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Restructuring ABE and ASE Programs to Better Serve Young Adults

by Linda Carlton, Principal, Sweetwater Union High School District

It started with such a simple little question: Why was the high school graduation rate at San Ysidro Adult School going down?

Which led to more questions: Was it the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) requirement? Was it the economy keeping students out of school? Was it the student placement procedure? Was it the curriculum?

In 2005, San Ysidro Adult School awarded high school diplomas to 53 students. Just four years later, in 2009, we awarded only 16. Additionally, in 2005, our average passing percentage on the CAHSEE was 65–70 percent for English/language arts (ELA) and 54–60 percent for math. By 2009, both of those averages declined to the 30–35 percent range.

For the past several years, we have seen increasing numbers of young adults with a unique set of needs who are not passing the CAHSEE. In 2004–05, 1,043 young adults were enrolled at San Ysidro. By 2008–09, enrollment increased to 1,296, and through March of the 2010–11 school year, that number reached 1,454. Compared with adults ages twenty-five years and older, teachers noted that the younger adult students needed more help in goal setting, study skills, and time management. Additionally, the younger students were not transitioning from adult basic education (ABE) to adult secondary education (ASE) classes and ultimately not obtaining their high school diplomas. Clearly, the younger adults needed better focus and clearer educational objectives.

As a result, administration, counselors, resource staff, and teachers analyzed the situation and discussed ideas to increase the number of graduating students. Every aspect

of our ABE/ASE program was scrutinized, and over the course of several meetings, we came up with the following concerns:

1. **ABE classes.** Students in the ABE program were slow in reaching high school and general educational development (GED) preparedness levels, creating a bottleneck at the ABE level and resulting in smaller numbers of students transitioning to ASE classes.
2. **ASE classes.** The individualized learning lab model was not as conducive to student achievement as was a whole-class instructional approach.
3. **CAHSEE preparation.** Pass rates were falling, both nongraduated (ABC—"All But CAHSEE") seniors from the high schools and adult students were having less success in passing the CAHSEE.

After we pinpointed these three areas of concern, we set about developing strategies to improve the program and creating a more focused pathway to help students toward graduation.

The ABE Academy

Our first step was to restructure the ABE program. After collaboratively making changes to the structure of the ABE program, we launched the ABE Academy. The academy is open to all ages, but young adult students comprise the majority of the enrollment. The purpose of the academy is to serve young adults and adults who lack skills in reading, writing, and math and help them on their path to graduation.

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Message from the Director

Mariann Fedele
Director, CALPRO

Colleagues, we are pleased to bring you the spring 2011 edition of the *CALPROgress* newsletter. In recent *CALPROgress* editions we have focused on themes associated with programming (postsecondary and workforce transitions programs in particular). For this edition, we are focusing on a specific population, young adults. Young adults, generally understood to describe people between the ages of 18 and 24, have unique developmental profiles that may require specific pedagogic approaches and create challenges for adult education programs.

Using data available from the American Community Survey, more than 17 percent of California's 3,744,453 people between the ages of 18-24 have less than a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of educational attainment. The relationship between educational attainment and future well-being and earning potential is well documented. Individuals with less than a high school diploma or GED can expect to earn less than one-half of what their counterparts with a bachelor's degree will earn, to face a higher rate and longer bouts of unemployment, and to be much more likely to live in poverty. Of the 434,428 (as reported to the National Reporting System 2009-2010) adult learners served in California's Adult Education System, just over 27 percent were under age 25. In effect, only about 18 percent of young adults with less than a high school diploma are receiving the basic education services they need to ensure a degree of self-sufficiency, economic productivity, and well-being later in life. The number of young adults reported served decreased by almost 34 percent from the 2008-2009 program year, presumably as a result of the severe budget cuts experienced by adult education programs.

Providing educational services to this population is particularly challenging. *The Transition to Adulthood: Characteristics of Young Adults Ages 18 to 24 in America* report funded in part by the Population Reference bureau notes:

The transition to adulthood can take place in different orders and over a wide range of ages from the teens through the mid- to late 20s and beyond, and most youth successfully make these transitions. However, many youth experience setbacks early on by becoming parents too

soon, dropping out of school, failing to find work, or getting in trouble with the legal system. These experiences not only make the transition to adulthood more difficult but can also have long-lasting effects by compromising a youth's potential to provide for himself or herself in adulthood, and by increasing the risk that a youth's own offspring will experience the same negative outcomes.

In this edition of *CALPROgress*, articles explore the challenges of and approaches to serving young adults in adult education programs. The articles, by state and national leaders in adult education, cover a range of perspectives on policy, research, and practice.

From a look at research to practice and administrative policy, our articles will focus on

- What research can tell us about the particular needs of young adults
- Instructional strategies for serving young adults in the Adult Secondary Education (ASE) classroom
- Program policies that support young adults' educational success

We hope that these articles provide some resources and ideas to support you, your staff, and your program in meeting the challenges of serving this important population.

Resources

Transition to Adulthood: Characteristics of Young Adults Ages 18 to 24 in America

<http://www.prb.org/pdf05/transitiontoadulthood.pdf>

Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society

http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/about/news_info/trends/ed_pays_2007.pdf

College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2009 High School Graduates

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/hsgsec.pdf>

State of the Field

Debra Jones

Administrator, Adult Education Office



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A high school diploma is just not enough anymore! A GED is not sufficient! This message comes from the federal government, researchers, economists, and futurists. Our students must begin their educational journey at the adult school and transition into training programs and employment.

As reported in *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, America is slowly coming out of the Recession of 2007—only to find itself on a collision course with the future: not enough Americans are completing college. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (GUCEW) shows that by 2018, the United States will need 22 million persons with new college degrees—but will fall short of that number by at least 3 million postsecondary degrees. In addition, we will need at least 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary certificates.

