**Alaska Narrative Report 2014-2015**

State Leadership Funds:

State Leadership funds supported a variety of ABE/GED/ESL professional development and technical assistance activities during program year 2014-2015. These activities included providing two statewide ABE/GED/ESL conferences, providing a separate training for the Department of Corrections’ ABE staff, and providing targeted technical assistance to ABE programs.

The Fall 2014 Statewide ABE Conference was held October 6-9, 2014 and was supported by FY15 State Leadership funds as well as state general funds. Approximately 55 ABE professionals representing the 13 regional ABE programs, including representatives from the Department of Corrections, participated. Judith Alamprese, Abt Associates Inc., was the principal presenter. Other presenters included: Arva Carlson, math, Poly Smith, BEST Plus training, and Amy Iutzi, essay writing. Sessions focused on learning about the Workforce Innovation and opportunity Act (WIOA), planning how to strengthen ABE Regional Program partnerships and strategic use of the partnerships, how to use data to facilitate learner success and improve program services, how to strengthen reading and writing instruction, and how to build career pathways with students.

The winter 2015 Statewide ABE Conference was held February 5-6, 2015 in Anchorage, Alaska and was also supported by FY15 State Leadership funds as well as state general funds. Judith Alamprese was again the main presenter. The key topic was preparing for the future in the context of WIOA. Program staff reviewed and discussed the key purposes and key strategies of WIOA Title II. Of particular importance in the discussion points were: ABE provides education for employment and education outcomes and employment outcomes are critical for ABE participants, the diversity of learners being served needs to be expanded, and programs must focus on outcomes. State and local coordination of policies and resources is needed to serve WIOA clients effectively, and the programs must guide learners on career pathways.

A separate meeting was held with the Department of Corrections ABE staff and focus was on math and reading instruction and on administrative tasks, such as recruiting, standardized intake and assessment, routine entering of student information into the statewide ABE database, etc.

During the 2014-2015 program year, technical assistance was provided to all programs, particularly as they work with the Statewide ABE Database, BEST Plus, and TABE On-line testing and TABE reports. Each of the programs wrote WIOA transition plans during fall 2014 and the plans were updated fall 2015.

Career Pathways were discussed in each of these training sessions. Currently, the career pathways course which Alaska has for its use is being shortened, as the programs have found it too long and cumbersome for the students. Some programs are drafting career pathway materials to use with students throughout their study time with the program.

Performance Data Analyses:

The following tables show these statistics:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Fiscal Year:** | **Full-Time ABE Students** |  |
| FY08 | 2,877 |  |
| FY09 | 3,179 |  |
| FY10 | 3,326 |  |
| FY11 | 3,176 |  |
| FY12 | 2,928 |  |
| FY13 | 2,986 |  |
| FY14 | 2,423 |  |
| FY15 | 1,975 |  |

Most of the Alaskan ABE students find us because they need to complete high school. With the changes to the GED® test administration and how Alaska responded to those changes, students are able to go on-line and register to take the test without first attending an ABE Program. That circumstance has directly affected the number of ABE students in FY15 and in the current fiscal year.

Core indicators of performance include analyzing the percentage of students who are both pretested and post tested. The following table shows those statistics:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fiscal Year | # pre-post tested | total # FY students | % pre-post tested |
| FY08 | 793 | 2,877 | 27.5% |
| FY09 | 1,399 | 3,179 | 44.0% |
| FY10 | 863 | 3,326 | 26.8% |
| FY11 | 1,401 | 3,176 | 44.1% |
| FY12 | 1,313 | 2,928 | 44.8% |
| FY13 | 1,284 | 2,986 | 43.0% |
| FY14 | 905 | 2,423 | 37.4% |
| FY15 | 878 | 1,975 | 44.4% |

* Alaskan students and teachers are slow to adjust to changes brought with the new GED® test.
* When the old GED® test series ended, several of the veteran ABE regional program directors retired and new young staff are having to learn how to teach for a new GED® test and how to prepare to transition to WIOA.
* ESL teachers must plan lessons which teach language acquisition while at the same time introducing students to American civics, post-secondary schooling opportunities in America as well as employment opportunities. Again, teachers must more quickly be paying attention to outcomes and their responsibility in helping students to attain those outcomes.

