



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 2014-15

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.

Sixty-seven 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 2014-15.

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.*

Professional Development

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.

During fiscal year 2014-2015, approximately 925 practitioners attended 34 pre-planned training sessions plus conference presentations at the CAACE and Annual Disability conference. Ninety five percent of all workshop evaluations were rated five or six on a six-point scale for overall quality. In addition, 10 additional requested training sessions were developed and conducted for 150+ participants. 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 provide updates, links to best practices, opportunities for sharing and an awareness of regional/national issues. ATDN continues to work with the CSDE to host a required statewide meeting for CCS Program Facilitators as well as regional meetings in the fall and spring.

The Connecticut Adult Numeracy and Mathematics Institute (CANMI) sessions this past year included content-based offerings, each with a connection to the Key Instructional Shifts of the CCRS or to the Standards for Mathematical Practice. Teachers were given the chance to strengthen their own content knowledge while developing a deeper understanding of the Standards, all with the purpose of helping adult learners improve their mathematical reasoning.

The 2014 GED^{fi} 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^{fi} Practice Test, as well as discussion of relevant new materials and resources. Sessions such as *Math for Science and Social Studies* helped teachers find ways to use data across content areas – improving students’ graphic literacy. The GED^{fi} 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.

In 2014-2015, 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 on August 20- 21 (70 participants each day) to share the standards and discuss implications to local programming. ATDN Trainers conducted a small pilot with 20 teachers for ELA and 10 teachers in Math to begin the process of implementing standards into instruction. While continuing to work closely with the pilot teachers, 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. Several sessions were presented at CAACE (the state adult education conference) in both reading and math.

Reading professional development incorporated 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, developing strategies and skills for instruction, integrating technology, and writing arguments and informational texts.

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 three-day training session was conducted for six new adult educators to current STAR programs. Since these teachers return to programs implementing STAR, a condensed version of the STAR Institutes is provided with the understanding that the program can continue to provide guidance and support.

The CASAS Functional Writing Assessment training was delivered two times during 2014-2015. This nine hour training was a requirement in order for programs to administer this assessment. The training included one full day in person session with follow-up discussion and review via *GotoMeeting*. Each adult education provider was expected to maintain one Writing Contact Person who had 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 1198 pairs of standardized pre-post writing samples in a six week period on behalf of local adult education programs. Intensive and ongoing training ensured the maintenance of the scoring service's accuracy.

English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) teachers were provided multiple professional development opportunities with a strong focus on connecting reading skills needed at all levels of ESL instruction. *Vocabularies in ESL Instruction and Comprehension in ESL Instruction* sessions were both well-attended and helped teachers to better understand the importance of vocabulary to comprehension for their students. The ESL Lead Teacher meeting focused on Professional Development opportunities available to teachers beyond the traditional face-to-face sessions offered by ATDN, including webinars, study circles, online videos, and online courses thru ELL-U etc. ESL Lead teachers learned about and discussed how they could bring PD to the program level and then planned to work with another program to utilize a new form of PD. This initiative was very successful with teachers working across districts to do online courses and then meet to discuss.

The NEDP Center at ATDN has continued to provide training and technical assistance to all of Connecticut's National External Diploma sites on an as-needed basis, as well as providing portfolio review for newly trained NEDP staff. A new Evaluation Workshop was developed based on the online NEDP program, and two sessions of the workshop were held. Two NEDP Refresher trainings were offered, as well as an additional "NEDP Tips and Tricks" session at the annual CAACE Conference. One three-day NEDP Implementation Training was held for new NEDP Advisor/Assessors. Four sessions of NEDP Administrative Policies and Practices meetings were held, as well as ongoing support for the CASAS NEDP Written Prompt training. The NEDP Center has reviewed and provided feedback to CASAS regarding program research and development.

ATDN and the CSDE facilitated a series of four workforce discussion forums to advance the workforce education emphasis to a more global career pathways approach. Forum topics included legislation, career pathways in adult education and college and career transition. These forums were targeted for workforce education directors and coordinators to support and enhance their workplace/career pathways program quality.

The 23rd Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities attracted over 300 attendees. The keynote address *Compassion Fatigue: Maintaining Hopefulness in Ourselves and Our Clients* was presented by Laura DiGalbo, M.ED., LPC, CRC. Ms. DiGalbo is in private practice and provides awareness building, training and consultation on a variety of issues facing disenfranchised people, including the process and benefit of developing hopefulness. She is also the disability consultant for adult education in Connecticut through ATDN. Breakout sessions included the topics of assistive technology, substance abuse in adults and its effect on learning, adults with autism spectrum disorder and how has technology changed the job search process.

