

Arkansas Narrative Report 2009-2010

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

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE/AED) uses State Leadership funds to support the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC) through a grant with the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative. The AALRC was established in 1990 to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education/literacy programs. In 1994 the AALRC's vision and mission statements were expanded to include professional development, and in 2004 they were updated and revised as follows:

Vision Statement: "Arkansas Adult Education/Literacy providers access needed information and resources to enable Arkansas' adult learners to reach their full educational and economic potential."

Mission Statement: "To operate an enhanced network of communication and coordination that provides information, resources, research, professional development, and technical assistance, and that facilitates collaboration to benefit Arkansas Adult Education/Literacy providers."

The AALRC is located in Little Rock, Arkansas. The center has seven full-time employees, which include the Director, Professional Development Coordinator, Information Technology Specialist, Disabilities Project Manager, Media Coordinator, Secretary, and Administrative Assistant. State funds support employee salaries while federal funds are used for the fulfillment of the mission.

The AALRC supports the ADCE agency goal of "developing a strategic plan for effective delivery of lifelong career development and workforce education" through training opportunities and technical support. During the **2009-2010 fiscal year training opportunities** provided by the AALRC for adult education and literacy councils included: ESL Institute, Administrators' Seminars, Instructional Strategies for the Classroom, Literacy Strategies, AERIS Management Information System, BEST Plus, BEST Plus Refresher, Computer Security, Computer Basics, PowerPoint, Movie Maker, Office 2007, Inspiration, Google Docs, Parental Involvement, LD Comprehensive, Distance Learning, Literacy Task Analysis, Regional Summer Institute, Summer Professional Development, Skillsoft, Previsor, ESL 101 Training, SkillsTutor, Woodcock Johnson, New Director Training, Teknimedia, Arkansas Ideas Portal Workshop, MHC GED Webinar, ESL Basics, and Test of Adult Basic Education Training.

The AALRC also supports practitioners and trainers through professional development opportunities at **state and national conferences**. Those include: Arkansas Association

for Continuing and Adult Education/Arkansas Literacy Council Conference, Arkansas Literary Festival, Learning Disabilities Association Conference, Commission on Adult Basic Education Conference, Technology Reading and Learning Disabilities Conference, ProLiteracy Conference, and Center for Adult English Language Acquisition Initiative Seminar.

The AALRC also supports local programs by maintaining a current library of materials, providing research support/information, purchasing/distributing software and materials, and upgrading/redistribution of equipment.

Arkansas requires adult education directors, instructors, and counselors to hold an Arkansas teaching license and an endorsement in adult education within four years of initial full-time employment. The AALRC supports this effort by providing tuition reimbursement to these individuals for college credits earned toward meeting this requirement.

The AALRC supports the ADCE/AED agency goal of “providing an effective communication system that is involved, informative, and interactive” by holding statewide directors meetings and numerous committee meetings, publishing a statewide newsletter and a directory of literacy services, and maintaining a website (<http://www.aalrc.org>).

2. 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 policy “Effective and Efficient (E&E) Evaluation Calculation” became fully implemented in 2007-2008, with the new calculations based on the NRS core indicators of performance. **According to this state policy, programs funded with adult education grants must meet or exceed 80 percent of the core indicators of performance to be considered effective and efficient**, and three years of underperformance can lead to a loss of funding. During that first program year of implementation, 2007-2008, twenty-eight (out of 77) adult education and literacy programs failed to meet 80 percent of the core indicators of performance based on the E&E calculations. As a result, those programs were required to develop and implement a program improvement plan that was closely monitored by the state office. In 2008-2009, only two programs failed to meet E&E requirements. Those two programs were successful in meeting E&E during program year 2009-2010. **However, 13 other programs did not meet E&E requirements during 2009-2010.** The majority of these programs, eleven of them, were community-based literacy councils.

These programs will be meeting with state staff to discuss their E&E results, and will **submit a program improvement plan for 2010-2011.** The programs’ E&E will be monitored by the state staff on a regular basis and all efforts will be made to ensure that these programs meet or exceed E&E and the federal benchmarks during 2010-2011.

The statewide averages for the core indicators of performance and the follow-up measures for the last three program years are found in Chart 1 below.

