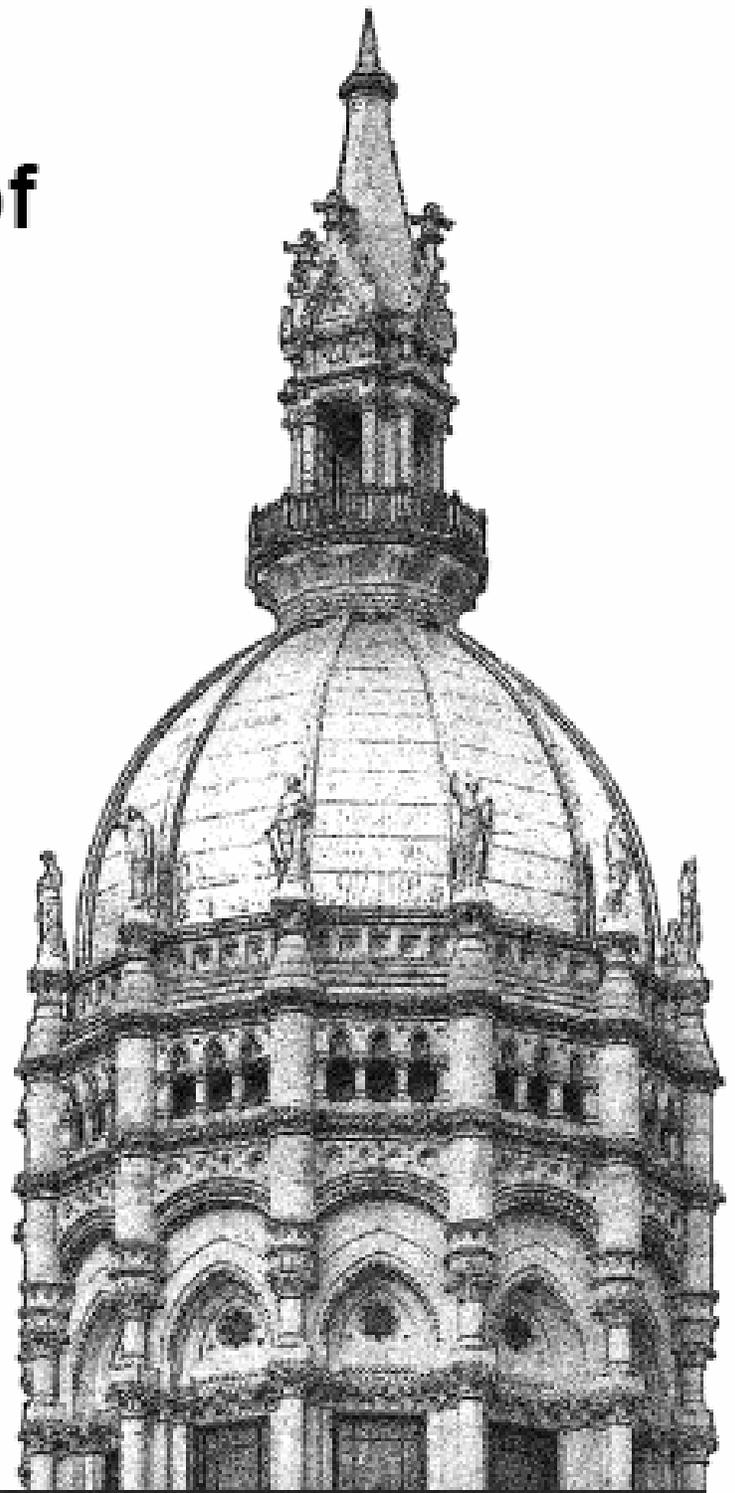


# Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs

DECEMBER 2006



**PRI**

**Legislative Program Review and  
Investigations Committee**

Connecticut General Assembly

**CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee is a joint, bipartisan, statutory committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. It was established in 1972 to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and statutory compliance of selected state agencies and programs, recommending remedies where needed. In 1975, the General Assembly expanded the committee's function to include investigations, and during the 1977 session added responsibility for "sunset" (automatic program termination) performance reviews. The committee was given authority to raise and report bills in 1985.

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW  
& INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

**Coordination of  
Adult Literacy Programs**

DECEMBER 2006

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# Table of Contents

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## COORDINATION OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Methods .....	1
Report Organization .....	2
<b>I. Overview</b> .....	5
Literacy Definitions and Needs .....	5
Major Legislative Mandates .....	8
Adult Literacy Programs .....	9
Program Providers .....	13
<b>II. Major Roles and Responsibilities</b> .....	15
Adult Education System .....	15
Workforce Investment System .....	21
Community Colleges .....	26
Statewide Coordination .....	28
<b>III. Funding</b> .....	33
Adult Education Funding .....	35
<b>IV. Adult Education Participants, Programs, and Outcomes</b> .....	41
System Population .....	41
Student Profile .....	43
Student Performance .....	46
Program Demand and Availability .....	55
<b>V. Findings and Recommendations</b> .....	59
Overall Assessment .....	59
Clear Roles and Responsibilities .....	64
Centralized Information .....	71
Shared Resources .....	74

### Appendices

- A. Agency Responses**
- Connecticut Community Colleges
  - State Department of Education
  - Connecticut Employment and Training Commission
  - State Department of Labor

# Table of Contents

---

- B. Adult Literacy Acronyms and Definitions**
- C. State and Federal Adult Literacy Laws: Major Provisions**
- D. National Reporting System and CASAS Overview**
- E. Adult Education Program Providers with Cooperating Districts**
- F. Adult Education Providers: FY 05 Enrollment and Budget**
- G. Workforce Investment Act: Provisions for Employment and Training Programs**
- H. SDE 2006-2007 Adult Education Reimbursement Percentages**
- I. State and Local Adult Education Expenditures: FY 05**
- J. Survey of Connecticut Adult Education Program Providers**
- K. Workforce Challenges Facing Connecticut**

# Executive Summary

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## Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs

In Connecticut and across the country, adult literacy is a significant issue, with serious social and economic development implications. In April 2006, at the request of the legislature's higher education and employment advancement committee, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee undertook a study of state programs aimed at improving the literacy levels of adults.

The study's primary purpose was to determine how well publicly funded literacy services for adults with academic skills below the high school level and/or limited English proficiency are coordinated. The committee review focused on assessing: the adequacy of the current service delivery system; consistency of standards and opportunities; accountability for outcomes; and the ability of the existing system to meet adult literacy needs now and in the future.

The program review study pointed out the literacy problem facing Connecticut and the nation is not the inability to read or write at all, or illiteracy in the traditional sense. Instead, today's challenge is low skill levels and a lack of the competencies necessary for success in the new, knowledge-based economy. At present, most family-supporting jobs, particularly in the Connecticut, require at least a high school diploma; adults will need increasingly higher reading, writing, math, and technology skill levels to function effectively at work, in the family and in their communities.

At the same time, the main sources of new workers, particularly in the Northeast, will be immigrants, disadvantaged youth, and nontraditional employee groups such as person with disabilities or former public assistance recipients. These are populations that tend to have limited literacy skills and/or English proficiency and little or no computer experience.

State-supported programs aimed at improving the basic academic and English language skills of adults are critical for maintaining a competitive, qualified workforce. Just as important, effective adult literacy programs will remain a major way to improve the ability of individuals to be self-sufficient and active citizens, as well as parents who can help their children succeed in school.

There are a number of adult literacy providers as well as a range of programs in the state, including but not limited to: local school district adult education courses; basic skills instruction provided in the workplace; remedial education classes at community colleges; and family literacy services as well as one-on-one tutoring offered by public libraries, volunteer organizations, and community-based agencies. The best available estimates, however, show only a small fraction of adults in need of improved literacy skills and/or English language instruction are being served by state programs.

# Executive Summary

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The program review committee found there is significant unmet need for adult literacy services, both basic education and English as a Second Language (ESL), in the state. Effective coordination among the many and varied providers is lacking. There are gaps as well as overlaps in service delivery, inequities in access to opportunities for instruction, and barriers to collaboration and shared resources. The current capacity of adult literacy programs in Connecticut is checked by funding levels that have stayed essentially the same over the last ten years. Competition for limited public resources contributes to unmet demand as well as fragmented service delivery.

Moreover, a mechanism to promote a systematic, strategic approach to providing services that meet identified needs is absent at the state level. There is no single state entity in charge of overseeing or acting as a “champion” for adult literacy services. In addition, there is no central source of good information on who needs what services, who is being served, and who is providing what services at what locations and times.

To address these problems, the committee developed a set of recommendations intended to enable the state systems with key roles in adult literacy -- adult education, workforce investment, and regional community colleges -- to: 1) better coordinate their activities; and 2) collaborate more effectively with the many other entities involved in basic skills and ESL instruction. Among these potential partners are: public libraries; the K-12 education system and the state’s secondary vocational schools; public and private postsecondary institutions; unions as well as businesses; and a wide variety of nonprofit, community-based organizations, including faith-based agencies.

The main purpose of the committee’s proposals, which are listed below, is to establish a state-level structure that can provide leadership, forge partnerships, and prioritize and direct the allocation of limited resources. The goal is a cost-effective service delivery system that produces literate adults, ready for the workforce, family and community obligations, and life-long learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Clear Roles and Responsibilities*

**To promote effective coordination of adult literacy programs, the program review committee recommends:**

**1) Adoption of a vision and mission statement that clarifies the purpose of adult literacy programs and services in Connecticut, emphasizing the goals of helping adults develop the literacy skills they need to function as productive citizens in work, family, and community environments.**

# Executive Summary

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2) Development of a three-year strategic plan that defines roles, identifies priorities, and directs funding for an adult literacy service system in Connecticut. Among the specific areas addressed by the plan shall be the following:

- a) Leadership, support, and service delivery roles of all system components, examining in particular:
  - i) governance responsibility for adult education;
  - ii) ways to promote regionalized service delivery and partnerships; and
  - iii) system “infrastructure” needs (resources and support for overall administration, management, research, and coordination).
  
- b) Priorities for services, including:
  - i) intensity of available programs (quality versus quantity of instruction);
  - ii) access (improving outreach) and retention (improving learner persistence); and
  - iii) target populations.
  
- c) Analysis of funding requirements, identifying at a minimum:
  - i) estimated resources needed to implement plan goals and objectives;
  - ii) current sources of funding and possibilities for reallocation; and
  - iii) potential alternative and new sources of funding sources.
  
- d) The plan shall be developed every three years by the adult literacy leadership board recommended below. The board shall review the implementation status of the plan and make any necessary revisions annually. The board shall designate regional planning workgroups consisting of representatives of adult literacy stakeholders to assist in developing and reviewing the state strategic plan for adult literacy.

3) Establishment of an adult literacy leadership board consisting of nine voting members appointed by the governor and the legislature. The governor shall appoint five members including the chairperson. The speaker of the House of Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall each appoint one member.

- a) The voting members shall be representatives of the key stakeholders in the adult literacy system including but not limited to: public and private adult literacy service providers, such as local and regional adult education programs, community colleges, volunteer literacy organizations, and community-based organizations experienced in adult literacy programs; public libraries; adult literacy advocates; businesses with employees in need of improved basic skills

# Executive Summary

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- and English language proficiency; organized labor; and regional workforce investment boards.
- b) **The term of office of the members shall be for four years. The board may create officers other than the chairperson as it deems necessary from among its members. All actions of the board shall require the affirmative vote of at least five voting members serving on the board, which number shall constitute a quorum.**
  - c) **The commissioners of correction, education, higher education, economic and community development, labor, and social services, the director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, and the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or their designees, shall serve as nonvoting, ex officio members of the board.**
  - d) **The board shall:**
    - i) **develop the vision and mission statement and strategic plan recommended above by July 1, 2008;**
    - ii) **submit recommendations to the governor and legislature for sources and levels of funding to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan each year;**
    - iii) **establish performance measures for the adult literacy system and use them to track progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan; and**
    - iv) **report to legislature and the governor each year by July 1 beginning in 2008 on progress made in developing and subsequently implementing the strategic plan, based on the established performance measures.**
  - e) **The board shall also be responsible for developing and maintaining centralized system information and for promoting coordination through regional planning, community partnerships for service delivery, and mechanisms for sharing resources, as discussed below.**
  - f) **The board may call upon state agencies and offices, including but not limited to the departments of education, higher education, labor, economic and community development, and social services, the workforce competitiveness office and the board of trustees for the community colleges for information, reports, and assistance as it may need to carry out its duties.**
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# Executive Summary

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- g) The board shall be scheduled to terminate five years from its effective date unless reauthorized by the General Assembly. During the year prior to automatic termination, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee shall conduct a sunset review and report its findings and recommendations regarding continuation, modification, or termination of the board for consideration by the General Assembly during the next regular legislative session.

