

Texas Narrative Report 2008-2009

Introduction

Texas had a challenging yet a remarkable year during 2008-2009. In the first quarter, the state met with vast destruction and closing of classes due to Hurricane Ike which hit the most populated area of the state on September 13, 2008. In the second quarter, history was made in Texas when the Commissioner of Education released his exceptional items list for Legislative Appropriations Requests (LAR) for 2009-2011 which included an unprecedented request for \$50,000,000 in state general revenue for adult basic education. The three agencies that are key to the success of adult basic education (Texas Education Agency (TEA) – Title II, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) - Perkins, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)-Title I) went “arm-in-arm” to the legislature to request the additional funds and to testify in favor of working together to “share the resources” if the request came to fruition.

Although the full request did not come to fruition and the agency is required to change the distribution formula, the legislature allocated 10 million dollars for adult basic education to the TEA and 10 million dollars to the THECB over the next biennium.

Part I - 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:

Statewide Professional Development System:

The state of Texas is divided into eight regions with a professional development center in each region, i.e., Project Getting Results Educating Adults in Texas (GREAT). Each GREAT Center is responsible for providing training in assessment, instructional strategies, content standards, data collection and program management. Training includes customized training in addition to standardized and required trainings. GREAT Projects are also expected to participate and follow up on any state initiatives that the state office with local program directors have identified as areas of need for participants in the adult education programs in our state. The GREAT Centers also host regional quarterly meetings of all the local program directors in their region to discuss program issues, program improvement, and professional development.

Texas has a total of 2,537 full time, part time and volunteer teachers in the adult education programs. Teachers that have two years experience in adult education and/or teachers with a K-12 certification are required to have twelve hours of in-service training per year. Teachers that are new to adult education and do not have a K-12 certification, are required to have twenty-four hours of in-service training per year. The following are highlights of activities and workshops provided with State Leadership funds and all assisted programs in meeting the goals of the Texas State Plan. Other on-going leadership activities that continued during the program year are: Teacher and Administrator Credential Project and associated data base called CREDITS, Content Standards implementation, Distance Learning teacher and administrator workshops, Local Report Card Training, Shop Talk papers (workforce and adult education cross-training initiative), and a variety of targeted list serves.

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHOPS

1. Assessment Training

The first step in ensuring consistent service to our learners is the ability to consistently assess them with either the TABE or BEST. Last year the regional GREAT Centers offered almost 100 workshops in administering the TABE, BEST Literacy, or BEST Plus assessments to almost 2,000 individuals. These workshops included information for teachers on how and what the learner was being tested on as well as how to administer the test. Our state assessment policy states that test administrators be calibrated annually in order to maintain the consistency necessary to ensure a correct and consistent assessment.

2. Data Collection/Analysis and Management Information System Training

As the adult education state office continues to stress the important role of data collection and analysis in program improvement, the regional GREAT Centers play a critical role in the professional development in this area. There were more than 30 workshops conducted with 461 participants on data collection and analysis. Local programs are encouraged to give a reader role to their teachers so they can track the attendance, progress, and achievements of their students and look for trends and patterns in their own teaching. If they do not request read-only access for teachers, they are encouraged to print an NRS Table IV for each teacher at the end of each class.

3. **The Success Trifecta: Collaboration to Stimulate Lifelong Learning: A Conference for Adult and Community College Educators and Workforce Professionals**

This conference was second annual joint effort between adult education programs, community colleges and workforce partners to address the needs of educators and career counselors who work with GED or Developmental Education adult learners. The primary focus of this conference was sharing common efforts to foster successful transitions for academic and career achievements. Sessions offered at this event emphasized the professional development needs that enhanced participant's skills by providing strategies in addressing clients' and/or students' needs, techniques to increase effectiveness in attendee's profession, information beyond the classroom, as well as provided opportunities for interaction with other educational and business professionals. The importance of having adult educators and workforce partners come together in an event such as this cannot be underestimated! Keynote speakers consisted of Tamara Thornton Clunis, Director of Developmental and Adult Education, P-16 Division of the Higher Education Coordinating Board; Larry Jones, Director, Workforce Development TWC; and Joanie Rethlake, State Director, Texas LEARNS.