The ATDN disability coordinator developed and presented to adult educators two workshops, "*Promoting Competence by Increasing Learner Retention*" and "*Strategies for Increasing Reading Comprehension for Students with Learning Disabilities.*" Disability Contact Persons 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 2014-15 continued to decline slightly from the previous year with all age cohorts dropping off somewhat.

MEASURE	National Average	2014-15 TARGET	ACTUAL 2014-15 PERFORMANCE
ABE Beginning Literacy	44%	48%	49%
ABE Beginning	46%	48%	49%
ABE Low Intermediate	46%	45%	42%
ABE High Intermediate	39%	30%	25%
ASE Low	38%	33%	34%
ESL Beginning Literacy	50%	56%	59%
ESL Low Beginning	54%	65%	64%
ESL High Beginning	54%	53%	56%
ESL Low Intermediate	48%	45%	43%
ESL High Intermediate	43%	44%	43%
ESL Advanced	26%	22%	37%

In ABE Beginning levels, Connecticut exceeded the national average. In ESL levels, Connecticut surpassed the national average in all measures except for ESL Low Intermediate. ESL Advanced exceeded the target by 11 points.

Percentage of Unemployed Learners

The percent of learners who indicate that they are employed at entry showed a slight increase which correlates with Connecticut's unemployment rate of 5%. The percent of learners who are unemployed and seeking employment remained steady.

Percent of Learners Based on Employment Status at Entry

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Employed	37%	37%	38%	38%	40%
Unemployed - Seeking Employment	41%	40%	40%	39%	38%
Unemployed - Not Seeking Employment	21%	22%	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 2014-15 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.

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

In fiscal year 2014-15, the CSDE provided direct and equitable distribution of financial support to all one-stop centers in the amount of \$178,839. 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 the second year of a pilot that expanded the development and implementation of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model; a model designed to help participants improve their basic skills and achieve or progress towards a secondary education credential while attaining an industry-recognized credential.

Funding was provided to four of Connecticut's five Workforce Investment Board (WIB) areas who successfully responded to a Request for Proposal (RFP). The four WIBs partnered with five adult education providers and eleven vocational education providers to offer Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) clients who receive Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) I-BEST programs. The following credentials were offered:

- National Professional Certificate in Customer Service from NRF (National Retail Federation)
- Qualified Food Handler Certificate
- OSHA Certificate
- CPR/First Aid Certificate
- Certified Nursing Assistant Certificate
- American Hotel and Lodging and Customer Service Certificate
- CT Asbestos License
- CT Lead Supervisor License
- Deconstruction Certificate

OSHA/HAZWOPER 40 Certificate
Microsoft Office (Outlook) Certificate
Microsoft Office (Word) Certificate
Microsoft Office (Excel) Certificate
Microsoft Office (PowerPoint) Certificate
Microsoft Technology Certificate

The period of instruction for the courses varied from four to sixteen weeks and included unpaid internships, paid internships or subsidized employment opportunities. Seventy-three JFES clients that enrolled in the I-BEST programs lacked a high school diploma. Forty-seven (64%) completed training while 37 (100%) of them took and passed an exam to receive either an industry-recognized credential or a State of Connecticut license. Twenty participants obtained employment and seven 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, 2014 through June 30, 2015. 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 held an intensive study ESL class for 25 hours a week where level gains were substantial. 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;
- Integration of College and Career Readiness Standards into curriculum;
- 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. Also, a meeting with the ESL Lead teachers was held to plan professional development for 2015-16 in relation to new WIOA requirements

for EL/Civics. 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 aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards 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 assessment program, aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards that offers no classroom instruction. An adult who successfully completes all components of the 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 the College and Career Readiness 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 (CCSS) 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. SDE had set the groundwork for implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) through the following events:

- In November of 2011, the SDE partnered with the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) to hold an introductory session by Susan Pimentel on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as they pertain to adult education;
- The National Adult Education Professional Development Council (NAEPDC) held a training in April 2013 in which CT participated on Standards in Action in Louisville, KY;
- A plan was developed to build state trainers' capacity and adult education providers/educators 'awareness' of the CCR Standards by holding a Summer Institute focused on the CCRS in 2013;
- Four CT representatives attended the USDOE OCTAE College & Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education Implementation Institute in Washington, June 4-5, 2014. These sessions provided our state with a more focused approach to introducing/understanding the standards and with instructional practices related to the CCRS key advances in Math and ELA;
- CCRS gets incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, writing and also, ESL;
- In December 2014 CT was selected for participation in the two year College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action (CCR SIA) project;
- Math and ELA trainers participated in both training sessions in Washington and technical assistance is ongoing with the national coaches as full implementation of CCRS occurs.

Annual Narrative Report Summary

During fiscal year 2014-15 Connecticut expended \$40,701,945 in state/local and \$4,110,855 in federal funds to serve 22,243 individuals for an average per pupil cost of \$2,014. 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.

