

Maryland Narrative Report, 2011-2012

During Fiscal Year 2012, the Adult instructional Program provided state leadership to 29 local programs and the Correctional Education Program. Grantees were funded under a continuation grant and state leadership followed goals established in the state Plan for Adult Education. Activities during this time were largely focused on innovative approaches to instructional delivery and post-secondary transitions. A second round of funding for Maryland Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training projects (MI-BEST) and the convening of a Career Pathways Summit solidified the state's commitment to pursue evidence-based practices that meet the needs of the low-skilled adults served in our programs.

Activities of Statewide Significance Promoting the Purpose of the Title

Performance Based Funding

Performance Based Funding awards were added to the base grant allocations for FY 2012 grantees that increased educational functioning levels of students and met or exceeded state performance averages. The dynamic formula will expand in future years under continued advisement of the task force, to include rewards for employment and post secondary enrollment outcomes.

Maryland National External Diploma Program (NEDP)

Maryland's National External Diploma Program (NEDP) remains the largest in the nation and produced 579 graduates during the FY 2012. State and local NEDP staff continue to play an important leadership role in the NEDP program changes. Fourteen local programs participated in the recent web-based "soft launching" of the program in the following areas: Health Literacy , Civic Literacy, Geography and History, 21st Century Workplace , Communications and Media Literacy and Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy. Through the soft launch, advisors and assessors have provided CASAS with valuable feedback and suggestions for fine-tuning the program before the full launch in 2013. The new web-based program has more rigorous competencies that reflect changing high school graduation standards and are aligned with the Common Core and Career Readiness Standards. Maryland's NEDP Coordinator also represented the state at the NEDP/CASAS Summer Institute in June 2012.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) initiatives prioritize the identification and delivery of training to adult education staff. Maryland utilizes a train-the-trainer model in partnership with the local leadership team [Administrator, Instructional Specialist (IS), Intake and Assessment Specialist (IAS), and Management Information Specialist (MIS)] to deliver foundation training and selected topics to new and experienced staff at the program level. Local programs submit a plan for professional development annually, detailing selection criteria, delivery method, target audience and evaluation method. Documentation of local PD offerings is submitted and maintained on the state online file sharing system and is reviewed by state staff. State level training included foundation training for CASAS, BEST Plus, ESL Content Standards, the GED® tests and appropriate use of the GED® Official Practice Test (OPT), NEDP (for new and experienced staff), EL Civics and ESL Content Standards. Among the most popular state-

facilitated offerings are sharing sessions for leadership team members designed to encourage collegial collaboration and sharing of best practices. In FY 12, one session was held for Administrators and Management Information Specialists on upcoming NRS changes and three regional sessions were held for Instructional Specialists and Intake and Assessment Specialists. Regional session discussion topics often drive the agenda for annual meetings.

The first state training culminating from Maryland's participation in the National Career Awareness project took place in April 2012. Thirty instructional staff from local programs participated in the training based on the Integrating Career Awareness into the Adult ABE and ESOL Classroom curriculum. The training introduced the curriculum but focused on the process of contextualizing career awareness into existing program offerings. Additional trainings are planned for FY 13 as part of the state-wide rollout.

The online ESL-standards training has undergone a large revision to meet the needs of our diverse ESL instructor population. The new version was reviewed by eight state ESL program Instructional Specialists and Coordinators. Their recommendations have been incorporated in the new version which is streamlined and more user-friendly. The revised version is ready to be launched on the appropriate online instructional platform in FY 13.

Maryland Adult ESL teachers participated in a sustained, nine-month program of professional development activities on the topic of "Learner-Centered Instruction in Adult ESL." Dr. Jodi Crandall and Dr. Susan Finn Miller facilitated the training. Activities included a face-to-face session, an online community of practice and a study circle. This professional development experience was based on Weinstein's learner-centered principles and provided participants with the opportunity to explore an area of research in the classroom over the course of three months. Nine ESL instructors each completed a mini-inquiry project on the topic of learner-centered instruction under the guidance of ELL-U. Projects included inquiry/research using mini-portfolios as tools to help ESL students monitor progress, identifying effective tools to support learner independence, and investigating strategies to motivate learners to read outside of class. Findings were shared with colleagues at a final face-to-face session. The process of inquiry was meaningful and motivating to the participating faculty. Projects and outcomes will be shared at seminars throughout the state.