We cannot ignore other statistics. In California, one out of five adults does not have a high school diploma. High school dropout rates have increased from 11 percent in 2000–01 to over 15 percent in 2007–08. More than 6 million adults with a high school diploma or GED will require remedial coursework to be able to apply to college. More than 1.2 million California residents of labor force age are unemployed. California is experiencing a 12.4 percent unemployment rate, and some areas experience almost 20 percent unemployment.

Between 1973 and 2008, the share of jobs in the U.S. economy which required postsecondary education increased from 28 percent to 59 percent. According to the GUCEW, the share of postsecondary jobs will increase from 59 percent to 63 percent over the next decade. High school graduates and dropouts will find themselves largely left behind in the coming decade as employer demand for workers with postsecondary degrees continues to surge. Projections of the state's economy show that it is continuing along a trajectory of steadily increasing demand for a highly educated workforce. At a time when every job is precious, this shortfall will mean lost economic opportunity for millions of American workers.

Our students are the workforce and higher education systems' next students—we want to ensure their successful transition into training programs and employment. Twenty-seven percent of our students enrolled in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Title II program are under age 25, and 58 percent of those students are male. Sixty percent lack a

high school diploma, and one-third is unemployed. Our adult education programs are one of the building blocks of California's economic and workforce development efforts. The ability of individuals to connect education, training, and careers is crucial to employability and to attaining and maintaining middle class status. We need to increase our capacity for students to move seamlessly into postsecondary education and training programs.

We know that postsecondary education and training are crucial to the American economy. We recognize that many of our students come to us too unprepared for college and the workplace. Our responsibility to prepare them for their future is greater than ever. At a time of increasing global competition, the implications of a decline in adult education funding are serious, both for the state's economic future and the economic well-being of its residents and our students.

To implement successful strategies for skill and wage advancement, California needs to have an education and training infrastructure that supports their development and implementation. The ideal infrastructure would include training opportunities from employability-related skills through graduate programs, all of which would focus on both the hard skills as well as the soft skills necessary to succeed in the ever-changing labor market. Successful strategies include:

- Extending traditional credential programming—GED, high school diploma
- Articulating instruction with existing higher education and training pathways
- Focusing on building school/college readiness and employability
- Implementing precertification programs
- Providing wraparound services
- Identifying college and career readiness indicators

In the face of budget reductions and elimination of adult education programs over the past two years, we believe that the strategic plan reflects a vision aimed at how California can continue to educate our most needy adult students who desire to earn a diploma, become literate in English, and learn skills leading to employment and training opportunities. We will continue to keep you informed of the progress of the strategic plan through the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN) Web site at <http://www.otan.us/strategicplanning>. At the time of this

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Adolescent Literacy: What Are the Big Ideas?

Millions of young adults lack the literacy skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace.¹ Adolescent literacy has emerged in the past decade as a unique focus of literacy development with specific concerns and practices. The topic has attracted the attention of educators, service providers, researchers, and policymakers alike as a key to ensure that young adults have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed. A handful of big ideas in adolescent literacy research should inform how adult education programs and alternative schools approach this topic and plan both programs for young adults and professional development for their instructors.²⁻⁵

These ideas indicate that programs and instructors should pay particular attention to background knowledge and vocabulary; comprehension strategies; the synergies of reading and writing; and the importance of interest, motivation, and engagement.

Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

The young adult population (aged 16-24) in the United States is multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic and becoming more diverse each year. Students represent a wide range of abilities, educational experiences, and literacies.⁶ This diversity calls into question any assumptions made by programs and curriculum developers about background knowledge and vocabulary; this diversity also underscores the need to pay attention to relationship building, engaging learners' interests, and supplying a variety of scaffolds, including technology tools. Electronic references such as dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias, and video supports such as how-to diagrams and animated illustrations help demonstrate concepts and vocabulary.

Young adults who struggle with academics will likely benefit from focused attention on their background knowledge and vocabulary as part of literacy instruction.² As young adults move from general survey courses in secondary school to more in-depth disciplines and career training topics, specific background knowledge and vocabulary assumed in reading materials and preparation tasks become even more important. Pre-teaching and making explicit the background knowledge and vocabulary assumptions needed for success in a training

program are keys to helping young adults engage the material thoughtfully. This is especially true for students who are English language learners (ELLs); even if their oral English is quite proficient, the content areas and specific job-related vocabularies are often completely unfamiliar. Learners who struggle need explicit, multisensory instruction that helps them connect new vocabulary with the sounds and spelling patterns, as well as many opportunities to use and hear new words in context.

Comprehension Strategies

All learners benefit from ongoing comprehension strategy instruction throughout their academic careers as the texts and expectations continue to change dramatically across content areas (a biology lab report is constructed and written quite differently than a history text, for example).⁷ The same is true for career and technical preparation. How texts are constructed, the key structural phrases and words, and the unique vocabularies of specific disciplines contribute to the unique "academic literacies" of each discipline. A variety of comprehension strategies are appropriate for all readers, but struggling readers often have a very limited repertoire. They need explicit modeling and guided practice to learn new strategies or to apply different strategies appropriate for specific texts.⁵ Supporting and reinforcing comprehension instruction requires a deliberate increase in the amount and quality of time devoted to open, sustained discussion of reading content. Far from watering down expectations, this recommendation calls on instructors of all types of courses to step up and increase the rigor of the intellectual intensity with which they engage their learners in discussions of text and modeling of comprehension. This discussion time can be used to model and role play thoughtful, respectful conversations and critical-thinking skills—soft skills that struggling students often lack and which workforce development programs and employers identify as key to workplace success. Support learners' active engagement with text by using digital text, text-to-speech, and annotation tools such as virtual Post-It™ notes, bookmarking, highlighting, and color coding.



by Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Ph.D.,
Senior Research Analyst,
American Institutes for Research

Synergy of Reading and Writing

Just as academic literacies challenge reading comprehension, they also challenge learners' writing proficiencies. Although a student may be able to write a personal narrative or creative story, he or she may struggle to construct an acceptable technical report or daily event log. Explicit writing instruction and guided practice reinforces vocabulary and comprehension strategies⁸ to help learners generalize and internalize the academic literacies and gain confidence with them. And while reading and writing are complementary processes, struggling writers need explicit strategy instruction and guided practice to become proficient and flexible writers.⁹ The underdeveloped writing skills of many new workers are considered a major barrier to workplace and postsecondary success.

