



Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and
Adult Education
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Connecticut Narrative Report 2009-10

Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has successfully completed another year of implementing the goals outlined in its State Plan as mandated by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIA Title II dollars has allowed the CSDE to expand its provider network while enhancing and supporting programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective and responsive to community needs.

Seventy two organizations including school districts, volunteer programs, community and faith-based organizations and other agencies provided adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. By keeping the needs of learners, families, communities and employers in the forefront, adult education programs succeeded in improving the skills of Connecticut's learners, enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma, helping to close the skills gap in the workplace, assisting non-English speakers to learn English, easing the transition to post-secondary education, preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.

The CSDE offers the following responses as part of its Narrative Report for Fiscal Year 2009-10.

- 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). The CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of Connecticut's State Plan and consists of professional development basics and stipend based Professional Development activities.

Professional Development Basics

During fiscal year 2009-10, 1,677 practitioners attended 81 ATDN training events. Ninety-five percent of all workshop evaluations were rated five or six on a six-point scale for overall quality with one indicating poor quality and six indicating high quality. Additional sessions were conducted based on requests from

the field, both face to face, and through web conferencing for topics including English as a second language (ESL), Writing, Workforce Education and the Connecticut Competency System (CCS).

CCS training sessions were offered several times during the year to practitioners from both adult education and the workforce development community. The CCS is the CSDE's standards-based framework based on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) that connects curriculum, assessment and instruction and captures the progress made by learners in adult education. ATDN staff supports the network of CCS Program Facilitators – lead practitioners who ensure the high quality implementation of CCS – through regional networking sessions that provided local programs with updates, links to best practices, opportunities for sharing and an awareness of regional/national issues. ATDN continues to work with the CSDE to implement the statewide meetings and three Advisory Group meetings for CCS Program Facilitators. This year, ATDN cooperated with new CASAS *eTests* site implementation, a version upgrade and ongoing approvals for numbers of test administrations for approximately 10 sites along with a CASAS *eTests* User Group meeting.

The STAR federal initiative continued its successful implementation, adding two new programs and training additional teachers for several more programs. This intensive reading training introduces evidence-based reading research and provides teachers with valuable strategies in the areas of alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, as well as training in administering diagnostic assessments and differentiated instruction. Additional reading workshops were offered and twenty-three certificates of completion were awarded to teachers who completed the entire instructional series. In addition, one trainer completed the year-long process and became a STAR certified national trainer.

The Connecticut Adult Mathematics Institute (CAMI) provided adult education teachers with a continuum of professional development to help them recognize, assess and remediate the areas of mathematics where their learners are having the most difficulty. CAMI provided training on establishing an understanding of CASAS mathematics content standards and their impact on curriculum and adult mathematical knowledge development. Sessions topics included: Data and Graphing in the Basic Education and GED Classroom; The Math of Financial Literacy; Guiding Math Students with Internet Resources; and How Geometric Art Facilitates Learning. These sessions attracted over 100 attendees.

The CASAS Functional Writing Assessment training was delivered three times during 2009-10. This nine hour training is a requirement in order for programs to administer this assessment. Each provider is expected to maintain one Writing Contact Person who has completed the training. To ensure the reliable and accurate scoring of writing assessment results, ATDN offered three inter-rater reliability training sessions. Additionally, three recertification sessions were offered to enable local scorers of writing assessments to work toward renewing their certification. Sessions were offered to review both scoring and interpreting students' writing samples. These sessions attracted over 100 attendees.

ATDN's Scoring Service, for the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment, scored 2,316 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.

An asynchronous writing lab for online writing practice and feedback was designed as a supplemental reinforcement for learners enrolled in local adult education centers for intermediate/advanced ESL classes and intermediate adult basic education and GED preparation classes. The system offers students the opportunity to practice writing and receive online feedback from Connecticut certified teachers. These teachers are also certified scorers in the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment rubric and are familiar with teaching writing for the GED test.

