Pennsylvania Narrative Report 2013-14

Introduction

For Program Year (PY) 2013-14, the Division of Adult Education renewed both state and federally funded direct service grants. Division staff performed desk monitoring of and provided technical assistance to funded programs on an ongoing basis throughout the year and conducted thorough, onsite program and fiscal monitoring of 12 agencies. Staff used a risk rubric to select the agencies that received an onsite monitoring visit.

State Leadership Funds

PA used state leadership funds to support projects that helped the state and its funded direct service providers implement the three main goals for PY 2013-14: 1) continue to build local providers' capacity to support the workforce development system by addressing the education needs of adults eligible for Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Title II services; 2) build on and improve previous work to develop and implement career pathways for adult students that meet the needs of the local communities and employers; and 3) implement a professional development system supporting research-based, job-embedded professional development leading to program improvement and high quality and effective teachers and program staff.

The Professional Development System
PA's professional development system (PDS) emphasized program improvement based on data and high-quality research-based professional development opportunities that informed such program improvement. The system supported relevant job-embedded professional development that helped staff at funded programs assume the responsibility for implementation and evaluation of program improvement and professional development at their agencies.

The PDS used a process consultation model supported by content area experts, high-quality research-based professional development opportunities and technology and course management support. The goal continued to be that each funded adult education and family literacy program could implement and evaluate high quality professional development at the agency level and that the professional development supported program improvement. The core of the PDS model was the Facilitation and Consultation Services project. Project staff consisted of the project supervisor/state consultant and four lead consultants. Each consultant worked directly with staff at assigned agencies, who were led by an agency professional development team that consisted of the administrator and an in-house professional development specialist. Lead consultants provided program improvement and professional development support and guidance, focusing on helping agencies support high quality job-embedded professional development. The continued focus of the PDS in PY 2013-14 was to guide and support agencies in designing program improvement goals supported by quality professional development. The lead consultants continued their practice of meeting with every agency individually and multiple times over the course of the year to assist them with program improvement and professional development activities.

This model emphasized developing the skills of the agency staff to use data to identify program improvement and professional development needs, use new knowledge in their work and

evaluate and document change. A new Program Improvement/Professional Development data collection worksheet (PI/PD worksheet) was designed to better capture all of the elements of program improvement that agencies were implementing. In PY 2013-14, the PDS used the data from this worksheet to inform its work related to the needs, challenges and trends in agencies' job-embedded professional development. The team of consultants met with each other regularly to review and analyze this and other data collected through their work. On most major points the internal data matched the findings of the external evaluation (discussed below), which bodes well for future confidence in the ability of the PDS to complete internal data analyses.

The Facilitation and Consultation Services project also included contracted teacher coaches in the content areas of workforce, math, reading, learning differences, ESL and technology. These teacher coaches were effective teachers drawn from the field, recommended because of their content expertise, people skills and interest in developing coaching skills. In PY 2013-14, the role of the coaches was expanded to include work, not just with individual teachers, but also with groups of teachers or entire agencies. The need for teacher coaches to assist with the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) may require an additional expansion of the teacher coach process.

The Facilitation and Consultation Services project worked with the other projects in the PDS (described below) to provide seamless services to the local adult education and family literacy programs. Those projects were the federally-funded Course Management, Content Experts, and Communications projects and the state-funded projects, Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth and Family Literacy Consultation Project. The Management Information System project provided support to all projects with data collection, use, and analysis. Additionally, project staff consulted with the Workforce Development System Liaison Project on professional development matters related to career pathways and career awareness support.

The Course Management project played two key roles in the PDS: management of formal professional development activities and technical assistance to staff of the Division, PDS and local agencies to maximize the effective use of MyLearningPlan (MLP), a web-based professional development management system. In PY 2013-14 the project used the data from the new PI/PD worksheet to make improvements in course offerings, develop targeted mailing lists and ensure that agency staff were enrolled in the proper courses. Based on this information, a number of new courses were added to the schedule to support professional development in areas such as understanding the CCRS, understanding Webb's Depth of Knowledge, preparing for the new GED® test, using technology and collecting and using data effectively. Additionally, project staff interacted on an ongoing basis with the lead consultants to stay informed about the professional development needs of agency staff and used this information to inform and update the course offerings during the year.

