

# Connecticut State Department of Education



2006-2007

## Annual Narrative Report

Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and  
Adult Education  
Division of Family and Student Support Services  
25 Industrial Park Road  
Middletown, CT 06457

## **Introduction**

Connecticut is a state of contrast. Boasting one of the highest per capita incomes in the nation, our state still struggles with an inequitable distribution of resources and pockets of poverty in many of its cities and towns. The contrast between the “haves” and the “have nots” presents a challenging landscape within which local school districts are required to provide adult education services.

- ▶ With an ever increasing immigrant population, adult education programs have demonstrated the capacity and expertise to assist these individuals with their English language acquisition needs.
- ▶ In response to the significant skills gaps between adult education program graduates and post-secondary institutions, adult education programs have been proactive in developing strong partnerships with local community colleges to support the successful transition of adult education graduates.
- ▶ With nearly twenty percent (20%) of Connecticut’s citizens lacking a high school diploma and an employer community requiring more and more technical skills of its incumbent workers, adult education programs are connected to the workplace needs in their regions and are offering high-quality services to employers while helping their adult residents increase their skill levels and their opportunities for success on the job.
- ▶ In response to an unacceptable number of children who cannot read with proficiency by third grade, adult education programs have forged collaborations with local schools to encourage family engagement in children’s learning through strong school-family partnerships.

By keeping the needs of students, families, communities and employers in the forefront, local school districts have succeeded in enhancing the skills of Connecticut’s adult education students, have helped to close the skills gap in the workplace, have assisted non-English speakers to obtain fluency, and have influenced the achievement of family literacy objectives. The financial resources provided by Federal grants through Title II of the Workforce Investment Act have allowed programs to supplement ongoing programming for adults and families in the State of Connecticut and to do so with thoughtfulness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In addition, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is forging new partnerships with the Department of Banking, the Connecticut Health Foundation and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to bring more resources toward critical adult education endeavors such as financial literacy, health literacy, and increased ESL services.

The following responses are offered as part of the CSDE's Federal End of the Year Report for Fiscal Year 2006-07.

**1. Describe successful activities, programs, and projects supported with State Leadership funds and describe the extent to which these activities, programs, and projects were successful in implementing the goals of the State Plan.**

The CSDE delivers a majority of its state leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN), a program of the Capitol Region Education Council. During 2006-07, ATDN continued its leadership role in statewide capacity building and technical assistance by providing an array of services for practitioners and administrators of adult education programs in Connecticut.

The CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of Connecticut's State Plan and consists of three distinct components:

1. Professional Development Basics;
2. Site-based Professional Development; and
3. Stipends for project-specific professional development activities.

During the last four years, stipend projects and site based professional development initiatives have enabled local programs to access funds for special projects and take charge of local professional development needs. The results have been gratifying as they have served as an indicator of local leadership and creative thinking. ATDN staff have monitored the projects and coordinated the dissemination of results.

The expert ATDN staff facilitates cross-program sharing and development. ATDN's role in coordinating a statewide network of program facilitators is a prime example. This network of lead practitioners provides programs with links to best practices, opportunities for cross program sharing and an awareness of regional and national issues.

ATDN has created a cadre of local trainers as adjunct faculty to assist with specific content expertise. These individuals have been of great assistance in the statewide development of training in reading, writing and math. Since these individuals are drawn from the field, they also have local credibility.

**Professional development highlights for 2006-07**

- 1075 professionals attended 54 ATDN preplanned training events. An additional 44 sessions were conducted based on requests from the field. Topics included: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) based Connecticut Competency System (CCS) training; instruction in reading, math, English as a second language and civics education; writing; External Diploma Program (EDP); learning disabilities; workforce education; writing assessment; and working with young adult learners.
- The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Learning Disabilities Conference attracted 185 attendees.