The conference has a wide range of presentations including:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the 21st Century: Understanding Today's Students and Tomorrow's Employees
- Taking Charge of Your Academic Progress
- I Showed Up... What MORE Do You Want?
- School to Work: Preparing Students for Tomorrow's 21st Century High Tech Careers
- Differentiated Instruction and Brain-based Learning
- GED and Accuplacer Math: Effective Instructional Strategies
- A Best Practice Strategy in TIME: The Total Immersion Method for English Language
- Instruction at St. Philip's College
- College Requirements for GED Students
- Celebrating Writing for Learning in all Subjects: How to Integrate More Writing into Your Classroom
- Workforce Solutions Alamo Career Center Services
- Learning Styles and Learning Disabilities in Adults: Strategies and Accommodations for Success in the Workplace
- Empowering Adult Education Students Together
- The Business (Employer's) Perspective: Panel Discussion
- Out of Your Seats, Into Learning
- College and Career Readiness for GED, Juggling Multiple Roles as an Adult Learner: Using Effective Time Management Techniques and Study Strategies to Create Academic Success
- Colors of Personality
- Brain-based Communication Strategies in the Workplace and Classroom
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: An Overview, Math for GED and Beyond
- Changes in GED Testing in the Successful Center
- The Alamo Region's Workforce Today and Tomorrow
- Providing Accessible GED Training for Visually Impaired Adults

- Want to Go to College? Don't Know Where to Start? The 123's and ABC's of Starting College
- Motivating the Adult Learner Using Windham CHANGES II Curriculum,
- Life-Long Learning, and Transitioning Adult Education Students to Workforce and Higher Education with the Lexile Framework

Out of the 217 attendees, 162 were from adult education programs throughout the state. The remaining 55 participants were from workforce and higher education.

4. Professional Development Evaluation

Texas has enhanced the management information system to allow local programs to identify classes where the teacher has participated in one or more of the intensive trainings, projects or activities with a follow up feature that have been offered by the state or the regional GREAT Center. The purpose of this flag is to monitor for classroom implementation and analyze the student data to see if there is an increase in student completions and/or persistence. Hopefully this will assist the local program administration to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development activities for future training needs.

PROJECTS

1. STAR Project

Forty-four teachers and administrators participated in the Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) Project pilot which introduced teachers to various assessments to use with participants to determine an individual's weakness so instruction in this area could be emphasized. This workshop was conducted in three two-day trainings with technical assistance in the form of site visits by the national trainers. If managed enrollment was not part of the local program structure, program administrators were encouraged to look at and experiment with the value of changing to managed enrollment. The STAR Project training provided needed training to help programs transition participants into certification programs at local community college where the requirement is reading at an eighth grade level.

2. Leadership Excellence Academy

The Leadership Excellence Academy is provided by national trainers and is intended for local program administrators. The training was developed by the National Adult Education State Directors Professional Development Consortium and delivered through Pro-Literacy. This was the second year of this two-year training project for local program administrators and a second cohort was added. There were twenty participants in the first cohort. The LEA trained local administrators to conduct needs assessments with teachers and stakeholders, worked with administrators in using their data to analyze and evaluate their program, and looked at areas that needed improvement. It provided interesting insight for those administrators that had not thoroughly analyzed their data before or were new to adult education. These series of workshops provided an excellent opportunity for administrators to network and discuss issues that are common among programs according to size, location, and participant demographics. A second cohort of eighteen local program administrators and state staff started last year and will continue through the 2009-2010 program year. This training is very timely as Texas emphasizes the need to use data for program improvement, planning, and transitions to performance based funding. In order to build state capacity, Texas sponsored two participants in a Train-the-Trainer program so the Leadership Excellence Academy can be conducted at the regional level which will allow more individuals to participate without the expense of travel and help Texas build capacity.

3. Special Learning Needs

2008-2009 was the third year the state adult education office has sponsored training through workshops and follow-up on Special Learning Needs. Two nationally recognized trainers (Neil Sturomski and Nancie Payne) have developed a statewide training and delivery to build the state's capacity to provide instruction for special needs students. There have been a total of seventy-one teachers trained through these workshops to work with individuals that have special needs or need additional attention to be successful in our programs. These participants are Special Learning Needs Resources

Specialist to their local program. Nine participants in the first cohort applied and were accepted by the national trainers as a train-the-trainer and were able to work with the second cohort of participants and be trained as Special Learning Needs Train-the-Trainers. The nine trainers will offer regional training through the regional GREAT centers which will allow more teachers to access this effective training, implement it in their classrooms, and serve their local program as a resource specialist. Texas LEARNS recommends that this training may be used for all types of instructors and students because it is effective with all types of learners.

