



Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education
Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness
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Connecticut Narrative Report 2013-14

Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has successfully completed another year of implementing the goals outlined in its State Plan as mandated by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The CSDE has expanded its provider network while enhancing and supporting programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective and responsive to community needs by supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIA Title II dollars.

Seventy-one organizations including school districts, volunteer programs, community based organizations and other agencies provided adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. By focusing on the needs of learners, families, communities and employers, adult education programs succeeded in improving the skills of Connecticut's learners, enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma, helping to close the skills gap in the workplace, assisting non-English speakers to learn English, easing the transition to post-secondary education, preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.

The CSDE offers the following responses as part of its Narrative Report for Fiscal Year 2013-14.

State Leadership Funds *Describe the major activities supported with State Leadership funds during the reporting period and the extent to which these activities helped you in implementing the goals of the State plan. Specifically describe activities related to the implementation of career pathways.*

The CSDE delivers a majority of its state leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN). The CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of Connecticut's State Plan and consists of professional development basics and activities related to the implementation of career pathways.

Professional Development

During fiscal year 2013-2014, more than 1200+ practitioners attended 50 pre-planned training events. Ninety-five percent of all workshop evaluations were rated five or six on a six-point scale for overall quality. In addition, 15 additional requested training sessions were developed and conducted for approximately 200 attendees. Sessions were presented in differing formats, face to face, through web conferencing, or a combination of both.

Connecticut Competency System (CCS) training sessions were offered several times during the year to practitioners from both adult education and the workforce development community. The CCS is an integral part of the CSDE's career pathways, standards-based framework utilizing the Comprehensive

Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) to connect curriculum, assessment and instruction that is able to capture progress made by adult education learners. CCS has incorporated the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education into training. ATDN staff supports the network of CCS Program Facilitators – lead practitioners who ensure high quality CCS implementation – through regional networking sessions that provided updates, links to best practices, opportunities for sharing and an awareness of regional/national issues, such as information related to the 2014 GED® Test. ATDN continues to work with the CSDE to host a required statewide meeting for CCS Program Facilitators.

The Connecticut Adult Numeracy and Mathematics Institute (CANMI) is fortunate to have been able to continue the previous year's effort made through the Eastern LINCS, OCTAE supported Adult Numeracy Instruction–Professional Development (ANI-PD). ATDN provided adult education math teachers with another extended, intensive, year-long PD opportunity. The ANI-PD stresses the importance of using adult daily life contexts for instruction that include career pathways mathematical situations. Math training was provided in conjunction with Common Core State Standards, and the CCRS to strengthen the relationship with curriculum and our adult students' mathematical knowledge development.

The 2014 GED® Test - As additional information about the subtests and newer student preparation material becomes available, instructors have been eager to incorporate all of it into their instructional settings. ATDN provided sessions that recognized instructor engagement with the GED Testing Service™ website, and the Official GED® Practice Test, as well as discussion of relevant new materials and resources. The GED® programs offer an enhanced opportunity for discussion and writing related to career options and pathways for students to continue into either employment and/or further educational situations.

The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education have been the focal point for our state's professional development particularly in reading, writing, and math. ATDN held a two-day summer institute in August (70 participants each day) to share the standards and discuss implications for local programming. Two programs were identified to pilot CCRS implementation utilizing the Standards-In-Action (SIA) process to unpack and create lessons. These programs and CT training staff participated in a regional SIA training coordinated by the New England Literacy Resource Center. While continuing to work closely with the pilot programs, CT trainers provided CCRS overview sessions throughout the state to increase awareness and knowledge. Also, CCRS were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing.

Reading professional development integrated the ELA Reading Standards into each session. Sessions incorporated the three advances (text complexity, evidence, and knowledge building) and identified standards relating to alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Resources and strategies for skills instruction were shared and discussed. Also the importance of connecting reading and writing was emphasized. Writing professional development concentrated on the ELA Writing Standards. Sessions focused on understanding of the writing standards and developing strategies and skills for instruction for adult learners.

The STAR federal initiative continued its successful implementation and support to our current eleven programs. On-site mentoring and coaching activities continued for STAR trained educators. A booster session was provided to show connections to STAR and CCRS Reading Standards, particularly the Reading Standards: Foundational Skills. The two nationally certified STAR trainers successfully completed the STAR recertification process. They also provided sessions for the STAR teachers from each program to review the diagnostic assessments and the resources contained in the STAR Toolkit.

