

NEVADA NARRATIVE REPORT 2008-2009

For greater ease in reading this report, the acronyms for Nevada's adult basic education programs are presented:

Ca Char	Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada
CALL	Computer Assisted Learning in Libraries (Las Vegas-Clark County Library District)
CMC	Community Multicultural Center
CSN	College of Southern Nevada
GBC	Great Basin College
NNLC	Northern Nevada Literacy Council
TMCC	Truckee Meadows Community College
WNC	Western Nevada College

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.

Nevada believes that equipping service providers with sound teaching techniques, content, and leadership skills benefits adult learners in their classrooms as they pursue their education goals. Leadership funds are granted to successful applicants through a competitive process to provide activities and initiatives that enable the adult education system to lead adult students to success and to effectively meet the goals of the state plan or new mandates from OVAE, community, or State initiatives. Leadership monies are dedicated primarily to providing quality trainings and resources for instructors, tutors and administrators. Continuous feedback and observation, analysis of local data and national trends, and surveys (formal and informal) are used to determine need and evaluate success. Activities are based on research and evidence-based practice when available.

One of our most successful training efforts in 2008-2009, as measured by student success and teacher enthusiasm, began in spring 2007 when a program director requested funding to attend Irlen's Scotopic Sensitivity training in California that fall. To date, 16 people have completed the required follow-up work and become Certified Irlen Screeners. This year Irlen screenings were done for 69 students with 71% of them needing overlays. This is much higher than the 12-22% Irlen predicts for the general population and the 45% Irlen predicts for Learning Disabled (LD) clients. Anecdotal evidence also supports the efficacy of Irlen screening. For example, in a 2/23/09 message to an Irlen trainer: "I have been meaning to write to you and thank you for giving me the gift of reading. It has truly been a gift in my life and I appreciate you so much for helping me to learn that I actually like to read, for fun. I read the entire 2500 page Twilight series in 6 days with my new lenses, the first time that I have ever read anything because I wanted to! A miracle!! This is not to mention that I read all my required reading last semester."

Another long-held goal is to encourage adult education teachers to produce and present trainings for their peers. This would give NV a cadre of presenters with in-state training expertise. This is challenging for many reasons and progress is slow, but encouraging.

- TMCC's Gail H. offered two-part writing workshops throughout the state. Participation held through both full days — in the north and in the south.
- CSN's Noreen T.-M. developed a full-day workshop on persistence, "Hanging by a Thread," which was very well received by the local program. Noreen provided condensed presentations at the Mountain Plains Adult Education Association (MPAEA) conference in March 2009.
- GBC's Sally S. was introduced to Professional Learning Communities (PLC) via group work facilitated by a Leadership grantee. For the next semester, Sally volunteered to facilitate Winnemucca's PLC, which was focused on student goal setting. Teachers developed a new process for setting and monitoring goals to be implemented in 2009-10.

These teachers earned credit toward their recertification of the Nevada Certificate of Performance for their leadership efforts.

In the past, Leadership monies were used to provide a menu of one-day workshops from which each program chose two. Although programs were comfortable with that model, it was decided to move toward more intensity and duration by offering a study circle on persistence, one on reading, and one on using Parker Palmer's "Courage to Teach."

We then began actively encouraging a more sustained, job-embedded PD by introducing Professional Learning Communities as an alternative to the workshops. Six of the eight programs implemented some form of Professional Learning Communities. Of Nevada's 300 full and part-time teachers, seventy-three participants took part in Professional Learning Communities, 47 in full-day workshops, and 48 in specialized or program-sponsored workshops. The instructor mentoring project was also continued.

In order to provide effective professional development responsive to the needs of the administrators of Nevada's ABE/ESL funded programs, administrative/management training sessions were held. Three meetings, each attended by 26-32 key administrators, staff, and instructors, were held during 2008-2009. Content was wide-ranging and included:

- Follow-up on federal July 2008 monitoring and subsequent Corrective Action Plan;
- Immigration issues (effects on students, teachers, and programs); and
- Transitioning to postsecondary education/training.

