative for the 2008-2009 program year was transitioning the Rural Adult Education Cooperative (RAEC) Grant distance learning pilot project to a statewide distance delivery system. In September 2008, the pilot project was introduced to state directors and staff at the annual ABLE conference. The pilot project team presented a comprehensive overview of the distance learning model and shared materials developed during the project. 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 existing curriculum. Eight of the 17 remaining programs submitted an application and participated in distance learning training in January 2009.

The state application required a commitment to adhere to the pilot project model, as the initial data demonstrated the model was a viable option for meeting the needs of employers and our under-skilled, employed workforce. The application requested each program complete a community needs assessment to determine what data supported distance learning and to help target potential distance learning audiences. After determining who the potential audiences would be, the applicants had to describe what message would be conveyed to each audience and how ongoing communication and specific outreach activities would be maintained. The programs also had to identify the staff who would be involved in distance learning and how time and fiscal resources would be allocated to distance delivery. The next section of the application required a plan of implementation detailing all steps from orientation to exiting students. The last section of the application required all program directors commit to adhering to the state distance learning policy, attend all required state-level distance learning activities, and use the RAEC grant model as their guide for integrating distance learning into their existing curriculum.

Prior to implementing distance education, all applicants and pilot project participants were required to attend distance delivery training in January 2009. The training was two-pronged. First,

the programs were immersed in the pilot project model and given directions on how to use all of the resources that have been developed (news articles, orientation material, student management plans, sample letters and e-mails, partner outreach material, and marketing packets). Each participating program left this phase of the training clearly understanding the Montana distance learning model was an adult education/employer partnership dedicated to helping employers and employees. Through employer support, employees would continue to work on the job while studying online to attain their GED, thus providing career pathways for the employee. At the same time distance learning would be assisting the employers through creating dedicated employees focused on furthering his/her opportunities. The second day of the training was a hands-on training by a representative from Missouri GED Online, the contractor for the state-approved distance learning curriculum. Local program staff was trained in all components of the GED Online software, as well as an overview of SkillsTutor, which was included in the Montana contract with Missouri. The Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) staff left the training equipped with the necessary resources to implement their proposed distance learning plan. In order to sustain the conversation and keep the local program staff energized and focused, the state scheduled monthly conference calls with all participating programs. The conference calls were set up by region, and each month the standing agenda items included questions regarding distance delivery, recruitment updates, and program reports on the steps completed, successes, and new strategies.

There was a strong commitment to use distance delivery as prescribed by the state, and the programs made a good faith effort to continue the pilot project work. However, within two months of the training, the state economy began to plummet. ABLE staff found it difficult to engage employers in a conversation about supporting staff that may be in need of a GED. In a matter of months, employers' focus turned from finding and retaining employees to cutting staff. At the same time, many of the ABLE programs were being inundated with students. By late spring conference calls became the vehicle to discuss how a pilot project that was designed to meet the needs of a robust economy could be modified to meet the needs of a staggering economy. All of the ABLE programs submitted a mid-year evaluation addressing their successes, challenges, and future needs. These evaluations will be used to shape distance delivery for the next program year.

In spite of the immediate challenges, 46 students completed more than 51 percent of his/her instruction time using the distance learning curriculum for a total of 1,606 student learning hours. Also, 34 percent of the distance learning students made an education gain. This data validates that distance learning is meeting the needs of some students, and it is incumbent upon the state to continue to support distance learning and to be flexible in defining the delivery model that will increase the number of distance learners.

Development of Content Standards: A second major initiative for the 2008-2009 program year was the development of content standards for ABLE. The process began in May 2008 when the state sent a request for volunteers to work on the development of the content standards. Interested applicants submitted a brief description of their education background and a letter of support from their program director. In order to launch the project, the state contracted with Claudia DeBay, ABE/CASAS Manager/Trainer and Resource Specialist from Nevada, to facilitate the project. The annual ABLE conference in September was used as the launch pad for developing the content standards. Ms. DeBay was a keynote speaker at the conference. She laid the foundation for the project by apprising directors and instructors of the need and benefits of having state content standards. Following her address, the individuals who had applied to work on the standards, worked with Ms. DeBay for the remainder of the conference. This initial meeting established work groups and defined how the standards' work would proceed. They also defined state goals and