- The Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) federal reading initiative continued successful implementation within three local districts with 16 workshops on evidenced-based reading instruction. Four certificates of completion were awarded to teachers who had completed the entire instructional series during 2006-07, the first year of the STAR Reading Institute. Participating teachers have reported that the intensive training has begun to impact reading instruction in their classrooms.
- *Writing Matters* in Connecticut connects assessment to instruction by utilizing research-based writing instruction and teaching methodologies appropriate for adult students. This initiative provided instructional resources and professional development opportunities specifically focused on writing instruction to strengthen students' skills and abilities to express themselves. During the course of the year, approximately 400 teachers attended *Writing Matters* workshops.
- The Adult Mathematics Institute provided adult education teachers with a continuum of professional development activities which afford them the necessary tools, resources and strategies for use with learners in their classroom and provided them with the necessary information to recognize, assess, and remediate the areas of mathematics where their students are having the most difficulty.
- ATDN sponsored workshops received positive evaluations with 80% rated a six on a six point scale with six being the best rating possible.
- ATDN's Scoring Service, for the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment, scored over 2,100 standardized pre-post writing samples on behalf of local adult education programs. Intensive and ongoing training ensured the maintenance of the scoring service's accuracy.
- ATDN partnered with the CSDE to support a joint workforce development capacity building initiative with the staff of twenty five local adult education programs and twelve community colleges.
- Several successful extended professional development events were held: an ESL marketplace; Connecticut Competency System Institute; math institute; writing workshop; Workforce Education Model training; and a Family Learning Curriculum Connections seminar drew varied audiences of practitioners from numerous programs.
- ATDN's work in the coordination of the statewide External Diploma Program (EDP) is noteworthy with staff also providing national leadership and training for the EDP program.
- ATDN staff provided assistance to Capital Workforce Partners (North Central Connecticut's workforce development board) in the development of a new youth competency assessment process which can be easily replicated statewide. A checklist

- ATDN staff served on the Board of Directors of the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC), the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), the CASAS National Consortium, the National External Diploma Program Council (NEDPC) and the Connecticut Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (CTTESOL).

**2. *Describe any significant findings from the eligible Agency’s evaluation of the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the core indicators of performance.***

In FY 2006-07, learner performance as presented in Table 4B (those with pre-post-tests) of the National Reporting System (NRS) was greater for all the NRS levels when compared to FY 2005-06. The numerous efforts by the CSDE and local programs to improve the quality of reading, writing, math and ESL instruction are clearly making a difference.

The performance of learners at the ESL Beginning Literacy level in NRS Table 4 was substantially greater (eight percent) than in the previous year. Similar improvements were noted at the ESL Beginning level which likely resulted from the NRS policy to split that level into two: ESL Beginning Low and ESL Beginning High.

Lack of improvement at the ESL Advanced level remains a cause for concern. The CSDE has long recommended that for learners with advanced listening abilities the focus of instruction and assessment should incorporate reading and writing competencies. An analysis of NRS data revealed that a majority of learners at the upper levels were being assessed through listening comprehension assessments and demonstrated little gain. Therefore, the CSDE published a research brief and concluded that “a greater emphasis on competency-based reading/writing instruction and assessment at the higher levels of ESL might serve the broader needs of the ESL learners, while also documenting the outcomes those learners are achieving in adult education programs.” This brief has been presented to Program Facilitators who serve as the local coordinators in matters of NRS assessment and accountability.

The number of persons with goals to either “Earn a Diploma” or “Enter or Retain Employment” has increased substantially. Programs are being trained to see that engaging students around their goals for participating in adult education can serve as motivators for persistence. Overall, performance on these follow-up measures has remained consistent.

The CSDE analyzed NRS data and presented local programs with some of the following suggestions to improve CCS implementation and measure learning gains accurately:

- administer pre-tests early;
- select next tests based on learner ability and CSDE policy;
- maximize instructional hours in ESL to achieve greater learning gains; and
- utilize CASAS assessment results as a guide to GED performance.

The CSDE continues to utilize daily/monthly attendance and longitudinal participation information to establish learner exit status and exit date for follow-up purposes. This methodology is also used to report the *numbers who separated before completing the level* in NRS Core Tables 4 and 4B. Consequently, the number of students in that column remains high in FY 2006-07.

- 3. Describe how the Eligible Agency has supported the integration of activities sponsored under Title II with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Include a description of how the eligible agency is being represented on the local Workforce Investment Boards, adult education's involvement on the State Workforce Investment Board, the provision of core and other services through the system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the delivery system.***

Connecticut adult education providers have designed programs to serve individuals with multiple barriers to education, which have assisted students in their transition to employment, training, or continued education. Providers have continued to effectively recruit educationally and economically disadvantaged youth and adults. Two thirds of all adult education participants reside in urban and/or priority school districts. Classrooms and instructional activities have been enhanced by technology and research-based methodologies to facilitate the learning process. Collaborative relationships have been developed both within the CSDE, with other state agencies and the workforce development system to greatly expand educational, support and training services to the target populations in the state (e.g. adult family members of children enrolled in School Readiness, Head Start, family resource centers, as well as those individuals served by the Department of Social Services, community and faith based organizations and workforce investment boards). CSDE staff also work closely with regional literacy councils to strengthen the connections between CSDE funded adult education programs and other literacy related programs in the community.