Additionally, Leadership funds provided local and specialized support for on-site/distance workshops; enhanced online PD offerings via existing courses; and piloted teacher training through web meetings. Thirteen people signed up for 17 courses. Based on reimbursement requests, ten were completed.

Organizational support was provided for the Mountain Plains Adult Education Association conference in Las Vegas. Sixty people from Nevada's programs were funded to attend.

Innovative practices were fostered in delivery systems through individualized PD:

- College-level course "Assessment and Evaluation of English Language Learners" for GBC teacher. Because of efficacy and availability of funds, we will continue to fund for appropriate courses.

- “Administrative Assistants Conference” for CSN staff person, who presented her impressions of this and CSN’s critical thinking workshop at April Directors’ meeting. As a result, WNC planned to send staff to similar “conferences” and organized critical thinking workshop for northern programs.

Leadership funds were used to share literacy information and resources by producing ten issues of *Nevada Connections* (NC), sent to approximately 1700 adult educators and stakeholders. All issues are posted at www.literacynet.org/nvadulted/newsletters.html

Coordinated formation of statewide Learning Disabilities support team, which includes ongoing dissemination of resource availability and coordination of future trainings.

Identified Colorado’s online teacher self-assessment and information management system for professional development as appropriate for Nevada. Currently revising for Nevada.

Some leadership funds are used to provide an alternative for Nevada adults who lack their high school diploma or GED and wish to study on their own for their GED tests. Various JobConnect offices (WIA, Title I), libraries, Nevada Partners, City of Las Vegas Parks and Recreation Department, Community Centers, and Adult Education centers offer GED Online as stand-alone or adjunct instruction. The collaborative benefits are well worth the resources invested in this project.

54 adult education staff were certified or re-certified to administer CASAS assessments. Seven teachers were certified to score the picture task writing assessments.

Certificates of Performance, based on student outcomes, continue to be granted to Nevada’s qualifying adult educators. Senator Harry Reid’s office acknowledges Certificate recipients with a personalized “gold bond” letter of recognition. Several states have asked for information about the process with the idea of replication in mind.

Nevada’s content standards for all program types are on-line at the Content Standards Warehouse and Nevada’s adult education website. Each individual program in the State has a list of resources that is aligned to the standards. Model lesson plans for every program type and level were created and presented to instructors that align the standards, objectives, and applicable CASAS competencies. Training on the Standards is presented to any program that requests such.

Technology is used in all programs to collect data and track students. All programs use TOPSpro software. Data collection procedures have been established and implemented to ensure data quality statewide. Nevada’s assessment policy has been approved by OVAE and disseminated to all programs. Training on policy has been provided and individual assistance is available on request. The Program Data Specialist in the State Adult Education office uses a web-conference program which allows him to provide immediate and effective intervention when a program has questions regarding data—content or process.

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.

2008-2009 was a difficult year for Nevada's AEFLA-funded programs. The year began with a reduction in federal funding of \$22,519. This is a small but significant cut to our state. While Nevada previously experienced a sizeable increase in funding as a result of the 2000 Census, it took five years to be able to incorporate and utilize that funding effectively due to lack of adequate infrastructure. In 2008-2009 the "cushion" had been fully absorbed. Carry-forward monies had been dwindling and finally just about ceased entirely. The result is that all programs were cut back, some fairly severely. Several service providers were forced to offer fewer classes in order to manage their meager budgets.

The overall net is that the State served 955 fewer students than in 2007-2008, a 10% reduction. However, while the enrollment dropped, total hours increased slightly. Average hours per student increased 11.6%, from 71 hours in 2007-2008 to 80 hours in 2008-2009.

Hispanics comprised 77% of all students receiving services, with the total ESL population topping over 82% of AEFLA students.

Only the ESL Low Beginning performance measure was met. However, if EFL performance measures are compared between years, six measures in 2008-2009 were equal to or above those in 2007-2008. While a year to year comparison does not correlate directly to the annual performance measure formula process at OVAE, it does reveal a continuous improvement trend in Nevada's programs.