## Centralized Information

4) The program review committee recommends that under the direction of the adult literacy leadership board:

- a) a statewide automated inventory of adult literacy services that can be accessed by the public online, and includes a description of the type of service, the time and place it is offered, and any eligibility requirements or fees, be established and maintained;
- b) all adult literacy service providers be required to maintain waiting lists and report that information in accordance with standards developed by the board; and
- c) state agencies with automated information systems containing data related to adult literacy services work together to overcome the restrictions that impede the sharing of program data for research purposes and develop ways of using their systems to track individual progress and service outcomes.
- d) The committee also recommends a state “report card” on the status of adult literacy in Connecticut be prepared and presented as part of the board’s annual report recommended earlier. The adult literacy report card should include, for each major component of the adult literacy system (e.g., adult education, family literacy, workplace literacy, developmental education): a description of funding levels and sources; numbers and demographics of the individuals served, and performance measures for key adult literacy outcomes such as learning gains, program/credential completion, success in employment or postsecondary education/training, and indicators of community participation (e.g., attain citizenship, voting, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc.).
- e) The program review committee further recommends at least two full-time education consultant positions be added to the adult education unit of the State Department of Education to provide sufficient capacity to collect and analyze information on available services and program outcomes and to carry out

# Executive Summary

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research on adult education program effectiveness and best practices. As part of its strategic planning responsibilities, the leadership board should also determine whether additional staffing is needed at the state level by other systems with adult literacy responsibilities, including public libraries, to carry out these functions.

## Shared Resources

5) The program review committee recommends that the board, through its strategic planning process:

- a) establish that collaboration and community partnerships are the preferred way of delivering adult literacy services and identify ways to modify program requirements to promote shared funding and funding flexibility; and
- b) develop funding policies that provide a) incentives for community partnerships of adult literacy providers and regionalized service delivery and b) financial support for regional collaboration and community planning.
- c) In addition, it is recommended that the legislature, with the advice of the adult literacy leadership board, establish a new funding source for adult education and other adult literacy program providers that provides state bonus grants for good performance outcomes, including but not limited to, effective collaboration and coordinated funding and service delivery. The board should also develop a policy for providing multi-year funding to programs with records of good performance.

## Overview

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the term literate has come to have a different meaning than the once commonly held notion of just being able to read at grammar school level and write one's name. There is general agreement adults need an array of reading, writing, communication, quantitative, and even technology skills, to function effectively in today's world. Adult literacy is not defined in state law and Connecticut has not adopted a legislative policy statement regarding the goals of all of its publicly funded programs aimed at improving adult literacy. To develop a working understanding of adult literacy definitions and measures, program review staff reviewed the relevant literature. Results of this review are summarized below.

This chapter also highlights the major legislative mandates concerning adult literacy and briefly describes the main types of basic literacy programs currently provided for adults. Given the many laws, agencies, and organizations, and the wide range of programs and services adult literacy encompasses, this report contains a large number of terms and acronyms. A list of the most common adult literacy acronyms is provided in Appendix B. An overview of the main roles and responsibilities for delivering and overseeing adult literacy services in Connecticut, information on funding sources and levels, and data on adult education programs, the core of the state's current adult literacy services, follow in Chapters II, III, and IV, respectively.

## Literacy Definitions and Needs

Being literate is commonly thought of as just being able to read but to educators, policymakers, and many employers, literacy encompasses the many reading, writing, communication, and quantitative skills individuals require for social and economic success today and in the future. Literacy levels are assessed on a continuum of skill-based proficiency. In general, adult literacy levels are measured using a scale of functional skills ranging from little or no ability to read and understand printed material in English to the capability of comprehending and using very complex information in either print or electronic formats.

There is no single, accepted goal for adult literacy programs or any one set standard for literacy. However, many experts agree high levels of English language proficiency and problem-solving skills, and more than a high school diploma, will become increasingly necessary for a family-supporting job, particularly in Connecticut. The primary target populations for adult literacy programs and services, therefore, are individuals with low literacy skill levels, those with limited English proficiency, and adults who lack a secondary school completion credential such as a high school diploma.

For the purposes of the committee study, the following definition from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), which is incorporated in federal adult literacy legislation, was used:

- an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society.

Additionally, for study purposes, the term “adult literacy programs and services” means the publicly funded activities in the state that are intended to improve the reading, writing, math, and English speaking skills of individuals age 16 and over who are not enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education credit programs.

**Service needs.** Increasingly, high reading, writing, and math skills, as well as English language proficiency, and more than a high school diploma are required to obtain a job that can support a family, particularly in Connecticut. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the most recent available on literacy needs in the state, show about 16 percent of Connecticut’s adult population age 18 and over (426,553 individuals) lack a high school diploma and almost 4 percent of adult residents (92,783) speak English “not well” or “not at all.”

Results from the most recent national study of adult English literacy rates, the 2003 U.S. Department of Education National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), indicate the reading and math skill levels of many American adults are below what is needed for most well-paying careers or admission to postsecondary education and training programs. NAAL measured adult literacy in three different skill areas:

- *Prose* (search, comprehend, and use information from continuous text);
- *Document* (search, comprehend, and use information from noncontinuous text in various formats); and
- *Quantitative* (identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed material).

Data from the national assessment were reported for each skill area using four adult literacy performance levels that range from “Below Basic” to “Proficient” (see below, Table I-1).

<b>Table I-1. Literacy Performance Levels for Adults (NAAL 2003)</b>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Sample Tasks</b>
<b>Below Basic</b>	Nonliterate in English to the most simple and concrete literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Search short, simple text to find out what a patient can drink before a medical test</i></li> <li>• <i>Sign a form</i></li> <li>• <i>Add amounts on a bank deposit slip</i></li> </ul>
<b>Basic</b>	Skills necessary to perform simple and everyday literacy tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Find in a prospective juror pamphlet how people are selected for the jury pool</i></li> <li>• <i>Use a TV guide to find out what programs are on at a specific time</i></li> <li>• <i>Compare ticket prices for two events</i></li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate</b>	Skills necessary to perform moderately challenging literacy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consult reference materials to determine which foods contain a particular vitamin</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify a specific location on a map</i></li> <li>• <i>Calculate the total cost of ordering specific office supplies from a catalog</i></li> </ul>
<b>Proficient</b>	Skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compare viewpoints in two editorials</i></li> <li>• <i>Interpret a table about blood pressure, age and physical activity</i></li> <li>• <i>Compute and compare the cost per ounce of food items</i></li> </ul>
Source: “A First Look at the Literacy of America’s Adults in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century,” NCES, 2006.		

Adult literacy performance levels of “Basic” and “Below Basic” are considered low. While there is no set NAAL benchmark for adult literacy, many experts believe adults need performance at least at the “Intermediate” level to function effectively as citizens, parents, and employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. National NAAL data presented in Table I-2 show the portion of adults with a literacy rate below “Intermediate” was: 43 percent for prose literacy; 34 percent for document literacy; and 55 percent for quantitative literacy. State-by-state literacy rates for 2003 are not yet available.

<b>Table I-2. U.S. Adult Literacy Rates: 2003</b>				
	<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Literacy Area</b>				
<b>Prose</b>	14%	29%	44%	13%
<b>Document</b>	12%	22%	53%	13%
<b>Quantitative</b>	22%	33%	33%	13%

Source: “A First Look at the Literacy of America’s Adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” National Center for Education Statistics, 2006

Until the 2003 assessment results for each state are released, the best available information on literacy needs for Connecticut and other states are from the first national assessment, the National Survey of Adult Literacy (NSAL), which was conducted in 1992.<sup>2</sup> In addition to producing data on literacy rates nationwide, researchers used the survey data to develop state-level estimates of adult literacy proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

The NSAL measured the literacy of U.S. adults on a five-level scale, with Level 1 the lowest, and Level 5 the highest, proficiency. According to NIFL, a number of organizations including the National Governors Association (NGA), have identified Level 3 literacy as the minimum standard of proficiency for a family-supporting job in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Based on the NSAL state estimates, about 41 percent of Connecticut’s population age 16 and over (more than 1 million individuals) were at NSAL Levels 1 and 2, or below this benchmark for adult literacy.

A study of adult education systems in New England was conducted for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation in 2002 by Jobs First, a nonprofit research organization. It showed substantial unmet need and demand for literacy services in all six states in the region.<sup>5</sup> The study defined demand as the number of adults with low literacy skills who acknowledge a need for

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that even when final results from NAAL are published, accurate comparisons between the 1992 and 2003 national assessments, will not be possible until the data are reanalyzed by national researchers since different scales were used to measure adult literacy levels.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Reder, *Synthetic Estimates of Literacy Proficiency for Small Census Areas*. Portland State University, prepared for U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. October 1997 (revision for Internet publication).

<sup>4</sup> National Institute for Literacy, *Workforce Education Fact Sheet*, [http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts\\_overivew.html](http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts_overivew.html) accessed on April 25, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Jobs for the Future/Nellie Mae Education Foundation, *Rising to the Literacy Challenge: Building Adult Education Systems in New England*. April 2002, Revised March 2003.

adult education services, which earlier research found to be about 20 percent of those with literacy levels at NSAL Levels 1 and 2. The Nellie Mae study estimated Connecticut's unmet demand for adult basic literacy skills and ESL services at 181,000 individuals in 2002.<sup>6</sup>

## Major Legislative Mandates

Connecticut's adult literacy activities are subject to state and federal mandates. The main state laws pertaining to adult literacy are the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) sections concerning adult education (C.G.S. Sections 10-67 through 10-73c). At present, the primary federal legislation on adult literacy is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). Both the state and laws are summarized below, while major provisions of each are described in more detail in Appendix C.

**State law.** In 1902, Connecticut began requiring its large school districts (at least 10,000 residents) to provide evening schools for persons over 14 years old, marking the origins of the adult education requirement in Connecticut. In 1921, any school district regardless of size, upon the written application of 20 or more persons, was required to provide school for non-English speaking adults. These schools were free to town residents. By 1943, requirements for general adult education and for educational services for non-English speaking adults were codified together in the statutory section.

Since 1974, state statutes have required all local and regional school districts, regardless of size, to establish and maintain, either alone or in cooperation with another districts or certain organizations, a program of adult classes for residents age 16 or older who are no longer enrolled in public school. By law, each district's mandated adult education program, which must be provided free of charge to eligible residents, is to include: instruction in Americanization and U.S. citizenship; English for adults with limited English proficiency; and elementary and secondary school completion programs or classes.

Districts are reimbursed by the state for their costs of providing mandated adult education programs on a sliding scale that is based on relative wealth. At present, the state adult education grant, which is administered by the State Department of Education, reimburses districts' eligible costs at rates ranging from 0 to 65 percent.

**Federal law.** The first federal adult literacy legislation (The Adult Education Act) was enacted as part of the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the basis for national anti-poverty policies and programs. Over the next 30 years, the federal grants were provided to states to support adult literacy activities under a series of legislative provisions that became increasingly focused on workforce development concerns. Currently, AEFLA, which is Title II of Public Law 105-220, The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), is the main federal law pertaining to adult literacy.

The 1998 WIA legislation was a major reform of federal adult education, employment, and vocational rehabilitation programs aimed at creating an integrated system of workforce training and education for adults and youths. In addition to replacing about 60 existing federally

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<sup>6</sup> Calculated as: State Population at NSAL Literacy Levels 1 and 2 (1,070,000) times 20 percent (214,000) minus number of adults participating in the state's mandated adult education programs (32,470).

funded adult education and employment training programs, the act mandated, for all WIA-funded activities, including adult education: service delivery through local “one-stop” centers; unified state plans for workforce investment; and a performance accountability system with standard outcome measures and reporting requirements.

Under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provisions of WIA, block grants are provided to states through the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) for basic education and literacy programs for adults age 16 and over who lack basic skills, a high school diploma, or English proficiency. U.S. DOE also must provide technical assistance to states, review and approve state plans, and monitor and report on each state’s performance of adult literacy activities.

AEFLA grants can be used by states for adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, or English literacy services. The designated state administering agency, which is the State Education Department in Connecticut, can retain a portion of the federal funds for administration and leadership activities but the majority (82.5 percent) must be distributed on a competitive basis to eligible local service providers which may include school districts, community colleges, and nonprofit, community-based organizations.