The CASAS Functional Writing Assessment training was delivered two times during 2013-2014. This nine hour training is a requirement in order for programs to administer this assessment. The training includes one full day, face to face session with follow-up discussion and review via *GotoMeeting*. Each adult education provider is expected to maintain one Writing Contact Person who has completed the training. To ensure the reliable and accurate scoring of writing assessment results, ATDN offered three inter-rater reliability practices (two mailings and one face to face session). ATDN's Scoring Service, for the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment, scored 1,408 standardized pre-post writing samples on behalf of local adult education programs. Intensive and ongoing training ensured the maintenance of the scoring service's accuracy.

SDE continued to offer an asynchronous writing lab for online writing practice and feedback designed as a supplemental reinforcement for learners enrolled in local adult education centers for intermediate/advanced English as a second language classes and intermediate adult basic education and General Educational Development (GED) preparation classes. The system offers students the opportunity to practice writing and receive online feedback from tutors who are Connecticut certified teachers. These tutors are also certified scorers in the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment rubric and are familiar with teaching writing for the GED test.

English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers were provided multiple professional development opportunities with a strong focus on Reading in ESL at all levels, as a result of the increased use of reading tests for data reporting. A workshop on Reading in the ESL Classroom was offered several times and was well-attended. The ESL Lead teacher meetings continued the focus on reading with several presentations on ways to increase use of reading strategies at all levels. Additional workshops were offered in Learner Persistence and Retention and CCRS in ESL

The NEDP Center at ATDN has continued to provide training and technical assistance to the 25 National External Diploma Program (NEDP) sites for the high quality implementation of the NEDP. Following this year's full launch of the new online NEDP, an Online Refresher Training workshop was created and offered five times, including once at the annual CAACE Conference. One three and a half day training session for new NEDP Advisor/Assessors was held as well as four mandated Policies and Practices Meetings. Additionally, customized technical assistance and professional development sessions are provided for individual sites and practitioners on an as-needed basis. CSDE and the NEDP Center are working with CASAS to facilitate the full launch of the new online NEDP and assisting sites with training and implementation of the online delivery. The NEDP Center has reviewed and provided feedback to CASAS regarding the program software research and development.

The 22nd Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities attracted over 200 attendees. The keynote address *Love, Learning, and Lasting Commitment: The Art of the Fresh Start* was presented by C. Leslie Charles, Certified Speaking Professional. Charles' mission is to help people realize their potential. Ms. Charles brought a background as diverse as her audiences, including mental health professionals and direct care staff, healthcare advocates and practitioners, educators, victim advocates, and principal investigators. The breakout workshop sessions included presentations on resilience, mind/body wellness, adult literacy, understanding executive functioning, nutrition, and soft skills for employment success.

The ATDN Disability coordinator developed and presented two workshops, *Learning Strategies for New Teachers* and *The Impact of Instructor Behavior on Classroom Environment*. Disability Contact training was held for new and experienced disability contacts. Consultations with Adult Ed and Literacy programs occurred at the rate of several per month around the state.

Performance Data Analyses Describe any significant findings from the evaluation of your performance data for the reporting period and efforts to improve outcomes for the core indicators of performance.

Number of Students Enrolled: The total number of students enrolled in fiscal year 2013-14 continued to decline slightly from the previous year with some age cohorts evidencing greater declines. The 16-18 age group showed the greatest decline of 13%. The 22-44 age group continued to have a slight increase.

MEASURE	National Average	2013-14 TARGET	Actual 2013-14 PERFORMANCE
ABE Beginning Literacy	44%	47%	55%
ABE Beginning	46%	49%	48%
ABE Low Intermediate	46%	44%	44%
ABE High Intermediate	39%	28%	32%
ASE Low	38%	31%	33%
ESL Beginning Literacy	50%	58%	60%
ESL Low Beginning	54%	60%	60%
ESL High Beginning	54%	57%	58%
ESL Low Intermediate	48%	46%	45%
ESL High Intermediate	43%	46%	44%
ESL Advanced	26%	21%	38%

In ABE Beginning levels, Connecticut exceeded the national average substantially and the intermediate levels either met or exceeded the target. The ASE Low measure also exceeded the target. In ESL Beginning levels, we surpassed the national average and either maintained or exceeded the target. ESL Intermediate levels were just below the target, but ESL Advanced exceeded the target by 17 points.

Percentage of Unemployed Learners

The percent of learners who indicate that they are employed at entry remained steady, ending a long decline. The percent of learners who are unemployed and seeking employment also remained steady. These statistics correlate with our state's unemployment rate of 6.4% and 7.6% for the last year.