The economy has had a major impact on the goals of obtaining and of retaining employment. Recent labor market trends show no sign of improvement for Nevada in the near future. The decline can be attributed to the continuing fall of construction activity as well as the stagnant leisure and hospitality sectors. There are fewer employment opportunities, and especially fewer for non-native English speakers who comprise four-fifths of Nevada's AEFLA student body. Catholic Charities' clients all have primary goals of obtaining employment in the shortest time possible, but the percentage of employment outcomes for 2008-2009 was 41.76% compared to 86.54% for the previous year. CSN states that the duration and depth of the recession makes it most difficult to assist students to obtain and/or retain jobs.

Nevada's programs were challenged throughout the year, calling on personal, professional, and programmatic strengths to provide effective services.

- Three of the eight programs experienced personnel changes in 2008-2009 when they had to replace data managers. This is a difficult position to fill and requires great time and effort on the part of the program, the new hire, and the State office to bring the new person up to speed.
- WNC was dislocated from their quarters for the second time in two years so that the college could continue retro-fitting the building in compliance with ADA guidelines.

They “camped” in a large room in another building for over four months. Students were redirected to the temporary office. It seemed that anything that was needed by staff was always in the old office.

- CMC was involved in a legal battle with the landlord from January until May. With one and one-half years left on their lease, they were informed that they would have to vacate their current office and classroom space and that they would have to pay for tenant improvements in their new space. The issue ultimately ended up in dispute and has since been resolved in CMC’s favor. However the harassment by the landlord, verbal abuse, being illegally locked out of the premises, cancellation of classes, dealing with legal issues, and moving to new quarters took its toll. Not surprisingly, outcomes were lower than anticipated.
- At Catholic Charities in Las Vegas, the client population jumped one-third from 621 to 822. The clients/students mostly came from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Bhutan through Nepal, Burma through Thailand, central and east Africa. Non-refugee clients were mostly from Latin America with a concentration from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba and Colombia. Due to a significant number of African, Burmese and Bhutanese refugees who have limited or no schooling, the agency experienced a 34% increase in the number of clients identified as ESL Pre-Literate, a 24% increase in the number of clients identified as ESL Low Beginning, and a 30% increase in the number of clients identified as ESL Low Intermediate. These three groups comprised 52% of the agency’s population.
- GBC saw a significant drop in level completions, from 42.01 in 07-08 to 32.38% in 08-09, as well as a drop in retention from 56% in 07-08 to 44% in 08-09. The average point gain dropped from 11.6 in 07-08 to 3.1 in 08-09. The agency did however log 5,000 more instructional hours than in the previous year. Additionally “stop-out” student percentage dropped and 50% of students achieved 40+ hours of instruction. GED pass rate remained high.
- CSN implemented a new curriculum for students studying to take the GED tests. It was a success in meeting the student’s immediate needs of taking/passing the GED, but it did not result in appropriate gains on the CASAS tests. Placement in postsecondary education or training was impacted by the failing economy (Las Vegas is currently experiencing over a 14% unemployment rate). Students cannot afford to take college level classes for several reasons, including tuition rate increases, job loss, and salary cuts. In addition, undocumented immigrants are considered non-residents and therefore must pay out of state costs which are prohibitive.
- WNC reports that with a decreased budget, some classes were closed and fewer students served. However the total number of attendance hours increased from 58 hours to 72 hours per student. This statistic speaks to an increased rate of persistence, a major focus for this program for several years.

- NNLC switched from 8-week class cycles to 12-week cycles. This limited the number of new students that could enroll—four intake opportunities a year compared to six in prior years. The result was a 28.7% decrease in students served in 2008-2009.
- CALL served 543 students in 24 classes. The program instituted a Reading Improvement Clinic in 2008-2009, serving native English speaking students who have historically not been a significant presence in the program. As in most pilot projects, the outcomes were not as high as hoped. CALL will continue at least one more year with this component however.
- TMCC **exceeded** all but one of the State proposed outcomes. This agency saw the lowest staff turnover in the last ten years, although they did lose their data manager. (This program’s basic structure is exemplary with regard to achieving State outcomes. Other programs will be encouraged to incorporate whatever components from this program that might work for their own, unique situations.)