4. ESL Beginning Literacy Teacher Training Project (CAELA Assistance)

Texas participated in the national CAELA Network Project which used data to evaluate program improvement. The data showed that the ESL Beginning Literacy level comprised 30 percent of the total number served in adult education and more students were enrolled in ESL Beginning Basic (28,368) than in all the other ESL levels combined (24,208). The data also showed that in 2007-2008, the ESL Beginning Literacy had the lowest completion rate (36%) of all ESL levels. The technical workgroup on the CAELA work team identified this level have difficulty showing progress because of the diversity of the learners and the wide range from the default score to the ESL low beginning level. One of the regional GREAT Centers accepted the responsibility to facilitate the development of a teacher training to help teachers develop instructional strategies to accommodate the participants at this very low level. CAELA Network coaches evaluated the training and gave feedback and comments on changes that needed to be done. The training was conducted by the developers; thirty-six individuals were trained to work in the local programs to improve their skills in working with this level. CAELA Network coaches continue to work with the trainers and have observed the training to evaluate and revise, as necessary, to make it more effective. Bringing attention to the low completion rate also raised awareness in each local program. In 2008-2009, the completion rate, as noted earlier in the report, was 52% for an increase of 16%.

5. Math Institute and GED Math Plus Development

A review of longitudinal data for the Texas adult education 2005 Exit Cohort showed that more than 85% of students who went to post secondary were required to enroll in a developmental math class. The first step to bring a solution to this problem was to develop teacher training. One of the regional GREAT Centers took responsibility for developing and training teachers and trainers to increase the math skills of the GED teachers. A Texas LEARNS staff member who has had a number of years experience teaching developmental math in a local community college assisted with the development and training of these workshops. Texas LEARNS in cooperation with the South GREAT Center have trained sixteen individuals that are available to assist GED teachers in responding to the needs of those learners with low math skills. In addition, there are six individuals that are trained to teach those learners who plan a transition to college to work with teachers that need a high skill level to cover the math that is required to bypass developmental classes and to enroll in credit classes in math. Since retention of teachers is always a problem in adult education, these workshops are on-going to ensure that teachers have the skills necessary to assist GED graduates to successfully transition to college. The plans for the next program year are to have a GED plus training that prepares students for enrollment in math credit classes.

6. Industry Specific Curriculum and Workplace Literacy Project

Texas Industry Specific ESL (TISESL) Curriculum was developed in response to a legislative mandate to the TEA in conjunction with TWC (Title I partner). Curriculum was developed for three industries – Healthcare, Hospitality, and Manufacturing. Each curriculum has four student books, two teacher instructional books, an employability module, a technology module, and a math module. Each curriculum is 200 hours and is designed for the ESL High Beginning and Low Intermediate levels. There is also a web based interactive site for employability that has a Spanish component borrowed from the US Department of Labor for self study by Spanish-speaking students. The future goal of this project is to develop policy and collaborations between local providers, one-stop centers, and employers to streamline adult education students into postsecondary certificate and/or training programs.

7. Volunteer Training Project

The Volunteer Training Project is an adult education state leadership activity funded by the TEA in collaboration with Texas LEARNS. This is one of several ways in which the Texas Center for Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL), the state's clearinghouse, works with Texas LEARNS to further important statewide initiatives, including the professional development priorities of Texas LEARNS and the GREAT Centers. Through the Literacy Volunteer Training Initiative, the Clearinghouse Project at TCALL collaborates with Literacy Texas (the states volunteer coalition association) to support program and professional development for community-based literacy programs and volunteers not currently receiving federal funds for training. Support includes funding of expenses to attend conferences and other trainings such as Bridges to Practice. It has also included funding of Pro-Literacy program accreditation fees for community-based literacy programs identified and recommended by Literacy Texas leadership.

Objective 13 of the Clearinghouse Project grant for the period of July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 states that the Clearinghouse Project will "Provide program and professional development support for community-based literacy programs and volunteers in collaboration with Literacy Texas leadership and/or other community-based literacy organizations. As a result hundreds of volunteers were trained on a large variety of techniques, methods, and approaches to teaching adults. In addition, the state's workplace curriculum is not available to the volunteer organizations at no cost. A partnership and funding with the Barbara Bush Foundation has provided free copies of the curriculum to volunteer organizations.

PART II - 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.