Maryland was one of ten states selected by OVAE to participate in the Evaluation Learning Community (ELC) training program for conducting research projects. The ELC is bringing together states interested in using their own program data to conduct research on issues related to adult education and literacy. Participating states received training from American Institutes for Research (AIR) in data analysis, planning and conducting research projects. The ESL Specialist and Adult Literacy Resource Center Director participated in face-to-face training, webinars, and conference calls to facilitate the development of their research plan exploring the relationship between investment in professional development and higher post test score gains.

Distance Learning

The GED®-I program, begun in 2008, offers an online alternative to students preparing to take the GED® tests. Its primary mission is to provide outreach to diploma seeking learners with barriers to the traditional adult education classroom setting. The Maryland Workforce Corporation was again awarded a grant to administer this program in FY 12.

Based on customer feedback, the program simplified the online application process so that interested applicants would not be unduly inhibited from applying, while still maintaining a level of difficulty that screened out applicants who were not serious about pursuing the program. The resulting 2,421 applications marked a 133% increase from FY 2011. Of these, 581 were pre-tested at a local program and a total of 291 new learners were accepted into the program. A total of 16 regular 12-week sessions and six seven-week (Fast Track) sessions were offered serving 264 enrolled learners for 15,094 attendance hours. A total of 67 learners completed a level (25%) and an additional 79 learners (30%) were continued in the next fiscal year.

The program continues to face challenges in moving learners from application to pre-test; and from program completion to diploma. An initiative was begun in 2011 to generate reminder letters at one week, one month and two month intervals after submission if no pre-test results were posted. This was continued during 2012. Due to a greater level of communication with customers, an average of 24% of applicants followed through for testing. Online instructors continue to look for ways to improve communications and maintain engagement with distance learners including online whiteboards, chat sessions, video conferencing and social media. Moving to computer-based testing will likely result in less waiting time for testing and a higher graduation rate for this group of learners.

Training for State Staff

State staff attended the following conferences as presenters or participants: Career Pathways Summit; annual State Directors Meeting; Employment and Training Administration (ETA)/ American Society for Training and Development, Region 2 Technical Assistance Forum; Maryland Association for Adult Community and Continuing Education (MAACCE), both regional mini-conferences and the annual conference; CASAS Summer Institute; TESOL; MD TESOL; WATESOL; NRS; and LINCS Region 1 Advisory Partner Meeting.

Maryland Adult Literacy Resource Center

The Adult Literacy Resource Center (ALRC) and Resource Center for Language and Culture, located at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), provide a strong multi-component, professional development center that supports the Maryland literacy provider network. The major focus of the Centers is to improve and enhance program quality and learner outcomes through the provision of professional development, logistical support for training and technical assistance, teacher resources, instructional materials, and the dissemination of research information.

The Centers include a lending library containing over 4,733 items, including professional development resources, instructional materials and workbooks, and media to support grantees. Education Department Faculty and Center' patrons donated 58 resources, which have been cataloged in the University of Maryland online Library system making them available and easily accessible for patron use. Faculty also provided the Centers with three journal subscriptions. Approximately 11,443 resources were circulated among the field in FY12.

The Centers disseminated a periodic on-line digest, the *Resource Retriever*, containing information about local, regional & national conferences, online course opportunities made available by other state and national organizations, and links and information about up-to-date available resources and research reports. Resource Center staff created three surveys to assess local program leadership team and instructor needs to inform future professional development activities provided to the field. Support and regular technical assistance were provided to adult education programs via 19 conference calls, as well as periodic face-to-face meetings and four electronic discussion lists, one for each program leadership category. A total of 527 posts enhanced communication and collaboration and provided networking opportunities among adult education programs.

A total of 28 professional development activities were delivered to 667 adult education state and local program staff with approximately 18 provided to grantee leadership team members (Program Administrator, Instructional Specialist, Intake Assessment Specialist, and Management Information Specialist).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of 29 grantees and Correctional Education were performed by state staff through a combination of on-site visits and desk monitoring of mid-year and final reports, performance measure achievement and reported Literacy Works Information System (LWIS) data. Two Specialists joined our staff to fill the vacant Accountability and Family Literacy positions. A third position will be filled in FY 13.