Eligibility for AEFLA grants requires states to appropriate matching funds and maintain their overall spending levels on adult education and literacy services. States must also negotiate annual performance targets in three core areas (i.e., demonstrated improvement in literacy skills, high school completion rates, and employment and postsecondary education/training rates) and report on their progress through an automated monitoring system established by U.S. DOE.

### **Adult Literacy Programs**

Adult literacy programs are generally considered to be instructional services intended to improve the reading, writing, listening, and math skills of individuals who are not enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education, as well as the English language proficiency of adult speakers of other languages. Programs specifically aimed at improving English language skills are commonly known as English as a Second Language (ESL).<sup>7</sup> For the most part, adult literacy programs are aimed at bringing the learner’s academic and English language skills to the level represented by completion of a secondary school education program.

Services for improving adult literacy skills are delivered through a number of sources including: the traditional adult education system operated by local school districts and overseen by the State Education Department (adult education programs); as part of job training and workforce development efforts (workplace literacy programs); in conjunction with early childhood education initiatives (family literacy programs); and within continuing education courses as well as remedial academic classes at community colleges and other postsecondary institutions (developmental education programs). A description of each of these four main types

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<sup>7</sup> Other terms for ESL programs are: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); English for Nonnative Speakers; and English for Adults with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Adults who participate in ESL programs may or may not be literate in their own language. Some ESL participants are only seeking improved English language proficiency while others may first need to improve their English language skills and then go on to other types of adult literacy programs.

of adult literacy programs -- adult education, workplace literacy, family literacy, and developmental education -- follows.

**Adult education.** In accordance with federal mandates, all states, under different organizational structures and with differing levels of resources, operate free, public education programs for adults that include the following instructional services: basic literacy skills; secondary adult education and high school completion; and English language acquisition. Many states include U.S. citizenship instruction in their programs, reflecting the historical beginning of state adult education as “Americanization” services for recent immigrants.

Eligibility for free, public adult education generally is limited to persons age 16 and over who lack a high school credential, the skill levels associated with a secondary school education, or English language proficiency. Table I-3 below provides a general description of the four types of instructional programs typically provided through state adult education systems.

<b>Table I-3. State Adult Education Instructional Programs</b>	
<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Adult Basic Education (ABE)</b>	Instruction in basic reading, writing, computing skills for adults functioning at lower literacy levels to just below high school level. Completion of an ABE program is intended to prepare an individual to benefit from secondary-level educational instruction and improve opportunities for employment and meeting adult responsibilities.
<b>Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/High School Completion</b>	Instruction for adults whose literacy skills are at approximately the secondary school level and who are seeking a high school diploma or equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development certificate. Diploma programs require adults to earn a minimum number of credits in a prescribed set of academic areas comparable to a school district’s graduation standards. GED programs provide instruction to help individuals prepare to pass a five-part standardized test that demonstrates attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school education program.
<b>English as a Second Language (ESL)</b>	Instruction for adults who lack English language proficiency and are seeking to improve their ability to understand, speak, read, or write in English. Courses are available at different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) and are intended to develop language skills needed for employment, other education and training, and successful adjustment to life in the United States.
<b>Citizenship</b>	Instruction for foreign-born individuals who wish to become United States citizens. Civics education courses are intended to prepare adults for the Immigration and Naturalization citizenship process and are sometimes integrated with English language instruction.
Source of Data: SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education	

As Table I-3 indicates, there is more than one way to obtain a secondary school completion credential through state adult education programs. Individuals can: 1) earn the number of credits needed to meet graduation requirements by taking courses through their school district's adult high school program; 2) be certified as having a secondary school level of education by passing an equivalency test, the General Educational Development (GED) examination; or 3) in some states including Connecticut, meet high school completion requirements by demonstrating their academic skills through a life-experience assessment process. Table I-4 below compares the three types of adult high school completion options as they exist in Connecticut.

In most states, adult education programs are overseen by state education departments and local school districts are common program providers. In some states, community college systems have primary responsibility for adult education while state labor departments are the lead agencies in a few others.

Adult education services are typically delivered in classroom settings, sometimes in local public schools but often at separate, adult education facilities (e.g., adult education centers) as well as in various locations in a community (e.g., libraries, community centers, churches) to improve accessibility. While sometimes referred to as "night school," adult education programs usually offer both daytime and evening classes, and some may even schedule courses on weekends. In general, adult education programs, particularly those provided by school districts, are headed by a director, who functions like a principal, and have their own administrative staff and educational support positions, such as guidance counselors and social workers.

<b>Table I-4. Adult Education Secondary School Completion Options in Connecticut</b>			
	<b>Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD)</b>	<b>General Educational Development (GED)</b>	<b>External Diploma Program (EDP)</b>
<b>Method</b>	Academic Credits (classroom and approved independent study)	Standardized Examination	Portfolio Assessment
<b>Requirements</b>	Obtain minimum of 20 academic and elective credits through prescribed plan of course work (districts may enhance diploma requirements)*  One credit course must be at least 48 hours in length  Diploma program must comply with SDE administrative requirements and only use certified teachers/counselors	Pass GED examination (a standardized, national, five-part test including a writing sample, developed by the American Council on Education)  Applicants must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months.	Complete portfolio that demonstrates skills and competence in particular job, talent, or academic area gained through life experiences (no classroom instruction)
<b>Credential</b>	School District Diploma	Connecticut High School Diploma	School District Diploma
<b>Providers</b>	Adult Education Programs operated by Local Education Agencies (local or regional school districts and Regional Education Service Centers)	All Adult Education Programs; variety of community organizations	Adult Education Programs (at their option)
*Credits must be distributed as follows: 4 English; 3 social studies including American history and ½ civics/government; 3 math; 2 science; 1 Arts/Vocation Education; 7 Electives			
Source: PRI staff analysis of SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education materials			

**Workplace literacy.** Basic literacy courses, GED programs, and English language instruction also can be included among an array of job preparation or career development activities offered by a nonprofit training program operator or local social service agency. Employers sometimes arrange to have adult literacy services provided on the job site and customized to meet their workforce needs for English language proficiency and/or basic academic skills. Programs that provide adult literacy services in the context of employment are commonly referred to as workplace literacy or workforce education programs.

Local adult education programs, community colleges, and private training companies are among the typical providers of customized adult literacy services for businesses. In addition to job-related academic and ESL classes, the programs may offer participants specific career training. Some workplace literacy programs also make available transportation assistance, child care, and other supports, and some employers allow participants to attend classes on work time with pay.

**Family literacy.** In recent years, adult basic education has been blended with early childhood education, parenting instruction, and adult education to create family literacy programs. These intergenerational programs are targeted at increasing the literacy skills of low-income families with the goals of improving economic opportunities for the parents and the academic success of their children.

Federal funding has been provided to states through the U.S. Department of Education for family literacy services called “Even Start” programs since 1989.<sup>8</sup> Program eligibility is limited to parents who have a child under age 8, lack a high school diploma and/or basic reading skills, or need English-as-a-second-language skills. Priority for services is given to families most in need and hardest to serve (i.e., those with the lowest incomes and education levels), with the intent of helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low literacy levels.

Local education agencies, in collaboration with a community-based organization including a public agency, higher education institution, or other nonprofit organization, may apply to operate an Even Start Program. Adult education services are one of the five required components of the program. The other four components are: early childhood and/or school-age education (up to age 8); parents and children learning together; parent education and support; and literacy-based home-visits.

Even Start is a relatively small federal program; the total federal appropriation for FY 05 was about \$225 million and Connecticut received a grant of just over \$1.7 million. Nine programs that served a total of 450 participants (adults and children) at an average cost of \$3,794 were operational throughout the state that year.

In response to concerns about disappointing results and several negative national evaluations, financial support for the Even Start program has steadily declined since FY 03. The federal appropriation for Even Start was cut by more than half between FY 05 and FY 06 and funding for the upcoming federal fiscal year is in question.

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<sup>8</sup> Even Start was created under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), P.L. 103-382, Title I, Part B.

**Developmental education.** In some cases, individuals have high school completion credentials but still lack the reading and math skills necessary to be successful in postsecondary education or career training programs.<sup>9</sup> To address this problem, many higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, offer developmental education courses that provide remedial instruction to raise the literacy skills of enrolled students to at least a beginning postsecondary level.

The term developmental education is also used to describe programs of academic instruction made available for incumbent workers who may have a high school credential but need to upgrade basic literacy skills in order to improve their job performance and/or advance their careers.

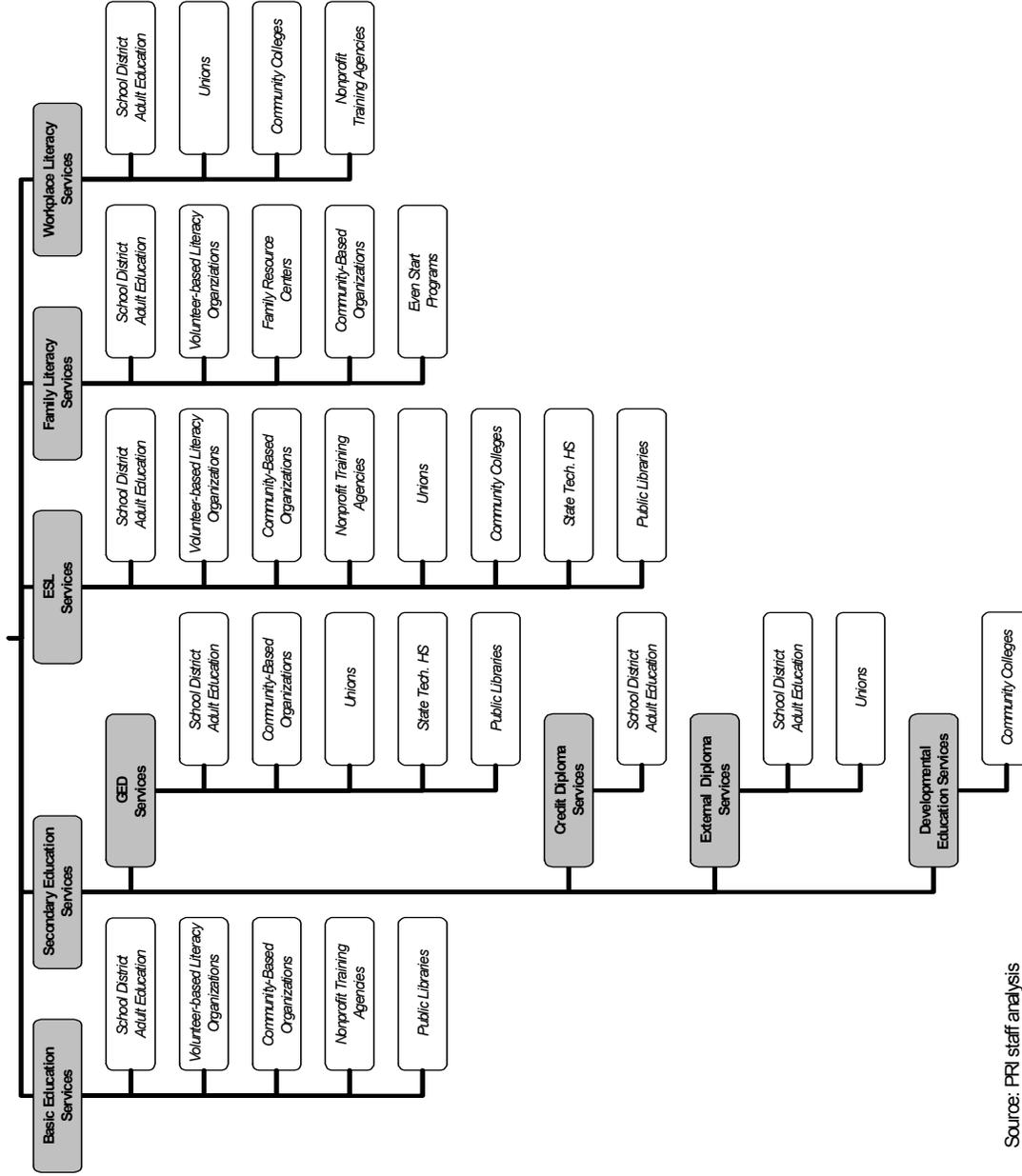
### **Program Providers**

The major types of adult literacy services and typical providers of those services in Connecticut are illustrated in Figure I-1. As the figure indicates, several state agencies, parts of the public higher education system, local school districts, public libraries, labor unions, private employers, and an array of nonprofit and community-based organizations are among the many entities involved in the delivery of adult literacy services. Nonprofit and community groups include, but are not limited to: volunteer-based agencies such as Literacy Volunteers; local community action agencies; YMCAs, churches, and other charitable organizations that sponsor reading and ESL programs for adults and families; and nonprofit employment and training agencies like Waterbury Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) that incorporate adult basic education in their jobs programs. The main public providers and their roles and responsibilities for funding, delivering, and overseeing adult literacy programs in the state are described more fully in the next chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> According to data from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, nearly 25 percent of all adults in the U.S. with prose literacy skills at the Below Basic Level, the lowest of the four NAAL levels of literacy, had been awarded a high school diploma..

