

Tennessee Adult Education Narrative Report PY 2019-2020

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1. State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

- a. Describe how the State has used funds made available under section 223 (State Leadership activities) for each the following required activities:

Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combined State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a).

In September 2019, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) created and hired for a new position on the Adult Education (AE) team: a director of college and career pathways. This person was instrumental in strengthening the focus of the state's AE program on aligning services with workforce partners, developing integrated education and training (IET) programming with local AE agencies, and pushing our efforts in career pathways development.

With the help of the director of college and career pathways, TDLWD accomplished the following:

- In-depth training of the local program directors on the various aspects of career pathways
- In-depth training of the local program directors on how to access and interpret labor market information and determine in-demand occupations and industries in a given area. Local providers in each region were asked to identify three occupational clusters by March 30, 2020.
- Site visits with all local AE providers to assess the current level of understanding of the various aspects of career pathways
- Researching and recommending use of Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) Standards for determining contextualized instruction

TDLWD has also worked with local AE providers to develop four pilot programs, including two pre-apprenticeship programs and two IET programs, as detailed below:

- Two Pre-Apprenticeship Fitters Fast Track (Maury County Jail and Columbia American Job Center) - The participants will receive credit toward the Registered Apprenticeship upon hire date. Upon completion of the Apprenticeship, those credits will go toward their Associate's degree.
- IET Healthcare Fast Track (TN College of Applied Technology Knoxville) - This program focuses on stackable credentials with several possible exit points. The participants have the potential to earn multiple certificates, including HSE, OSHA10, BLS, CNA, Phlebotomy, and EKG.
- IET Construction Core (Collierville) - This program focuses on stackable credentials with several possible exit points. The participants have the potential to earn multiple certificates, including HSE, OSHA10, NCRC, and Construction Core. Participants choosing to continue with the pre-apprenticeship pathway will receive credit toward the Registered Apprenticeship upon hire date.

TDLWD has worked with local providers to develop six workplace adult education classes, specifically for ESL students. These workplaces include:

- Gestamp (Chattanooga)
- Amazon (Chattanooga)
- Tyson (Shelbyville)
- Tyson (Goodlettsville)
- Ficos (Cookeville)
- Nissan (Smyrna)

TDLWD has worked with the local AE provider in Nashville on a co-location and transition initiative with Nashville State Community College (NSCC). The goal is to co-locate AE classes at NSCC campuses to reduce transportation barriers for students. TDLWD staff will also assist with reviewing current NSCC programs to determine opportunities for AE student co-enrollment at the college, specifically in courses related to hospitality management, logistics, retail management, and information systems. ESL students are also being considered for these opportunities. Plans are also underway for a summer bridge program at NSCC to assist AE students with transitioning to college.

In January 2020, the AE team was tasked by TDLWD leadership with participating in several objective charters conceived by the TN Workforce Development System steering committee. These charters include projects related to adult education pathways, incarceration pathways for incarcerated individuals, re-employment initiatives, and labor force participation rate initiatives. Within each of these charters, the core teams—which are made up of AE team members and various workforce partners—set out to establish shared objectives and align the services offered among the partners.

Unfortunately, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the dire need for agencies to primarily focus on their own services, much of this work was put on hold through the remainder of PY 19. The pandemic has also made it very difficult for career pathways-related initiatives to gather momentum. With workplaces and schools requiring or encouraging people to stay home during these months, these initiatives have been largely stalled.

Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development programs as described in section 223(1)(b).

In this program year, TDLWD hired several new people to join the AE team and assist with developing and guiding local programs. These positions included a director of professional development, a director of academic services, and a director of ESL services. These team members were instrumental in ensuring that local AE programs were provided with sufficient opportunities for training and professional development. The activities we conducted that are related to the specific professional development areas are described below.

Instruction incorporating the essential components of reading as these components relate to adults.

The director of professional development was charged with researching the essential components of reading instruction and devising a plan to provide professional development and training to local teachers. However, due to competing priorities (especially due to the pandemic), we unfortunately did not accomplish much in this aspect of professional development.