Approximately 21 program visits were made by Specialists to provide orientation to new administrators, technical assistance for targeted issues, and to monitor program and instructional practices. Adult Education staff also participated in learner recognition ceremonies at local programs. Regular monthly conference calls provided information and updates on state and federal initiatives to grantees.

We continue to focus on providing training and assistance to improve the quality of the data collected and to support the use of NRS data for program management and improvement. The Data Quality Consultant, employed through the Adult Literacy Resource Center, provided continuity for technical assistance to programs, and updates to NRS reporting requirements and the state data system. For all programs, there was a focus on DQ Data Analysis and Reporting standards, an area identified for targeted assistance in the FY 2010 Data Quality Desk Audit. In FY 2012 the *Administrators' Quarterly Data Review Report* was revised based on field response to the original FY 2011 reporting template. Program administrators and leadership team members engage in quarterly data analysis and reporting

on targeted areas. Reports are reviewed by the Data Quality Consultant and state Program Managers who provide feedback and technical assistance as needed. The report is a valuable tool that assists local program administrators in identifying areas for program improvement.

Family Literacy

In November 2011 a Family Literacy Specialist joined the adult education staff to provide technical assistance in delivering the four components of Family Literacy. In May 2012, a statewide Family Literacy meeting was convened for family literacy program providers and their counterparts to promote greater integration between partner agencies. The purpose of the meeting was to re-evaluate strengths and challenges relating to partnerships and to develop realistic goals for family literacy programs while preserving the integrity of the four components. Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to hear how their peers from similar programs manage non-traditional program models. All participants engaged in a poverty simulation exercise sponsored by the United Way of Frederick, Maryland to help further sensitize staff to the effects of poverty on the students our programs serve.

Financial Literacy

The Financial Literacy planning begun in FY 10 and FY 11 with the Maryland Cash Campaign culminated in two pilot training sessions for three adult education programs and Correctional Education staff on credit and savings in FY 2012. A planning session was held in September 2011, and trainings were convened in October 2011 and January 2012 with more than 20 adult education staff participating. The Cash Campaign staff also participated in the annual MAACCE Conference.

Local Grantee Network

Twenty nine local programs and Correctional Education were provided funding through a continuation grant during FY 12. A competitive application was released in August 2011 for services in Wicomico County. The previous provider, Wor-Wic Community College, notified DLLR at the end of FY 11 that they would not seek a continuation grant. Chesapeake College was funded to cover the interim period. They subsequently applied for and were awarded the grant beginning in October 2011. Additionally, Baltimore County Public Schools, a program serving only the out-of-school youth population decided not to renew their grant for FY 13. DLLR staff and the Community College of Baltimore County worked with the public schools on close out operations and to ensure the successful transition of the adult education learners to the college program. A transition grant was planned for three months to close out classes at the Baltimore County Detention Center.

Transitions to Post-Secondary Education

The FY 2011 competitive application required a transition plan detailing how programs would assist students with integrating their goals for further education, training and employment into their education plans. As a result of this emphasis, a number of programs created a dedicated position to facilitate goal setting and transition activities for learners at the high intermediate and advanced levels. Technical assistance including training on the Integrating Career Awareness (ICA) curriculum and copies of the curriculum have also been provided to guide programs with the implementation of transition strategies for students in adult education programs. Additional activities include "College Week", or

“College for a Day” sessions, transition classes for ASE level students on college campuses, and information sessions with college personnel. Several programs have guided students toward scholarship opportunities with post secondary institutions in both credit and non credit classes.

Adult education students in Maryland who earn a score of 3000 or better on the GED® tests and plan to pursue postsecondary education and training programs are eligible for the Regina L. Milio Scholarship fund. The Milio fund was established in 2003 in honor of the late Regina Milio, a former employee of the Maryland GED® Testing Office. Since the fund began, 89 scholarships have been awarded to 57 deserving graduates. The awardees must be currently enrolled in or accepted into an accredited post-secondary education or training institution. DLLR presents the awards in partnership with the Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education (MAACCE), at the annual spring conference for MAACCE members. Four \$500 scholarships were awarded in FY12 to students pursuing post secondary degrees at Chesapeake College, The College of Southern Maryland and Harford Community College.