Figure I-1. Adult Literacy Services and Common Providers in Connecticut



Source: PRI staff analysis

### Major Roles and Responsibilities

Adult literacy services in Connecticut are not delivered through one, cohesive system and no single state agency oversees or coordinates all programs. At present, three state systems have key roles in providing adult literacy services: the adult education system; the workforce investment system; and the community college system. Major adult literacy responsibilities carried out by each one are described below. Current state efforts to coordinate adult literacy activities across these systems are also highlighted.

#### Adult Education System

In Connecticut, the State Department of Education and local school districts have central roles in the state's mandated adult education system. In addition to the programs provided by local and regional school districts, some adult education services are delivered by nonprofit, community-based organizations and state agencies. Adult education functions carried out by the department, and school districts and other providers are outlined below.

**State education department.** The main adult education duties of the State Department of Education are: planning and reporting on programs and services in accordance with federal and state requirements; administering federal and state funding; and monitoring and providing technical assistance to program providers. These responsibilities are carried out by the department's Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education.

At present, five education consultant positions within the bureau are assigned to adult education functions although one is vacant due to a recent retirement. The department's adult education staffing dropped to its current level in FY 03, following implementation of the state's early retirement program, from a peak of 10 filled consultant positions in FY 01.

**Consultant duties.** The adult education consultants are responsible for developing state plans and federal grant applications, processing state grant applications, directing state-level initiatives to improve services, and serving as liaisons to agencies and organizations with links to adult education. As part of the bureau's monitoring responsibilities, the consultants: review program and financial data from each provider; conduct site visits; and work with providers to address performance problems.

**Professional development.** The bureau uses some of the federal funding it receives for statewide leadership activities to contract with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) for professional development services for adult education teachers, administrators and other program and support staff. CREC established and operates the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN) to provide a variety of services including: workshops on instruction techniques in all academic areas; training on administrative policies and procedures; technical assistance on student appraisal and assessment tools; facilitated discussions on adult education topics; and classroom materials and other resources.

**Accountability.** The State Education Department is responsible for meeting federal as well as state accountability requirements for adult education activities. Like all states, Connecticut must report program outcomes to the U.S. Department of Education through the National Reporting System (NRS), the performance monitoring process mandated under AEFLA.

The federal NRS establishes five core measures for assessing program effectiveness: demonstrated literacy skill improvement; high school completion; entered postsecondary education or training; entered employment; and retained employment. Each year, states must negotiate targeted levels of performance for each core measure and report progress toward their goals to the U.S. DOE. The department's adult education staff are responsible for setting Connecticut's performance goals and tracking and reporting results for the NRS core measures.

To carry out this function, the bureau uses the Connecticut Competency System (CCS), an internal accountability process developed by SDE in the late 1980s that integrates assessment of student performance, curriculum development, and instruction. It is based on the standardized, competency-based assessments developed for adults by Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), an independent, national testing organization overseen by a consortium of adult education program providers, employment and training professionals, and business and industry representatives. (More details on CASAS and the NRS core measures are provided in Appendix D.)

Adult education, family literacy and any other program providers funded by the bureau are expected to meet CCS performance standards and data collection requirements as well as follow the system's student assessment procedures. The system is intended to help assure effective service delivery by all providers, as well as comply with NRS performance monitoring requirements.

As part of the CCS accountability process, the bureau developed an automated information system called the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) to collect and report demographic and performance data on all adult education participants. CARS is an Internet-based comprehensive database that can be used by adult education program providers to report required information to the bureau, as well as to generate information for their own management and planning uses.

The bureau also uses CARS to implement a data-driven accountability and program improvement system it created in 2004. Each year, performance profiles based on CARS data are developed by bureau staff. The profiles encompass program effectiveness indicators beyond the NRS core measures of student outcomes, such as recruitment (meeting demand for services), student retention, and utilization of instruction. The profiles are used by bureau staff to provide feedback to help providers improve overall performance and to target technical assistance.

**School districts.** While a variety of organizations can, and do, provide adult education services in Connecticut, school districts have a statutory responsibility to provide or arrange for free mandated adult education programs (i.e., adult basic education, secondary school

completion, ESL, and citizenship) for eligible residents of their communities.<sup>10</sup> Some districts provide all mandated adult education services with their own staff and other resources. Others directly provide parts of their programs, adult basic and secondary education, for example, and contract out for some services like ESL programs. School districts are not required to provide any services directly and may, by law, make “cooperative arrangements” with adult education programs in other districts or regional education service centers (RESCs) to serve their residents.<sup>11</sup>

At present, school districts in 125 towns are adult education program cooperators, and districts in 44 municipalities are program providers. As Figure II-1 indicates, cooperating districts tend to include the smaller, more rural towns across the state. (Appendix E lists all the providers and the cooperating district municipalities they serve.)

**Program providers.** Connecticut’s adult education system currently includes a total of 71 school districts and other organizations that receive state and federal grant funding to provide mandated adult basic and secondary education, English literacy, and citizenship programs. Figure II-2 lists all the providers in the state by category.

As the figure shows, most adult education program providers, 44, are local and regional school districts and three are RESCs. Another 16 providers are what are known by state statute as “cooperating eligible entities” (CEEs), the public or private organizations that provide certain types of adult education classes or services to school districts and RESCs under formal agreements. CEEs, in a sense, act like subcontractors, independently performing specified activities but funded through the main provider organization’s adult education budget.

The majority of CEEs are local Literacy Volunteers (LV) agencies. Literacy Volunteers are local affiliates of ProLiteracy America, a nonprofit educational organization of volunteer-based adult literacy service providers. Through LV programs, trained volunteers provide adult learners one-on-one or small group instruction in basic literacy skills and ESL. Literacy Volunteers agencies have a long history as critical partners for adult education programs in Connecticut and across the country because they can provide quality individualized instruction, which adults with very limited literacy and/or English language skills need, at a relatively low cost.

The remaining eight adult education providers are an assortment of entities that include: the Department of Correction; one community college; one state technical high school; two local housing authorities; and three nonprofit community-based organizations. Unlike the school district providers, they operate programs with very targeted literacy services and/or populations

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<sup>10</sup> Most district adult education programs also offer various general interest, recreational, vocational and continuing education courses, usually for a fee, to their residents as part of their mission to support life-long learning. Sometimes referred to as enrichment courses, these services are not eligible for state or federal adult education grant funding and are not subject to monitoring and reporting requirements. Some districts use revenues generated from enrichment courses to help support their mandated adult education services.

<sup>11</sup> RESCs are education agencies formed by multiple school districts in a region to cooperatively provide programs and services. There are six RESCs statewide and three, Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), EastConn, and Education Connection (EdConn), currently provide adult education programs.



**Figure II-2. Connecticut Adult Education System Providers (2006)**

**School Districts (44)**

Berlin Adult Education  
Bloomfield Adult Education  
Branford Adult Education (ERACE)  
Bridgeport Adult Education  
Bristol Adult Education  
Cheshire Adult Education  
Danbury Adult Education (WERACE)  
East Hartford Adult Education  
East Haven Adult Education  
Enfield Adult Education  
Fairfield Adult Education  
Farmington Adult Education  
Greenwich Adult Education  
Groton Adult Education  
Hamden Adult Education  
Hartford Adult Education  
Meriden Adult Education  
Middletown Adult Education  
Milford Adult Education  
Naugatuck Adult Education  
New Britain Adult Education  
New Haven Adult Education  
Newington Adult Education  
New London Adult Education  
New Milford Adult Education  
North Haven Adult Education  
Norwalk Adult Education  
Norwich Adult Education  
Plainville Adult Education  
Shelton/Valley Reg. Adult Education  
Simsbury Adult Education  
Southington Adult Education  
Stamford Adult Education  
Stratford Adult Education  
Trumbull Adult Education  
Vernon Adult Education  
Wallingford Adult Education  
Waterbury Adult Education  
West Hartford Adult Education  
West Haven Adult Education  
Westport Adult Education  
Wethersfield Adult Education  
Windsor Adult Education  
Windsor Locks Adult Education

**RESCs (3)**

Capitol Region Education Center  
Education Connection  
EastConn

**CEEs (16)**

Family Services Woodfield  
Literacy Volunteers - Danbury  
Literacy Volunteers - East Hartford  
Literacy Volunteers - Enfield  
Literacy Volunteers - Greater Hartford  
Literacy Volunteers - Meriden  
Literacy Volunteers - Middletown  
Literacy Volunteers - New Britain/Bristol  
Literacy Volunteers - New Haven  
Literacy Volunteers - New London  
Literacy Volunteers - Norwich  
Literacy Volunteers - Stamford/Greenwich  
Literacy Volunteers - Waterbury  
Urban League  
Waterbury OIC  
YMCA of Metro Hartford - Read to Succeed

**Other (8)**

Department of Corrections  
APT Foundation  
Bullard Havens Tech. High School  
Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum  
Housing Authority of Ansonia  
Housing Authority of Meriden  
Mercy Learning Center  
NW CT Community Technical College

Source of Data: SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education

and receive only federal adult education funds through SDE. With the exception of the correction department adult education program, the services provided by these organizations are projects in areas designated by the state as priorities for federal adult education grant funding, such as workplace education, transition to postsecondary education, and family literacy. (The state's priority funding areas are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.)

The DOC school district, which has an average daily enrollment of more than 3,000 students, is the largest provider of adult education services in the state. It is funded through a state General Fund appropriation within the agency budget and some federal monies. Unlike other providers overseen by SDE, it does not receive any state adult education grant funds; it is not receiving any federal adult education grant funds at this time, although it has in the past. The state portion of the annual district budget, which is used mainly for personnel costs, has been approximately \$25 million in recent years and federal grant funding has totaled about \$1.5 million a year. The district serves about 12,500 students a year, operates 18 schools within the correctional community, and in the 2004-2005 school year employed 222 professional full-time staff and 48 durational part-time employees.

**Main duties.** Adult education program providers have direct responsibility for mandated literacy services. Their duties include: assessing and counseling students; developing and providing instructional programs; meeting all financial and performance reporting requirements; and staffing, scheduling, and other related support and administrative functions.

There are few state-level standards for the mandated adult education programs beyond the minimum requirements set in statute for an adult high school credit diploma. School districts and other adult education providers have considerable control over the amount, type, and quality of instructional services they offer so there can be significant variation among programs.

The state does require that adult education teachers be certified and all programs that offer high school credit diplomas must have guidance counselors. However, the conditions of employment for adult education staff are decided by the program providers. For the most part, even in school districts, adult education staff positions are part-time and few are part of collective bargaining units. In some districts, even the director of adult education is a part-time position.

**Program statistics.** Basic enrollment and budget information for each provider for FY 05, the most recent available annual data, is presented in Appendix F. In that year, total providers numbered 74, including three community-based organizations (shown in italics in the table) that received federal adult education funding in FY 05, but did not subsequently apply for any grants.

There is a wide range in enrollment numbers among all providers, from as small as five students in one program operated by a CEE (Waterbury OIC) to over 3,200 in the New Haven Adult Education Program. Among just the school district and RESC programs in FY 05, the smallest was in Simsbury with 24 students, the largest in New Haven, and the median program size was 283. As would be expected, the school district programs in the larger cities have the most students. Eight district programs (New Haven, Hartford, Stamford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Danbury, Norwich and New Britain) and the Department of Correction each had enrollments of

over 1,000 students and together accounted for almost 60 percent of adult education students statewide.

Operating budgets for adult education programs also vary greatly in size. In FY 05, funding levels ranged from just under \$20,000 for Waterbury OIC, a cooperating eligible entity that only provides adult basic education services, to over \$6 million for the Hartford Adult Education Program. A total of 12 programs, all school district providers, had funding levels of more than \$1 million, but in general, adult education budgets are relatively small. The median funding level for school district and RESC programs in FY 05 was about \$378,000.

Overall trends in adult education funding are discussed in the following chapter. Program review analysis of selected data SDE compiles on participation, utilization, performance from each of the state's adult education providers in the state is presented in Chapter IV.

