

## **Vermont Narrative Report 2012-13**

### ***Leadership***

Leadership funds support professional development activities, state staff salaries related to professional development, and annual dues that support the New England Literacy Resource Center. The FY13 Adult Education & Literacy Professional Development Calendar was an effort of teachers, program managers, provider organizations, the statewide professional development committee members including staff from the field, and state AEL staff. All training reflected the continuing state priorities of promoting standards-based instruction with Equipped for the Future, technology integration, and to develop and maintain a knowledge base in adult learning and development. Our professional development system is tied to competencies published by Pro-Net effort and is working to align in an on-going way with the professional development system standards put out by the Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers. This reporting year, the identified theme was “Standards-Based Practices” in concert with the state shift to *Common Core State Standards* and the late year (April/May) OVAE release of *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Learners*. All professional development offerings were organized into content/ topical strands with multiple approaches used for professional learning in each strand. The strands were a mix of state-identified priorities and priorities identified in the field from a multi-layered professional development needs assessment process.

This focus on standards-based practice with research-based professional development program is in line with achieving the goals of our State Plan. The topical strands of professional development were designed to support professional growth and program improvement in for every applicable adult education and literacy activity area designated in the Vermont State Plan.

The reporting year was the ninth year of a single statewide grant for the provision of adult education and literacy services. The statewide grantee shares responsibility with the AEL Team at the VT Agency of Education for professional development services. During this period, the system has employed a Professional Development Coordinator who has planned and implemented a full, year-round calendar of professional development workshops designed to meet a variety of training needs in content strands as described previously, via ongoing dissemination of new resources and opportunities to the field electronically at least twice monthly, and via funds made available for job-embedded and in-service professional development experiences. During the reporting year, 100% of the paid field staff participated in at least one professional development activity supported by Leadership funds. Unpaid volunteer staff were also invited to participate and took part to a lesser extent.

### ***Core Indicators of Performance***

Vermont began building a common accountability and continuous improvement system for Adult Education & Literacy eleven years ago. The first step, a management

information system, was designed to provide internet-based individual student records containing inter-relational data on demographics, goals, educational plans, skill assessments, service participation, and outcomes. FY06 was the first year that all providers were required to enter data directly into the new system (Data Works) which went online on September 6, 2005. In years since then, a library of revised and new reports was established and progress continues toward full implementation with efforts on improved data quality. In reporting year FY13 in partnership with the field, we continued to update and modify data system reports to be more accurate and useful at both the state and local level. Expanding the changes from FY 12 allowed for greater sophistication in identifying/ excluding target populations from the local program perspective. We also began the process of changing the look of the current system to include dashboard indicators, ease of navigation and more efficient reporting. These changes will go “live” during the next program year.

In FY13, the population qualifying for the federal report increased slightly by percentage (approximately 66% compared to 61% in the previous program year) but a drop of @ 4% in real numbers (2097 compared to 2188 in the previous program year). There were two primary reasons for this drop in actual numbers. First, there was a significant decrease in the total number of ESL students served (22% and 83 students from the previous program year). This is attributable to Burlington’s designation as a refugee resettlement site and the fluctuation in numbers that occur as a result of broader, national resettlement plans. Another issue facing the AEL system in Vermont is an innovative approach to public education which continues to increase the number of students in AEL services retaining an “enrolled” status with their local high school. It is expected that this number of “enrolled” students will increase based on Legislative passage of a “Flexible Pathways” bill (Act 77) and the upcoming adoption of updated Education Quality Standards. State AEL Leadership looks forward to future discussions with OVAE and DAEL staff on how this will/can impact adult education reporting in Vermont.

In FY13, programs showed percentage improvements in educational gains in completing some levels, some percentage decreases and some relatively unchanged. The same held true with ESL gains. Overall, there was an improvement in the NRS 4-6 levels (from table 4). Increasing gains for the lower level students (NRS1-3) continues to be an area that needs improvement – despite a percentage increase at NRS Level 1, the real numbers of outcomes was virtually unchanged. Following an OVAE targeted visit in June, the State did connect with AIR to begin digging into our data and procedures as part of our continuous improvement efforts. The work with AIR will continue into the early, mid-winter of the current program year (PY13-14).