Instruction related to the specific needs of adults

In July 2019, TDLWD hosted a multi-day statewide conference for all local staff. Teachers were able to attend a variety of sessions facilitated by subject matter expert presenters. Topics ranged from content-specific teaching strategies, to accessing and analyzing performance data, to strategies for engaging adult learners. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our director of academic services and director of professional development began to focus largely on helping teachers transition to a distance education model. This included regular technical assistance and guidance on strategies and resources to help adult learners in a distance education environment (especially for learners who lack digital literacy skills).

Instruction provided by volunteers or by paid personnel

The 2019 statewide AE conference focused largely on strategies for helping teachers to improve their instruction (whether they are volunteers or paid personnel). When the pandemic began and the state had to shift to a distance learning model, our director of academic services and director of professional development began to focus largely on helping teachers transition to a distance education model. This included providing training and resources to help teachers improve their knowledge and skills related to teaching via distance education.

Dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to AEFLA funded programs.

In PY19, TDLWD focused on improving its use of an “AE Staff Portal” website which housed the various policies, resources, and training information for local staff to access. Using this website allowed us to easily publish and disseminate critical information about effective AE practices, especially related to distance education. We also utilized the 2019 statewide AE conference to share important information about AEFLA, WIOA, grant performance and accountability issues, and program development and instructional strategies.

Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c).

How the State is developing and disseminating instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training.

In PY19, TDLWD hired two new staff members to oversee technical assistance related to instruction: a director of academic services and a director of ESL services. We also restructured the state team

into two groups: a performance and accountability team, and a program development and operations team, both of which are overseen and led by assistant administrators. The new directors, as part of the program development and operations team, worked diligently to review and provide feedback on local providers' curriculum framework plans. These plans, developed at the local level, helped the locals to think through the curriculum to be utilized for various levels and categories of students (such as ESL or distance learners).

Fulfilling local providers' role to provide access to employment, education, and training services as required one-stop partners.

In PY19, TDLWD created a new role on its staff: a director of college and career pathways. This individual was charged with assisting local providers in their role to provide access to employment, education, and training services as required one-stop partners. She worked with local staff and businesses to develop integrated education and training opportunities, workplace education classes, and pre-apprenticeships. We also continuously encouraged local program leaders to focus on transitioning students to employment and post-secondary/training opportunities. We did this through regular leadership calls and conferences.

Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

In PY19, TDLWD provided much assistance to local providers in their use of technology. Specifically, we began implementation of the Schoology Learning Management System, and provided technical assistance and training to locals on how to use the system. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, TDLWD also provided training and guidance on the use of distance education software (such as HiSET Academy) and synchronous learning tools (such as Zoom).

TDLWD also focused heavily on assisting local providers in the use of our statewide MIS, "Jobs4TN". We provided several live training events on how to use the system, as well as written guidance. This training and guidance helped increase locals' understanding and efficiency in using the system.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223(1)(d).

In PY19, TDLWD focused on revamping its monitoring and evaluation processes. We did a complete rewrite of our monitoring guide to better assist the monitoring staff to identify the critical criteria involved in monitoring. It also included suggested methodologies for determining the level of the program's effectiveness on each criterion, and possible questions to discuss with local staff.

We also revised our risk assessment process to include new risk indicators that would help us more effectively determine the programs most in need of monitoring. These risk indicators included:

1. Continuous years of TDLWD funding and experienced staff
2. Prior monitoring findings indicating levels of deficiency
3. Student measurable skill gain (MSG) performance in prior year
4. Percentage of potential service population who were enrolled as program participants (12+ contact hours) in prior year
5. Degree of fiscal-related errors in prior year (e.g., requesting reimbursement for unallowable costs, mathematical errors, late report submissions, having significant funds unspent, etc.)

6. Degree of adherence to policies, guidance, and requests from TDLWD (e.g., providing information or reports, correcting data errors, attending training events, implementing strategic initiatives, etc.)