### **Workforce Investment System**

Connecticut's workforce investment system, under state and federal mandates, incorporates a variety of state agencies and programs as well as local and regional entities, community-based organizations, and private providers involved in employment training and work-related education. The purpose of the workforce investment system is to improve the quality of jobs and workers in Connecticut and support economic development by ensuring the availability of a skilled, competitive workforce. While adult literacy activities are not the system's focus, they are a key priority according to the state's most recent two-year workforce investment strategic plan.<sup>12</sup>

Much of the system's current structure and responsibilities is based on requirements contained in the 1998 federal Workforce Investment Act. WIA mandates planning and policy-making groups at both the state and local levels and an integrated, one-stop service delivery network for employment, education, and training programs. The main components of Connecticut's workforce investment system at present are:

- the Connecticut Department of Labor, the state agency designated to administer WIA Title I and Title III employment and training programs and responsible for the employment portion of the state's welfare-to-work program, Jobs First Employment Services (JFES);
- the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), which is staffed by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), and serves as the state-level workforce investment policy board mandated by WIA;
- five Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), which are the local policy boards required under WIA; and
- *CTWorks*, the state's system of one-stop job service centers.

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<sup>12</sup> State of Connecticut, *Final Strategic Two-Year State Workforce Investment Plan for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Workforce Investment Systems) and The Wagner-Peyser Act: State of Connecticut for the period of July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007.*

An overview of main provisions of WIA regarding employment and training programs and background on each system component is provided in Appendix G. Key adult literacy activities carried out by CETC, the regional boards, and the one-stop centers are highlighted below. The labor department's administration of the Jobs First Employment Services program, whose clients often are in need of adult literacy services, is also briefly described.

***CETC duties.*** CETC serves as the WIA-required statewide workforce investment policy board, with staff support and assistance provided by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. The commission, in consultation with the regional workforce development boards, is required to prepare, and update at least once every five years, a single Connecticut workforce development plan that outlines a five-year strategy for the state's workforce development system.

The plan is intended to serve as a framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of all workforce education and job training programs in the state. It is required by federal and state law to contain long-term and short-term goals, which must address accountability for provider performance, coordination of activities, and integration of funding resources, benchmarks, and performance measures.

The state strategic plan must also identify core, intensive, and training services that are available under the one-stop service delivery system. Several of these, such as initial and comprehensive skill assessments, and programs that combine workplace training with related instruction like adult education, are related to adult literacy.

Each year, CETC is required to submit recommendations to the governor and the General Assembly on the appropriation of WIA funds for a number of specified workforce development activities including certain adult literacy services. These include: job-related vocational, literacy, language and numerical skills training; adult workforce development services for individuals with barriers to fulltime, stable employment including language, basic skills, and occupational literacy barriers; and special grants or contracts in each region for training programs targeted for difficult-to-serve workers, including but not limited to, those with low literacy skills, limited English proficiency, or lacking a high school credential.

Since 1999, the commission has been required by state law to provide the regional workforce development boards with criteria for evaluating employment and training programs they fund. The criteria must include: a description of the amount, type, and effectiveness of literacy training; the number of persons completing job training; the gender and race of persons receiving training; occupational skill types; the number of persons who enter unsubsidized employment; the number remaining in unsubsidized employment after six months; and the earnings they receive. CETC must include the board program evaluations in its statutorily mandated annual progress report to the governor and legislature.

The employment and training commission uses these evaluation criteria as the basis for the education and job training report card it has been statutorily required to develop since 1999. The report card must assess the Connecticut workforce development system's accomplishments in meeting federal accountability requirements. By law, the report card must address system effectiveness in meeting both employers' needs for educated and trained workers and clients' needs for improving their economic well-being. Each report card produced by the commission

to date includes outcome information related to adult education programs and community colleges, as well as the other major parts of the workforce investment system.

**Regional boards.** At present, there are five regional boards in Connecticut responsible for developing policies for workforce investment funding and programming, as well as planning and overseeing service delivery for their geographic areas. Each regional board is listed in Table II-1.

<b>Table II-1. Connecticut Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>No. Towns</b>	<b>Regional Board Name</b>	<b>WIB Office Location</b>	<b>No. One-Stop Center Sites</b>
North Central	37	Capital Workforce Partners	Hartford	6
South Central	30	Workforce Alliance	New Haven	4
East	41	Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board	Franklin	4
Southwest	20	The Workplace, Inc.	Bridgeport	3
Northwest	41	Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc.	Waterbury	3
Source of Data: Connecticut Department of Labor				

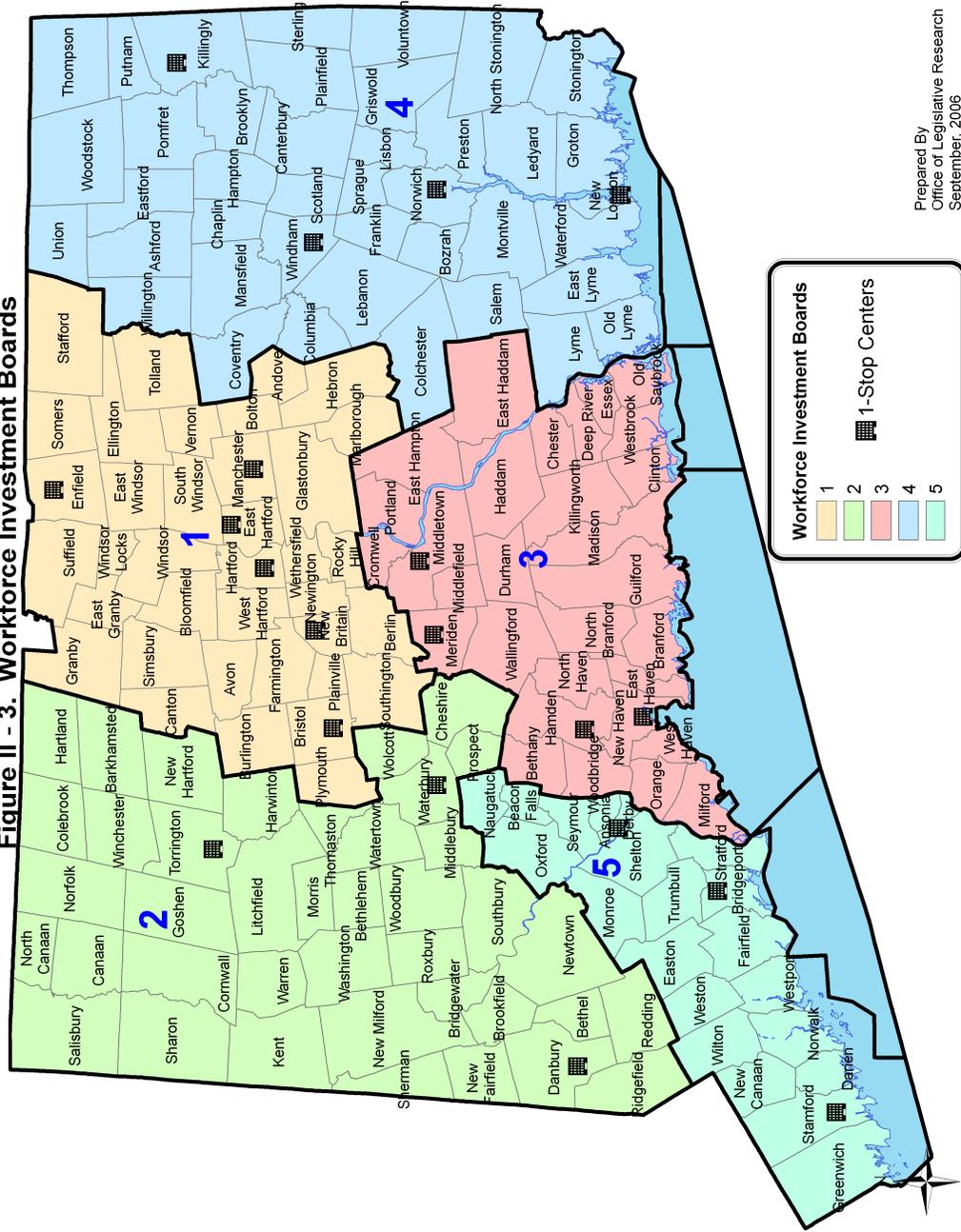
In accordance with federal requirements, the WIBs play the lead role at the local level in coordinating strategies and resources to meet the workforce development needs, including employment-related literacy needs, of their employers, workers, and jobseekers. Under federal law, WIBS must establish at least one one-stop comprehensive center for delivering employment, education and training services in their areas and may contract with a public or private organization to operate the centers. (With very few exceptions, WIA prohibits boards from directly operating one-stop centers.)

In Connecticut, the regional boards, in partnership with state labor department, supervise one-stop centers. In a number of cases, the centers are located in facilities leased by DOL. A map showing the state’s five workforce regions, and the location of all *CTWorks* one-stop centers, is presented in Figure II-3.

All regional boards are subject to compliance and performance monitoring by DOL and are expected to conform with federal and state workforce investment policies and operating procedures. However, WIBs are also expected to tailor their activities to respond to the needs and resources of their particular service areas. As a result, funding and programming priorities, as well as the scope of services and service delivery methods, can vary from region to region.

**One-stop centers.** Currently there are 20 *CTWorks* career centers throughout the state (see Figure II-3) that serve as Connecticut’s WIA one-stop network for employment and training services for jobseekers and employers. One-stop centers are an important initial access point to services for adults in need of improved literacy skills. One-stop centers, at a minimum, provide information about adult education programs and other literacy services through their self-service resource rooms.

**Figure II - 3. Workforce Investment Boards**



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Office of Legislative Research  
September, 2006

When individuals have obvious English language or reading, writing, and math needs, staff may refer them immediately to the adult education system or help them access volunteer-based services (e.g., Literacy Volunteers). Literacy skill assessments are not routinely offered to all customers, as a center's primary focus is employment and the staff's main function is to help with job search and training. However, one-stop customers who are eligible for intensive WIA services, including all JFES welfare-to-work program participants, do receive a formal reading and math skills appraisal, as well as a comprehensive career assessment.

It is state policy that all one-stop centers use the same adult literacy skills assessment system as the adult education system requires for its program providers, the Comprehensive Adult Skills Assessment System. Training and technical assistance in using CASAS is provided to one-stop center case management and employment specialist staff by the State Department of Education through its adult education professional development contractor.

The one-stops use a CASAS appraisal test, the ECS-130, that measures reading and math skills in terms of employability. Unlike other CASAS tests used by adult literacy programs to measure gains in proficiency, appraisal instruments are designed to identify overall skill levels and guide placement decisions. One-stop staff use the results help develop individual employability plans for clients and make referrals to literacy services, such as adult education programs. Data on literacy appraisals and referrals are not routinely gathered by either DOL or SDE and the management information systems for one-stop centers and adult education programs are not linked at this time.

**DOL.** The labor department does not have any direct responsibilities for adult literacy. Its main roles in the workforce investment system include: statewide planning, funding, and monitoring duties required by state and federal law for a number of employment and training programs; managing, with the regional workforce boards, the state's one-stop center network; and administering JFES, the employment portion of the state's welfare-to-work program.

Unless exempted from work requirements, all recipients of cash assistance under the state Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) must participate in Jobs First Employment Services. JFES clients are referred to the labor department by DSS after an initial assessment of their eligibility and overall service needs.

The labor department, in conjunction with the regional workforce investment boards, is responsible for providing case management and other employment services to JFES clients to help them reach their independence goals. Part of case management, which is carried out by one-stop center staff, is assessment of the client's education and literacy skill levels to help complete the individual's employability plan. JFES case managers at one-stops use the same literacy assessment process as the adult education system and receive training through the State Education Department on how to administer the CASAS appraisal test.

If it is determined a client's literacy or English language skills are barriers to employment, the JFES program can provide training that may include GED preparation and English as a Second Language courses. JFES clients who need basic literacy skills improvement and greater English language proficiency for employability are generally referred to local adult education programs.

A June 2006 report by the state labor department on Jobs First Employment Services participants served by *CTWorks* shows many clients have literacy-related employment barriers. In that month, the lack of a high school diploma was an employment barrier for 26 percent of the nearly 8,000 JFES participants enrolled for one-stop services, low reading/math skills was a barrier for 18 percent and English language proficiency was a barrier for 11 percent.

The information systems for JFES and adult education programs are not linked, so it is difficult to track referrals to literacy services and student outcomes. A concurrent 2006 program review committee study of welfare reform in Connecticut examined JFES client employment barriers, including low literacy skills. Among the findings of that report was the significant need within the JFES population for services to improve basic academic skills and English language proficiency. Over half of the TFA recipients included in the study's client sample had literacy levels below the secondary level for reading; eight in ten had math skills at the basic or below basic levels of literacy. (See Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, *Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative*, December 2006).