All class activity in the Beaumont, Galveston and Houston metropolitan and surrounding areas completely shut down for 3 weeks after Hurricane Ike while utilities were restored and the devastation was cleared. The displacement of large numbers of residents emptied usually jam-packed registration lines and full classes. Teacher training, professional development and related activities ceased due to the mayhem. Many class sites were destroyed and new locations had to be found. Additionally, enrollment of students was delayed and the loss of fall enrollment was not recoverable. In 2007-2008 program year, Texas enrolled 93,242 and in 2008-2009 Texas enrolled 84,514, a difference of 8,728 students and contributes much of this lost enrollment to Hurricane Ike. Other important factors that locals sited as contributing to the downturn in enrollment was the continued implementation of managed enrollment and the state assessment policy rule (at least 60 hours of instruction between pre and post testing).

On the upside, program quality and completion rates were increased although at the cost of serving fewer students. In 2007-2008 41.4% of enrolled students (all levels) completed a level. In 2008-2009 53% of enrolled students completed a level. Table I on the next page shows an increase in all levels except the Low Adult Secondary Level. Locals report that part of the problem with Low Adult Secondary Education students is they leave to take the GED and do not return to take the post test (Test of Adult Basic Education – TABE) thus showing on Table 4 as non-completers although they may have passed the GED. All other levels show significant increases especially in the Adult Basic Education Beginning Level with a 15% increase from 45% to 60% completion rate. Another significant increase in completions is in the ESL Beginning Literacy with a 16% increase from 36% to 52%. The remaining levels had increases of 6 to 14 percentage points.

The number of contact hours per student (Table II) also increased confirming that students are staying longer in the program. Increased hours per student appear to correlate to higher completion rates.