How effective was Alaska in teaching those 1,975 full time FY15 ABE students? The following table shows the percentage of students who are reported on NRS Table 4 as having completed educational levels:

*Percentages Completing Levels from Table 4:*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ed. Levels | **FY08** | **FY09** | **FY10** | **FY11** | **FY12** | **FY13** | **FY14** | **FY15** |
|
| **ABE Beg. Literacy** | 3% | 39% | 20% | 25% | 19% | 24% | 21% | 29% |
|
| **ABE Beg.** | 18% | 30% | 20% | 22% | 32% | 24% | 23% | 27% |
|
| **ABE Int. Low** | 15% | 22% | 18% | 21% | 23% | 23% | 18% | 21% |
|
| **ABE Int. High** | 8% | 18% | 16% | 18% | 18% | 17% | 10% | 18% |
|
| **ASE Low** | 0% | 9% | 9% | 12% | 9% | 11% | 9% | 17% |
|
| **ASE High** |   | 68% | 68% | 68% | 75% | 71% | 57% | 40% |
|
| **ESL Beg. Literacy** | 18% | 25% | 17% | 18% | 13% | 22% | 23% | 24% |
|
| **ESL Beg. Low** | 23% | 26% | 26% | 12% | 20% | 17% | 23% | 23% |
|
| **ESL Beg. High** | 18% | 30% | 24% | 22% | 21% | 29% | 25% | 27% |
|
| **ESL Int. Low** | 27% | 25% | 31% | 28% | 25% | 30% | 40% | 27% |
|
| **ESL Int. High** | 21% | 20% | 5% | 10% | 11% | 11% | 15% | 10% |
|
| **ESL Advanced** |   |   |  |  | 56% | 38% | 19% | 69% |

Table 4B may be the best representation of the effectiveness of the instructional activities in Alaska. Students do show educational gain when post-testing is done: therefore, more post-testing needs to be done.

*First Column is the # of students post-tested; Second Column is percentage achieving educational gain:*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4B** | FY10 # | FY10 % | FY11 # | FY11 % | FY12 # | FY12 % | FY13 # | FY13% | FY14 # | FY14% | FY15 # | FY15% |
| **ABE Beg. Lit.** | **7** | **100%** | **12** | **67%** | **10** | **70%** | **10** | **80%** | **7** | **100%** | **12** | **67%** |
|
| **ABE Beg. Basic Ed** | **63** | **89%** | **86** | **72%** | **114** | **79%** | **107** | **72%** | **81** | **70%** | **71** | **73%** |
|
| **ABE Int. Low** | **191** | **85%** | **316** | **55%** | **323** | **56%** | **322** | **59%** | **193** | **59%** | **178** | **50%** |
|
| **ABE Int. High** | **202** | **73%** | **380** | **41%** | **341** | **41%** | **303** | **41%** | **181** | **44%** | **118** | **50%** |
|
| **ASE Low** | **35** | **77%** | **73** | **34%** | **49** | **31%** | **55** | **35%** | **31** | **35%** | **44** | **39%** |
|
| **ASE High** | **169** | **68%** | **147** | **67%** | **105** | **75%** | **98** | **71%** | **58** | **57%** | **77** | **40%** |
|
| **ESL Beg. Lit.** | **99** | **55%** | **172** | **37%** | **122** | **29%** | **161** | **42%** | **140** | **50%** | **142** | **56%** |
|
| **ESL Beg. Low** | **58** | **90%** | **101** | **27%** | **100** | **44%** | **74** | **39%** | **88** | **55%** | **94** | **49%** |
|
| **ESL Beg. High** | **22** | **95%** | **60** | **42%** | **60** | **43%** | **58** | **62%** | **40** | **68%** | **57** | **60%** |
|
| **ESL Int. Low** | **13** | **100%** | **15** | **67%** | **28** | **50%** | **36** | **56%** | **29** | **79%** | **17** | **71%** |
|
| **ESL Int. High** | **5** | **60%** | **37** | **22%** | **43** | **26%** | **52** | **25%** | **49** | **31%** | **55** | **18%** |
|
| **ESL Advanced** | **0** | **0%** | **3** | **0%** | **18** | **56%** | **8** | **38%** | **8** | **50%** | **13** | **69%** |
|
|  |  **864** |   |  **1,402** |   | **1,313** |   | **1,284** |   | **905** |   | **878** |   |