### **Community Colleges**

Connecticut's regional two-year public college system was created to promote access to higher education opportunities and help meet the state's demand for a skilled workforce. At present, the system includes 12 community-technical colleges that are governed by a board of trustees. The board establishes and administers academic, financial, and administrative policies. Its administrative staff, headed by a system chancellor, oversees day-to-day operations and coordinates activities among the individual colleges. The colleges, their locations, and the most recent student headcounts (unduplicated number of individuals enrolled or registered in programs) are shown in Table II-2.

While the community-technical colleges are part of the state's higher education system, a number of the services they offer are aimed at improving basic literacy skills and English language proficiency of adult learners. In addition, like the adult education providers, their mission includes support of life-long learning. Many of the individuals taking community college courses are older, nontraditional students seeking to upgrade their skills, often for employment reasons, and a large number attend on a part-time basis.

By statute, the mission of the community college system is to provide:

- occupational, vocational, technical and career programs designed for immediate employment, job retraining, or skill upgrading;
- general study programs, including but not limited to remedial, adult, and continuing education, to meet individual student goals;
- programs of study for transfer to baccalaureate level education; and
- educational programs centered on community services and life-long learning.

<b>Table II-2. Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges</b>			
<b>College</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Student Headcounts</b>	
		<b>Credit Program Enrollments (FT &amp; PT) Fall 2005</b>	<b>Non-Credit Program Registrations Annual 2004-05</b>
Asnuntuck	Enfield	1,483	1,395
Capital	Hartford	3,573	4,003
Gateway	New Haven North Haven	5,739	3,718
Housatonic	Bridgeport	4,471	905
Manchester	Manchester	6,135	7,359
Middlesex	Middletown Meriden	2,286	1,601
Naugatuck	Waterbury	5,667	5,413
Northwestern	Winsted	1,569	8,467
Norwalk	Norwalk	6,036	1,531
Quinebaug Valley	Danielson Willimantic	1,714	2,135
Three Rivers	Norwich (Mohegan & Thames Valley)	3,660	2,198
Tunxis	Farmington Bristol	3,894	3,636
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>STATEWIDE</b>	<b>46,227</b>	<b>42,361</b>
Source of Data: Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges, Fall 2005 Credit Enrollment Report and Annual Non-Credit Report for 2004-2005			

To carry out their responsibilities, community colleges currently provide two types of educational programs: credit and non-credit. Almost equal numbers of individuals participate in each program as Table II-2 indicates. In 2005, about 46,000 students (full-time and part-time) were enrolled in community college credit programs while more than 42,000 individuals participated in non-credit courses.

The colleges' academic credit programs lead to associate degrees or certificates and require a high school diploma or its equivalent for admission. Students enrolled in credit programs at community colleges as well as other higher education institutions, however, may not be prepared for college level work. In these cases, the community colleges, like many four-year colleges and universities, make developmental education courses available to help improve students' basic literacy skills. The community colleges also believe providing developmental education promotes their broad policy goals of access and opportunity.

According to the state Board of Governors for Higher Education annual report for 2006, in any given semester, almost one-quarter of the students attending a community college (23 percent) are taking at least one basic skills English or math course.<sup>13</sup> This appears comparable to a national statistic included in the same report that 29 percent of first-time college freshmen, on average, are enrolled in at least one remedial reading, writing, or math course. Developmental

<sup>13</sup> Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, Department of Higher Education, *2006 Report*, p. 104.

education placement policies and course content vary among the 12 community colleges. Program review staff attempted to compile more information about these basic literacy skill services, in part to try determine the extent students coming from adult education programs are prepared for postsecondary level work. However, the community college research staff was unable to provide the data necessary for this analysis within the study timeframe.

Admission to non-credit courses at community colleges does not require a secondary school credential but there may be other prerequisites for some classes. The non-credit courses offered encompass a variety of instruction, from professional continuing education classes and computer skills training to recreational, cultural, or personal enrichment classes. However, all non-credit courses can be generally classified as either workforce or personal development.

Non-credit workforce development courses provide job-related education and training and may include basic literacy skills or English language instruction. Through their Business and Industry Services Network, the community colleges also develop and provide customized workforce development courses for local employers.

Personal development courses provide opportunities to learn new skills that may also improve an individual's employability or literacy level. In 2005, 52 percent of the 42,361 non-credit program students were taking courses related to personal development and 48 percent were taking workforce development classes. Program review committee staff requested information from the community colleges needed to determine the extent adult literacy services are available through both types of non-credit courses but it could not be developed within the study timeframe.

## **Statewide Coordination**

Responsibility for coordinating adult literacy programs and services across the adult education, workforce development, and community college systems is not formally centered in any state agency at this time. The state education department is responsible for managing the adult education system and promoting consistency across those programs. Some broad policy coordination is achieved through the workforce investment planning activities of CETC and some service delivery is integrated through the *CTWorks* one-stop center network. At the time of the committee study, there were also several informal efforts underway to better coordinate adult literacy in the state. Each of these formal and informal coordination activities is described below.

**State management of adult education.** The state education department, in overseeing all adult education programs, has standardized a number of operating procedures and policies across the system. For example, the registration process for all GED examinations in the state is centralized and managed by the department. SDE has also coordinated collection and reporting of performance data and created a statewide management information system for adult education.

Coordination of adult education programs is aided by fact that in many parts of the state, service delivery is regionalized through school districts' cooperative arrangements. The department's adult education bureau also seeks to coordinate policies and programs by working

with the state adult education professional organization, the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE).

As Connecticut's lead agency for adult education, SDE periodically undertakes activities to improve, expand and better coordinate services throughout the state. One recent special project, the department's Workforce Education Initiative, is aimed at better connecting adult education programs with workforce development efforts. The initiative began in FY 03 as a two-year pilot program, funded with WIA incentive grant money, to develop a model for expanding adult education's capacity to provide workforce education services.

Many school districts' adult education programs have a long history of working with local employers to provide customized, on-site basic skills instruction, but the goal of the pilot project was to systematize services and create a workforce education network. The first step of the project was to develop and hold training programs for local adult education staff. The training focused on meeting local business needs for basic skill education services and using a workplace-based student assessment instrument (developed for Connecticut by CASAS) integrated with the SDE information system.

The first workforce education services (14 customized ESL programs and one on-site GED program) were implemented in FY 04. A formal evaluation conducted for SDE by an outside consultant found the model effective and recommended its continuation with some revisions.<sup>14</sup> The bureau is continuing to develop the program as a network of workforce education service providers called Adult Education at Work. Training in the model is provided through CREC and as of fall 2006, 22 local adult education programs statewide had completed the training and were part of the network.

In the 1990s, the state education department had initiated another effort to coordinate adult education with employment training. Under the Coordinated Employment and Training Opportunities (CETO) program, funding was set aside from state education, social services, and labor department sources, and from the regional workforce investment boards, to provide grants for activities that supported the employability, particularly skills and training programs for adults. A portion of the monies allocated by DOL were used for vocationally focused remedial and adult education services for welfare-to-work clients participating in the CETO program.

In addition to pooling resources to fund skills and training activities, CETO used a single planning process and common request-for-proposal grant award procedure. A number of groups involved with adult literacy issues have cited the CETO program as a good model for stimulating collaborative planning and funding. The program ended in FY 00 due to changes in federal law concerning allowable activities under AEFLA.

**One-stop service delivery.** The primary way delivery of adult literacy and employment and training services is coordinated in Connecticut is through the one-stop center network created in response to WIA. As required by federal law, the state's adult education system is a mandated one-stop partner. Each year, the State Department of Education develops memoranda

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<sup>14</sup> Holt, Wexler & Farnum, *Building Skills to Compete in a Changing Economy: Connecticut's Workforce Education Initiative, 2002-2004*. A Report to the Bureau of Early Childhood, Career, and Adult Education, Connecticut State Department of Education.

of understanding with all five WIBS that outline the roles and responsibilities of the adult education in the one-stop center, such as providing initial literacy skill appraisals, GED readiness materials, and training on the CASAS assessment system.

Both SDE and DOL personnel noted to program review committee staff that there is a long history of cooperation between the adult education and workforce systems in Connecticut, although relationships are stronger in some parts of the state than in others. At one time, a number of local adult education programs had staff on-site to help one-stop center personnel with skill assessments or service referral and sometimes, adult education classes would be offered at the center locations. Adult education programs have cut back on activities at one-stop centers because of budget problems at both the local and state levels. The State Department of Education, however, still contributes a portion of its annual AEFLA state leadership funding to support the infrastructure expenses of the one-stop center system. SDE staff also sit as members of each regional board.

**Statewide policy coordination.** The Connecticut Education and Training Commission, as noted earlier, is responsible for policy and funding coordination for all aspects of the state's workforce investment system including adult literacy programs and services. Representatives of each major state education system -- the commissioners of education and higher education -- are CETC members. Adult literacy is not CETC's primary focus but it is the only state entity with a specific statutory role in policy and program coordination across service systems.

Certain program coordination issues are also being addressed at present by an ad hoc group, the Statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee. The committee, which grew out of the education department's workforce education initiative described above, was formed by SDE in March 2005. Its members include: staff from the departments of education, labor, social services, and economic and community development, and the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and state community college system; and representatives from the regional workforce boards, adult education program providers, Literacy Volunteers, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), and the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF).

The committee began as a way for adult education, community colleges, and the workforce boards to work together to overcome fragmented, inefficient, and at times competitive, ways customized education services for workers were being delivered to local businesses. Its current mission is "... to create coordinated, regional, user-friendly systems that respond to employer needs with fast, flexible, and comprehensive education and training solutions."

The workforce coordinating committee members meet monthly and, through various subcommittees, are working on several tasks such as developing a strategic plan and a model for service delivery. Regional committees have also been established to foster better working relationships and coordinate policies among the stakeholders in local service delivery areas.

Although the committee is focused on employer needs and incumbent workers at this time, it expects to address job preparation and transition issues in the future. Recently, CETC, in response to a problem identified by one of its workgroups, asked the statewide coordinating

committee to develop strategies for addressing adult-education issues facing low-wage workers. The committee presented its recommended actions to CETC at the June 2006 commission meeting. The coordinating committee's proposals were under active consideration by CETC at the completion of the committee study.

**Community collaboration.** During the program review study, there were at least three community groups in the state bringing together stakeholders in an effort to address issues related to adult literacy including coordination of resources and service delivery. One, the Greater Hartford Literacy Council, is a nonprofit organization established in January 2001 in response to recommendations of the City of Hartford Task Force on Adult Literacy. Its founding partners include the city of Hartford, Hartford public schools and Public Library, and Capital Workforce Partners, the region's workforce investment board. At present, its members include more than 100 organizations, businesses, and individuals representing 35 communities in the area. The council is part of Literacy USA, a national alliance of about 65 local literacy coalitions throughout the country

The council's mission is coordinate and promote literacy services in the Greater Hartford area. To date, it has sponsored research and produced several reports on the status of literacy in the region including adult literacy rates and literacy-related service needs, as well as a directory of adult literacy services available in the area.

A second private nonprofit, the Greater New Haven Literacy Coalition, is an umbrella organization that was formed to mobilize public awareness and collective action to promote improved literacy of individuals and families throughout its member communities. The coalition's partners include public and private nonprofit service providers, municipalities, school districts, public libraries, and colleges and universities from across the greater New Haven area. In addition to its continuing public education campaign about literacy needs, it has developed a network of literacy professionals and volunteers to support coalition activities and a website with an events calendar, data, and links to literacy resources.

A third community group, the Coalition for a Working Connecticut was formed in 2006 by representatives of a broad array of workforce investment system stakeholders, including nonprofit agencies, advocacy organizations, unions, and state and local education and workforce agencies. It's main purpose is to jointly promote state education and training goals, and develop solutions to increase worker skills and advance family self-sufficiency in Connecticut. Coalitions with similar membership and purposes are active in the other New England states.

The coalition is interested in work-related literacy issues from both the worker's and employer's view. It supports investment in both adult and higher education. One of the coalition's key initiatives for the 2007 legislative session is to seek substantial increases in current and future state funding for basic skills and English language instruction, including incumbent worker education programs for low-skill, low-wage workers.



### Funding

Funding for adult literacy services in Connecticut is available from various federal, state, and local government sources. However, the state's major fiscal resource dedicated to adult literacy services is federal and state grant money, and required local matching funds, that support the state's mandated adult education programs. In FY 05, federal, state and local funds expended on the adult education system totaled approximately \$40.0 million. (At the time of the committee study, FY 05 fiscal data were the most recent available for both federal and state grants). Analysis of funding provided for Connecticut's adult education system, along with a brief description of the federal and state grant funding process, is presented in this chapter.