Writing Matters in Connecticut connected assessment to a range of instructional methodologies that provided guidance to adult education teachers to improve the writing skills of their adult students. Professionals in Adult Education from state programs and in and out-of-state colleges shared their knowledge of writing through a variety of sessions. Six workshops were offered on these topics: Connecting Family and Writing; Providing Feedback on Writing to Students; the Effect of the Internet on Writing; Strategies to Guide Students to Success on Assessment; Writing Resources on the Internet; and Teaching Writing in Transition to College Programs.

ESL teachers were provided multiple professional development opportunities. A workshop was held on Teaching Vocabulary in the ESL Classroom to assist practitioners in identifying strategies and resources for ESL learners and teachers that focus on increasing/enhancing vocabulary in non-native speakers.

Two all-day professional development ESL Days provided an opportunity specifically designed for ESL and English Literacy/Civics teachers. A fall event had morning sessions on Health Education in Adult Literacy and Environmental Justice & Health Disparities in Connecticut. Afternoon sessions offered additional health and curriculum resources related to identifying action steps for healthy living and creative approaches to working within the community.

The spring event offered a morning session on Working with Beginning Literacy ESL Students, which introduced participants to strategies and activities for addressing the needs of beginning literacy students. The afternoon session Healthy Eating for Life presented nutrition focused ESL curriculum designed specifically for adult students that focused exclusively on teaching health literacy skills and basic and life skills. Since that presentation, the CSDE has partnered with the Health, Emotion and Behavior Lab at Yale University's Department of Psychology to implement this curriculum in several adult education sites throughout Connecticut.

ATDN continued its partnership with the CSDE to support a workforce development capacity building initiative to create a user-friendly system for Connecticut businesses that seeks to provide resources for current or future employees. Four Workforce Education Model sessions and three Adult Education at Work Users' Group workshops were held to strengthen this effort and to establish a collaborative network of service providers, create a compendium of curriculum resources and develop a statewide approach to marketing that could be utilized locally, regionally and statewide.

The Eighteenth Annual Learning Disabilities Conference attracted more than 285 attendees. The keynote address Psychiatric Aspects of Learning Disorders was presented by the Medical Director of Hartford Hospital's Institute of Living. Breakout sessions focused on topics including autism, returning soldier's issues, benefits of online facilitation in breaking down employment barriers, the deaf culture, identifying individuals with learning disabilities and effective transition models.

ATDN continued to provide training and technical assistance to the 25 National External Diploma Program (NEDP) sites for the high quality implementation and statewide coordination of the NEDP. Workshops included one three-day session on basic advisor/assessor training, refresher advisor/assessor training, administrative policies and practices and two evaluation workshops. The training sessions attracted approximately 200 attendees. The new NEDP center located at Capital Region Education Council (CREC) provides 35 hours of technical assistance weekly to local practitioners.

ATDN continues to expand utilization of *Go to Meeting* web conferencing to augment and supplement face to face professional development and technical assistance.

Extensive technical assistance through visitations, telephone conferences, email exchanges, regional forums, and follow-up meetings were provided by ATDN. ATDN staff and adult education staff from

several providers collaborated to conduct workshops at the annual state adult education conference organized by the Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) in March. In addition, the ATDN staff provided training at the annual CASAS Summer Institute in San Diego, California.