Alaskan ABE program staff needs to be more diligent about post-testing in order to improve Table 4. More attention must be paid to the initial TABE/BEST scores so that it is understood that, for example, if reading places them in ASE high but math places them in Intermediate low – then in order to show educational gain, the student must perform better in math on the post test.

Integration with Other Programs:

Alaska’s ABE offices are located in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services. ABE works daily with the other activities ESD funds in the Job Centers and with the other grants such as the Title I grants for out-of-school youth.

Specifically, ABE staff work with local Job Center staff and WIOA Title I staff, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Alaska Vocational Technical Center, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Partnerships are also formed with the Department of Health and Social Services (public assistance) to deliver coordinated services to persons needing reading, writing, math, English as a Second Language, and targeted workplace literacy.

ABE regional program staff serves on various boards, for example the Anchorage Regional ABE staff serves on the APICC, Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium.

The Mat-Su Regional ABE Program is located within the Mat-Su Regional Job Center. Alaska refers to One Stops as Job Centers.

David Alexander, Anchorage Regional ABE Director, continues to represent ABE on the Alaska Workforce Investment Board.

To the best of the state’s ABE director’s knowledge, no AEFLA funds from the Alaska grant are used to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system. As to support with WIOA funds, ABE’s responsibility has not been determined.

Describe Alaska’s efforts to develop or advance career pathway systems that include career and technical education, postsecondary education, employers, and economic and workforce development:

Alaska ABE programs offer a Career and College Awareness course. Additionally, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) invested in ACT Work Keys, including the Career Ready 101 course. DOLWD allows ABE students to use the Work Keys materials. ESL classes use the Ventures, a Cambridge Press textbook series, and the fifth book in the series teaches job and career search skills such as resume, application, and cover letter writing and interview skills. The various courses offer an integrated approach to exploring careers and their skill requirements and build life-literacy through lessons about financial awareness, job searching, and more.

Training Agency Partners:

Each regional program is actively meeting with and documenting the meetings with their community partners. Many of the regional ABE programs are located on a University of Alaska campus or in one of the state’s regional technical centers. The Barrow Regional ABE Program is located in Ilisagvik College. All take advantage of being in these locations and work to get ABE students involved in post-secondary training, some of it happening simultaneously with their ABE studies.

Career Plans as part of the ABE work:

Alaska statewide ABE grantee training meetings are focusing on career pathways. The goal for the ABE programs is that a career plan is developed with each student during the time they are studying with the program.

English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program:

The EL Civics programs continued in the regional programs in Southeast Alaska, Fairbanks, and in both the Anchorage ABE Program and the Anchorage Literacy Program. The teachers were charged with using the materials, scope and sequence, and lesson plans which they had been trained with during past years. Approximately 550 students participated in the EL/Civics classes. The programs use, and have been trained in using, the Ventures series from Cambridge Press. The fall 2014 statewide training included instruction in administering the BEST Plus. Students did study in citizenship classes, but the exact number of how many became citizens is unknown. ESL program staff has been engaged in discussions concerning the intent of WIOA to prepare students to enter training and/or careers. ESL staff is being encouraged to actively understand what WIOA means by the term: Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and how they can begin teaching integrated English literacy with civics.