Public funding that supports adult literacy services other than adult education grants is difficult to identify. In some cases, the federal workforce investment grant funding the state receives for employment and training programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth (WIA Title I programs) may be used to improve literacy levels of WIA clients. The amount of WIA funding allocated to job-related basic skills classes, high school completion programs, or ESL courses, however, is not known.

Similarly, some of the state's budget for its welfare-to-work program, Jobs First Employment Services, can be allocated for services intended to increase participant employability by improving their literacy skills. Most recently, the legislature appropriated state funds in FY 07 for TANF Job Reorganization, an initiative intended to improve the state's federal work participation rate that encompasses some literacy services for JFES clients. For the current fiscal year, funding for TANF Jobs Reorganization, which is a separate account within the labor department budget, totals \$6.5 million. About \$3 million was allocated for workplace education, other basic literacy skills, and ESL instruction connected with vocational and occupational skills training. Information on other possible funding sources for adult literacy services for welfare clients has not been compiled.

The state's federal Even Start Family Literacy grant, which totaled less than \$2 million in FY 05, also can be used in part to improve parents' basic literacy and English language skills. An estimate of Even Start spending for adult services was not available but state education department staff believe it is a small component of the total program budget.

This is due in part to the fact Even Start programs, as well as WIA and JFES programs, try to rely on local adult education classes to meet their clients' needs for basic literacy skills since they are generally provided at no charge to participants.<sup>15</sup> As discussed above, information on the resources within the workforce investment and welfare systems for adult literacy services (other than mandated adult education) is not readily available. Program review committee staff

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<sup>15</sup> The extent to which the adult education system is used by workforce development and family literacy program providers could not be determined due to the absence of a consistent referral policy or the capacity to track students across systems and programs. Findings regarding the lack of consistent, centralized information on adult literacy services are summarized in Chapter V.

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worked with the state labor department and the regional workforce boards to develop estimates of funding they used for adult literacy services in FY 07.

Based on information provided by the WIB executive directors, resource for adult literacy services beyond the adult education system appear to be relatively minor. In FY 07, the five boards together allocated an estimated \$3.4 million for services aimed at improving the basic academic skills and English language proficiency of their clients. Individual board funding for adult literacy programs ranged from around \$300,000 to just over \$1 million. The primary sources were: JFES and WIA program monies, and the newly established TANF Job Reorganization Program.

Smaller amounts of funding for adult literacy services have come to the boards through the DOL incumbent worker training program and some private grants. Since the late 1970s, the state Department of Labor has funded customized job/incumbent worker training, which can include services to improve the literacy skills of currently employed adults and in some cases job seekers. Over time, total program funding has been about \$1 million per year although the budget peaked at \$4 million in FY 03. Since that year, however, annual state funding has dropped to about \$500,000, which the department has supplemented in some cases with some small amounts of federal (WIA reserve) funding. It is not known what portion of incumbent worker training funds are used for basic skills and ESL services.

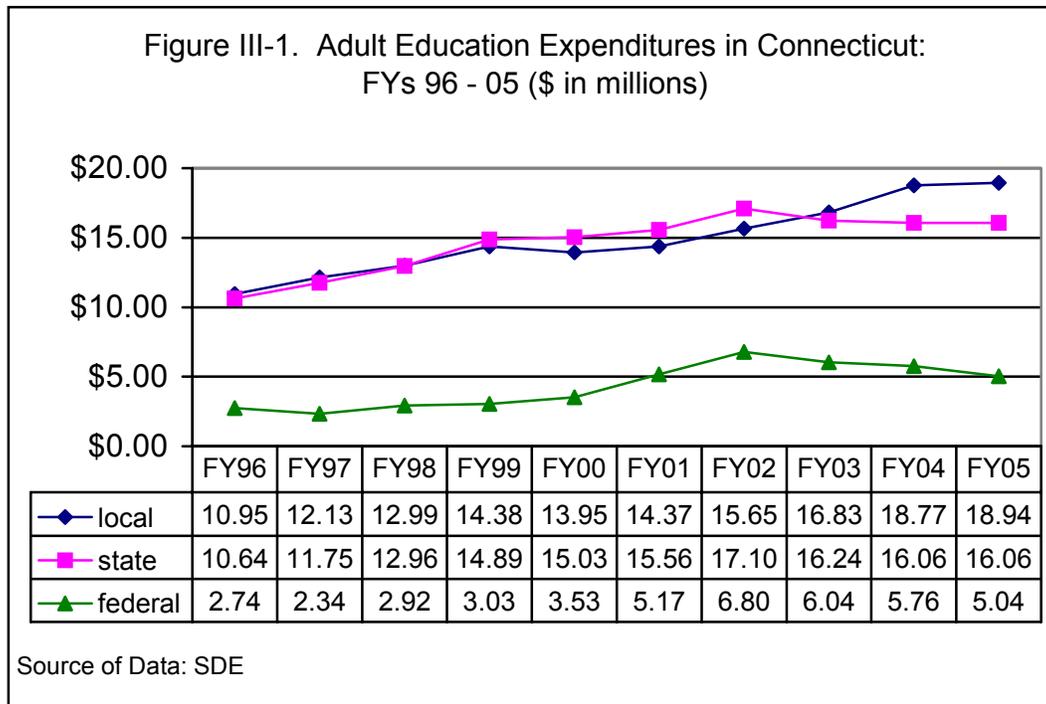
The federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) administered by the state labor department is another source of funding for adult literacy services. The program provides job training and education assistance to workers who are unemployed because of national trade policies. The amount of TAA funding used for adult literacy isn't known but DOL reports that between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2006, 221 program participants were referred for adult basic education services (158 for ESL and 73 for ABE/GED).

In the current fiscal year, DOL is administering another new program aimed, in part, at improving the literacy skills of adults-- the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Skills program. The FY 07 appropriation for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Skills is \$1 million, with 5 percent set aside for administrative costs. Allocation of the funds had not been finalized at the time this report was completed; however, one plan had \$150,000 directed to pilot projects involving collaborative workforce education services provided by adult education programs and community colleges.

Committee staff also worked with the community-technical colleges to try to determine what resources within that system are applied to adult literacy services. The direct costs of the college's developmental education programs are paid through user fees as are expenses related to the system's noncredit continuing education and customized training programs for business and industry. Support for the basic academic skills and ESL courses provided through community colleges, therefore, is likely to be primarily "in-kind," such as classroom space and general administrative functions (e.g., registration, scheduling, recordkeeping). In the end, the colleges' budget staff was unable to provide estimates of direct or indirect funding for activities related to adult literacy within study timeframe.

## Adult Education Funding

Federal, state, and local levels of government contribute funds to support Connecticut's system of mandated adult education programs. Federal AEFLA grants, state adult education grants, and local funds expended on the adult education from for each year between FY 96 and FY 05 are shown in Figure III-1.<sup>16</sup>



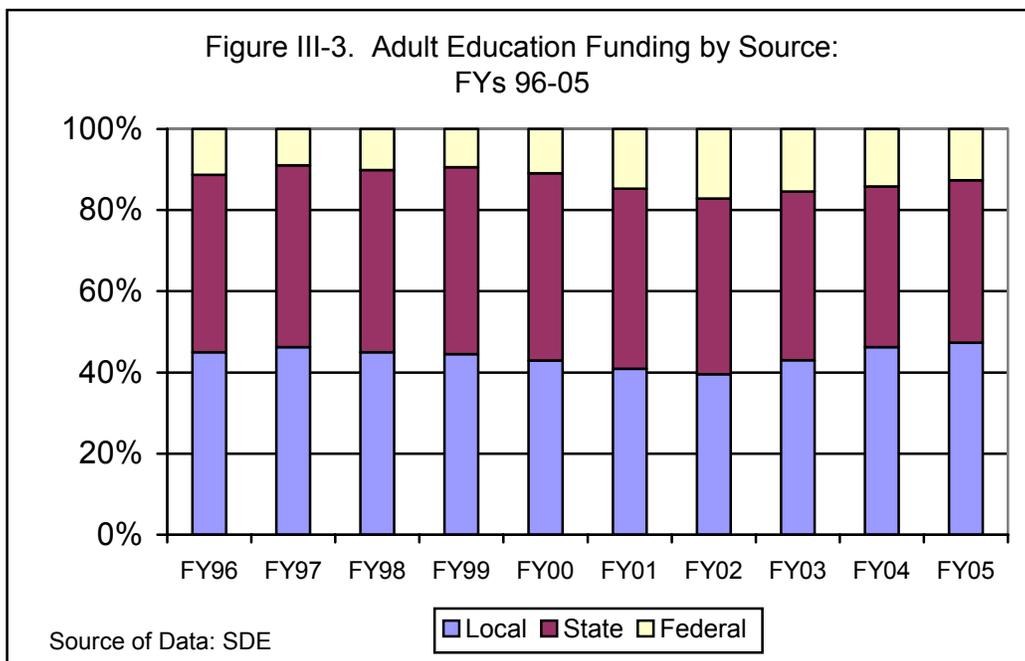
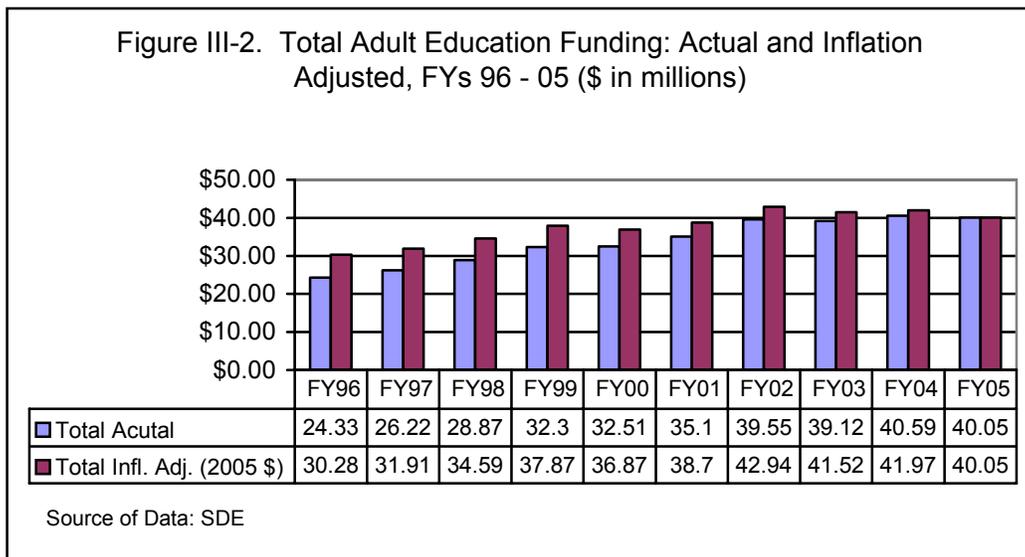
As the figure shows, state and federal funding levels peaked in FY 02 and have since flattened or dropped off. The federal trend reflects, in part, special, one-time bonus funding Connecticut received in FY 02 due to previous good performance on adult education activity measures. Decreases in state funding are related to poor fiscal conditions. Budget deficits in Connecticut in recent fiscal years led the legislature to reduce or cap appropriations for many state programs including grants for adult education. In contrast, local funding for adult education has steadily increased in recent years to at least maintain the same overall level of support for the system. Since FY 03, local funding has been the largest source for adult education.

Figure III-2 presents total funding levels for the state's adult education system, in both actual and inflation-adjusted (2005) dollars, for each year from FY 96 to FY 05. Except for one year (FY 00), the system experienced small annual funding increases through FY 02, even

<sup>16</sup> The amounts shown in the figure do not include state funds the education department is allowed to use for grant program administration (i.e., not more than 5 percent of state funds appropriated for adult education program). For FY 06, the agency administrative expenses for adult education totaled \$979,820, which was used for computer consultant costs related to the CARS database as well as department GED and EDP costs (e.g., test leasing, state and local site licensing fees, and travel) and some salary costs for two staff positions).

adjusting for inflation,. Since that year, adult education programs in Connecticut have essentially been “flat funded” and, when adjusted for inflation, there has been a decline in financial support.

Figure III-3 shows the portion of adult education system funding from each government source for the 10-year period ending in FY 05. The state and local shares of funding for Connecticut’s adult education system funding have been relatively equal over time, averaging about 44 percent each, while the federal contribution has averaged 12 percent of total funding. However, as the figure indicates, local government funding has been the largest source for the system in the last three fiscal years and has accounted for an increasing percentage of total expenditures (43.0, 46.2 and 47.3 percent, respectively) each year.