The Course Management project worked closely with content experts, online course instructors and other facilitators of professional development activities to develop and enter formal professional development activities, both online and face-to-face, into MLP. This support included guidance on accurately describing the activity and its objectives. Based on needs identified from the work of the consultants with local agencies, project staff integrated existing professional development activities offered through World Education/ProLiteracy, LINCS,

CASAS and Wonderlic into the professional development catalogue. The project leader worked with the facilitators of those courses and content experts (described below) to develop appropriate follow-up activities to help participants implement course content into their work. Staff provided technical assistance to course registrants to ensure that they fulfilled all steps to complete the course. Project staff also produced reports from MLP for Division and PDS staff to support ongoing monitoring and improvement of professional development services.

The Content Area Experts project contracted with experts in the areas of workforce education, ESL, adult learning differences, math, science and reading/writing to enable the PDS to offer content-rich professional development activities to agency staff. The content experts supported quality professional development in several ways during PY 2013-14. In addition to course facilitation as described above, the content experts were involved in planning for the Summer Institute, held in August 2013. After the institute, they provided support to and answered questions from the participants as they implemented new practices at their agencies. During PY 2013-14, content experts began working more closely with teacher coaches from the Facilitation and Consultation Services project to assist them as they worked to combine content with the coaching process. For example, the math content expert worked with a math teacher coach on the development and delivery of a regional math workshop. The learning differences content expert worked with several teacher coaches to support the development of the contents of the classroom learning differences toolkit.

The Communications project used available technology to support communication within the PDS and to share news and resources from the Division and PDS with the field. The project updated and redesigned the Pennsylvania Adult Education Resources website, which houses information and resources from the various state leadership projects and the field of adult and family literacy education in general. The website has new navigation that is organized by program activity related to program improvement and professional development. This allows program staff, the site's primary audience, to find necessary information easily. It also presents the PDS activities as a system rather than as siloed projects. As part of a larger initiative to streamline communication with the field, the Communications project redesigned the bi-monthly newsletter to group similar content, to include links to national or state newsletters of interest to the field and to provide a cleaner look. The newsletter was disseminated via an email marketing program and reached many practitioners at the same time, including administrators, instructors and volunteer tutors.

State funded state leadership activities
In addition to the activities funded under WIA Title II Section 223, PA has two state-funded statewide projects to support adult education and family literacy programs: Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth (TLC) and the Family Literacy Consultation Project (FLCP). These programs are an integral part of the PDS and work collaboratively with the projects funded with state leadership dollars.

Throughout PY 2013-14, TLC staff worked with administrators and tutor coordinators from 30 adult education programs. TLC staff used current research to help agencies identify and address gaps in their tutoring component. TLC also helped programs collaborate and share resources to best utilize the time of all paid and unpaid adult education practitioners. TLC provided guidance

to tutoring programs on tutor participation and created opportunities for networking and sharing throughout the state. By combining knowledge and resources, they were able to make the most of programs' training dollars. In response to identified needs of tutors, TLC offered 37 face-to-face tutor trainings during PY 2013-14 with a total of 466 tutors participating. In addition, enrollment in TLC's self-paced, CCRS-based online Basic Tutor Training course increased from eight attendees in PY 2012-13 to 41 in PY 2013-14. At the end of the 12-module training, tutors have designed their own tutoring kit of instructional materials to use while tutoring.

In PY 2013-14, the FLCP provided consultation services and professional development to 20 family literacy programs. The project used the process consultation model described above in its work on professional development related to parent education, interactive literacy activities, and early childhood education and assessment. The project aligned its services with those of the other PDS projects to ensure seamless services to agencies, while preserving the intensity and unique aspects of family literacy professional development. For example, family literacy programs focusing on developing a strong learning differences toolkit were connected with a family literacy teacher coach to learn ways that the tools could be used to support parent and child interactive literacy activities. The adult education programs had been using the learning differences toolkits for several years, and this was a natural extension of that work to support parent and child reading interactions. Another example is the inclusion of a family literacy resource, On Our Way, as a choice for the career awareness resource review project completed by the Workforce Development System Liaison project. Together, staff from both projects developed a resource review guide using the career pathways template. This resource was shared via webinar, and several programs worked with their family literacy consultant, lead consultant, and career pathways lead contact to establish a career pathways plan that incorporated this resource into their instruction.