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

As part of an ongoing collaboration, the CSDE has continued to ensure that its needs assessment process aligns with the service delivery goals and objectives of each Workforce Investment Board (WIB) as a means of enhancing adult education service delivery strategies. The Commissioner of Education is a member of the Governor's Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) while the Associate Commissioner has continued to serve on the statewide Youth Committee. CSDE staff members served on all five local WIBs, Youth Councils and subcommittees. In fiscal year 2006-07, the CSDE provided direct and equitable distribution of financial support to all one-stop centers for a total amount of \$236,577. Staff also served as active members of CETC's Performance Accountability and Workforce committees.

Memoranda of Understanding are in place with each area WIB regarding the roles and responsibilities of adult education as its partner. The CSDE has provided all one-stop centers with CASAS appraisals of customers' literacy skills, and computer based CASAS

assessments. CSDE staff provided formal training sessions to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth managers at the WIBs and welfare case-managers at the one-stop centers.

The CSDE continues to work closely with the Connecticut Department of Labor and members of the workforce investment boards to assist them in responding to the *common reporting measures* now required for youth in WIA programs. Both education and labor continue to speak with one voice when it comes to competency-based instruction, standardized assessment, and reporting.

Several adult education programs collaborated with their WIB to provide intensive and integrated vocational and basic skills education to individuals receiving public assistance.

### **Workforce Coordinating Committee**

The CSDE continues to convene a statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee (WCC) bringing together adult education directors; community colleges; workforce investment boards; the Departments of Economic and Community Development, Labor, and Social Services; and the Office for Workforce Competitiveness to foster coordinated user-friendly systems that respond to employer needs within each WIB region of Connecticut. During FY 2006-07, the committee met regularly to work on issues of service provision, funding, marketing and program inventory. Each service delivery area (SDA) has also been holding on-going regional workforce coordination meetings that include adult education, workforce investment boards and community colleges to establish service delivery strategies to better serve the training and education needs of the business community. All partners were trained through ATDN in the Workforce Education Model, a comprehensive system for needs assessment, curriculum customization, marketing, and accountability. A recent example of this collaboration is the Department of Labor's allocation of \$150,000 to pilot the collaborative model created by the WCC to connect basic skills with occupational training in the workplace. The CSDE continued its support of adult education programs through the *Adult Education at Work* network.

### **Federally- Funded Program Improvement Grants**

In fiscal year 2006-07, the CSDE continued existing WIA Title II grants as long as they reflected strong performance. Eligible providers were required to demonstrate past program effectiveness; classes of sufficient intensity and duration; measurable student outcomes; the use of computer technology; coordination of services with local schools, colleges, one-stop centers, job-training programs and social-service agencies; flexible program schedules and provision of support services; and an information management system capable of reporting student outcomes and monitoring program performance.

Eighty nine Federal Program Improvement Project (PIP) continuation grants were awarded to thirty four adult education providers for the improvement of educational programs and services for adults who lack the level of basic skills and literacy necessary for effective citizenship and productive employment and to build a comprehensive continuum of lifelong learning. The PIP Grants provided funding for proposals that addressed the following priority areas: family literacy services, workforce preparation, workplace education,

transition to post-secondary education and training, technology, English language acquisition and virtual high school.

Notable program accomplishments included:

- Achievement of significant mean gains and solid completion rates for adult education students as demonstrated in the Connecticut Adult Report System (CARS);
- Increase in student retention;
- Increase in wages/promotions;
- Incorporation of extensive support services including transportation;
- Collaboration with WIBs to assist students with employment;
- Development of workplace education models focusing on advancing basic skills of incumbent employees;
- Strengthening of collaborations between adult education and the community college system;
- Incorporation of intergenerational literacy activities; and
- Development of electronic student portfolios and distance learning classes.

The Connecticut Adult Virtual High School increased access to learning opportunities by offering high quality mentored online credit bearing courses. Four hundred sixty enrollments were evidenced in the content courses; 338 of those enrollments (73%) completed the courses and attained credit toward the adult high school diploma.

### **Transition to Post-Secondary Education**

The CSDE continued its efforts to help high school graduates successfully transition to post secondary education. Adult education programs are bridging the “transition gap” by raising standards/expectations, partnering with higher education institutions, aligning curricula, awarding dual credit, coaching learners about their postsecondary options, and targeting instructional strategies to help them transition successfully to post-secondary education/training. Transition programs feature written agreements between the adult education provider and its post-secondary partner or partners, and a solid referral and support process.