Following is a brief look at each agency’s outcomes for the year.

Comparing FY 07-08 and FY 08-09 Enrollment, Outcomes, and Pair Testing

Agency	Type	Enrollment		Table 4 Outcomes		% Pair Tested	
		FY 07-08	FY 08-09	FY 07-08	FY 08-09	FY 07-08	FY 08-09
Ca Char	FBO	621	822	49	48	70	67
NNLC	CBO	804	571	39	42	63	75
CMC	CBO	409	442	51	40	66	77
TMCC	Community College	1766	1506	43	43	72	72
CSN	College	3340	2692	74	80	78	76
GBC	College	407	352	42	32	70	58
WNC	College	921	863	43	43	66	70
CALL	Library	1258	1323	52	50	77	75
State-Wide		9526	8571	46	45	73	72

In 2008-2009 the multiple challenges addressed above, resulted in lower enrollment as well as lower completion levels with regard to the negotiated State levels. However, as is evident in the table above, EFL outcomes and pair-testing remained approximately the same.

1. **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 (WIB), adult education’s involvement on the State WIB, the provision of core and other services through One-Stop system and**

an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system.

- There are two One-Stops in Nevada. There is adult education representation on each local WIB, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction represents adult education on the Governor's WIB.
- One of the ABE/ESL program directors sits on the NevadaWorks Board. (The Nevada Works Board oversees the Nevada JobConnect [One-Stop] offices in northern Nevada.) She is also a member of the JobConnect Consortium which directly oversees the three One-Stops in the northern part of the State.
- Leadership funds have been used to establish GED On-Line in several One-Stops with more placements planned. These are for direct client referral and are very popular with the One-Stop partners.
- Most Title II programs make referrals to the One-Stop Centers. Some receive referrals from the One-Stops.

2. 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.

- All EL/Civics classes focus primarily on CASAS Content Area 5: Government and Law. In addition to civics and citizenship content, these courses include basic English writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. Adult learners enrolled in classes are assessed prior to their learning experiences using a CASAS assessment series.
- CALL's program served 811 EL/Civics students in 47 classes. The agency believes that its reduction in average hours per student is in part due to the current economic crisis which has created irregular work schedules and shift changes for students in the programs.
- CSN assembled a Supplemental Activity Binder for each level of English Literacy/Civics. The program served 841 EL/Civics students. All Civics locations are off-site where room availability is limited; multi-level classes are inevitable at those locations. It is more difficult to attain significant outcomes in such classrooms.
- NNLC served 327 EL/Civics students with 35% completing one or more educational functioning levels. The agency uses a competency-based curriculum which addresses the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and U.S. government. The curriculum also addresses community resources and develops the students' understanding of their role as community members.
- TMCC's EL/Civics projects stress contextualized learning in which language and literacy are developed through practical, immediately relevant, thematic units. Experiential learning

concepts such as the “classroom without walls” in which students are actively engaged in community pursuits are integrated into program delivery. TMCC served 142 EL/Civics students.

Summary: The enrollment decrease of the AEFLA programs in 2008-2009 can be attributed to the economy; but the economy could also cause more students to seek education for upgrades for jobs. Sometimes instability promotes change, but can't it also cause folks to hold onto the status quo? Failure to meet negotiated performance measures may be explained by a change in assessment policy that limits post-testing; switching from one assessment series to another; or disruption from the outside world. It also can be explained by a process that demands continuous improvement by setting questionably high measures. The reasons for Nevada's performance for 2008-2009 are most likely multiple, broad and deep. Despite many obstacles, however, Nevada's AEFLA-funded programs continued in 2008-2009 to provide effective services for students.