Percent of Learners Based on Employment Status at Entry

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Employed	39%	37%	37%	38%	38%
Unemployed - Seeking Employment	40%	41%	40%	40%	39%
Unemployed - Not Seeking Employment	22%	21%	22%	22%	22%

Integration with Other Programs Describe how you have integrated activities funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Describe your efforts to develop or advance career pathway systems

that include career and technical education, postsecondary education, employers, and economic and workforce development. Include a description of how your agency is being represented on the State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, the provision of core and other services through the One-Stop system and an estimate of the AEFLA funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system.

WIA Title II funds enabled the CSDE to effectively supplement Connecticut's legislatively mandated adult education system. Adult education providers were able to offer more comprehensive and cost-effective services to their eligible residents and expand their network to offer more locally responsive programming. Collaborative relationships have been developed between the CSDE, local adult education providers, community colleges, community based organizations, other state agencies and the workforce development system to greatly expand educational, support and training services to the target populations in the state. CSDE staff and local practitioners also worked closely with regional literacy councils to strengthen the connections between CSDE funded adult education programs and other literacy related programs in the community.

The goal of the CSDE's Program Improvement Project (PIP) continuation grant process for FY 2013-14 was to provide funding opportunities for adult education providers to offer programs and services for adults who lack the level of basic skills and literacy necessary for effective citizenship and productive employment and to build a comprehensive continuum of lifelong learning.

Overall, providers receiving WIA Title II grants demonstrated strong learner outcomes on the core indicators of performance. Some notable accomplishments included the following:

- National External Diploma Program (NEDP) expansion enabled providers to offer another high school completion option for adult learners and/or expand the program further into their region.
- Non-traditional adult education services grants promoted quality and increased accessibility to adult education programs for learners in halfway houses, homeless shelters and in work release programs needing ABE/GED instruction as well as ESL instruction.
- Family literacy grants integrated parent literacy training leading to economic self-sufficiency; age-appropriate education for children; training for parents regarding how to be the primary teachers and full partners in the education of their children; and interactive literacy activities between parents and children. Funds were used to support the adult education component in order to provide basic skills, ESL and/or secondary school completion instruction in an integrated learning environment.
- The Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CTAVHS) continued to facilitate greater coordination among adult education programs and increased access to learning opportunities by offering high quality mentored online courses to learners statewide.

The CSDE designed three priority areas through its federally funded competitive grants to adult education providers specifically focused on critical aspects of career pathways for adult students: Preparing for Twenty-first Century Careers, Post-secondary Education and Training and Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST).

- Twenty-first Century Careers grantees integrated career readiness activities including career portfolios, resume workshops, computer proficiency checklists, skill certification courses and community service experiences into their adult education programming. Students were exposed to labor market information, visited one-stop centers and learned about career pathways as part of their contextualized classroom instruction.
- Post-secondary Education and Training grantees bridged the "transition gap" by raising students' standards/expectations, partnered with higher education institutions, aligned curricula, awarded

dual credit, coached learners about postsecondary options and targeted instructional strategies to help them transition successfully to post-secondary education/training programs. Transition programs also featured written agreements between the adult education provider and its post-secondary partner(s) and a solid referral and support process.

- The Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) grantees provided specific career pathways for adult students by utilizing a co-teaching model that included basic education/diploma attainment and training in a specific skill that led to an industry recognized credential.

Workforce Coordinating Committee

Over the last several years, the CSDE has convened a statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee (WCC) bringing together adult education directors; community colleges; workforce investment boards (WIBs); the Connecticut Business and Industry Association; the Departments of Economic and Community Development, Labor and Social Services; and the Office for Workforce Competitiveness to develop a coordinated user-friendly system responsive to employer and employee needs within each WIB region of Connecticut. The quarterly meetings provide a forum for exploring collaborative opportunities; refining the service delivery referral process; developing a smooth continuum between the adult education and community college systems; sharing training opportunities; and building relationships among workforce development stakeholders. These efforts are creating educational and occupational opportunities for low wage and low skilled workers, many of whom are adult education students, while piloting and institutionalizing collaborative workforce development models and forging innovative partnerships.

Collaborations with Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), One-Stop Centers, the Connecticut Department of Labor and the Department of Social Services

In fiscal year 2013-14, the CSDE provided direct and equitable distribution of financial support to all one-stop centers in the amount of \$198,710. Memoranda of Understanding are in place with each area Workforce Investment Board (WIB) regarding the roles and responsibilities of adult education as its partner. As part of our continuing collaboration, the CSDE has continued to ensure that its needs assessment process aligns with the service delivery goals and objectives of each WIB as a means of enhancing adult education service delivery strategies. The CSDE continues to provide staff of all the one-stop centers with the training, technical assistance and assessment materials necessary to utilize CASAS appraisals and computer-based CASAS testing to gauge customers' literacy skills during the intake process.