CHART 1: National Averages, Performance (2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010), and Targets (2009-2010)

ARKANSAS

CORE INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE	National Average	2007-2008 Performance	2008-2009 Performance	2009-2010 Performance	2009-2010 TARGETS
ABE Beginning Literacy	42%	41%	42%	47%	42%
ABE Beginning Basic	41%	40%	41%	39%	41%
ABE Intermediate Low	40%	41%	41%	40%	42%
ABE Intermediate High	36%	40%	42%	42%	41%
ASE Low	38%	41%	42%	42%	42%
ESL Beginning Literacy	39%	25%	33%	30%	28%
ESL Low Beginning	50%	38%	32%	33%	39%
ESL High Beginning	48%	44%	44%	37%	45%
ESL Low Intermediate	44%	39%	48%	40%	40%
ESL High Intermediate	40%	36%	38%	30%	37%
ESL Advanced	30%	25%	32%	27%	26%
Enter Employment	68%	50%	48%	39%	51%
Retain Employment	54%	67%	67%	62%	68%
Obtain a GED	57%	63%	72%	80%	64%
Enter Post-Secondary/Training	62%	26%	33%	38%	37%
AVERAGE	46%	41%	44%	42%	43%

Except for a five-point increase in ABE Beginning Literacy compared to 2008-2009, ABE and ASE performance seems to be leveling off – they are similar to the national averages, and comparable to each of the targets within one or two percentage points. **ABE Beginning Literacy, ABE Intermediate High, and ASE Low all met or exceeded the target benchmarks.** ABE Beginning Basic and ABE Intermediate Low were two percentage points below the targets.

Three ESL levels met or exceeded the federal targets; however, almost all the ESL levels have dipped compared to 2008-2009 (except for ESL Low Beginning which only increased one percentage point). The state office has examples of many ESL students leaving the state for employment in other states which may have led to decreases in educational gains. ESL students also do not always stay in the programs long enough

to be post-tested – often leaving after obtaining basic conversational skills or meeting their personal goals, for example, to pass the citizenship exam.

The four follow-up core indicators are still showing some swings in performance. The two employment core indicators have shown the most decreases over the last three years. This drop could be the result of the **poor economic and employment situation** in Arkansas, the loss of many manufacturing and agricultural jobs, and the decline in new hiring. Neither of these indicators met the target benchmarks.

The core indicator “Obtain a GED” increased eight percentage points over last year’s performance and exceeded the benchmark by sixteen points. This increase could be due to the increased enrollment in several areas of the state that have seen large layoffs of an older workforce of primarily manual laborers who have low levels of education. Many unemployed people are turning to adult education centers to improve their basic academic skills and obtain their GED® credential, which, in Arkansas, is the Arkansas High School Diploma. On the other hand, it could be that this core indicator is very easy to follow up in Arkansas since almost all GED testing is conducted at adult education centers. The local staff will know who has and who has not passed the exams.

The “Enter Postsecondary Education or Training” core indicator increased from 33 percent in 2008-2009 to 38 percent in 2009-2010 and exceeded the federal benchmark by one percentage point. The numbers behind the 38 percent for 2009-2010 showed that 1,040 students successfully achieved the goal out of 2,714 who had the goal. The state office conducted a second data match with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and included all adult education students who exited during program year 2009-2010, not just those who had “Enter Postsecondary Education or Training” as a goal. The result of this data match showed that 2,575 students actually entered postsecondary education institutions. This is more than twice as many as those who achieved the goal according to NRS Table 5. Clearly, the adult education programs are missing out on setting the postsecondary education goal for many of these successful students. Programs still need to find the balance between setting goals for all of their students and not enough of their students. The emphasis of the state’s new funding formula on performance outcomes also provides additional motivation for programs to increase the number of successful goal achievements.

The total student enrollment for 2009-2010 was 31,550 students, which was a decrease of 1,060 students compared to 2008-2009. Thirty-nine percent of all students made an educational functioning level gain, and 77 percent of students who took both the pre-test and the post-test made gains according to Table 4B.

According to NRS Table 4, the statewide average number of hours the learners attended classes was 67.5 hours per students in 2009-2010. After many years of professional development training on **increasing learner persistence** and adding “contact hours” into the state’s funding formula, it is very encouraging to see this average number of hours of student attendance, or persistence, increasing in Arkansas.