Stipend-based Professional Development Activities

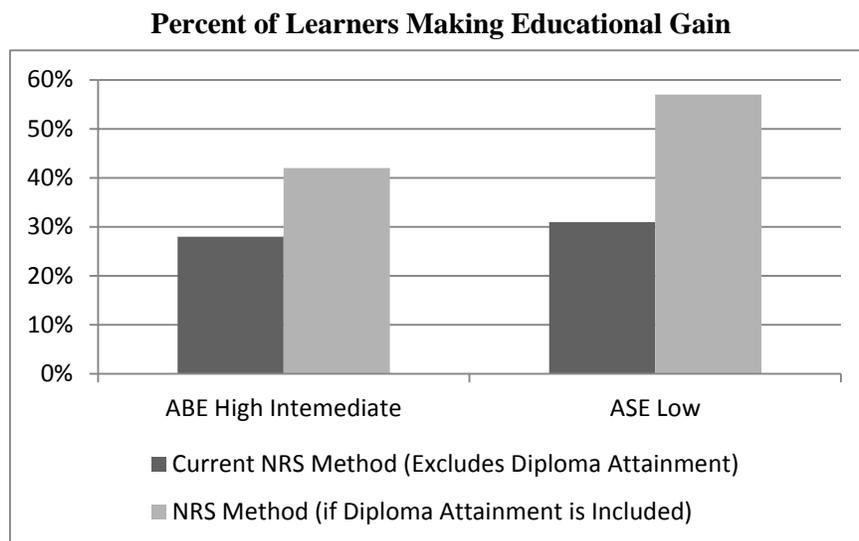
The CSDE’s stipend-based professional development initiative offered resources to 17 adult education providers in order to impact student achievement by improving the professional capabilities of teachers. Stipends were awarded to providers in four categories: Learning Disabilities, STAR, Math and English as a second language. The stipend program was created to support local districts with customized technical assistance requirements and training.

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.

Educational Gain

For the three years of 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10, the educational gain at the various National Reporting System (NRS) levels has remained relatively stable despite reductions in total state/local expenditures during the same period. This is commendable considering that state/local expenditures account for nearly 90% of all adult education expenditures in Connecticut. Furthermore, ESL performance has held steady despite declines in the post-test rate. **Overall in 2009-10, Connecticut exceeded its targets for the educational gain measure.**

The **inability to report diploma attainment as educational gain** at any level other than High Adult Secondary Education (ASE) remains a major shortcoming of the NRS. This depresses the performance in NRS Table 4, chiefly at the ABE High Intermediate and ASE Low levels. A majority of learners with math abilities in the upper range of those two levels are able to pass the GED tests, so there is limited incentive for them to take a post-test and demonstrate progress on the NRS levels. If diploma attainment were also reportable as “educational gain” at all levels within NRS Table 4, then the success rate at those two levels would be vastly greater (see figure below).



The CSDE continues to support local programs in strengthening their implementation of the CASAS standards-based approach to adult education. Assessments are administered not just to satisfy compliance to the NRS but rather because they are an integral part of the program placement, curriculum planning and instructional process. Noteworthy accomplishments in this arena include the following:

- The **Life and Work Listening** assessment series is being used increasingly among ESL programs to report progress to the NRS. Since the early part of this decade, Connecticut worked with several other states in the CASAS National Consortium to create this new listening test series. Connecticut practitioners participated in various aspects of the test development process including competency revalidation, listening content standards development and revision, item tryouts, field-testing and standard setting. Practitioner feedback to the new assessment has been positive; they appreciate having a “pure” listening test that: does not offer reading cues; reflects newer life and work competencies; and is aligned with listening content standards. Over the past couple of years, practitioners have been revamping their curriculum and instruction to ensure alignment with the new listening standards. In addition to using the results from the Life and Work Listening Assessment to guide classroom placement, teachers are using item level information regarding the competencies, content standards, and listening item types to guide instruction.
- Several Connecticut programs are implementing **CASAS eTests** to streamline the intake, assessment and placement process. The computer-adaptive locator which automatically places students into the appropriate level pre-test in reading, math and listening has been extremely advantageous because it minimizes testing time and enables the placement of students based on the pre-test score. Program staff also report a high degree of student engagement with the testing process when using CASAS eTests. Having the capability to administer the Life and Work Listening assessment through eTests has been extremely beneficial as well.