In terms of follow-up measures, there is improvement to report as well, though this is primarily in the numbers we have for data match. Last year we had two categories fail to meet the 50% response rate for valid results – that did not happen this year due in large part to internal reporting changes and by utilizing the Agency’s contract with national Student Clearing House for post-secondary education and training.

### ***Integration***

Through the development of ten full-service learning centers and linked satellites, as required by the statewide grant, students have access to a statewide system. Learning centers serve as points of access, enrollment, and coordination for a wide range of adult education and literacy services, including:

- \*intake and enrollment;
- \*goal setting;
- \*learning plan development;
- \*assessment;
- \*instruction;
- \*tutoring;
- \*credentialing (GED, Adult Diploma, High School Completion);
- \*workplace skills development; and
- \*transitions assistance.

Staff from throughout the state serve on local Workforce Investment Boards. Partnerships, both formal and informal, exist throughout the system linking adult education to the workplace, secondary education, and post-secondary education. An essential partnership with secondary education continues to evolve.

The Vermont High School Completion Program was in its eighth year of operation during the reporting year. It requires partnership between adult education providers and high schools for the purpose of developing graduation education plans for participating students. One result of this process has been improved relationships among the partners. High schools now have a better idea of what adult education is able to offer and adult education is benefiting from the expertise residing in the secondary system. In other words, effective practice is being shared and students in both systems are the beneficiaries. Prior to this reporting year, eligibility for access to this funding source ended at age 22. However, during the FY13 Legislative session this age cap was eliminated, expanding opportunities for all adult learners (this was part of the statutory and policy language changes referenced above).

### ***EL/Civics***

During FY13 EL/Civics grants supported efforts at three learning centers, Burlington, Barre, and Brattleboro. While every center provides some level of ESL services as a full service learning center, these three represent the areas with the highest concentration of such students and greatest need. Statewide, 295 ESL students were served. The programs supported by EL/Civics funds served 150 students of that total with EL/Civics instruction.

All programs make continuing efforts according to this scope of work:

- Enhance existing English literacy services with instruction in civics,

- rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures and activities designed to prepare students for success as community members.
- Develop standards-based contextual curriculum materials and activities related to parent, worker and citizen roles for use in English literacy/civics programs.
- Provide staff development for English literacy/civics education.

Specifically, EL/ Civics funding supported staffing and materials that enabled these learner activities as a part of instruction:

- Class trips to hospitals, libraries, local municipal offices, fire departments, banks and similar public institutions with which the learners might interact;
- Learning centers in partnership with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regional office hosted opportunities to learn about gaining US citizenship.
- Attending community arts productions
- Citizenship, American culture, American history and government integrated into all six levels of ESOL instruction (contextualization of language acquisition skills)
- Choosing a doctor, dentist or other health care professional
- Attending American holiday/family celebrations
- Learning about social customs, norms, and other aspects of our U.S. culture through participation in neighborhood events.
- Touring local businesses
- Preparing for pregnancy and childbirth and understanding rights within the medical and social systems for both parent and child

Activities such as the following occurred with emphasis on understanding the law and individual rights, responsibilities and access to community resources:

- Applying for Vermont's health insurance
- Choosing a bank and opening a savings and/or checking account
- Establishing credit and purchasing a home
- Understanding rights and the law when applying for a job or renting an apartment
- Understanding Vermont's school system and a parent's role within it
- Preparing for the citizenship exam
- Understanding the tax system, its role in government, and preparing tax forms
- Intermediate and advanced level students transitioning to college focused on historic American literature and participated in Student Voice and Advocacy workshops, including a two-day session for students and staff at the State House.

## ***Conclusion***

Vermont is a rural state with a small population, limited industry, and challenging travel conditions. Availability of services to students, delivery of professional development opportunities, and managerial functions are all made more difficult by the physical

environment. However, the size of the state can also make it possible to be more innovative, act as a laboratory for future national leadership activities, and move more quickly to effect improvement. Very hot topics in education in our state include proficiency-based graduation (and transcripts), work-based learning, and personal learning pathways, and our adult learners and staff are drawing on their experiences to support a structure to provide these transformative educational opportunities for all of Vermont's students. Legislation passed during the 2013 Legislative Session as well as impending changes to the State's Education Quality Standards will continue to impact the AEL system in future program years and will require that the AEL State Team navigates the "gap" between state-led innovation and AEFLA reporting requirements.