The Workforce Development System Liaison Project
During PY 2013-14, the Workforce Development System Liaison project supported funded programs to build capacity to address the goals of WIA and function effectively as partners in PA's workforce development system. Forty-four agencies chose to receive technical assistance from the project to support articulation, development and implementation of career pathways for students from adult basic education through transition services into local training opportunities that lead to employment that benefits adults, their families, employers and the community. These pathways integrate contextual learning and workforce readiness opportunities; align basic skills curricula with the skill needs of local industry; lead to student transitions to postsecondary education and training; and increase employment outcomes. The technical assistance focused on several key aspects of the development and implementation of successful locally relevant career pathways for adult learners: ongoing analysis of current labor market and workforce information to guide decision making; building and strengthening relationships among the stakeholders; and integrating career awareness and planning into adult education services. Project staff assisted agencies in the development of action steps, which included analysis of local labor market and workforce information as well as an evaluation of local postsecondary education and training opportunities. Project staff then used the action steps to determine the need for and develop additional resources, training and technical assistance, including the Career Awareness Resource Guide, a career coaching webinar series, the Career Coaching Resource Guide and a sector strategies resource outline. In addition, the project, with assistance from the ESL content expert,

created the Career Pathways ESL Working Group to meet program-identified concerns regarding integrating career awareness and career pathways work with low-level ESL learners and developing resources to support transitions for advanced ESL learners.

Project staff also continued to support adult education coalitions through technical assistance, presentations, and partnership meetings. This ongoing coalition work, led by adult education providers, demonstrated the willingness to build, maintain and strengthen workforce development partnership through communication, coordination and collaboration with Local Workforce Investment Boards and PA One-Stop centers.

Management Information System Support
The e-Data Tech Support project provides technical assistance, training and support to the Division, PDS and programs in the collection, reporting, use and analysis of program data with the goals of ensuring accurate data and improving program services and student outcomes. In PY 2013-14, e-Data Tech Support provided training and technical assistance to programs in several ways. Training for e-Data v2, PA's data reporting system, was provided face-to-face and online. Participants used the e-Data v2 training site, a mirrored version of the live site, to work in the system and develop a level of comfort with data entry. The project also provided technical assistance to programs by email and phone on topics ranging from data entry to the development of effective data collection and entry policy and procedures. Project staff produced monthly agency data check reports for Division advisors, which were also sent to agency staff to alert them of potential data errors. As the year progressed, staff also assisted agencies in preparing data for the end of the program year.

To support both the Division and agencies to conduct ongoing monitoring and use data for decision-making and program improvement, e-Data Tech Support continued to update the Access templates linked to the data reporting system. The templates contain many reports, including the NRS tables. Agency staff can produce reports for individual teachers and classes to use in evaluating the impact of program improvement and professional development activities. The project provides training and technical assistance on creating additional reports. Project staff also produced reports upon request from the Division to address questions from interested parties, such as other state agencies, legislators and the field.

Much of the project's prior work focused on the effective use of quantitative data; in PY 2013-14, the project expanded its assistance on the effective use of qualitative data. The project developed three additional webinars as part of an ongoing series to help programs look more closely at their data.

System integration
Staff members from all of the projects in the PDS worked with the Division to plan and hold the Summer Institute, the largest face-to-face professional development opportunity during PY 2013-14 (232 attendees from 55 agencies). Seven sessions were offered: Incorporating a Tutoring Component in an Adult Literacy Agency; Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and the ESOL Classroom; Integrating Technology into the Classroom; Learning Differences Classroom Toolbox; Teachers and Data: Beauty and the Beast; Tools for Implementing the College and Career Readiness Standards; and Using Sector-Based Content to Deliver Basic

Skills Instruction. Content experts and lead consultants provided support for follow-up activities for participants who requested the help.