In FY 12, Maryland partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide a second round of funding for community college programs to deliver an integrated basic education and skills training program modeled on the Washington State I-BEST model. Maryland I-BEST (MI-BEST) is designed to increase opportunities for low-skilled adults to succeed in occupational training and embark on a career pathway in a high-demand employment sector in Maryland. Chesapeake College joined the original five colleges in FY 12 to continue the work begun in the DOL Career Pathways Local Implementation Planning Grant. Maryland Literacy Works funding provided an opportunity for the colleges to build on their initial experiences and to focus on developing innovative strategies to help students make the transition to employment and track student progress and program performance. The training programs for this round included Certified Nursing Assistant (37%), Office Technology (9%), Accounting (10%), Hotel Front Desk (11%), A+ Certification (16%), and Building Maintenance (17%). One hundred fifty six students participated in the training; 88 were native English speakers with less than a high school diploma and 68 were English language learners at high intermediate or advanced educational functioning levels. Three of the programs opted to add a second training area and three started additional cohort groups totaling 12 training programs. Of the 12, nine offered a bridge/vestibule program, and all 12 provided tutoring and case management. Preliminary results indicate that 73% of the enrollees persisted to completion of their MI-BEST courses and 57% of the enrollees increased their levels of literacy. Efforts are underway to develop more extensive tracking of student outcomes following program completion.

A central feature of MI-BEST is its consortium approach: the six colleges form a peer-learning community. DLLR’s Adult Education program was able to partner with Washington State in FY 2012 to host a one-day training session on Integrated Instruction for MI-BEST participants and other grantees who were interested in considering this instructional model. Additional technical assistance is planned for FY 2013.

Effectiveness of Activities based on the Core Indicators of Performance

Enrollment

Enrollment declined slightly from 32,833 in FY 2011, to 31,094 learners in FY 2012. The relative proportions of Adult Basic (45%), Adult Secondary (13%) and English language (42%) learners have remained stable through the past four years. Youth, ages 16-24 represent 34% of the population, while the highest student age representation remains in ages 25-44, at 48% of the total student enrollment. While FY 2012's total enrollment decreased by 5% from the previous year, the past three years had seen above average growth in enrollment, presumably related to the scarce employment opportunities for the low skilled.

Literacy Attainment

Learners had a literacy level completion rate of 42% on Table 4, a slight decline from FY 11's 43%. Completion by program type showed a decline for ABE learners at 37% from 39%, with ASE unchanged at 43%. Literacy level completion for ESL learners also remained stable at 47%. Students who remained in the program long enough to be post tested showed an overall 62% completion rate. An increase in enrollment late in the fiscal year and increased numbers of learners entering at the lower levels of literacy are likely reasons for the decline in this performance measure.

Diploma Attainment

The total number of high school diplomas awarded was 2,417 with the rate of learners achieving the outcome increasing from 71% to 74% this year. The EDP program continues to be an excellent option for high school credentialing in Maryland with 579 graduates and accounted for 24% of all high school diplomas awarded in 2012.

Employment Outcomes

State unemployment rates averaged 6.8 % during FY 2012, and for adult education students, state employment outcomes continue to be affected by the lack of available jobs in Maryland and surrounding states for adults without college education or technical training. Learners who lacked basic skills or a high school diploma were unable to qualify for available employment or training programs. Of the learners who identified an employment goal, 27% achieved the outcome. While this is a slight decrease in the percentage outcome, the number of learners who reported a goal to enter employment increased by 32% from 3,304 in FY 11, to 4,362 in FY 12, and the number achieving this goal rose from 803 in FY 2011, to 1,019, a 27% increase during FY12. The retained employment measure remained stable at 63% in FY 12, while the number of individuals setting the goal was 5,775 in FY 12, compared to 5,338 the previous fiscal year. The number of participants achieving the outcome also increased from 2,141 in FY 11, to 2,417 in FY 12, a 13% jump. The increases in numbers of individuals who identified employment goals is a reflection of continuous technical assistance targeted to a better understanding of goal setting and establishing outcomes for this measure. Additionally, requirements were added to the continuation application to improve goal collection data, and report employment goals for an appropriate percentage of the students who reported being employed or unemployed.