reviewed commonly used terms and standards from a variety of states. Participants left this meeting with a work plan and identified roles for each member. Prior to a second meeting, the individual participants gathered resources and collaborated via e-mail and conference calls to review writing format options and the overarching goals for state content standards. In November, the teams met for the second time with the facilitator to review all of the information they had gathered and to finalize the format the teams would use for the writing process. After this second meeting, the writing teams determined that a facilitator was no longer necessary. They were prepared to begin the writing process and were confident they could continue on their own. The state organized monthly face-to-face meetings and interim conference calls that provided the teams the time to share, discuss, and manage the process. Between monthly meetings, the individuals continued to write and communicate through weekly Skype meetings and e-mails. Between November and May, the teams completed math, reading, science, social studies, writing, and ESOL standards. In addition to the content standards, the teams designed a logo and completed a purpose statement, statements of significance, a bibliography, and a standards overview. In June, the teams met to assemble all sections of the standards into one document for statewide review.

The completion of the content standards has been a major accomplishment for the state. Standards development has clearly articulated what students need to know and be able to do, and they are the basis for a systemic approach to adult education. The completion of the initial standards document is a first step; the state standards initiative will continue into the next program year. In the coming year, the state will provide technical assistance in implementing the standards and promoting standards-based instruction. The state will be responsible for making standards-based education an integral part of the state adult education system.

Leadership Academy: Ten program directors applied to participate in a two-year Leadership Excellence Academy-Program Improvement Training. The academy includes state supported face-to-face workshops, online courses, Web casts, and technical assistance in completing a self-identified program improvement project. The directors began the project in October 2009 with a series of self-assessment activities. Over the course of the first year, the directors used this information to guide them in integrating research and data analysis into planning program improvement. The state supported this project with the intention of developing a cadre of program instructors that will become empowered and excited about their work as instructional leaders, and at the same time, provide leadership for their professional peers. The ultimate outcome will be strengthening the leadership at the local program level, as program improvement is dependent upon good leadership.

Research-Based Instruction (Montana LINCS): MTLINCS has become the vehicle for promoting statewide, ongoing support for research-based instruction. The state contracted with Norene Peterson, a state ABLE instructor, who has worked on the LINCS Web site since it began as a collaborative effort between the Northwest Consortium and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The original site was developed to provide a variety of teacher/student resources. The vision for a new use of MTLINCS is to transition from a teacher/student resource center to become the hub for ongoing professional development that is linked to the state initiatives. The homepage for MTLINCS now features a star with a link to the five-state initiative strands. Each week an e-mail is sent to all ABLE instructors, directors, and volunteers, with links to one to three of the strands from the star. Upon opening a link, recipients will note a snippet of research on the selected strand with links to further resources and Web sites when they want to read further on the topic. Below each research snippet, the reader will find the question for the week and an e-mail link to submit responses and/or insights on the topic. Through reading and responding, Montana ABLE instructors can find support for their professional development endeavors and carry on

professional conversation between programs and across the miles. Also, all state activities related to each strand are posted. In minutes, readers can access PowerPoints, pictures, and all relevant state documents from trainings and meetings. ABLE staff may also bookmark the LINC'S homepage to view the Web site in its entirety. The importance of MTLINC'S cannot be emphasized enough; it is the virtual faculty lounge that promotes research-based professional development. There are an average number of 832 daily visits to this site, and the OPI state initiatives links are steadily increasing. One can conclude that most of the hits are Montana-generated. For example, the Distance Learning index has grown from two visits per day to 14, Content Standards from two to four, and ESL from two to 11. In addition, people are still accessing the information from the 2008 state initiative and the original pilot project.

Montana ABLE Student Information System: Each program year a portion of the state leadership allocation is set aside to pay for ongoing maintenance and updates to the Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education (MABLE) student information system that was built by state programming staff. MABLE is viewed as an evolving system that is continually updated and modified to meet the current needs of the National Reporting System (NRS) and the local programs. This flexibility was supported this year by sending state staff (ABLE director, ABLE administrative assistant, and a representative from the information technology staff) to participate in the annual NRS training, Building and Sustaining Quality in NRS Data: Strategies for Program Improvement. The Montana team worked through the step-by-step program improvement guide and determined that our data objective for the year would be to move beyond MABLE enhancements to create a culture of data-driven work at the state and program level. Under the umbrella of creating a data culture, the state team decided that each year the state would focus on a specific data goal(s). This year, goal setting and desk monitoring were identified as areas of concentration.