The collaboration and coordination of services among the various federal and state-funded state leadership projects strengthened the work of adult education and family literacy providers to integrate data-driven program improvement and professional development, as well as to begin to evaluate the impact of that work on program services and student outcomes. As a team, the system worked to coordinate methods of documentation, data collection and service delivery to ensure that programs receive collaborative, seamless services that ultimately benefit learners. Progress is being made to create a truly integrated professional development system that supports high quality, job-embedded professional development with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes. Due to the substantial changes this requires for everyone involved (Division staff, PDS staff and direct service program staff), the Division decided that an ongoing evaluation was important. Cassie Bryant of Drennon & Associates is conducting a three-year evaluation of all aspects of the PDS. PY 2013-14 was the second year of the evaluation. During the year, recommendations from the Year One evaluation, such as suggestions for improving program data collection and providing better guidance to agencies on the job-embedded professional development implementation, were incorporated into the PDS. The Year Two evaluation focused on measuring and describing the impact of job-embedded professional development on programs and practitioners. Ms. Bryant conducted 12 face-to-face agency visits at which she interviewed over 100 stakeholders, including program administrators, in-house professional development specialists, teachers, case managers and tutor coordinators. Ms. Bryant provided a formal report in October 2014 with findings and recommendations that are helping to guide the work of the PDS in PY 2014-15.

Performance Data Analyses

Adult education in PA faced several challenges in PY 2013-14. In a three year span, approximately 60% of the program administrators in the field either retired or moved on to other positions. In addition, agencies continued to lose veteran instructional and support staff. Staff from the Division and the PDS provided ongoing technical assistance to ensure that the new administrators and staff received the proper support to effectively run their programs and provide superior service to their students. In the first half of the year, many programs focused on preparing students to pass the 2002 Series GED® tests before the test expired on December 31, 2013. Many students successfully passed the tests; however, many of them also exited the adult education program without taking a posttest. This impacted educational functioning level gains. Finally, the state was hit by several severe winter storms which impacted agency enrollment and student persistence.

Despite these challenges, the performance of PA's adult education and family literacy providers continued its steady upward trend in PY 2013-14. The state achieved 10 of its state performance targets. It matched or exceeded the target in seven of 11 Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) and three of the four Follow-up Core Outcome Measures. The state set or matched top performance marks in five of the 15 performance categories. One area of continued improvement over the last few years has been the educational gains of English-as-a-Second (ESL) students.

Some factors that likely led to the continued improvement are:

- Continued increase in the number of managed enrollment classes
- Continued agency refinement of the orientation process
- Improvement of student barrier and transition support services
- Continued emphasis on proper assessment administration
- Increase in the use of data for decision making
- Continued technical assistance for professional development from the PDS lead consultants

While PA has shown overall improvement in educational gains and outcomes over the past 14 years, more work still needs to be done in regard to overcoming student barriers and transitioning students to employment and/or postsecondary education. In addition, agencies need to work on transitioning advanced ESL students to adult basic and secondary classes.

Family literacy continued to be an important part of the services offered. During PY 2013-14, state Act 143 funds enabled 20 agencies to operate programs to provide family literacy services in 40 of PA's 67 counties. These programs provided services to 807 families, with 821 adults who were NRS eligible and 965 children. The family literacy programs provided a full range of services that resulted in overall educational level gains of 46%.

As described in the state leadership section above, the focus of the PDS, as well as of the work of the Division, is program improvement with the goal of improved student outcomes. Agencies are expected to review and analyze program and performance data on an ongoing basis and to base program improvement and professional development work on that data.

Integration with Other Programs

Agencies have been successful in partnership development and student transitions through a variety of partnerships with community colleges. For example, one agency, through continued partnership building with staff at Community College of Philadelphia Welcome Center, has been able to gain inroads at the college for current and transitioning adult students. This partnership has led to additional activity through programs at the college, including Single Stop Services, which provides case management services to students. The adult education provider's case manager developed a strong partnership with staff at the college's Wannamaker's Scholars program, which offers free tuition/training for eligible students to earn a certificate in nurse aide, pharmacy technician, or clinical medical assistant. With support from the adult education program, several students transitioned into and completed one of the certificate programs.