The average was 63 hours in 2008-2009; 59 hours in 2007-2008, 56 hours in 2006-2007, and only 53 hours in 2005-2006. According to Table 4B, the average number of hours for students who both pre-tested and post-tested was 99 hours per student. This is eight hours more than in program year 2008-2009. Also according to Table 4B, 50 percent of all enrolled students were both pre-tested and post-tested, which is about the same as 2008-2009, and is considerably higher than 2007-2008 when only 45 percent of all students were both pre-tested and post-tested. Local programs understand the importance of post-testing students to show educational gain as it relates to meeting and exceeding the core indicators of performance and as that relates to E&E calculations. The state office will continue to work closely with the programs that are not meeting or exceeding the federal benchmarks and not meeting the state requirement of Effective and Efficient evaluation calculations.

3. Describe how the eligible agency has supported the integration of activities sponsored under Title II with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Include a description of how the Eligible Agency is being represented on the local workforce investment boards, adult education's involvement on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (WIB), the provision of core and other services through the one-stop system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the one-stop delivery system.

The ADCE/AED responds to both the employer and the potential employee to help enhance the local workforce skills through its Arkansas **Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy™ (WAGE™)** program. The WAGE program is designed to ensure that unemployed and underemployed Arkansans have the academic skills necessary for success in the workplace. WAGE places business and industry at the center of an effort to redefine basic skills required by today's workplace. WAGE includes 112 basic skill competencies identified in the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and deemed essential by the nation's and Arkansas's employers. As part of WAGE, educators perform literacy task analyses for participating businesses and industries and use the results to determine what basic skills are necessary for competent job performance, particularly in areas that significantly impact production, profit and safety. For an adult education program to become WAGE-certified, it must have a WAGE advisory committee that must consist of more than 50 percent business and industry members. The local WAGE advisory committee chairperson must also be from business and industry.

Community WAGE alliance members include the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Department of Economic Development, the Workforce Investment Boards and other local economic development agencies and boards, postsecondary educational providers, chambers of commerce, employment training and placement agencies, local businesses and industries, and county and city governments. A WAGE student who successfully completes the program earns a state-issued certificate in one or more of three areas:

Industrial, Clerical, or Employability. In 2009-2010, WAGE added an additional certificate in the area of Bank Teller.

The ADCE/AED is an active partner in the comprehensive **one-stop career development center** movement in Arkansas. Twenty out of 51 adult education programs are located within workforce centers or have a satellite program located there, and all of the adult education programs across the state provide services to one-stop participants. These services include the assessment of participants' basic academic and computer skills and the education of those participants to increase their skills when needed. Adult education programs also assist one-stop centers through resource sharing and in a few cases through the payment of rent and utilities. Several WAGE centers are also located in one-stop centers.

Adult education is represented on the local **Workforce Investment Boards** by at least one member in each of the ten regional workforce areas. In some cases, this is a local adult education provider, director, or president of a local two-year technical or community college.

The ADCE/AED in conjunction with the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, the Arkansas Transitional Employment Board, and the Southern Good Faith Fund collaborated to develop the **Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative**. This is an initiative to improve earnings and educational attainment of low-income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-eligible adults in Arkansas. It encourages and assists those adults to gain the requisite skills to earn a marketable employability credential for immediate entry into a job or to enter college and complete a degree in order to sustain a better quality of life. TANF funding has been received by all 22 public two-year colleges to implement the program. Career Pathways Partners meet regularly to discuss issues and problems.

For several years, the ADCE/AED operated the **Food Stamp Employment and Training Program** through a contract with the Arkansas Department of Human Services. This program is exclusively intended for non-exempt work registrants who wish to participate in the program on a volunteer basis. This program is currently operating with MOUs between the Arkansas Department of Human Services and local adult education programs. The Employment and Training Arkansas State Plan is approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

The **Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate** involves collaboration between ADCE/AED, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Workforce Centers, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Arkansas Department of Education, with the governor signing the official Arkansas CRC certificates. Adult education programs provide basic skills improvement through regular adult education services as well as the Key Train software. Some adult education

centers also provide the WorkKeys assessment which an individual must pass to receive an Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate.

Further evidence of collaboration would be the MOUs between Arkansas Department of Career Education and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to **match data on employment and postsecondary enrollment for NRS reports**.