In addition, preparing young adults for the 21st century workplace includes the ability to write for multiple audiences and purposes, alone or collaboratively, and to use a variety of tools and platforms to do so.¹⁰ All young adults and adults should be proficient with everyday technologies such as word processing, spell checkers, graphic organizers, Web 2.0 applications, presentation and diagramming software.

Interest, Motivation, and Engagement

Interest and motivation are absolutely key to learning, yet young adults who have experienced years of school failure may be reluctant to reengage with any academic system.¹¹ The best way to learn what young adults are interested in is to watch what they do on their own time. Take an environmental scan of the out-of-classroom literacies taking place in hallways and parking lots: singing, dancing, texting, e-mailing, gaming, note writing, surfing the Internet, photography, music, etc. Look for what digital devices learners carry with them. The literacies that young adults engage in on their own can be used to draw analogies to and support academic literacies that contribute to rather than conflict with their emerging identities.¹¹⁻¹³ Tapping into their interests can energize young adults' motivation to do the extra work required to be successful.¹⁴ Similarly, community-based projects that engage young adults as responsible community members can successfully draw on the "funds of knowledge"¹⁵ present in their families, themselves, and their communities. Forging partnerships with community

organizations can provide internships, projects, and mentors. Use the Internet for inquiry projects for research and communication with other communities engaged in the same topic, and to create end products that can be shared with the larger community on the Internet: a digital story, movie or podcast, a tutorial, a report or blog post. Encourage learners to "geek out" and "go deep"¹⁰ on a subject, both involving and becoming experts on a topic.

Resources

Learn how to implement these suggestions and many others at these technical assistance and resource centers:

- Adolescent Literacy, <http://www.AdLit.org>, provides online articles and links to research-based information on instruction and supports for young adults literacy development.
- Edutopia, <http://www.edutopia.org>, is an interactive site with examples and suggestions for digital project-based learning initiatives and an active community of educators.
- <http://www.EdTechLocator.org>, is an interactive technology team planning tool and roadmap, created by the Center for Implementing Technology in Education, <http://www.CITEd.org>.
- LD OnLine, <http://www.LDOnLine.org>, offers hundreds of resources and articles specific to addressing the academic and life success of individuals with learning disabilities (LD). The technology section hosts articles on how to integrate technology into teaching, learning, and independent living, including a version of this article focusing on young adults with LD.
- Literacy Matters, <http://www.LiteracyMatters.org>, hosts an online collection of professional development modules, archived workshops, and resources addressing the instruction of adolescent literacy and a section for activities for learners.
- TechMatrix, <http://www.TechMatrix.org>, an online database of products reviewed for universal design and accessibility features with links to manufacturers' Web sites and a collection of research on the use of technology for instruction.

Visit American Institutes for Research at <http://www.air.org>

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Transitioning Young Adults to Meet Their Goals

by Christine Paynton, Instructor,
Mt. Diablo Adult Education

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Two years ago, staff at Mt. Diablo Adult Education's Loma Vista Adult Center in Concord, CA, designed a course to help students with their reading, writing, and math skills to be successful in higher education, Career Tech programs, and employment opportunities. Using San Leandro Adult School's "Bridging the Gap" format, the adult basic education (ABE) department, with the cooperation of the English as a Second Language (ESL) staff, offered a bridge class for the higher level ESL students.

This year, the Loma Vista Adult Center expanded the class to include adult students of all ages, including learners eighteen to twenty-four years old who desire to enhance their lives by obtaining more specific goals. The idea came from an article about innovative ways to integrate instructional programs, which appeared in the spring 2010 issue of *CALPROgress*. The staff liked the idea of integrating the students and departments.

Mt. Diablo Adult Education opened the Career Transition class and enrolls new students in the class once a month. The class has allowed staff to offer assistance to other departments on the campus. The Career Technical Education (CTE) department now has a specific place to refer their students, who have not been able to pass the course entrance exam, to learn traditional educational concepts. Because most of the students are very driven to begin their specific CTE program, they are willing to study diligently, and most have successfully entered their course of study within months. This also brought benchmarks to ABE through CASAS testing as the students gained reading and math knowledge.

Christine Paynton has been an ABE/GED/ASE/CTE instructor at Mt. Diablo Adult Education for 19 years and currently teaches the transition class. One of her professional goals is to help 1,000 students obtain their general educational development (GED) degree; as of this year, she has assisted 960 learners. Below she shares her approach to teaching a diverse group of learners who range from eighteen to fifty years old.

Flexibility Is Key: As a seasoned teacher, I decided many years ago that flexibility was the number one key to reaching a diverse group of students. Diversity includes students from different cultures and of different ages and students with different learning styles, learning issues, and unique ways of socially interacting in the classroom. Yet, I find the diversity invigorating!

I encourage and reinforce that each student respect the other's differences, but I am continually reminding us to discover our commonalities. My desire is for each student

to appreciate these differences, and I expect them to increase their understanding of each other as they enter the workforce and the world we live in today. This is accomplished in the classroom through individual lessons and expanded through group work. Hopefully, my tolerance, acceptance, and strong belief in equality will encourage each student.

Understand Learning Modes: One of my first goals is for students to discover their personal learning modes. As a teacher, having my students know their learning preferences helps me to meet their needs and build on their strengths. I noticed that I can help the young adults in my class to focus better by using the best teaching methods for their particular learning modes. I try to present most of my lessons with a variety of approaches—including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods—and I encourage students to be proactive with their unique learning strategies and to use them in their school, home, and work environments. Knowing one's learning preferences also serves as a way to be accountable for one's own learning. For example, for those whose strength is to learn visually, seeing examples on the board and taking notes helps them to learn better and retain more information. Students can learn about their learning preferences by using an assessment found at <http://www.metamath.com/lsweb/dvclearn.htm> or <http://www.ged-abe-ase-cvp.us>.