Adult education providers continued to strengthen their partnerships with career and technical education (CTE), particularly in the healthcare sector. Agencies worked with CTE to develop bridge programming that includes career awareness. For example, one agency worked with CTE to develop a bridge program to review basic science and math concepts in preparation for the Licensed Practical Nurse entrance exam or certification for other healthcare sector employment.

Twenty-five adult education providers submitted 477 career pathways reports on students they were able to track, which documented that 131 of 236 adults with the goal of entering postsecondary education achieved that goal. The healthcare sector was the most common sector.

Adults in adult education programs transitioned to postsecondary opportunities in the following certificate programs in the healthcare sector: Emergency Medical Technician, Licensed Practical Nurse, Certified Nursing Assistant, medical assistant, surgical technician, phlebotomy, medical billing, medical reimbursement and coding and vascular ultrasound.

The reports also showed that of the 131 students who transitioned to postsecondary education, 64 were awarded individual training accounts. Additionally, 89 adult students received postsecondary funding through TAA, TANF, EARN, OVR, additional WIA Title I and Veterans programs. Several adult students also participated in WIA-supported on-the-job training and other work-based learning opportunities.

Adult education programs also promoted career pathways through community partnerships that helped adults persist by addressing barriers to transitioning. Adult students received services or funding for postsecondary education through programs associated with agencies such as Community Action Agencies, the United Way, Educational Opportunities Centers and Work Attributes toward Careers in Health Attributes.

Adult education representatives involved directly with provision of WIA Title II services served on many of PA's 22 Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs). These representatives, along with other Title II providers, participated in the LWIBs' committee structure responsible for policy and procedure development. Providers regularly reported to LWIBs on adult education programs, partnerships and successes of students, particularly attainment of credentials, employment and transition to postsecondary education and training. Adult education programs co-located in One-Stop centers provided a range of services, including GED® test preparation, basic skills instruction, preparation for postsecondary entrance exams, career awareness, case management, support for distance education and subject-specific workshops and clinics. Services were available through classroom instruction, one-on-one tutoring and/or drop-in centers. A two-way referral process at the One-Stop centers allowed students to access many workforce development services for which they met eligibility requirements. Providers estimated spending over $2.3 million on agreements and services at the One-Stop centers in PY 2013-14.

English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program

In PY 2013-14, there were 16 EL/Civics grants providing funding to 27 agencies. These 16 grants provided services in 10 of the LWIAs that were determined to have the greatest need for EL/Civics services. Grant amounts ranged from $20,762 to $290,455. The programs served 2070 students, 1814 of whom received at least 12 hours of EL/Civics instruction. Forty-nine percent of students completed one or more educational functioning levels. Programs also tracked the students' success in achieving the secondary outcomes related to civics education: achieve U.S. citizenship skills, register to vote, vote for the first time and increase involvement in the community. The success rate for those goals were 73%, 51%, 31% and 59% respectively.

In addition to data submitted in e-Data v2, EL/Civics programs submit narrative final reports, which include examples of student outcomes related to the required secondary goals. According to these reports, a total of 100 students were in the process of applying for citizenship, while another 93 obtained their U.S. citizenship during the program year. Student participation in civics-related activities was diverse. Students reported increased levels of involvement in their

children's school activities by volunteering as classroom aides and by chaperoning field trips. Civics instruction also enhanced students' workplace skills and, in turn, made them more employable. Students reported that as a result of attending classes they could better understand and take directions from their bosses, communicate more with English-speaking co-workers and were now allowed to work with customers due to their speaking and listening improvement. Perhaps because of an increased awareness at agencies of career pathways due to the Career Pathways ESL workgroup described above, there was a noticeable increase in agencies reporting student transitions to postsecondary education/training.