### **Young Adult Learner Grants**

In FY 2006-07, through a \$500,000 legislative grant, the CSDE provided new and unique educational services within the Adult High School Credit Diploma program (AHSCDP) to 225 young adult learners in nine school districts. Services included student internships, Saturday academies, articulated agreements with Community Colleges, collaborations with WIBs, senior projects and careers exploration. Program participants achieved outcomes (i.e. persistence, credit attainment, educational gain, and graduation) at rates greater than those of other learners in the AHSCDP. As a result of these achievements, seven of the nine programs are participating in an NELRC project on learner persistence in adult education during FY 08.

### **Developing Tomorrow's Professionals (DTP)**

Developing Tomorrow's Professionals (DTP) is a carefully constructed program of training, assessment, and support services designed to address the needs of young men of color (black and Latino), providing year round overlapping mentoring, academic skill set training, university linkage, and technology training as it relates to academic performance and assessment. The DTP is designed to create, improve and sustain a student approach to learning, college matriculation, and career opportunities.

### **Even Start and Family Learning Curriculum Connections**

The alignment of adult education with Even Start Family Literacy has proven to be an effective method for increasing a family's literacy skills and has provided a successful model for other family literacy initiatives. The CSDE has continued support of a Family Learning Curriculum Connections project that encourages family engagement in children's learning by strengthening school-family partnerships and building unique collaborations between adult education programs and elementary schools, specifically targeting families of children in kindergarten and first through third grades. This project resulted in take-home activities that were aligned with the Connecticut Reading and Language Arts standards and CASAS competencies.

#### ***4. Describe successful activities and services supported with EL Civics funds including the number of programs receiving EL Civics grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.***

The State Department of Education distributed EL/Civics funds through a continuation grant of an original competitive request for proposal (RFP) to twenty-one adult education providers throughout Connecticut. This past year, grantees provided effective educational services to immigrants and other limited English proficient individuals so that they might effectively participate in the education, work and civic opportunities of this country. EL/Civics funds provide the flexibility to either integrate services within existing English literacy programs or to create new services.

Many programs are challenged by the sheer number of students needing English language services. Nearly 50% of Connecticut adult education enrollees have limited English proficiency. Having access to EL/Civics dollars assures that additional students can be served and waiting lists reduced. For the most part, Connecticut immigrants are working at low-wage jobs with little hope for advancement. Providing an opportunity for English language acquisition can assist in successful assimilation within their communities and can enhance the economic development of the cities in which they live.

This past program year, nearly 2,800 individuals were involved in EL/Civics activities in citizenship and English as a second language classes. Specific program activities and outcomes directly related to the use of these funds included the following:

- notable increases in students' mean gains as demonstrated in program year-end reports;
- retention rates increased in both day and evening adult education programs;
- knowledge gained of current events and the U.S. Constitution;

- cross cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent projects were incorporated into ESL and citizenship classes;
- knowledge gained of the American education system with special focus on addressing needs of families new to the U.S. school system;
- student writing skills were enhanced through the creation of opinion essays;
- ESL students became citizens and voted for the first time;
- increased competence in idiomatic speech resulted in improved communication with children's schools and other community agencies;
- increased technological skills development resulted in increased competence in the workplace;
- study skills improved and self-directed learning activities were utilized;
- participation in distance learning activities increased;
- Internet research was utilized for the application of learning activities;
- students participated in government-related field trips; and
- opportunities were created for interaction with the local community.

### **Annual Narrative Report Summary**

During fiscal year 2006-07, Connecticut expended \$42,065,675 in state, local and federal funds to serve 26,686 individuals for an average per pupil cost of \$1,576. The availability of federal funds expanded the ability of adult education programs to provide school districts, community-based organizations, family literacy centers, work sites and other entities with the opportunity to offer locally responsive programming. By augmenting state and local dollars with Federal dollars, Connecticut has been able to assist adults in achieving their educational goals, obtaining or advancing in their jobs, entering post-secondary education, and participating more fully as family and community members. Connecticut has met the challenges necessary in designing and planning programs that meet each student's need for education and self-sufficiency as well as each community's need for economic growth and stability.

The CSDE will continue to work closely with other organizations to ensure coordination of effort, increased accountability and program access to those individuals in need of adult education services in Connecticut.