Encourage Interdependence: My second goal is for each student to become an interdependent learner. By this, I mean I want them to trust themselves and each other. I hope that they appreciate what they have learned and what they already know while being open to ask for help whenever they need it. Learning to depend on each other is important because such a skill is needed in every setting—that is, at home, work, and school. I've observed that young adults range in self-confidence: Some lack self-confidence and are afraid to ask for help, and others are overly confident and don't like to admit that they need help from others. I try to build a rapport with each student and foster a class environment of trusting each other so students will feel comfortable asking for help.

Through testing, a personal interview, and constant weekly conversations, "we" assess their needs and plans. Some days there may be a need to renew their driver's license, study for their citizenship test, or help their child with a homework problem. Reminding myself of my choice to be flexible in the classroom, I may have to scratch my lesson plans for that day and direct students to complete their daily goals, knowing that we will get back on track the next class.

Integrate Technology: Integrating the use of technology into my classroom instruction is important because using

the computer and the Internet are essential skills, as half of my students do not have an Internet connection at home. Although many young adults are tech savvy, I find that some younger students are hesitant to use the computer. Some students do not have opportunities outside of class to practice using the computer, so I encourage all students to use the computers in the classroom and at the local library. In class, students practice typing, searching job Web sites, using ReadOn, and accessing other relevant programs and links. I designed the class Web site (<http://www.ged-abe-ase-cvp.us>) to have links to other useful Web sites that addresses the diverse needs and interests of my students. Once a week, I show the class Web site to students and highlight a link that may be useful to them. I give them time to use the classroom computers to become familiar with that Web site. Consequently, I am adding and deleting links monthly. I often ask my students for input about what to include on the Web site. I try to keep it simple. Students don't like confusion, chaos, or too much information in class.

Collaborate with Internal and External Partners: If I find that a student needs more specific tools to be successful, I work closely with other departments to make this happen. Some examples include a typing class, an anger management course, a parenting class, etc. If students need more basic reading skills, I include them in a comprehensive, evidence-based reading class called STudent Achievement in Reading (STAR). STAR is tailored to high-risk students who are attempting to enter the ASE or GED prep classes. The STAR format focuses on vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and if needed, alphabets (or decoding words). It is designed for those who are reading at 4 to 8.9-grade reading levels. We also refer students who are reading at a lower grade level and need additional individual instruction to Project Second Chance, which is Contra Costa County's free library literacy program.

Conclusion

When we hear speakers like Dr. Willard Daggett, an international leader in education, encouraging us to prepare our students for the changing world, I feel optimistic. We ARE doing so many great things in adult education for our younger students and the general population as we prepare them for the future. I encourage each of us to continue what we are doing, as we love and teach each student. Let's remain positive and always keep our sense of humor.

Visit Mt. Diablo Adult Education at <http://www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/adulted>

Professional Development Options by State Leadership Projects

Spring 2011

CASAS Assessment and Accountability

The 2011 CASAS National Summer Institute will be held June 14-16, 2011, in San Diego. The Summer Institute offers trainings, panel discussions and workshops, poster sessions, work groups, and hands-on labs. Registration is now open at <http://www.CASAS.org/si>.

CASAS is offering assessment and accountability workshops in three formats: regional face-to-face, facilitated Web-based, and online self-paced. Workshop topics include CASAS Assessments, Accountability, TOPSpro®, CASAS eTests®, and Citizenship Oral Assessment. All workshops are accessible at:

- California Adult Education Professional Development (<http://www.caadultedtraining.org>)
- CASAS Training Registration (https://www.casas.org/online_registration/)

They are appropriate for agencies funded by Workforce Investment Act Title II, Sections 225/231, and EL Civics in California.

OTAN Professional Development

OTAN offers 1-year academies for practitioners in two areas. Those wishing to improve their knowledge and ability to use technology effectively in the classroom and to help their colleagues do the same should apply to the Technology Integration Mentor Academy (TIMAC). Those committed to moving some or all course content online and assisting their colleagues in this endeavor may apply for the Online Teaching Academy (OTAC). Both applications are available on the OTAN Web site, <http://www.otan.us>, and are due in May.

OTAN also offers many workshops and Webinars on technology topics for a variety of program areas. See the OTAN Web site for more information, and <http://www.CAAdultEdTraining.org> to register for these and other professional development events.

Preparing Youth for the Future: The Literacy of America's Young Adults

by Ying Jin, Senior Research Analyst, and Joanna Kling,
American Institutes for Research

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This article is an excerpt of a research publication released December 2010 by the U.S. Department of Labor. Visit <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research> to download the full text. This article was reprinted with permission.

Introduction

Young adults are among the most recent entrants into the labor force. Many out-of-school young adults, especially those with no postsecondary schooling, have encountered severe difficulties in obtaining access to career jobs (Sum, Fogg, and Mangum 2000). Improving the literacy of young adults is among the proven strategies for enhancing their labor market prospects. Knowing the literacy proficiencies of America's young adults has become increasingly important for providing guidance to public policymakers about effective literacy instruction among this population group.

Using data collected from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), this report examines the characteristics and literacy proficiency of America's young adults ages 16–18 and 19–24. This report also compares the literacy of young adults with that of older age cohorts and identifies characteristics that are most associated with the low literacy of America's young adults. Many of the background variables examined in this report are based on self-reported data, and because many of the variables are related to one another, complex interactions and relationships among them cannot be explored. Therefore, readers are cautioned not to draw causal inferences based solely on the results presented here.

The 2003 NAAL assessed the English literacy of adults (ages 16 and older) in the United States for the first time since the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey. The NAAL provided information on the literacy proficiencies of approximately 18,000 adults living in households and 1,200 prison inmates. In the household sample, 2,960 adults were between ages 16 and 24 and formed the young adult analysis sample in this report. In addition to assessing the literacy skills of respondents, the NAAL gathered extensive background information on their

demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (e.g., their age, gender, nativity status, schooling, labor force status, household income), as well as on their literacy practices.