TDLWD conducted a formal, in-depth monitoring of four local providers based on our risk assessment. Two of these providers were exclusively monitored on the ABE grant, and two were exclusively monitored on the IELCE grant. We recognized that, since monitoring IELCE programs is relatively new, those monitorings were more challenging to conduct. Specifically, prior to May 2020, we did not have a director of ESL services, and not having an expert staff member to lead the program monitoring meant that we weren't able to confidently probe deeply into the program's operational effectiveness. However, with the addition of the new ESL director in May 2020, we are confident that future monitoring of ESL/IELCE programs will be more efficacious.

Another challenge with monitoring in this year was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two of our four formal monitorings were conducted after the pandemic was in full force, and we had to adjust from our usual in-person activities to an exclusively virtual monitoring. This proved especially difficult for class observations; we like to quietly observe learning and instruction in action as part of monitoring. With virtual monitoring, our monitoring staff had to join the Zoom classes, which was still informative, but harder to get a sense for the class environment. It was also much less personal and more intimidating to conduct interviews of staff and students virtually.

Two TDLWD staff members focused much of their work this year on informal/desktop monitoring of the local providers' fiscal practices and data and performance. The fiscal director worked regularly to review program expenditures and assist locals with issues related to allowable costs and accurate reporting. The data specialist worked regularly to review the statewide MIS performance data and to assist locals with troubleshooting errors in their data entry. TDLWD leaders regularly reviewed the providers whose performance was struggling, and to offer guidance as possible.

b. As applicable, describe how the State has used funds for additional permissible activities described in section 223(a)(2).

The primary permissible activity we undertook with State leadership funds this year was the implementation of the Schoology Learning Management System. When the director of academic services began with TDLWD in January 2020, she was immediately charged with procuring and implementing a learning management system. We were fortunate that the procurement of Schoology was already completed when the COVID-19 pandemic came in full force. Several teachers took advantage of the system to conduct distance learning activities with their students. The academics director has conducted basic training for interested teachers and is making plans to curate resources, facilitate networking, and house/track training opportunities in the system.

2. Performance Data Analysis

Describe how the adult education program performed in the overall assessment of core programs based on the core indicators of performance. Discuss how the assessment was used to improve quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years.

Program year 2019 proved to be a challenging year for Tennessee's AE programs. Yet, in the face of the challenges our programs showed great resilience and determination to provide excellent services to students. The first two quarters of the year were trending towards our state meeting its negotiated MSG target for the program year, which was 40%. We were intentional in training the local leadership, staff, and teachers how to use their data to make informed decisions that would work in the best interest of our students in meeting their educational and career goals.

In the period July 2019 through February 2020, TDLWD-funded local programs administered a monthly average of 305 CASAS assessments for ESL/IELCE students and 1,814 TABE assessments for ABE/ASE students. The official notice to close in-person learning for our state began March 10, 2020, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that all in-person assessments ceased (i.e., pre- and post-tests of CASAS and TABE, and HiSET exams at official testing centers). From March 1-9, 2020, our local programs gave 183 CASAS assessments and 847 TABE assessments. However, without the provisions yet established by the test publishers to administer assessments remotely, from March 13-April 30, 2020 our programs were unable to give any CASAS assessments and only gave 6 TABE assessments.

TABE publishers released their guidance on remote testing mid-May 2020. This enabled our local programs to give 103 TABE assessments in May and 575 assessments in June. CASAS released their guidance late-May 2020 which allowed our local programs to give 2 assessments in May and 23 assessments in June. The inability to give pre- and post-tests to students stifled our ability to increase our MSG gains through participant post-testing. We faced a huge learning curve in converting all local programs to remote learning and assessment with limited technology and resources to provide such services. Our state team was tasked with providing technical assistance to enable local programs to find and utilize remote learning and assessment resources.