The CSDE has been working collaboratively with the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission and its sub-committee, the Career Advancement Committee, to ensure that career pathways development is connected with labor market needs and reflective of the certificate and credit-bearing courses offered at Connecticut's twelve community colleges. The employment outcomes achieved by adult education learners are reported alongside those from higher education and employment and training programs, thus providing greater visibility and credibility on the impact of adult education in Connecticut.

CSDE staff members served on all five local workforce investment boards, their Youth Councils and subcommittees as appointed. The CSDE remains committed to strengthening connections among adult education, social service organizations and the workforce system. The Design Group continued its long-standing interagency efforts with representatives from the Connecticut Departments of Labor, Social Services and Education; workforce investment boards; and one-stop center directors that focused on the delivery of Jobs First Employment Services (JFES). Teachers of adult education learners who are participating in the JFES program provided attendance verification information to the respective JFES staff.

The CSDE continued to assist the Connecticut Department of Labor with expanding the development and implementation of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials. Funding was provided to each of Connecticut's five Workforce Investment Board (WIB) areas which then partnered with six adult education programs to provide Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) clients who receive Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) I-BEST training in areas such as Certified Nursing Assistant, National Institute for Metal Working Skills (NIMS) certification, National Retail Foundation (NRF) Customer Service Certification, Emergency Medical Responder, Culinary Arts with Food Handler Certification, Automotive Technician and Microsoft Technology Associate certification. Ninety-five JFES clients that enrolled in the I-BEST programs lacked a high school diploma. Fifty-four percent of them completed training and 79% passed the exam to receive either an industry-recognized credential or a State of Connecticut license in the related occupational training requiring a license. Eleven participants obtained employment and two successfully obtained a high school credential.

English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program *Describe the activities and services supported with EL/C funds, including the number of programs receiving EL/C grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.*

The CSDE distributed English Literacy/Civics Education (EL/Civics) funds to twenty-two adult education providers during the funding year July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. Grantees utilized these resources to improve literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy for immigrants and other limited English proficient populations and to provide contextualized instruction in civics education. More than 2,000 individuals learned about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation and U.S. history and government. Program outcomes included increases in learners' mean gains in program year-end reports, the development of functional language abilities in receptive and expressive oral and written English, improvement in numeracy/computation skills and a growing competence in idiomatic speech.

Many programs had a particular focus on writing. Students in one regional program submitted articles to an ESL newspaper as a way to connect students' writing from beginner to advanced levels to their personal, political and civic thoughts and another program worked on an oral and written history project with students from a local college. Use of Weebly websites in EL/Civics classes were utilized as a way to communicate and stay in touch with teachers and classmates for English practice and writing experience. Students were able to communicate through the blog feature of the website. Others had access to hand held devices with ESL software available to them 24/7.

Additional program activities directly related to the use of these funds included:

- participation in career pathways exploration and distance learning activities that impacted competence in the workplace;
- integration of various hand-held technologies into classroom work including tablets, smart phones and I Pads;
- creation of video oral histories;
- exposure to basic math vocabulary and interpretation of charts, tables and graphs;
- knowledge of the American education system with special focus on addressing the needs of families new to the U.S. school system; and
- cross cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent projects.

In addition to ESL professional development, a special workshop was offered for ESL lead teachers/coordinators with a focus on curriculum development. The ESL Advisory Committee continued

to meet regularly to ensure excellence in English language teaching by promoting standards of excellence and acceptable practice within the profession.

Secondary School Credentials and Equivalencies *Describe your state's policies related to how it awards a secondary school diploma or its equivalent to individuals who are no longer enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law. Include state recognized tests that are used to award the diploma as well as other criteria that may be recognized, such as competency-based or credit-based methods.*

Connecticut Adult Education offers three distinct pathways for adults to attain a high school diploma.

Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD):

The Adult High School Credit Diploma program is a prescribed plan, process and structure for earning a required number of academic and elective credits. The provider must be a local education agency (LEA) or Regional Education Service Center (RESC). An adult who successfully completes the required credits of the AHSCD program is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

Credits toward a local diploma must be obtained through a prescribed plan that requires a minimum of 20 credits in academic and elective areas. Credits for work or military experience, independent study projects and online courses are additional ways to obtain credit. Also, CSDE offers an Adult Virtual High School (AVHS) program which provides a collaborative statewide system that delivers supplemental online courses for students enrolled in a CT Adult Education Center's AHSCD or GED program. Online courseware are taught by CT certified teachers with a web-based tutoring service and a seven day help desk. The program operates from July to June and is sustained by an established infrastructure and management team with trained and experienced teachers and mentors. Each provider/town can enhance the basic AHSCD program but must adhere to the minimum state requirements: 1) use certified teachers and counselors; 2) adhere to State Department of Education requirements regarding assessment, enrollment, and accountability and reporting; 3) meet required credit standards; and 4) ensure that a one credit course offers a minimum of 48 instructional hours.

Credits are required to be distributed as follows:

- 4 English
- 3 Social Studies (including 1 credit in US/American History and half credit in Civics/Government)
- 3 Math
- 2 Science
- 1 Arts/Vocational Education
- 7 Electives

National External Diploma Program (NEDP):

This program provides a secondary school credential designed for adults who have gained skills through life experiences and demonstrated competence in a particular job, talent or academic area. The NEDP is a web-based portfolio assessment program that offers no classroom instruction. An adult who successfully completes the portfolio assessment, as required, is awarded a local high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

General Educational Development (GED):

Adults who have not completed high school must demonstrate the attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school program. They do this through the GED examination that includes four subject-area modules: Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA), Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. The test is also aligned with career- and college-

readiness content standards and measures both high school equivalency as well as readiness for career and college. Applicants for this examination must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months. Individuals who pass the GED Tests are awarded a Connecticut State High School Diploma. GED instructional programs, provided throughout the state in local school districts and a variety of other instructional sites, help individuals to prepare for this rigorous examination.

Adult Education Standards Describe your state's progress toward implementation of adult education college and career readiness (CCR) standards, including whether your state has formally adopted a validated set of CCR standards. Describe how the state has determined the standards to be representative of CCR and the timeline by which such standards will be or have been implemented by all local programs. Describe how the state is supporting the use of standards by local programs and State Leadership funds that are being used to support implementation.

With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Connecticut, the new GED test and the new web-based NEDP, the State Department of Education (SDE) recognized the need to support a set of standards relevant to adult learners. In November of 2011, the SDE partnered with the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) to conduct an introductory session on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as they pertain to adult education. The session included a presentation by Susan Pimentel, one of the lead writers of the CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy. With the official announcement of the College and Career Readiness Standards by OVAE expected, the National Adult Education Professional Development Council (NAEPDC) held a training in April 2013. CT participated in this intensive training of the Standards in Action in Louisville, KY. This training set the groundwork for implementation in CT. We then developed a plan to build state trainers' capacity and adult education providers/educators 'awareness' of the CCR Standards.

We held a two-day summer institute in August, 2013 (70 participants each day) to share the standards and discuss implications to local programming. Two programs were identified to pilot CCRS implementation utilizing the Standards-In-Action (SIA) process to unpack and create lessons. The instructors from these programs and CT training staff participated in a regional SIA training coordinated by the New England Literacy Resource Center. While continuing to work closely with the pilot programs, CT trainers provided CCRS overview sessions throughout the state to increase awareness and knowledge. Also, CCRS were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing. The strategies and activities learned at the sessions in Washington in June were presented at the state's August 2014 Summer Institute (60 participants each day) entitled "CCRS: Beyond the Basics". In order to build capacity state-wide, an implementation agreement was shared during the statewide Directors' Policy Forum and was distributed to teachers. CT Trainers will continue to support the 2013-14 pilot programs in ongoing capacity building. Because teachers work all hours and funds are limited, webinars will be offered to encourage networking and for accountability. CCRS continues to be incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, writing and also, ESL.

Connecticut has been selected for participation in the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action (CCR SIA) project. Over the next two years, we can look forward to receiving intensive, advanced level CCR implementation support. This technical assistance will enable us to continue the implementation of CCR standards and to reach all of our programs, adult education staff and students.

Annual Narrative Report Summary

During fiscal year 2013-14 Connecticut expended \$39,647,670 in state/local and federal \$4,231,229 funds to serve 24,751 individuals for an average per pupil cost of \$1,773. By augmenting state and local dollars with federal dollars, Connecticut has successfully assisted adults in achieving their educational goals,

obtaining or advancing in their jobs, entering post-secondary education and participating more fully as family and community members. The CSDE will continue its efforts to partner with other organizations to ensure coordination of effort, increased accountability, maintenance of the highest standards and program access for those individuals in need of adult education services in Connecticut.