The NAAL measured respondents' proficiencies on three literacy scales: prose, document, and quantitative. For each, proficiency was measured on a scale that ranged from 0 to 500. Scores on each of the three literacy scales were characterized in terms of four literacy proficiency levels: *Below Basic*, *Basic*, *Intermediate*, and *Proficient*.¹ Given the scope of this report, the analyses focused on the prose and quantitative literacy scales; in some sections, the analyses focused on the prose literacy scale only.

Demographic Characteristics, Educational Attainment, and Computer Literacy

Based on self-reported data on highest level of educational attainment, although nearly half of young adults ages 16–18 were still in high school and 23 percent had completed high school or high school equivalency, nearly one quarter still lacked a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Among young adults ages 19–24, some 16 percent lacked a high school diploma or a GED certificate.

Although the majority of young adults in these age cohorts reported speaking English before starting school, 11 percent of the 16–18 year olds and 16 percent of the 19–24 year olds reported speaking a non-English language before starting school. Among the latter, 16 percent first learned to speak English after the age of 16, and nearly one quarter did not speak English at all.

The vast majority (92 percent) of young adults ages 16–18 had at least some computer literacy. A higher percentage

Footnote

¹ For an interpretation of the literacy scales and performance levels on the NAAL assessment, see Kutner, M., E. Greenberg, Y. Jin, B. Boyle, Y. Hsu, and E. Dunleavy. 2007. *Literacy in Everyday Life: Results From the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NCES 2007-48). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

of young adults ages 19–24 (20 percent) lacked computer literacy compared with the younger age group.

Employment, Earnings, and Job Training

Seventy-two percent of young adults ages 19–24 were employed full or part time at the time of the assessment compared with 12 percent who were unemployed and 16 percent who were out of the labor force. Forty-four percent of young adults ages 16–18 were out of the labor force. The out-of-the-labor-force group included individuals who were classified as neither employed nor unemployed. They included students, persons keeping house, persons who were disabled, and those who did not wish to work at the time of the assessment for other reasons.

Of all employed young adults ages 16–18, nearly half held jobs in *Service* occupations and another 20 percent in *Sales* and related occupations. Similarly, the occupations of the employed 19–24 year olds were concentrated in *Service, Sales and related, and Office/Administrative support*.

Data on weekly earnings at the time of the assessment were also available for young adults who were employed full time. Of young adults ages 16–18, nearly half earned less than \$300 weekly. Of the 19–24 age group, 21 percent earned less than \$300 weekly, and 41 percent earned between \$300 and \$499. In general, young adults ages 19–24 earned more weekly than the younger age group.

The NAAL respondents were asked whether, during the previous year, they had participated in any training or education to help improve their job performance, get a promotion, or get a job. Thirty-one percent of the young adults ages 16–18 and nearly half of those ages 19–24 had participated in some type of job training.

School Involvement, Public Assistance Participation, and Voting

Among adults ages 19–24, less than a quarter had one or more children. Parents of school-age children were asked

whether they had been involved in their children's schools during the previous year in any of the following ways:

- Volunteered to help out at the school, including in the classroom, on a field trip, or at a school event such as a party or school fair
- Gone to a parent-teacher or other type of meeting at the school
- Spoken individually with a teacher to see how their children were doing in school
- Sent food or other items to share in the classroom

Among the 19–24 year olds who had school-age children, 63 percent reported doing three or four activities during the past year.

The majority of young adults in both age groups had never participated in public assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Among America's young adult citizens of voting age, 74 percent reported they voted in the 2000 presidential election.

On both the prose and the quantitative literacy scales, adults ages 16–18 had lower average scores than adults in the two older age cohorts (i.e., 19–24 and 25–64). For adults ages 19–24 and adults ages 25–64, although their average prose literacy scores were similar, their average quantitative literacy scores were different, with the older age group having higher scores than the younger age group.

The literacy scores can also be used to assign individuals to one of the four levels of literacy performance. The percentage distributions across proficiency levels on prose and quantitative scales are displayed in Figure 2 for adults in different age cohorts. On the prose literacy scale, nearly half of young adults ages 16–18 had *Below Basic* or *Basic literacy*, indicating that their literacy proficiency was quite limited. The percentages of adults having *Below Basic* or *Basic* prose literacy were lower in the two older age cohorts. On the quantitative scale, about two-thirds of young adults ages 16–18 and 57 percent of those ages 19–24 had *Below Basic* or *Basic literacy*. Both percentages were higher than those of adults ages 25–64.

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Prose and Quantitative Literacy

Of young adults who dropped out of high school, more than 30 percent had *Below Basic* prose literacy compared with 9 percent of their peers who completed high school or high school equivalency. In total, more than two-thirds of high school drop-outs had *Below Basic* or *Basic* prose literacy, whereas less than half of those with a high school diploma or a GED certificate fell into these two lowest literacy levels.

On the quantitative literacy scale, half of the young adults who dropped out of high school had *Below Basic* literacy, which was also higher than the percentage of those having a high school diploma or a GED certificate.

Similar to the findings in the previous section, among dropped-out young adults having *Below Basic* and *Basic* prose literacy, Hispanics and Blacks were over-represented compared with the general adult population. For example, over half of drop-outs ages 19–24 who had *Below Basic* and *Basic* prose literacy were Hispanics, compared with 12 percent of Hispanics in the total adult population. Nearly one-third of the drop-outs ages 19–24 who had *Below Basic* and *Basic* prose literacy had less than 9 years of schooling, and 61 percent demonstrated a lack of computer literacy.

Characteristics Most Associated With Low Prose Literacy of Young Adults

To identify characteristics most associated with the low prose literacy of America's young adults, we conducted multivariate analyses. Such analyses allowed us to disentangle differences in the characteristics among young adults with *Below Basic*, *Basic*, and *Above Basic* (i.e., *Intermediate and Proficient*) prose literacy.