Table I – Percentage of completions increased

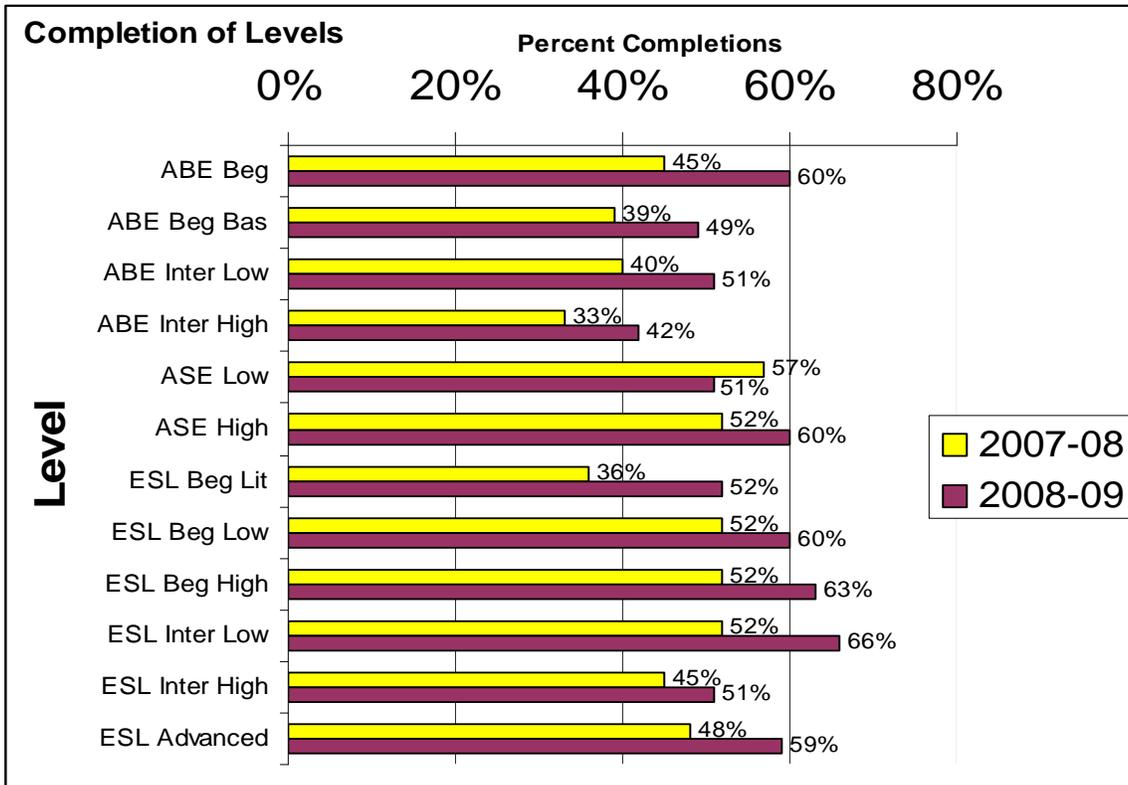
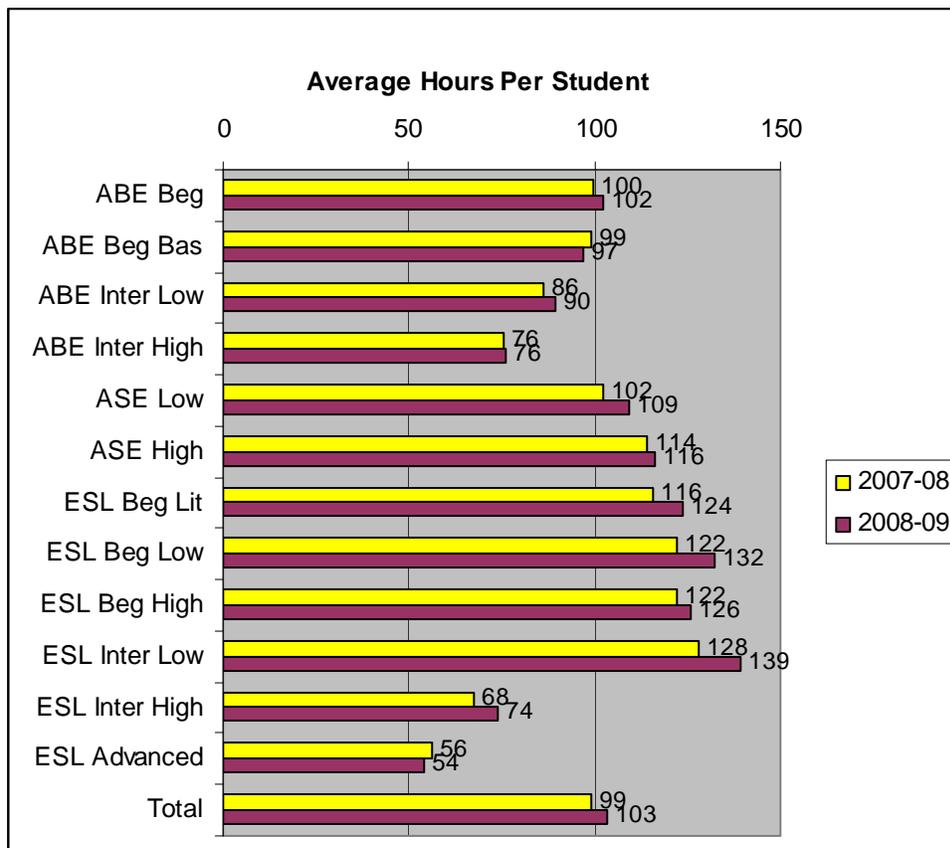
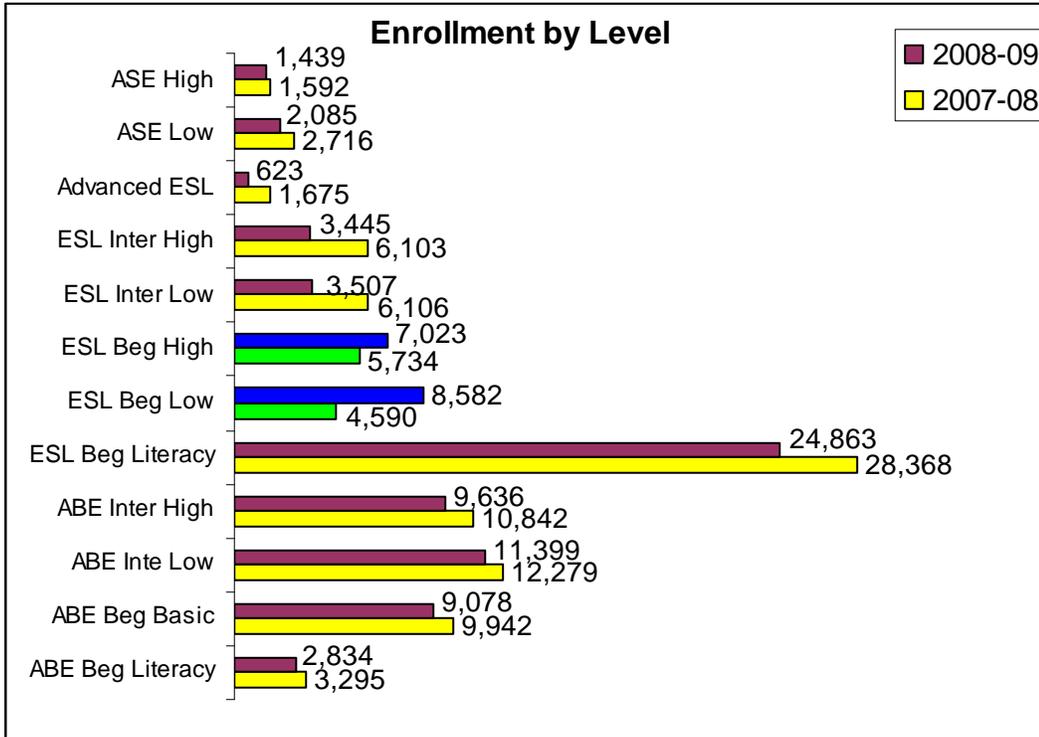