In the area of goal setting, the state identified the following goal: each program would improve student goal setting by the end of the 2010 program year. The measure of success would be an increase in each programs' percentage of students with more than one transition goal. The programs were to encourage students to think beyond attaining their GED. The target would be a 5 percent increase for the 2008-2009 program year and a 10 percent increase in the 2009-2010 program year for each core goal. Each local program would monitor student goal setting by completing a state-generated goal setting spreadsheet each quarter. Between the program years 2007-08 and 2008-09 the percentage of students with the goal of attaining a GED moved from 47 percent to 39 percent; entering postsecondary moved from 11 percent 15 percent; entering employment moved from 15 percent to 24 percent; and retain employment moved from 14 percent to 21 percent. The results demonstrate a successful move in helping students articulate goals and think beyond the GED. This goal is specifically aligned to a collaborative effort by the Department of Labor, ABLE, and postsecondary education to transition adults into career pathways, and it has helped programs broaden their perspective when working with students.

In the area of desk monitoring, the state-identified goal was to provide training on using the desk monitoring tool that is built into MABLE to assist program staff in making program improvement decisions and to flag programs in need of state-level technical assistance. This training took place at the annual ABLE conference.

Staff Training and Technical Assistance (TABE, BEST Plus, and Spreadsheet): The state is committed to designating leadership dollars to comply with the state assessment policy's requirement that each year all trained TABE and BEST Plus staff will participate in refresher assessment training. In order to make the best use of state resources and staff time, assessment trainings were held in conjunction with another statewide event.

The MABLE student information system was built for transferring student data into spreadsheets for sorting and analysis. Regional trainings in the use of MABLE in the 2007-2008 program year revealed that many ABE staff personnel were not using this feature, because they did not understand spreadsheets. The state determined that through scheduling a TABE training, in conjunction with training on the use of spreadsheets, staff would begin to understand not only the value of administering assessments in a consistent manner, but that analyzing student data is as important as proper test administration. In March 2009, a group of 32 instructional staff and program directors came together for this training. The combined training validated the importance of standardized testing procedures and gave all programs the information needed for analyzing assessment and other student data.

The BEST Plus training was held the day before the state ESOL conference in April 2009. Nine instructors participated, and it was the perfect transition into the two-day conference that followed. The participating staff members were all new hires to ESOL education, and the training prior to the conference gave them the background they needed to glean essential information presented at the conference.

Formula Funding: The formula funding task force that convened in 2007 to develop a formula for the distribution of an increased state ABE allocation, met again in November and December of 2008. The purpose of the follow-up meetings was to review the formula and make further recommendations to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on formula funding for adult education. Both meetings were facilitated by the division administrator for the Career, Technical and Adult Education at the Office of Public Instruction. At the November meeting, task force members reviewed the minutes and the formula that was developed at their initial meeting. They then proceeded to go through an agenda that addressed funding concerns, defined a direction, identified solutions, and disseminated information to the field. At this time, the task force discussed the possibility of applying the formula to some of the federal and to more of the state allocation in the 2009 program year. The task force determined that at their next meeting, current program data would be analyzed using the spreadsheet that was developed in 2007. After analyzing the data at the December meeting, the task force recommended that the formula be applied to all state and federal allocations with a 10 percent cap for hold harmless and a 17 percent cap for increases in funding. The work of this task force is aligned to the goal of allocating resources to serve those most in need and rewarding programs that are effectively meeting these needs. However, the state needs to approach formula funding in a different manner in the upcoming program year. The swiftness of the process, the lack of communication with the field, and the fiscal impact on some local programs has led to skepticism and concern over future funding. The state will pursue technical assistance in order to generate an equitable and defensible funding formula.

State Directors' Meeting: The third annual state directors' meeting was held on January 28, 2009, with all program directors in attendance. Profiles for adult learners, statewide data, and local program data were reviewed. State goals, initiatives, assessment policy, formula funding, and program improvement strategies were agenda topics. All agenda items were related to the theme of transitioning students. The state will continue to bring the directors together annually, as the meeting is essential in assisting the directors in short-term and long-range planning within the parameters of the state initiatives and compliance with the federal law. Pride in adult education and local program improvement are the results of meetings that provide focused, relevant information for the program directors.

Shop Talks: 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.

The National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC): NAEPDC continues to be a source of information and support for the state director. The connection to the NAEPDC has allowed the state director to learn from and network with colleagues both 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 and access to important information that can benefit the state.

Describe any significant findings from the eligible agency's evaluation of the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the core indicators of performance.