Transition to Other Education and Training

The postsecondary education outcome increased to 41% during FY 2012, from 21% in FY 11, and 31% in FY 10. The increase may be the result of a number of changes in program management. The emphasis of the FY 2011 competitive application on transition planning motivated a number of programs to hire a staff person specifically dedicated to this task. The state continues to stress the importance of setting of this goal for students and developing tools to implement career awareness in the adult education programs. Despite the increase in FY 2012, the potential for underreporting of this goal continues to be a concern, due to the lack of a shared database.

Matched Literacy Level Assessments

The state pre-post match remained stable at 68% during FY 2012 following a decline in FY 2010 and FY 2011. Programs have implemented changes to monitor attendance hours and increase post testing rates as they adjusted to stricter assessment policy requirements. The role of the Intake and Assessment Specialist (IAS) has been critical in educating instructional staff and organizing the post-testing process.

Learner Persistence

Average contact hours decreased from 92 in FY 2011 to 88 in FY 2012. Maryland continues to focus on research-based strategies for learner persistence. Managed enrollment, local attendance policies and the Intake/Assessment Specialist role all play a part in this dynamic; however, programs still struggle to surmount barriers to attendance with our adult population.

Integration with Other Adult Education, Career Development and Employment and Training Activities

The Maryland Adult Learning Advisory Council (MALAC) originally convened in 2011, continued to meet during this fiscal year. Appointees to the committee serve two full years and represent a wide range of stakeholders including government agencies, Maryland delegates, community colleges, public schools and community based organizations. The committee is focused on the need for continued collaboration in order to integrate adult education and workforce development.

Adult Education coordinates with the Governor's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB) initiatives including the Interagency Workforce Committee charged with coordinating workforce development programs and policies to meet the demand of Maryland's high demand industries and increasing collaboration among WIA partners. The Director of Adult Education was appointed to serve on this committee. The Adult Education ESL Specialist continued to serve on the New Americans Committee. She developed and provided training for One Stop staff to reduce language and cultural barriers in working with the growing population of New Americans.

In FY 2012, MOU's were updated by adult education grantees and their workforce partners for planning integrated activities. Most jurisdictions meet on a quarterly basis; share information with staff about

program offerings and eligibility requirements; refer qualified participants for services; and attend partner orientations to provide information to applicants about available services. A number of Adult Education Administrators serve on WIB Youth Councils.

DLLR is currently engaged in promoting career pathways initiatives to key stakeholders. In September 2011, the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) hosted the Maryland Career Pathways Summit to introduce the state's implementation of a career pathways framework to address the needs of low-skilled workers. The event convened over 250 government, education, workforce, human service and business representatives to explore strategies for implementing a career pathways system. The Summit was the outgrowth of Maryland's participation in the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Career Pathways Institute. State leaders were hopeful that the Summit would drive future innovation and the future expansion of career pathways strategies at the local and regional level. Summit participants were joined by Dr. Brenda Dann- Messier (OVAE), representatives from the USDOL Career Pathways Institute Team, Minnesota Fast TRAC program, Mott Community College of Michigan and others. Key goals of the Summit included creating a greater awareness in Maryland of the national career pathways movement and an understanding of the six key elements in the development of career pathways; understanding critical components and required partnerships for the implementation of this approach; identifying key roles for state and local partners including adult education providers, workforce investment boards (WIBS), community colleges, social services, career and technical education (CTE) and other local partners ; and providing tools to stimulate planning and assistance for the development of a Career Pathways Implementation Plan

Activities and Services Supported with EL Civics Fund

In FY 2012, Maryland funded 21 local grantees with a total distribution of \$1,422,800.00 in EL Civics funds. A total of 7,482 English language learners reported as having a goal of civics education. The state continues to provide technical assistance to the field to ensure that the appropriate population and curriculum are supported by EL Civics funding.

Annual training in implementing EL Civics curriculum is widely attended by ESOL practitioners. In 2012, the annual gathering hosted guest speakers Rachael Shaw and Michael Jones with the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Office of Citizenship. They provided information on the EL/Civics on line training tool. At the same training, staff from Montgomery Community College's Adult ESOL & Literacy-GED Program, presented on Enhanced Integration Tasks®, designed to help students to practice English outside of the classroom and consider the true value of civic participation. Additionally, Deneice Jones, USCIS Community Relations Officer for Baltimore was available to answer participant's questions regarding the naturalization process.