Table II – Number of contact hours per student increased



Other data showed a 12% decrease in the number of ESL Beginning Literacy students in comparison to a 47% increase in ESL Beginning Low. Data also showed a 43% increase in ESL Beginning High.



There was a 13.4% increase in the percentage of students who set the goal of enrollment in post secondary education and enrolled in post secondary. In 2007-08, 31.3% achieved their goal and in 2008-09, 44.7% achieved their postsecondary goal.

Part III - 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.

Texas Industry Specific ESL (TISESL)

Texas Industry Specific ESL (TISESL) is a demand-driven workplace literacy and basic skills curricula for adult learners. The curricula focus on the Sales and Customer Service, Healthcare, and Manufacturing industry sectors. The curriculum is designed for intensive instruction of at least 200 student contact hours. TISESL training includes administrator orientation to building collaboration with employers. Administrators and teachers are encouraged to invite employers to bring presentations to participating ESL students.

Texas Workforce Investment Council

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) assists the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce development system, which is comprised of eight state agencies and 25 diverse and dynamic programs. The Council’s strategic priority is to promote the linkage of education, workforce and economic development in order to leverage resources, increase collaboration among state and local partners, and build the pipeline of skilled workers that Texas must have to prosper in the 21st century. Adult Education has strategic action goals and timelines outlined by the Council. Adult Basic Education is a major objective of the TWIC and reports on distance education, a

new funding formula, TISESL curricula, and a workforce literacy resource team were projects that came to a conclusion during the 2008-2009 program year under the TWIC.

Tri-Agency Initiative

The Tri-Agency Initiative is a developing collaboration between the TEA, The THECB, and the TWC that seeks to leverage the key functions of each agency to educate and train more adults in the basic literacy skills and career and technology skills to meet essential workforce needs for the state and expand post-secondary opportunities. The initiative will include a memorandum of understanding between the three agencies to define agency roles and to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, the Texas Legislature has passed the following Rider that promotes the alignment of Adult Basic Education and Postsecondary Education. The Rider is as follows:

Legislative Rider 45, Senate Bill 1, 81st Texas Legislature, Article III, (THECB)

45. Align Adult Basic Education and Postsecondary Education.

Out of funds appropriated above, the Higher Education Coordinating Board shall coordinate with the Texas Education Agency to develop and implement an immediate and long-range coordinated action plan to align Adult Basic Education and postsecondary education. To increase the number, success and persistence of students transitioning to postsecondary education, these action plans shall address at a minimum:

- a. outreach and advising;
- b. assessment, curriculum, and instruction;
- c. persistence interventions;
- d. state-level accountability systems to monitor performance;
- e. service-provider-level performance measures and program evaluation;
- f. standards to enhance data quality and sharing among state agencies and service-providers;
- g. needs assessment of students and service-providers to identify other structural issues and barriers; and
- h. grants (including Federal Funds and Other Funds) to maximize effective use of limited General Revenue Funds

To measure the effectiveness of this action plan, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, in coordination with the Texas Education Agency, shall calculate annual performance measures for the: (1) number of adults in need of Adult Basic Education services statewide; (2) number of Adult Basic Education students served, including those served by developmental education, by provider, institution, and statewide; (3) number of students that passed the General Education Diploma test served and not served by TEA; (4) number of Adult Basic Education students exiting the program by provider and statewide; (5) number of Adult Basic Education students exiting the program with a higher education goal by provider and statewide; (6) number of Adult Basic Education students enrolled in higher education by provider, institution, and statewide; and (7) total annual program expenditures by revenue source per provider. The agencies shall prepare a report that summarizes performance, evaluates outcomes, and recommends changes to improve outcomes and the components of the action plan.