The state is in year two of using the Web-based data system that provides the beginning of longitudinal trend data. The Web-based system requires similar assessment data for each student (locators and pretests in language, reading and mathematics). This consistent student data provides the state the opportunity to engage in meaningful data analysis from year to year. This holistic approach for measuring students' academic need has required changes in instructional practice, intake, and goal setting. The chart below shows the percentage of students making an educational gain in program years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 07-08</u>	<u>PY 08-09</u>
	New Web-Based System	New Web-Based System
ABE Beg Lit	47%	47%
ABE Beg Basic	40%	33%
ABE Int Low	39%	40%
ABE Int High	34%	34%
ASE Low	38%	46%

The data suggests the students in ABE Beginning Basic are an instructional challenge, and the only significant percentage gain was in the ASE Low category. It is incumbent upon the state to determine in which content areas the students are not making education gains and which programs are not making education gains. Technical assistance must be made available for identified programs, and professional development opportunities must be provided if a specific content area is identified as one where students across the state are struggling to achieve an education gain. Additionally, the state must work with local programs to ensure that research-based instructional strategies are being integrated into existing practice.

Montana's ESL population remains very small, and the number of students in each functioning level varies significantly from year to year. Data does validate educational gains for a large number of ESL students. With only 214 ESL students and wide swings in enrollment in each performance area, comparisons from year to year are difficult.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 07-08</u>	<u>PY 08-09</u>
	New Web-Based System	New Web-Based System
ESL Beg Lit	44%	44%
ESL Low	47%	67%
ESL Beg High	38%	56%
ESL Int Low	57%	45%
ESL Int High	54%	65%
ESL Advanced	56%	49%

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

<u>Outcome Measure</u>	<u>PY 07-08</u> New Web-Based System	<u>PY 08-09</u> New Web-Based System
Entered Employment	47%	36.7%
Retained Employment	41%	80%
GED or Sec Diploma	61%	61.8%
Post Sec	61%	56.9%

Data indicates the heightened awareness of the importance of goal setting beyond GED attainment may account for the decrease in performance for entering employment or postsecondary. As more students identify core goals beyond attaining a GED, programs must determine how to assist students in attaining these goals. Since the ABLE mission is to help transition students beyond the GED to postsecondary education or the workforce, the state will continue to examine the selection of core goals and the performance outcomes. Transitioning students beyond the GED will continue to be a focus for the next program year.

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.

State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB): The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau, has appointed the division administrator of the Career, Technical and Adult Education Division as a full voting member of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) representing ABLE. The state ABLE 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 work force information related to youth education and employment for the purpose of making recommendations to the SWIB. The Youth Council holds quarterly meetings designed to augment the vision and mission of the SWIB.

In addition to the Youth Council, the state ABLE 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 ABLE program directors are required to participate in the activities of the local CMT. The flow of information between the various entities strengthens meaningful partnerships and continues to positively contribute to the local work force development efforts.

One-Stop Delivery Systems: Although only one ABLE program is housed in a true one-stop delivery system, the remaining programs have established strong relationships with the one-stops 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.

ABLE's role in the one-stop delivery system has been validated by its presence being required on the governor's Rapid Response Team. The governor has called for monthly meetings where the heads of all the state agencies come together to discuss how the needs of the individuals losing employment can best be met. ABLE is a member of this team and was a participant in a teleconference that was organized by the governor to explain the role of this team to state staff at one-stops throughout the state.

Shared Youth Vision Task Force: The Shared Youth Vision core team continued to meet during 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 other core team members, worked diligently throughout the program year to clearly communicate a vision and to keep the Shared Youth Vision in Montana moving forward. Increasing the number of GED's 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 prepare and move the action plan for accomplishing this goal. 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 of helping targeted youth attain a high school equivalency credential. The vision was shared in presentations for the Superintendent of Public Instruction's staff and the state GED examiners. At each meeting, participants were asked to sign a pledge of support. Armed with the pledged support of the numerous agencies, a completed white paper, and a formal action plan, the Shared Youth Vision core team presented its goal and action plan to the Youth Council at their October 2008 meeting. At the conclusion of the presentation, the Youth Council voted to request funds from the governor's discretionary fund for implementing the proposed action plan. All partners understand the connection between the Shared Youth Vision and the economic future of Montana. To date, our request for a presentation at the SWIB has not been accepted.

Transition Task Force: Representatives from a majority of all of the state agencies, including ABLE, are serving on this task force. 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 into 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.