COVID-19 significantly impacted services to our incarcerated citizens in Tennessee. Due to COVID outbreaks in correctional facilities, facilities took safety precautions by suspending services and visitation to protect their staff and the inmates. Adult Education enrollment of corrections education students suffered drastically. From March through June 2020, the AE corrections enrollment dropped 64%. Of the 93 facilities with Adult Education services, only 19 facilities had computer access for AE students which limited our ability to provide synchronous distance education services.

New student enrollment numbers (for all students/participants and reportable individuals) for July 2019 through February 2020 was 10,338. New enrollment numbers for March through June 2020 was 2,331. The total number of participants reported for PY19 was 10,189. The total number of reportable students for PY19 was 5,795. Of the 15,984 students enrolled for PY19, 12,669 were new enrollments for PY19 and 79.3% of those students enrolled prior to March 2020 (20.7% after March). Compared to the PY18 new enrollments for March through June, the number of new student enrollments reduced by almost half during this period of time. PY18 had 4,156 new students enrolled during March through June equating to 30% of the new enrollments for that program year.

COVID-19 significantly impacted our MSG outcomes during PY19. The negotiated MSG target was 40%. With the mandated closing of testing centers and learning centers, our reported MSG for PY19 was 33.24%, which included 2,316 high school equivalency (HSE) diplomas earned and 1,054 EFL gains through post-testing. From the period July 2019 through March 2020, we had 925 EFL gains through post-testing, (average of 308 level gains per quarter). During the fourth quarter of the program year, we only had 129 student level gains through post-testing. Of the 2,316 HSE diplomas earned during the program year, only 161 were earned during the fourth quarter.

Transitioning learning and instruction to distance education methods became our primary focus at the outset of pandemic. With much technical assistance, guidance, and trial-and-error, we were able to increase distance educational hours for participants by 218%. Participants logged 21,609 hours of attendance during the fourth quarter of PY19. Distance education students were only averaging 3,304 hours of attendance during the first three quarters of PY19.

Historically, the core post-exit performance indicators for Tennessee have been in the top quartile of the nation. The impact of COVID-19 was not fully seen during PY19; however, we anticipate a drastic impact to our employment measures due to the high unemployment rate during the height of the pandemic. Since many of our students were not exited until the end of the program year, we

anticipate we will see the full impact of COVID-19 on our PY20 post-exit measures. PY19 core outcome measures were as follows:

- Employment Q2 After Exit--52.96%
- Employment Q4 After Exit--50.02%
- Median Earnings Q2 After Exit--\$4,024.74
- Attained Any Credentials (unduplicated)--44.07%
 - Attained a sec. diploma/equivalent & enrolled in PS ed/training--0.11%
 - Attained a sec. diploma/equivalent & employed--43.03%
 - Attained a PS credential while enrolled or w/i 1 yr of exit--0%

One area of concern related to our performance data is the postsecondary metrics; these data are not housed within our department, and we rely on data sharing with other educational partners for this information. However, due to the lack of consistency of what “counts” as a credential across educational partners, the AE data is not necessarily completely reflective of actual credentials earned by exited students. We will work to rectify this issue in the coming program year.

3. Integration with One-stop Partners

Describe how the State eligible agency, as the entity responsible for meeting one-stop requirements under 34 CFR part 463, subpart J, carries out or delegates its required one-stop roles to eligible providers. Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system. Describe how infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.

TDLWD stated in its RFP that all grantees are required to coordinate with the other WIOA partners and services. It also stated that specific grantees that are serving counties with comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs) would be designated as a “one-stop partner” in their respective local workforce development areas. The RFP also informed applicants that TDLWD would provide information and guidance on the scope of services and funds required for infrastructure costs.

We added new criteria related to one-stop partnerships to our monitoring guide this year, which are determined through interviewing local program directors:

1. The program partners with and leverages other WIOA and outside services and resources to assist students with needs such as transportation, childcare, food, and training (e.g., Title I, TN Reconnect, SNAP Employment & Training, TANF, etc.). Staff and students are aware of these resources, and a significant number of students co-enroll in the services.
2. The program is an active partner with the American Job Center (AJC) system and, if applicable, participates knowledgeably in the MOU/IFA process.