For purposes of this rider, the THECB shall be considered the lead agency. The report shall be submitted to the House Committee on Higher Education, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Education Committee, Senate Finance Committee, the Governor, TWC, and the Legislative Budget Board by January 31, 2010.

In addition, through an informal survey of local programs about their relationship with the local workforce development board in their region, it was found that about 50% of local programs have direct representation on the local boards either as a member or having a colleague from their organization on the board. In addition, through the GREAT Center workshops and trainings, collaboration activities are becoming increasingly more common at the local level.

Finally, the TWIC's new project will include an ESL and ABE/ASE dual enrollment pilot.

Part IV - 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.

EL Civics funds were distributed through a competitive grant application process in 2007 with continuation grants in 2008 in 13 Community colleges, 32 local education agencies and 11 community based organizations. These 56 programs served 10,870 students.

The purpose of the English Literacy and Civics Education program is to support projects that demonstrate effective practices in providing and increasing access to English literacy programs linked to civics education. The purpose of the program is not simply to expand English Literacy services, but to create an integrated program of services incorporating English Literacy and civics education. Civics education means an educational program that emphasizes contextual instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civics participation, and U.S. history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members. To become full participants in American life and to be successful as workers, parents, family members and citizens, adults in the United States must be able to read and communicate in English. They must be able to understand and navigate governmental, educational, and workplace systems as well as key American institutions, such as banking and health care.

A key professional development activity provided all 56 programs with a full spectrum of training over a three-day workshop. One activity with a participatory flavor had the following objectives:

- Learn to use your students immigration stories to develop language skills
- Reaffirm your students' own culture and traditions
- Provide creative ways for students to learn about their community and solve the problems they confront every day
- Give students a chance to use and showcase the skills successful people use in this country
- Find ways for students to help other people in need
- Explore creative ways to build more background knowledge of the geography, history, and politics of this country

Other resources provided to the EL Civics programs were in Basic Transactions, Job Interviewing, Local Government, U.S. Flag and U.S. History. A popular activity among EL Civics programs is to invite elected officials to speak to their classes. With the presidential election, programs used much from the media to discuss the issues and have mock elections for their EL Civics participants. Another activity was to collect clothing and other resources to send to victims of the Hurricane Ike.

CONCLUSION: During the program year, many student success stories were submitted. One exceptional anecdotal success story is presented below as reported by a local program in Midland, Texas. Another story printed below was part of an EL Civics project in El Paso, Texas that was used for instruction to develop language skills.

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Midland College reported that the evening GED class enrolled a student from Chad (Chad is located in South Africa and due to its distance from the sea and its largely desert climate, the country is sometimes referred to as the "Dead Heart of Africa"). The young woman arrived at Midland College through heroic circumstances. She saved the life of 4 Navy Seals by stepping in front of a rebel gunman in Chad. The Chad embassy flew her from Africa because her life was threatened by her courageous actions. She arrived in New York City and was living with a family member who was very elderly. One of the Navy Seals, after returning from Chad, literally bumped into her on the streets of New York and realized that this woman had no home or money since her

relative had recently died. The Navy Seal brought the woman from Chad to Midland to live with his mother and to enroll her into college. The four Navy Seals are paying for her college education as she is dual enrolled in GED and college coursework.

Story by an EL Civics student and used for instructional purposes by the local program:



I CAME TO GET BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MY CHILDREN

My name is Silvia. I am an immigrant from Mexico. I have a husband and five children. I came to the United States to provide better opportunities for my young children. I have twins and three older girls, who are 24, 26, and 28. My family is separated. We have two homes: one is in El Paso, Texas, and the other is in Juarez, Mexico. I live in El Paso with the twins. They are five years old. I want my children to learn English and get an education in the United States. They need a chance for a better life. They need more opportunities.

My husband lives with the three older girls in Mexico. One has completed college. The other two girls don't have jobs. On the weekend, my husband comes to El Paso to visit us. The situation is not perfect. My husband cannot join us permanently. He has no job in El Paso and cannot work in the United States legally. Sometimes I am unhappy. I hope that my family can be reunited one day.