Secondary School Credentials and Equivalencies:

Alaska’s high school equivalency test is the GED.

Sixteen and seventeen year olds, by State Administrative Code, must have a formal withdrawal from school and parent/guardian permission.

Some states have requirements such as passing the state’s government test, but Alaska has no further requirements than to pass the four GED subtests in order to receive an Alaskan GED diploma.

Amy Iutzi is both the Alaska GED Administrator and the Alaska State ABE Director; therefore half of her time is spent with each job.

Some of the Alaskan ABE Regional Programs have Pearson VUE testing sites in their organizations.

All Alaskan ABE Regional Programs prepare students to take the GED tests. Alaskans can take the GED tests without studying in ABE. With the Pearson VUE sites which are not co-located with Regional ABE Programs, the challenge is informing GED examinees of the location of the ABE programs. For the first time in Alaska’s history, potential GED examinees can register online to take the tests and never have to enter an ABE program. For the student who is already embedded within an ABE Program before they attempt a GED test, should they fail and need to be immediately encouraged and pushed to continue studying they are already with their teachers. For the students taking the tests on their own without any studying, it is proving harder to get them to study in order to increase their ability to be successful.

Alaska knows that 1,527 individual have taken at least one of the GED tests in the 2014 series. Of those, since January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2015, 656 have graduated. That means that at least 871 Alaskans need to study before they will be able to successfully complete the 2014 GED® test series battery. Certainly having to schedule testing in advance and having to take the test on the computer is a factor. For the first time, Alaskans have to pay for the test themselves. Prior to 2014, the state general fund dollars paid to lease the GED tests and to grade the tests.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fiscal Year** | **Number of GED Graduates** |
| FY08 | 1,540 |
| FY09 | 1,686 |
| FY10 | 1,608 |
| FY11 | 1,660 |
| FY12 | 1,580 |
| FY13 | 1,624 |
| FY14 | 1,700 |
| FY15 | 365 |

What is unclear is if the cost of the tests ($30 each) is preventing some individuals from testing. Individuals involved in social service programs, or in the Department of Corrections, or a member of an Alaska Native Organization, or in the Alaska Military Youth program, or Job Corps (to name some examples) have the tests paid for them. Some ABE Programs are recruiting local community organizations (Rotary for example) to donate money to be placed in a scholarship fund for GED examinees with need.

Having to take the test on the computer is a challenge, for sure. But it doesn’t have to be an insurmountable challenge. Some of the Department of Corrections ABE staff identified computer study programs to augment classroom teaching so that the students get practice on the computers.

Honestly, part of the problem is the teachers embracing the challenges of the new tests and figuring out how to help their students best. Also, students need to study to learn basic skills and they need to commit the time necessary to learning to achieve their goal.

Adult Education Standards

The Alaska Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program adopted College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards for Adult Education. The CCR, the product of a project funded by Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), are a set of content standards reflecting broad agreement among experts about what is desirable for adult students to know to be prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education and training. CCR are a manageable set of the Common Core State Standards and were determined to be the most indispensable for college and career readiness and most important to adult students

In 2012, the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development adopted new academic standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Alaska did not adopt the Common Core State Standards because the state did not want to agree to accept the standards in their entirety without the ability to change them in the future. The adoption process involved two years of working on the new standards with rural and urban Alaskans, including representatives of universities, career and technical programs, industries, and teachers of diverse student populations. The State ABE Director was included in this process. The proposed standards were compared to standards across the country in terms of content and rigor. The final standards are similar to those adopted in other states, while allowing Alaska the right to adjust them in the future. The state ABE Director attended meetings in November of 2010 and was part of the team that analyzed the state’s standards to the Common Core State Standards. Very few differences were found between the Common Core State Standards and the standards adopted by the Alaska Board of Education. Therefore, the CCR standards for Adult Education align with the Alaskan standards.