Follow up Outcomes

For the first time since the 2002-03 reporting year, the “Entered Employment” outcome for learners who exited adult education between 10/1/2008 and 9/30/2009 fell below 50%. Two factors explain this dramatic decline. First, the depressed labor market most adversely affects those with the least education or skills. Second, NRS policy was modified in March 2010 to no longer permit the reporting of job attainment while a student is enrolled in the program. Not surprisingly, for the first time since 2000-01, more learners were unemployed at entry into adult education during 2009-10, an added reflection of the dire labor market.

Surprisingly, the “Retained Employment” measure held steady; this result is likely a reflection of an economy where it may be easier to hold on to a job if already employed but much more difficult to procure a new job if unemployed.

The “Earned a diploma” and “Entered Postsecondary” measures evidenced little variation.

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 one-stop system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the one-stop delivery system.

WIA Title II funds enabled the CSDE to effectively supplement Connecticut's legislatively mandated adult education system. Adult education providers were able to offer more comprehensive and cost-effective services to their eligible residents and expand their network to offer more locally responsive programming by competing for federal funds in various priority areas. Collaborative relationships have been developed between the CSDE, local adult education providers, community colleges, other state agencies and the workforce development system to greatly expand educational, support and training services to the target populations in the state. CSDE staff and local practitioners also work closely with regional literacy councils to strengthen the connections between CSDE funded adult education programs and other literacy related programs in the community.

WIA Title II Grants

The CSDE continued to fund WIA Title II grants for those providers who met the established standards and achieved all project goals. Grants provided funding opportunities for adult education providers to offer programs and services for adults who lack the level of basic skills and literacy necessary for effective citizenship and productive employment and to build a comprehensive continuum of lifelong learning. Forty-two providers received one or more grants in the following priority areas:

- Preparing for the Twenty-first Century Workforce;
- Family Literacy;
- Nontraditional Adult Education Services;
- Expansion of the National External Diploma Program;
- Transition to Post-secondary Education and Training;
- English Language /Civics Education;
- Workplace Education; and
- The Connecticut Adult Virtual High School.

Continuation grants in all priority areas required program designs that were comprehensive and systematic in order to improve the learning experience; reach a greater number of students; increase a district's/agency's outreach and collaboration capacity; promote diversity in the delivery of instruction; and increase learning gains. Grantees coordinated their services with their Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and one-stop centers by submitting memoranda of understanding as part of their continuation application.

Overall, providers receiving WIA Title II grants demonstrated strong learner outcomes on the core indicators of performance. Some notable accomplishments included:

- Workforce preparation grantees integrated career readiness activities including career portfolios, resume workshops, computer proficiency checklists, skill certification courses and community service experiences into their adult education programming.
- Workplace programs provided adult education instruction in ESL, ABE, GED and NEDP to employees from different industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, entertainment, education and food services. Many programs solicited feedback from employers and prepared comprehensive reports on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- Grants funded within the priority of transition to post-secondary education/training helped adult education programs bridge 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 programs. Transition programs also featured written agreements between the adult education provider and its post-secondary partner(s) and a solid referral and support process.

- The Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CTAVHS) facilitated greater coordination among adult education programs and increased access to learning opportunities by offering high quality mentored online courses to learners statewide: 1,204 enrollments were evidenced in the Adult High School Credit Diploma Program (AHSCDP) credit-bearing courses; 714 were enrolled in the online GED preparation course; and 1,566 were enrolled in Orientation to Online Learning. Two algebra courses were added to the list of offerings; these courses review content that is typically assessed in college placement tests. Also, the Connecticut Legislature selected the CTAVHS for the development of a Results Based Accountability (RBA) report card.
- Expansion of the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) enabled providers to offer another high school completion option for their adult learners and/or expand the program further into their region. This expansion increased the number of NEDP sites in Connecticut from 14 to 25 while expanding four existing programs. Diplomas earned through NEDP increased from 277 in 2008-09 to 399 in 2009-10.
- The non-traditional adult education services grants promoted quality and increased accessibility to adult education programs for learners in halfway houses and in work release programs needing ABE/GED instruction.
- Family literacy projects integrated parent literacy training leading to economic self-sufficiency; age-appropriate education for children; training for parents regarding how to be the primary teachers and full partners in the education of their children; and interactive literacy activities between parents and children. Funds were used to support the adult education components in order to provide basic skills, English as a second language (ESL) and/or secondary school completion instruction in an integrated learning environment. Programs were required to use a curriculum that incorporated computer literacy into the subject matter, provided access to career and employment information and assisted participants in the development of individual career portfolios. In addition, programs provided support services and formal collaboration with family learning and support providers. Some family literacy projects aligned their efforts with Even Start, which has proven to be an effective program for increasing family literacy skills.