WIA Incentive Grant (WIG): At the conclusion of the 2007-08 program year, the Department of Labor, Adult Education, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education had finalized their goal for the recently awarded WIG. Developing a plan to enhance 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 was identified as the collaborative goal for this grant.

Through a series of meetings early in the 2009 program year, representatives from each agency determined that the most effective way to accomplish the goal was to coordinate client/student

services. Each agency agreed that client/student retention and completion of self-identified goals were the major problems facing each agency. The team determined a common intake activity could be found and shared across the agencies, duplicity of intake activities and assessments would be eliminated. Through the common intake activity, clients/students would seamlessly transition between agencies, which would lead to personal empowerment rather than discouragement. To accomplish this goal, the team agreed that the Montana Career Information System (MCIS) would be the hub for sharing client/student information. No matter what the point of entry (ABLE, higher education, or job service), MCIS would be the starting point for each client/student to create and store a transferable, electronic portfolio. Every client/student would have access to the same training modules to assist them through a three-step process. The process moves each person through skills awareness, career exploration, and finally the planning/implementation process. Each step of the process would be electronically saved, so the client/student works at their own pace in developing their academic and employment plan.

Once the plan was in place, the second half of the 2009 program year was spent garnering support. In January 2009, the WIG team hosted a meeting for the bureau chiefs and key staff from each of the respective agencies. An overview of the collaborate work was presented, and permission was granted to move forward with the project. The process was received with overwhelming support. The next step in the process was to gain the support of the field staff that would be facilitating the process with clients/students. In March 2009, the WIG team scheduled four focus group meetings that covered the uniquely divided regions of the state to explain the plan and ask for their input. At the conclusion of the focus group meetings, 72 pages of notes were collected, and the WIG team had the buy-in from the field. The information gleaned from the focus groups was organized and sent to all participants assuring them that their input would be considered in the final development of the plan. The remainder of the spring and early summer was spent finalizing the development of the plan. Development included creating customer/staff training modules, intake cards, client/student handbook, skill assessment cards, brochures, and posters. The team agreed that the common intake process would be called the PEP Talk, which would give each person his or her personalized employment plan. The field training target date was November of 2009, and the PEP Talk for clients/students in place by December 2009.

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.

Five programs have been awarded the EL/Civics grant. Each year the number of students served with this grant remains small and relatively constant. This program year served 214 students. Historically, these programs work diligently to use these funds to serve their adult students in the most effective manner. However, beyond BEST Plus training, the instructors have received little state professional development support. Instructors have worked independently, pursuing individual professional development activities with no opportunity for dialogue and sharing with their professional peers. There was no systemic support for ESOL instructors.

This prompted the state to apply for support and guidance from the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network for technical assistance in planning professional development for instructors working with English language learners. The state was notified in June 2008 that the OPI had been awarded the opportunity to work with CAELA staff in a professional development planning process that would meet the needs of the instructors and students in Montana. Over the course of this program year, a state CAELA team (ABLE state director, two ESOL instructors, and a program director) has collaboratively worked with staff from CAELA to develop and implement a state plan for professional development.

The work with CAELA began in July 2008, with the state CAELA team meeting with Sarah Young and Lynda Terrill. Over the course of two days, the team analyzed data and discussed potential professional development needs. The state team ultimately identified three focus areas for professional development: a) the need to collect background information to help assess professional development needs; b) planning and implementing the state's first ever conference for ESL practitioners, informed by the survey results; and c) planning and implementing conference follow-up activities for participants to directly apply and reflect on the knowledge and skills learned to improve their instructional practice. The survey for ESL instructors and program directors was developed and completed in September. The results of the surveys were used to inform the next steps for a new professional development system. Through e-mails and conference calls, Sarah Young and the Montana team discussed survey results, and the specific needs of the field were identified. The team continued to meet via telephone calls and the first ever ESL conference was planned and held on April 30-May 1, 2009. The conference was attended by 34 practitioners and program directors. The conference focused on five strands: 1) Who are adult ESL students? 2) What is an effective adult ESL teacher? 3) How are languages learned? 4) How can technology be used in adult ESL? 5) What is effective multilevel instruction? Each participant was asked to submit a follow-up lesson plan that was posted on the MTLINCS Web page October 30, 2009. The assignments are posted under the appropriate strand, so all ESL instructors can read and benefit from the work of the colleagues. The intent of the Web page is to develop a learning community with ongoing professional support.

Through our work with CAL, the Montana CAELA team is engaging in a thoughtful professional development 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.