In general, among the factors investigated, lacking a high school diploma or a GED certificate, lacking computer literacy, and not speaking English before starting school were found to increase the likelihood that young adults had low prose literacy.

For example, young adults lacking a high school diploma or a GED certificate were four times more likely than those having received postsecondary education to have *Below Basic* relative to *Above Basic* prose literacy.

Young adults having at least some computer literacy were only half as likely as those who were not computer literate to have *Below Basic* literacy relative to *Above Basic* literacy. Young adults who spoke a non-Spanish foreign language before starting school were over three times more likely than their native English-speaking counterparts to have *Below Basic* literacy relative to *Above Basic* literacy.

Results also showed that Black young adults were nearly twice as likely as White young adults to have *Below Basic* literacy relative to *Above Basic* literacy.

Summary

This report, based on the 2003 NAAL assessment data, examines the characteristics and literacy proficiency of America's young adults ages 16–18 and 19–24. The key findings in this report are as follows:

- The most frequently held jobs among young adults were in *Service* and *Sales and related* industries.
- The vast majority (92 percent) of young adults ages 16–18 had at least some computer literacy. The percentage among adults ages 19–24 was lower (80 percent).
- Young adults who did not have a high school diploma or a GED certificate, lacked computer literacy, and did not speak English before starting school were more likely to have low prose literacy.

Visit U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration at <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research>

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12 Restructuring ABE and ASE Programs

Continued from page 1

Part of the restructuring process involved reviewing the classes that we offered and the schedule. In Basic Language Arts, two teachers (Jennifer Rodriguez and Chris McGraw) taught the entire reading/writing curriculum. Both teachers believed this led to overlapping in teaching the standards. We decided that we would have teachers specialize in subject matter. We broke our Basic Language Arts curriculum into two distinct classes—reading/vocabulary and writing/grammar—and assigned one teacher to each class. We also added a math class with a new teacher, Sean Caruana. All classes are teacher directed through whole-class and small-group instruction.

We created a schedule that resembles a high school model. Students rotate through the ABE Academy from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Monday–Friday, and spend 90 minutes in each subject: reading/vocabulary, writing/grammar, and math. Teachers focus on their specialty, and students receive a well-rounded basic skills curriculum.

This led to the challenge of scheduling. Counselor Hank Austin helped to create a rotation of levels so that reading and writing could be offered at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels and math could be offered from ABE beginning math to geometry. Some of the classes had to be multilevel—beginning/intermediate or intermediate/advanced hybrids—to accommodate placement and balance of class size.

Accurate pre-assessment became critical to placing students into a workable and balanced schedule. In addition to our use of the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) (M Level), teachers created a writing/grammar assessment and a math assessment based on our ABE and ASE curriculum. We worked with ASE teachers and asked them, “What do students need to know to hit the ground running in high school/GED classes?” They helped us with input about pre-assessment and the exit assessment for passing students from ABE to ASE.

Teachers ordered materials from a resource teacher, Lisa Diaz-Lopez, to help them with the “new” classes, and the bell schedule for the entire school’s morning session was modified to help promote the new ABE schedule. The classes enroll approximately 24–26 students. Additionally, we asked students to sign a contract to participate in the academy, since we closed all classes to new enrollment after the third week. This contract sets out expectations for attendance and progress. We also have a guidance counselor who knows all of the students and monitors their progress to make sure that their attendance and work meets expectations.

Adult Secondary Education Program Changes

After we set the ABE schedule and restructured the curriculum, we concentrated on the high school/GED program. For ELA, we brought back a whole-class instructional model, instead of using only a lab setting. Because the majority of students were second language learners, the teachers felt that students would experience greater success with this model. Students go through the standards with the teacher, Jill Tucker, who drives instruction (instead of a study packet) and realigns the syllabus as needed to accommodate student progress. Although we still have individualized labs, the ELA class helps students to get through the rigorous curriculum in their second language.

CAHSEE Preparation Changes

Next, we addressed the passing rate on the CAHSEE. We believed that the restructured ABE/ASE curriculum would yield good results, but other factors played into our challenge. Ninth- and twelfth-grade students in the district’s high schools were having a lot of success at passing the CAHSEE. The young adults who did not pass the CAHSEE in high school came to San Ysidro Adult School with learning or language challenges. To make them successful at our school, we implemented several strategies. First, we began to offer an afternoon class specifically to review the CAHSEE. This class is coordinated with our academy’s schedule and also serves non-graduated seniors who have enrolled at the community college but still want to pass the CAHSEE. They were able to make it to an afternoon class to prepare for the test. Second, students who wanted to take the CAHSEE at our school were strongly encouraged to attend classes regularly and productively. Our counselor met with all of these students to help them understand that the result would not change unless the approach changed. Third, we began to utilize “Stepping into Your Future” (<http://cahseesteps.net/>), a free online CAHSEE preparation program that was developed by California community colleges to individualize students’ skill tutoring sessions.

Mr. McGraw was trained to conduct the online instruction program, and we added computer work stations to the classroom. Mr. McGraw and Ms. Diaz-Lopez developed the curriculum, which uses both small-group instruction and technology time so that students can learn and reinforce the standards that they have yet to master.

Results

Results have been great, and the young adult learners are passing the CAHSEE. As they cycle through, we are sending them on to ASE classes. The ABE Academy has become our “bridge” program.

ABE. The academy has been a huge success. Enrollment is high, and attendance is excellent. Teachers love the managed enrollment, and the young adult and adult students are getting through the curriculum faster. The transition rate from ABE to ASE has gone up, and many students who did not plan in the beginning to get a diploma or take the GED are now focused on graduating and going on to community college. The program has also realized an infusion of students from our Career Technical Education (CTE) program. Students who wish to enroll in our Medical Assistant or Medical Insurance Billing/Coding programs must meet a minimum reading level to take those classes. Students who do not meet the minimum requirements for reading are enrolled in ABE classes to increase their skills. Those students may be concurrently enrolled in their prerequisite medical classes (e.g., healthcare essentials) as long as their attendance and progress in ABE remain steady.