Of the 24 Even Start adults enrolled and exited in the AHSCDP or GED program, 11 (46 percent) received a high school diploma or equivalency. Of the 23 children headed to kindergarten who were enrolled in the program for four months or longer, 17 (74 percent) identified 10 or more alphabet letters on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) letter recognition sub assessment.

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

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. In fiscal year 2009-10, the CSDE provided direct and equitable distribution of financial support to all one-stop centers in the amount of \$236,577. Memoranda of Understanding are in place with each area WIB regarding the roles and responsibilities of adult education as its partner. The CSDE continues to provide staff of all the one-stop centers with the training, technical assistance and assessment materials necessary to utilize CASAS appraisals and computer-based CASAS testing to gauge customers' literacy skills during the intake process.

The Commissioner of Education is a member of the Governor's Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC). CETC has legislative responsibility to report to the Governor and the legislature on the outcomes of Connecticut residents. The employment outcomes achieved by adult education learners are reported alongside those from higher education and employment and training programs, thus providing greater visibility and credibility on the impact of adult education in Connecticut. On November 25, 2009, by Executive Order No. 35, Governor M. Jodi Rell directed the CETC to guide and monitor preparation of Connecticut's State Plan for Adult Education and Family Literacy.

CSDE staff members served on all five local workforce investment boards, Youth Councils and subcommittees.

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

The CSDE remains committed to strengthening connections between the adult education, the social service and workforce systems. The Design Group continued its long-standing interagency efforts with representatives from the Connecticut Departments of Labor, Social Services and Education; workforce investment boards; and one-stop center directors that focused on the delivery of Jobs First Employment Services (JFES). Teachers of adult education learners who are participating in the JFES program provided attendance verification information to the respective JFES staff. Additionally, the CSDE was integrally involved in identifying changes to help improve the client flow process. This process included examining adult education activities through on-line learning via the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School.

Through its involvement with the Supported Education Advisory Committee, a stakeholder committee of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the CSDE collaborated with Local Mental Health Authorities and DMHAS to provide adult education programs and services to those adults who experienced behavioral and mental health conditions.

Workforce Coordinating Committee

The CSDE continued to convene a statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee (WCC) bringing together adult education directors; community colleges; workforce investment boards (WIBs); the Connecticut Business and Industry Association; 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 and employee needs within each WIB region of Connecticut.

The activities of the Workforce Coordinating Committee were supported at the regional level by coordinating groups convened by each of the five workforce investment boards. The regional meetings provide a forum for exploring collaborative opportunities; refining the service delivery referral process; developing a smooth continuum between the adult education and community college systems; sharing training opportunities; and building relationships among workforce development stakeholders. Regional groups are able to respond to employer needs efficiently and effectively because of these established partnerships.

Investment and implementation of statewide workforce development efforts have been enhanced by the strong partnerships supported by the WCC and the regional coordinating groups. Some important alignments include the Connecticut Community College's SMART (manufacturing) and

SOAR(sustainable energy) grants. An adult education consultant is a member of the project advisory council for both grants.