Collaboration between the ADCE/AED and the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) helps adult education **students with disabilities** through referrals to adult education programs for instruction and testing and referrals from adult education programs to ARS for diagnosis of students after thorough screening. In addition, one program provides basic skills instruction at the residential Arkansas Career and Technical Institute run by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for students with disabilities.

ADCE/AED is an active participant in the meetings and activities of the **Arkansas Youth Development Collaborative** through representation by the director of the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center.

ADCE/AED is working with ACDE/Career and Technical Education, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, the Arkansas Department of Education, the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce, and the Arkansas Transitional Employment Board on a major initiative of the Governor's office to extensively expand the Arkansas college and career planning system for use by youth and adults. In 2009-2010, this system, supervised by ADCE, was launched as **Arkansas Works**. The program is also piloting career coaches for adult education students and Hispanic students.

ADCE/AED participates in the **Interagency Council on the Homeless** with Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Department of Education, and many local service providers.

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

During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, ADCE/AES awarded EL Civics grants to eleven local programs – eight adult education centers and three literacy councils. **These eleven programs served 3,582 adult learners with EL Civics funds.**

According to the Arkansas state plan for the EL Civics grant, programs are encouraged to supplement the classroom integration of civics and ESL instruction with field trips and guest speakers. Following a classroom unit on **US government**, several EL Civics classes took advantage of guided tours of the three branches of government by visiting

the state Capitol in Little Rock, the local town halls, and the county courthouses. EL Civics students also visited the Clinton Presidential Library and various local history museums during 2009-2010. Following a classroom unit on **US history**, one EL Civics class visited the local Civil War battlefields at Prairie Grove and War Eagle, Arkansas.

Many EL Civics classes involved their students in the **2010 election process**. In one program, students received a hands-on experience with voting when a county clerk brought a voting machine and sample ballots to class to help students become familiar with the voting process. The clerk discussed school elections, special elections, primary elections, and general elections. She detailed the qualifications for voting and explained how to register to vote. Voter registration cards were provided for students who requested them. The clerk explained that voting gives citizens a voice in how the country, state, and local areas are run.

EL Civics teachers invited senators, state representatives, mayors, judges, and police officers to speak to EL Civics classes. Among some of the many topics covered were government structure, city ordinances, traffic laws and violations, correct procedures following a traffic accident or after being stopped by the police, appearing in court, bonding processes, doing community service, serving jail time, and paying fines. One program conducted mock traffic court trials and had students practice asking questions about their tickets and asking how to pay for the tickets.

One EL Civics program has a **Speakers' Series** to enhance community outreach. The students benefited significantly from the various community representatives visiting the classes. The information provided is valuable, particularly to immigrants new to the community. Among the agencies participating were the local women's shelter, credit counseling, public library, LULAC, college admissions office and financial aid, career pathways, Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas, legal aid, and the Samaritan Center.

Many EL Civics programs had representatives from the Catholic Charities of Arkansas Immigration Services come to their classes to discuss the **citizenship process and immigrants' rights**. These speakers also gave students advice on what to do if they are arrested or accused of a crime. They also provided students with information about the rights and responsibilities as a citizen, such as paying property taxes, renewing car tags, and applying for a driver's license.

Part of being a good citizen includes **civic responsibility** and one EL Civics class was introduced to the concept of recycling. The students helped launch a classroom recycling project at the adult education center. They collected paper, aluminum cans, and plastic to recycle from the student break area. Students became very involved and wanted to make recycling at home a priority. Several students requested recycling bins from the sanitation department and the class took a tour of the city's recycling center.

For **community involvement**, a final project at one program had the students make a presentation to the county leadership institute about the importance of adult education and the difference that ESL classes have made in their lives.

One program has a unique way of recognizing its students who become citizens. It has become a tradition now in this program for students who pass the citizenship exam to have their photos taken with their instructors. These photos are displayed on the “**Wall of Fame**” outside the citizenship classroom. Many students have stated that the photos have given them a goal to strive for and further motivation to continue their studies.

Another program, which has a district USCIS office in its city, invites the field office director to the EL Civics classes twice a year to meet students and to help personalize the office. The informative sessions are followed by a mock interview.

“**Citizenship Bees**” were held on two separate occasions. These contests, sponsored by the Junior League of the city, had over 90 students participating in friendly competition that allowed students to display their knowledge of the 100 civics questions that are an integral component of the citizenship exam.