ASE. Students are passing ELA classes at a higher rate and gaining credits faster. Math students are placed in ABE math classes and receive valuable teacher-directed instruction. Classes have waiting lists, and students are meeting regularly with career and guidance counselors on campus to plan for graduation and financial aid as they look forward to college enrollment.

CAHSEE. Our passing rates are up. For the November 2010 results, ASE students passed the CAHSEE at 50 percent in ELA and 69 percent in math. Our advanced ABE students also take the CAHSEE to help them get comfortable with the test and get them focused on the goal of graduation. The November 2010 ABE pass rates on the CAHSEE were 31 percent in ELA and 71 percent in math. The afternoon CAHSEE class continues to have high enrollment, and students are continually preparing for future administrations of the CAHSEE.

While the graduation rate is still not as high as in previous years, we are seeing an increase. Our classes are full, and students are completing their credits. In 2010, we awarded 25 diplomas.

While our graduation rate has not reached its numbers from 2005, we saw an increase during the first year of our restructuring and hope to continue that pattern this year. Our students’ success with CAHSEE is up, and our lecture/technology class hybrid is full every day. Our “bridges” for students transitioning from ESL to ABE to ASE are firmly set, and students are placed in programs and levels with precision. We are still asking questions, mostly about fine-tuning, and we are still making changes as we see the need to adjust. But we feel that we are well on the way to success with our improvements and that the benefits of gains by our students make all of our hard work worth it.

The deep change experience was a little scary at times (one teacher asked me if we were making it up as we went along—to which I replied, “Yes!”), and change does not happen easily. But at a time when adult education in California is challenged to demonstrate its relevancy and effectiveness, we must (a) analyze the problems and come up with solutions that fit the needs and (b) bravely embrace change that leads to improvement. Sometimes, you just have to ask the right questions.

Visit Sweetwater Union High School District at <http://www.suhsd.k12.ca.us/sya/>

Calendar of Events

2011

CAEAA State Conference
January 27-28, Long Beach
<http://www.caeaa.org>

CATESOL State Conference
April 7-10, Long Beach
<http://www.catesol.org>

CCAEC/COABE National Conference
April 17-21, San Francisco
<http://www.ccaecoabe2011.com>

CASAS Summer Institute
June 14-16, San Diego
<http://www.casas.org/si>

Highlights of CALPRO Activities

by Catherine Green, Jacques LaCour, and Amy Park, CALPRO

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Communities of Practice

If our ultimate collective goal in adult education is great learning outcomes for students, what can we do better or differently in the world of professional development to move the field closer to the goal? CALPRO's Communities of Practice (CoP) initiative addresses the question by increasing the focus on *implementation and skillful practice* of new instructional strategies, supported by participants' exchange of targeted feedback and resources to expedite the transfer of learning from the training room to the classroom.

CoP participants use the Internet—typically a Moodle site dedicated to their group's training experience—for learning and communication before, between, and after their face-to-face training sessions. The online activities allow participants to get to know each other, learn about each others' students, share successes and challenges in implementing new skills, and provide guidance and instructional materials to each other in ways that facilitate implementation.

CALPRO has recently begun piloting the CoP approach on four modules: *Evidence-Based Reading Instruction*, *Integrated and Contextualized Workforce Skills in the ABE/ASE Classroom*, *Integrated and Contextualized Workforce Skills in the ESL Classroom*, and *Postsecondary Transitions* (see next column for details). The initial feedback is very encouraging—participants are reporting that the CoP experience represents clear progress over training approaches that are more one-dimensional (i.e., exclusively online or exclusively in person) and that the collective focus on practical application of new skills has a positive impact on individuals' readiness and willingness to use new skills in the classroom. By keeping a constant eye on students' responses to implementation and reporting those responses to CoP colleagues, participants can analyze more effectively what works and what doesn't work in the classroom and adjust instruction accordingly.

Educators need feedback, inspiration, and ongoing support to carry out the work of using new skills, and our CoP approach addresses those very needs. CoPs are an important development in our continuous improvement approach to professional development, and more and more of CALPRO's offerings will be offered in CoP mode.

Evidence-Based Reading Instruction Institute

In January, CALPRO launched its first CoP pilot on the topic of evidence-based reading instruction for agencies in the greater Los Angeles area. Teachers and administrators from 11 schools (including Hacienda La Puente, Paramount, Simi Valley, and eight Los Angeles Unified School District sites) are participating in the online activities and five face-to-face sessions. Author and trainer Elizabeth Griffin and CALPRO research analyst Amy Park are co-facilitating the CoP on assessment and instructional techniques in the four components of reading: alphabets, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

New Professional Development Module

CALPRO is working with three authors and facilitators—Kathleen Porter of Poway Adult School, Sylvia Ramirez of MiraCosta College, and Elizabeth O'Shea-West of Vista Adult School—to develop a new professional development module on postsecondary transitions. The module is intended for teams of an administrator, instructor, and counselor to develop a bridge program in support of students' successful transitions to college and/or career training programs. CALPRO will pilot the CoP on this module topic in March and will train additional facilitators at the Training-of-Trainers' Institute in June.

Face-to-Face Workshops

CALPRO is collaborating with agencies across the state to offer more than 30 face-to-face sessions. The most popular topic this year has been integrated and contextualized workforce skills. Participants can register for regional workshops online by using the *Event Calendar* at <http://www.calpro-online.org>. Administrators planning next year's professional development can contact CALPRO to host a regional workshop on a topic relevant to their students' goals and staff needs. For details, visit <http://www.calpro-online.org/documents/HostRegionalWorkshops.pdf>.

Training-of-Trainers' (ToT) Institute

CALPRO will offer its annual Training-of-Trainers' Institute on June 28–29, 2011. Sessions will focus on the CoP initiative and facilitating the CoP experience.