Students across the state volunteered in a variety of ways. They volunteered at hospitals, schools, food drives and libraries. Many students volunteered at their own programs by helping to fix broken furniture, install new equipment and distribute recruitment fliers. Students in one program knitted and crocheted over twenty scarves to donate to the elderly in the local community. Students at another program held a food drive, donated it to the Food Bank and then served lunch to homeless people. A student who is a Buddhist monk used the information learned in EL/Civics class about Martin Luther King, Jr. to help plan a community event honoring MLK and his contributions to civil rights and peaceful acts. To better integrate into their community, students at one program started a "Roots in America" community garden with other local, non-immigrant volunteers. The harvest was donated to a local food pantry which serves mainly non-immigrant families.

In PY 2013-14, the Division began requiring each agency to have at least one instructor complete the OCTAE/USCIS EL/Civics online course. Agencies used information learned in this course to tailor their curricula to better align with the intent of EL/Civics funding. Instructors met to share information learned in the course and to craft lessons and curricula together as part of a professional learning community. One agency found the course so useful that it plans on having all new EL/Civics instructors take this course next year. At another agency this sharing and discussion enriched teachers' understanding of EL/Civics and how to adapt mainstream publisher-created materials to suit the needs of low-level learners.

Secondary School Credentials and Equivalencies

Per 22 PA Code 4.72, the PA Department of Education is authorized to award the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma to residents who are 18 years of age or older, are not enrolled in secondary school and do not possess a secondary school diploma who meet one of the two following criteria: 1) present "evidence of full matriculation and the satisfactory completion of a minimum of 1 full year or 30 semester hours of study at an accredited institution of postsecondary education" or 2) earn "a passing score as determined by the Department on the high school level tests." Individuals between 16 and 18 may qualify for high school equivalency testing under court order or at the written request of an employer who requires a high school equivalency credential for employment, an official of a postsecondary institution that accepts applicants on the basis of high school equivalency test scores, a military recruiting officer or the director of a state institution on behalf of residents. However, the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma is not issued until the individual's 18th birthday unless otherwise recommended by his/her school district.

PA currently uses only the GED® test as the basis for awarding the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma under option 2 above. The department implemented a process to combine eligible 2002 Series GED® test scores with passing 2014 GED® test scores to issue the credential, which will be in place through December 31, 2015. In addition, the department anticipates conducting a review of available high school equivalency tests in 2015 with the intent of making a minimum of two tests available, at least one of which will have a paper-based option.

Adult Education Standards

PA has adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education as its adult education content standards. These standards are fully aligned with Pennsylvania's K-12 standards, the PA Core. The Division has a three-year implementation plan for the CCRS that closely follows the Standards-in-Action process. In PY 2014-15 agency teams will focus on understanding the standards and evaluating and aligning existing resources. PY 2015-16 will focus on curriculum and sustainability, and PY 2016-17 will focus on observation and evaluation. By the end of PY 2016-17, we want to ensure that adult education students in all components, including ESL and tutoring, will be receiving standards-based instruction.

The process of implementing the standards statewide began with a team attending the CCRS Implementation Institute in Washington, DC in June 2014. The PDS then used the Standards-in-Action process and the materials from the DC institute to create a two-day Summer Institute in August 2014 that introduced the instructional shifts and started the process of understanding the standards by unpacking, creating activities and aligning resources. The Division required each funded agency to send a team comprised of the administrator, the in-house professional development specialist and at least two teachers to the institute. Participants completed hands-on activities related to the instructional shifts and the unpacking process. Each agency left the institute with an outline of its annual PI/PD worksheet as well as a plan for starting an in-house professional learning community to work with the standards. Agencies are currently working on the unpacking process and are starting to align resources.

Our plans involve the continued support of all elements of the PDS, including lead consultants, content experts, teacher coaches, state staff and agency teams. The PDS will support agencies through a variety of consultants who assist programs with goal setting and writing action plans. As described above, over the past few years agencies have been creating internal support structures for managing their own job-embedded professional development efforts. Policy requires that teachers spend at least 20% of their time as professional development and preparatory time. Agencies are also required to have an in-house professional development specialist that works closely with agency staff to align and support staff professional development needs and help with implementation of new knowledge and skills. To assist with these efforts, agencies were granted additional money in PY 2014-15 to support in-house professional learning communities and their work with the standards. Through policy and the support provided by the PDS, PA has built capacity to implement the standards.