The process TDLWD has for designating one-stop partner responsibilities is not very clear, nor are clear expectations for one-stop participation. We intend to address this via policy and guidance in the future.

The primary method through which AE services are offered in AJCs is through local AE staff being housed in-person at the comprehensive centers. The specific AE career services provided in most centers were related to intake and orientation, initial assessment of numeracy, literacy, and English language skill level (via TABE or CASAS), and providing information and referrals for other programs and services.

The AE partners at the centers not only administered assessments for AE students, but for individuals seeking Title I and Title III services, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services. In some cases, these individuals were referred to participate in AE based on their assessment scores

and career goals. For example, the TAA staff decided on TABE qualifying scores for specific training programs, and referred individuals to AE staff in the AJC for taking the assessment. If the individual didn't achieve the requisite scores, then they were encouraged to participate in AE classes.

In most comprehensive centers, regular AE classes were also offered for ABE students. These intake and orientation activities and classes were not necessarily customized to meet local one-stop and community needs; this is an aspect of needed guidance that TDLWD will address in the future.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, the operation of the AJCs was severely limited, and in many instances, centers had to close completely. However, at the state level, the partner programs have worked to keep each other informed of the centers' statuses.

The infrastructure costs of the AJCs have been supported through the local AEFLA grants. TDLWD required grantees to provide a budget at the beginning of the program year, indicating how much money would be utilized for AJC infrastructure costs. In some cases, TDLWD requested that a different amount be budgeted in order to keep within the local administrative cost cap. Local program directors participated in the MOU/IFA negotiation process; in some areas, the AE partner is readily included and their voice considered, but in other areas, the AE partner is often left out of discussions.

In a leadership conference of the local program directors, the TDLWD staff arranged a presentation by a state-level AJC expert. His presentation included information on one-stop partner requirements, the IFA and MOU process, and a Q&A from the local directors which allowed them to ask clarifying questions and bring up concerns about the process in their local area.

We intend to conduct similar training in the future and to provide written guidance and expectations for local programs concerning the IFA and MOU process, and the requirements for providing AE services as a one-stop partner.

4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)

Describe how the state is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IELCE program:

Describe when your State held a competition [the latest competition] for IELCE program funds and the number of grants awarded by your State to support IELCE programs.

In January 2020, TDLWD published a RFP which announced the availability of funds and the competition requirements for the IELCE grants. The competition ended with six grantees being awarded \$105,000 to \$367,000 annually. The grants were established for the three-year period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023. The RFP identified and targeted the six areas in Tennessee with the largest populations of non-U.S.-citizens and specified that the grant was meant to serve English language learners with required IELCE activities. To be considered an eligible provider, an applicant had to be able to demonstrate effectiveness in providing adult education services. Eligible applicants submitted past performance data to TDLWD as a condition of applying for the grant.

Describe your State efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training activities.

TDLWD hired a director of college and career pathways to join the AE team in September 2020. The director was charged with overseeing career pathways programming and integrated education and training program development, including for IELCE programs. In February 2020, a series of changes in AE state leadership, followed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, put a pause on new

implementation of IETs as programs worked feverishly to transition to remote teaching in their regular programs. In May 2020, TDLWD also hired a director of ESL services to assist with overseeing technical assistance and guidance to IELCE programs and their IET development. Given the transitions in leadership and the newness of the state-level positions assigned to work on these program areas, we are still at the beginning stages of developing robust IET programs, with extensive progress planned for the coming program year.

Describe how the State is progressing towards program goals of preparing and placing IELCE program participants in unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency as described in section 243(c)(1) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals

In February 2020, TDLWD AE staff trained local IELCE program directors to find and use labor market information to help them identify in-demand industries and occupational clusters relevant to their region. We also introduced a student goals sheet to assist local staff with identifying and discussing students' career goals, and to help instructors to individualize and contextualize instruction based on student needs and workplace goals. Each students' goal sheet is referenced throughout their learning pathway in the IELCE program.