Administrators can nominate staff to become a CALPRO CoP facilitator on either postsecondary transitions or evidence-based reading instruction. Nomination forms will be available at <http://www.calpro-online.org>.

Online Professional Development: Expanding Access for Adult Educators

Throughout 2010-11, CALPRO has continued to harness new technologies effectively to expand adult educators' access to research-based professional development on a variety of priority topics. As the online initiative's updated home page, <http://www.calpro-online.org/onlineCourses.asp>, graphically depicts, this array of online options now includes a wider variety of options: 18 facilitated, asynchronous courses; 10 facilitated, synchronous workshops (online training in real time); two Virtual Workrooms and associated electronic Communities of Practice; four self-directed online courses; three series of Webinars; as well as an updated instructor's competencies self-assessment and individual professional development plan.

Workforce readiness of adult learners—a high-priority topic of both the federal Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the California Department of Education, Adult Education Office—has been the focus of many new online products and services CALPRO has developed this year. For example, from its face-to-face training module on integrated and contextualized workforce skills, CALPRO created two asynchronous courses, each lasting 4 weeks—one for ABE/ASE instructors, the other for ESL instructors. Within a given week, participants log in when convenient to read and write comments in shared discussion boards. Participants can also talk to each other in real time through two live Webinars. First piloted in winter 2011, these courses are facilitated by subject experts who guide discussions and help develop participants' awareness and implementation of new skills.

A second set of online products on workforce skills is CALPRO's facilitated, synchronous online workshops. For each session, participants interact in two 90-minute meetings and also complete application activities that support the implementation of new concepts and skills between and beyond the online meetings. Session 1 of the online workshop focuses on integrating transferable skills

and accommodates ABE/ASE and ESL instructors alike; this workshop will be piloted in spring 2011. Session 2 focuses on contextualized instructional strategies and will be piloted in May 2011, with ABE/ASE and ESL instructors, respectively.

A third online option addressing workforce skills is CALPRO's newest Virtual Workroom for Adult Educators and an associated electronic Community of Practice (e-CoP). The e-CoP's mission is to expand the professional knowledge, share and create resources, and solve problems inherent in preparing adult learners to be successful in the workplace. This mission is accomplished through interaction with the research-based resources in CALPRO's Virtual Workroom and through the exchange of practitioner wisdom in the e-CoP. For more information, visit <http://www.calpro-online.org/virtualworkrooms.asp>.

Another new online product developed this year is CALPRO's self-directed course on *Learner Persistence*. This course is a great companion to CALPRO's self-directed course, *Learner Goal Setting in Adult Education Programs*. Adult educators may access self-directed courses whenever convenient, and registration and additional details are available at <http://www.calpro-online.org/selfdirectedcourses.asp>.

Finally, CALPRO has updated its Instructor Competency Self-Assessment, as described at <http://www.calpro-online.org/competencies/instructorselfassessment.asp>. The online tools allow teachers to rate themselves in 31 competencies, determining areas of greatest relevance to their teaching, priority, and skill ability. An instructor may view his/her own results and identify the top five professional development competencies. For these top-ranking competencies, instructors can also access specific recommendations for research-based professional development resources that form the basis of an annual, individual professional development plan. In 2011-12, CALPRO plans to update a similar online tool, the Administrator Competencies Self-Assessment.

Visit CALPRO at <http://www.calpro-online.org>



writing, the adult education commentary has been reviewed, and the draft is being edited. Next steps will include posting the draft for public review and State Board approval later this year.

The Adult Education Office is currently engaged in a process of examining the workforce and education transition initiatives of other states. During these challenging times, we can learn from the best thinking and best practices of programs across the nation. The work that we do continues to evolve to meet the growing needs of our students. The Adult Education Office staff wants you to know two things: (1) We recognize your commitment and hard work in building a future for adult students, and (2) we are committed to building a sustainable adult education program to support your work.

I find daily inspiration in a quote by Michelle Obama: "All of us are driven by a simple belief that the world as it is just won't do—that we have an obligation to fight for the world as it should be." Together, we will continue to change our world, one student at a time.

CALPRO is a state leadership project of the California Department of Education (CDE), Adult Education Office, <http://www.cde.ca.gov>. The CDE contracts with the American Institutes for Research, <http://www.air.org>, to fund CALPRO activities.

The *CALPROgress* periodical is published twice a year and features issues related to adult education and literacy. It contains news about local programs in California and CALPRO services that support professional development to enhance adult learning.

CALPRO invites readers to send their articles related to professional development in adult education and literacy to Amy Park at apark@air.org.

Read *CALPROgress* online at <http://www.calpro-online.org>.

Ronna Magy Meet a CALPRO Facilitator

Ronna Magy has nearly three decades of experience as an adult ESL teacher, teacher trainer, staff development specialist, textbook author, series consultant, and conference presenter. Throughout her teaching career, Ronna taught ESL, VESL, ABE and Citizenship classes. She also taught a series of ESL Methods classes at UCLA Extension.

While working with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in the Division of Adult and Career Education Central Office, Ronna collaborated with Adult ESL/CBET staff on building the LAUSD ESL instructional program. She planned and implemented the ESL Site-Based Professional Development Project, ESL Professional Development Series, New Teacher Orientation, Mini-Conferences, School-Site Workshops, and STELLAR Speaker Series. She trained both new and experienced teachers in lesson planning, learner persistence and goal setting, cooperative learning, and working with textbooks.

Ronna also planned and implemented the CALPRO Site-Based Professional Development and Learner Persistence Study Circles, and she facilitated CALPRO trainings on teacher mentoring. In 2010, Ronna co-authored and trained presenters on the multisession CALPRO module, *Integrated and Contextualized Workforce Skills in the ESL Classroom*. She co-presented a CALPRO Instructors Forum Webinar on Contextualizing Workforce Skills in the ESL Classroom in fall 2010. This spring, she will take on a new role of facilitating the Community of Practice version of this module.