As a result of the CSDE's collaborative efforts, a statewide STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) initiative, funded by the United States Department of Labor, provided funding to three adult education providers in 2009-2010. The goal of these efforts was to develop a bridge to STEM opportunities for adult education students. Moving forward, there is a strategy to increase the number of adult education providers involved in Connecticut's STEM effort.

These efforts are creating educational and occupational opportunities for low wage and low skilled workers, many of whom are adult education students, while piloting and institutionalizing collaborative workforce development models and forging innovative partnerships.

Federal Incentive Dollars

- **Incumbent Worker Basic Skills**

The utilization of a portion of the federal incentive dollars that came to Connecticut for meeting its performance goals were earmarked to advance the mission of the WCC to provide a continuum of workforce development services for incumbent workers and their employers by connecting basic skills education with occupational skills training through increased partnerships between adult education programs and community colleges. These funding opportunities have provided demand-driven education and training resources for businesses and their current employees. Specifically, these funds facilitated the development and integration of basic skills education and adult secondary completion programs that link participants to technical skills training for specific businesses. Particular emphasis was placed on providing more intensive instructional interventions for low-wage low-skilled incumbent workers.

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

With federal incentive dollars, the CSDE continued its support of the Developing Tomorrow's Professionals (DTP) program. Designed to address the assumptions of public education, including the removal of barriers, leading to educational engagement and achievement, the DTP has dramatically expanded its scope, serving black and Hispanic young men, ages 15-19. The construct of the DTP includes wrap-around mentoring (each young man has both an academic and a professional mentor); training in education skill-sets; critical reading, writing and thinking; etiquette; leadership; and fatherhood. The long term goal of the DTP is matriculation to, and graduation from, a four-year college/university for each young man of color.

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 English Literacy/Civics Education (EL/Civics) funds to twenty-five adult education providers. Grantees utilized the funds to improve literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy for immigrants and other limited English proficient populations and to provide contextualized instruction in civics education. More than 3,000 individuals learned about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation and U.S. history and government.

Some adult education programs integrated STAR reading strategies in the ESL classroom. Other providers worked with early childhood centers to help young children enter programs designed for early intervention while others integrated career awareness and labor market information into their curriculum in order to increase students' knowledge of community economics and potential job opportunities

A summary of additional program activities and outcomes directly related to the use of these funds include the following:

- access to vocational, educational and personal counseling;
- increases in learners' mean gains in program year-end reports;
- competence in idiomatic speech that improved communication with children's schools and other community agencies;
- knowledge of the American education system with special focus on addressing needs of families new to the U.S. school system;
- participation in distance learning activities that impacted competence in the workplace;
- multi-media approaches to increase students' literacy attainment;
- cross cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent projects; and
- opportunities for experiential learning within the local community.

EL/Civics grantees that were meeting or exceeding established standards were provided additional funds to enrich and/or expand existing EL/Civics projects. Many programs extended learning opportunities for students by lengthening the semester or adding a summer component.

State Leadership dollars were used to support training and technical assistance for EL/Civics grantees in a variety of areas including grant management, program implementation and curriculum development. Special workshops on the Census 2010 were offered statewide. Two ESL days featured presentations on health literacy, linking curriculum to the community, healthy eating and environmental justice and health disparities.

An ESL Advisory Committee was constituted to ensure excellence in English language teaching by promoting standards of excellence and acceptable practice within the profession.

Annual Narrative Report Summary

During fiscal year 2009-10 Connecticut expended \$44,322,719 in state/ local (\$38,359,272) and federal (\$5,963,447) funds to serve 28,255 individuals for an average per pupil cost of \$1,569. By augmenting state and local dollars with federal dollars, Connecticut has successfully assisted adults in achieving their educational goals, obtaining or advancing in their jobs, entering post-secondary education and participating more fully as family and community members. The CSDE will continue its good work partnering with other organizations to ensure coordination of effort, increased accountability and program access for those individuals in need of adult education services in Connecticut.