Prior to 2020, there was not a designated person to oversee the IELCE programs. The state recognized the need to address the issue and hired a director of ESL services in May 2020. The director has begun to provide technical assistance and will continue to do so in the coming year by designing a more robust career pathway system for the IELCE programs.

Describe how the State is progressing towards program goals of ensuring that IELCE program activities are integrated with the local workforce development system and its functions as described in section 243(c)(2) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.

Recognizing the need for someone to focus on ESL and IELCE programming, TDLWD hired a director of ESL services in May 2020 to provide continuous oversight and guidance to the ESL and IELCE programs. After extensive evaluation of our IELCE programs, we determined more technical assistance was needed to educate the local workforce development boards to increase understanding of the IELCE program and how it fits into the local workforce development system. It is imperative for our local programs and local boards to understand how to ensure seamless integrated services to all job seekers, workers, and businesses, and to include IELCE programming in their strategic planning. The director of ESL services has been charged with assisting local IELCE programs to align with local plans and to integrate with the local workforce development system in each local area.

5. Adult Education Standards

If your State has adopted new challenging K-12 standards under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, describe how your Adult Education content standards are aligned with those K-12 standards. Optional – Describe implementation efforts, challenges, and any lessons learned.

The TDLWD AE program did not make any changes to the content standards this year. We continue to apply the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), which are founded on the Common Core State Standards for K-12, and the English Language Proficiency Standards. The use of CCRS-aligned curricula was assessed as part of our regular local program monitoring process, which includes class observations, teacher interviews, student surveys, and assessment of the program's

curriculum framework plan. In addition, each program's curricula was submitted to TDLWD as part of annual curriculum framework planning. These were reviewed to ensure appropriate alignment with the standards and for any needed changes or updates.

Our primary challenge this year was the unexpected necessity for programs to transition to a distance education format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our focus from March through June 2020 has been on guiding the transition to a virtual learning environment for local programs. This, by necessity, took precedence over the development of other new training and other project implementation not essential to that effort. In the coming year, we will have a continued focus on standards-based teaching as we move out of the emergency teaching phase necessitated by the pandemic. In the coming program year, we will be focusing further on the development of standards-based training and support and providing online resources for instructors to ensure continued alignment to and reliance on the standards.

To assist us in our efforts to improve the leadership, technical assistance, and guidance related to curriculum, instruction, and content standards, in January 2020, TDLWD hired a director of academic services. The director was charged with overseeing class instruction offered by local AE providers, and she has begun implementation of the Schoology learning management system for use by staff and students across the state. In May 2020, TDLWD also hired a director of ESL services who was charged with overseeing the ESL and IELCE programming across the state. In the coming year, these positions will be instrumental in focusing our efforts on improving standards-based curriculum and instruction across the state.

6. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

What was the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served? Please describe the methods and factors used in calculating the rate for this reporting period.

TDLWD stated in its RFP that Adult Basic Education grantees would be required to provide corrections education activities in the local and county jails located in their respective service areas, to the extent possible (expending no more than 20% of their grant funds to do so). In Tennessee, the AEFLA program is typically the sole education option for local and county jails; the TN Department of Correction operates its own education program in the state and federal prisons. In PY19, we continued to encourage all local programs to develop relationships with the local and county jails in their areas, and to offer ABE services to incarcerated individuals--specifically to eligible individuals who also have less than five years remaining on their sentence, per Federal regulation. TDLWD-funded AE programs served 3,506 students in correctional institutions during the year.

Unfortunately, TDLWD has not developed methods or metrics for determining the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served in the AE program. In the coming year, we will make it a priority to develop metrics for evaluating the rate of recidivism for corrections education students. We also plan to do an analysis of the service needs of the incarcerated populations in the various areas. This will help us guide the local programs to design education programming specific to ESL, IET, pre-apprenticeship, and re-entry based on student needs and local resources.