In comparison to other states, Connecticut state and local governments provide a high level of financial support for adult education. Eligibility for federal AEFLA grant funding requires a minimum 25 percent match from state and local sources although the majority of states, like Connecticut, provide a much greater portion. Based on FY 02 comparative data, the most recent available, Connecticut, at 85 percent, was one of 12 states at or above 74 percent, the national average for state and local share of adult education expenditures. The nonfederal share of adult education expenditures ranged from the minimum 25 percent (in six states) to 90 percent (in Florida).

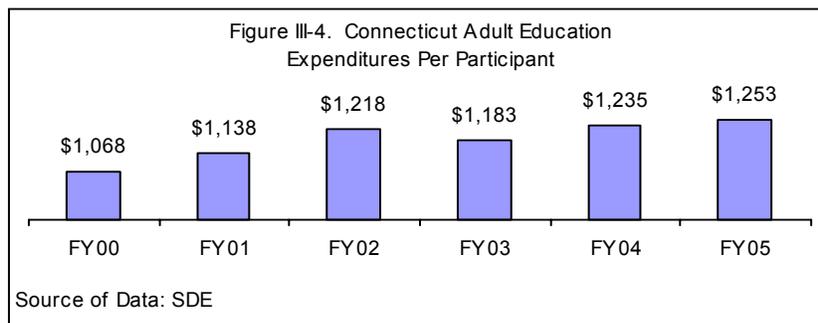
Comparative data also show Connecticut, like most states in the Northeast, provides more adult education funding on a per participant basis than most of the country. Table III-1 presents the total dollars spent per adult education program participant in FY 02, the most recent available information, for each state in the Northeast and for the U.S. on average.

<b>Table III-1. Total Adult Education Spending Per Participant: FY 02</b>	
	<b>Total Per Participant</b>
<b>U.S. Average</b>	\$803
<b>Northeast Region</b>	
Connecticut	\$1,260
Maine	\$1,361
Massachusetts	\$1,904
New Hampshire	\$616
New Jersey	\$1,067
New York	\$830
Rhode Island	\$1,140
Vermont (U.S. Highest)	\$2,683
<b>U.S. Lowest</b>	
Georgia	\$208
Source of Data: U.S. Dept. of Education AEFLA Program Facts, December 2005	

Connecticut, at \$1,260, had the fourth highest adult education spending level in the region and seventh highest in the nation. Vermont, at \$2,683, was first in the region as well as in the nation. New Hampshire, at \$616, had the lowest per-participant spending in the region and was the only Northeast state below the national average (\$803). The lowest spending state in the country in FY 02 was Georgia (\$208).

Trends in Connecticut's total adult education spending per participant between 2000 and 2005 are shown in Figure III-4.<sup>17</sup> Over the six-year period, the expenditure rate grew about 17 percent, from \$1,068 to \$1,253. However, annual increases have varied from 1.5

percent to 7.1 percent and per pupil spending actually declined between FY 02 and FY 03 (2.9 percent) and FY 00 and the prior year (2.3 percent).



<sup>17</sup> The FY 02 amount in the figure differs from that in Table III-1 because the national comparative data is based on reported spending (estimates) at the time while the Figure III-4 data are actual expenditures finalized by SDE.

**Federal grant.** Federal funding for adult literacy activities under AEFLA is allocated to states according to statutory formula. State administering agencies are then required to distribute the bulk of the federal funds received to eligible local providers of adult education services on competitive basis.

In Connecticut, the State Department of Education receives Connecticut's AEFLA monies and uses a request-for-proposal process award federal funds to local providers for what it calls Program Improvement Project (PIP) grants. It is the department's policy to use the federal funding to: supplement state and local support for adult education programs; enhance services by expanding the numbers and types of local providers; and support the state's priority funding areas. The present priority areas are: workplace preparation; workplace education; family literacy; transition to post-secondary education and training; technology implementation; English language acquisition; and the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (an Internet-based, on-line learning system for adult education participants).

For FY 06, 34 adult education providers received a total of just over \$3.8 million in federal AEFLA funding from the state education department for 92 different Program Improvement Projects. The typical PIP grant amount was \$50,000 and individual grants ranged from \$10,900 for an English language acquisition program at the East Haven Adult Education program to \$250,000 for the consortium of providers developing the adult virtual high school. Most of the PIP grant recipients (25) were local school district adult education programs and RESCs, and 9 were CEEs and other types of providers. Of the 71 current adult education providers in the state, 37 received no federal funding in FY 06.

As noted above, under the federal Workforce Investment Act, states are eligible for additional federal funding – incentive grants -- when performance targets for all WIA-funded programs are exceeded.<sup>18</sup> Based on its 2001 performance, Connecticut received an additional \$1,652,500 in federal funding for 2002. A portion of this bonus funding was allotted to the State Department of Education for development of its workforce education initiative. The state adult education and other WIA programs reached all federal goals again in FY 2004. In April 2006, Connecticut was notified it was one of 23 states eligible for an incentive bonus and would receive an additional \$637,907 in WIA funding.

**State adult education grants.** State law requires local school districts to provide mandated adult education services free of charge; a portion of the cost is then reimbursed according to a sliding-scale formula based on relative municipal wealth. Districts determine how much local funding will be allocated their education programs each year, submit their program budgets to the State Education Department and apply for their state reimbursement through the department's grant process.

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<sup>18</sup> While the state's adult education system has met or exceeded its federal performance goals every year, federal law requires all WIA-funded programs in a state (e.g., Title I employment and training for adults, dislocated workers, and youth and Wagner-Peyser labor exchange employment services overseen by DOL) achieve their targets in order for a state to receive an incentive bonus.

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At present, the state share of mandated adult education program expenses ranges from 0 to 65 percent of eligible costs. In the past, the reimbursement rates were higher (30 to 70 percent) but due to state fiscal constraints they were reduced to the current levels in 1992. Appendix H shows the preliminary FY 07 reimbursement percentages calculated by SDE for each district.

Under the adult education grant formula, the wealthiest districts, which are at the lowest percentages, receive little or no state funding. For example, in FY 07, Greenwich is at the 0 percent rate and two other communities (Darien and New Canann) are at rates less than 1 percent. Districts in poor cities (e.g., Hartford, Norwich, New Britain, Waterbury, Windham, Bridgeport, New Haven), as expected, have the highest reimbursement rates.

State adult education grant payments in FY 05, the most recent data available, are shown for each district in Appendix I. In that fiscal year, grant amounts ranged from no state aid in Greenwich to over \$3.3 million in Hartford. The median state grant payment was \$8,950 and 19 districts received less than \$1,000 in state adult education funding. As Appendix I also shows, the local share of state and local actual expenditures on adult education ranged from 44 percent in Norwich and Windham to 100 percent in Greenwich and New Canaan, and averaged almost 70 percent, based on FY 05 data.

As discussed earlier, beginning in FY 03, the funding level for the adult education grant has been capped so the legislature has not appropriated the amount required to meet the total payments to towns authorized under the grant formula. An analysis by SDE, summarized in Table III-2, below, indicates state grant funding to adult education program providers was reduced by about 5 percent to more than 18 percent a year between FY 04 and FY 07 because of the cap on appropriations.

<b>Table III-2. State Adult Education Grant Funding: Requested and Available, FY 04 – FY 07</b>				
	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05</b>	<b>FY 06</b>	<b>FY 07</b>
Amount Requested	\$19,101,486	\$19,699,598	\$19,109,510	\$20,015,913
Amount Available	\$16,064,500	\$16,064,500	\$18,616,580	\$18,616,580
Projected Difference	\$3,036,986	\$3,635,098	\$1,006,246	\$1,952,232
State Funding Reduction (approximate)	15.9%	18.45%	5.13%	9.49%

Source: SDE, Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education (September 2006).

In response to state funding reductions, towns must either reduce their budgets for adult education or make up the difference with local resources to maintain their planned level of services. The funding situation for towns is complicated by the fact they receive their state adult education reimbursement grant in two payments, with the second occurring near end of school year, usually in May. If towns receive notice from SDE that the final amount they will paid is less than originally projected, little time remains in their own fiscal years to find additional local funds to cover costs incurred by the adult education program. This funding uncertainty makes it difficult to plan and deliver adult education services and has resulted in program cut-backs in some communities.



### **Adult Education Participants, Programs, and Outcomes**

The adult education programs carried out by local school districts and overseen by the State Education Department are the core of the state's adult literacy services. The adult education system is long-established with dedicated state funding. Partly in response to federal mandates, SDE has developed an adult education program database that contains extensive demographic, program participation, and student performance information by individual. A profile of the population served by the adult education system in Connecticut is provided in this section. Analysis of selected student outcome data compiled by the department is also presented.

At this time, the department does not maintain comprehensive centralized information on waiting lists or course schedules (e.g., availability of daytime, evening, weekend, and summer courses, number of classes offered per week, etc.) for all adult education providers. Supplemental information developed by program review committee staff to permit some assessment of the demand for adult education programs, as well as service accessibility and intentivity, is summarized in this chapter.

#### **Adult Education System Population**

In recent years, more than 30,000 persons have attended adult education programs annually in Connecticut. In accordance with federal data reporting standards, only students attending a mandated adult education program (i.e., Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, English as a Second Language or Citizenship) for at least 12 hours in a fiscal year are included as participants. In Connecticut, more than 80 percent of adult education students attend class for 12 or more hours. However, this means almost one in five students, in essence, drop out of adult education programs.

The total number of adult education participants each year from FY 99 through FY 05, the most recent available annual data, is shown in Figure IV-1.<sup>19</sup> As the figure shows, the total adult education student population grew from 29,543 in FY 99 to 33,062 in FY 03, representing an 11 percent overall increase. During the last two fiscal years, FY 03 and FY 05, the total student population decreased 3 percent to 31,958 participants.

According to the state education department, the growth in the students from FY 99 to FY 02 was the result of increased federal, state, and local funding for adult education programs. SDE attributes the decline in student population in FY 04 and FY 05 to the cap on state adult education grant funding and subsequent reductions in program offerings by local providers. As a result, fewer students attended adult education classes, and for fewer hours, especially in the Adult Basic Education programs. SDE also believes adult education programs were offered in

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<sup>19</sup> Students attending Citizenship classes were not included in Figure IV-1 since data for that program were unavailable for FY 99 and FY 00. The Citizenship program is small relative to the other adult education programs, accounting for less than 2 percent of the total student population. The number of students attending Citizenship classes for 12 hours or more each fiscal year from FY 01 and FY 05 was: 480, 521, 471, 506, and 486, respectively.

fewer sites due to the combining or eliminating of classes to cuts costs, which also had an impact on student access.

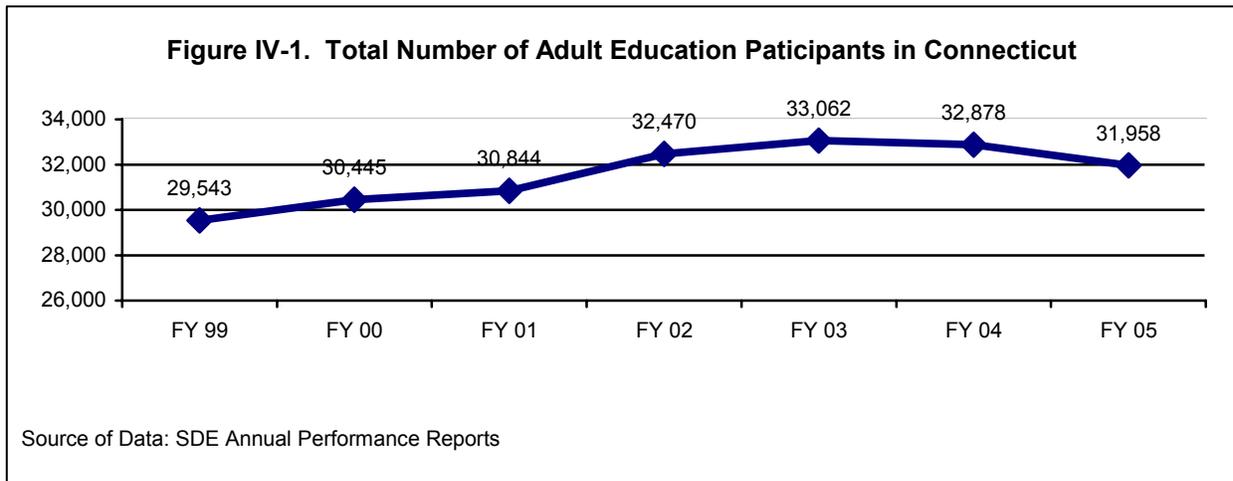
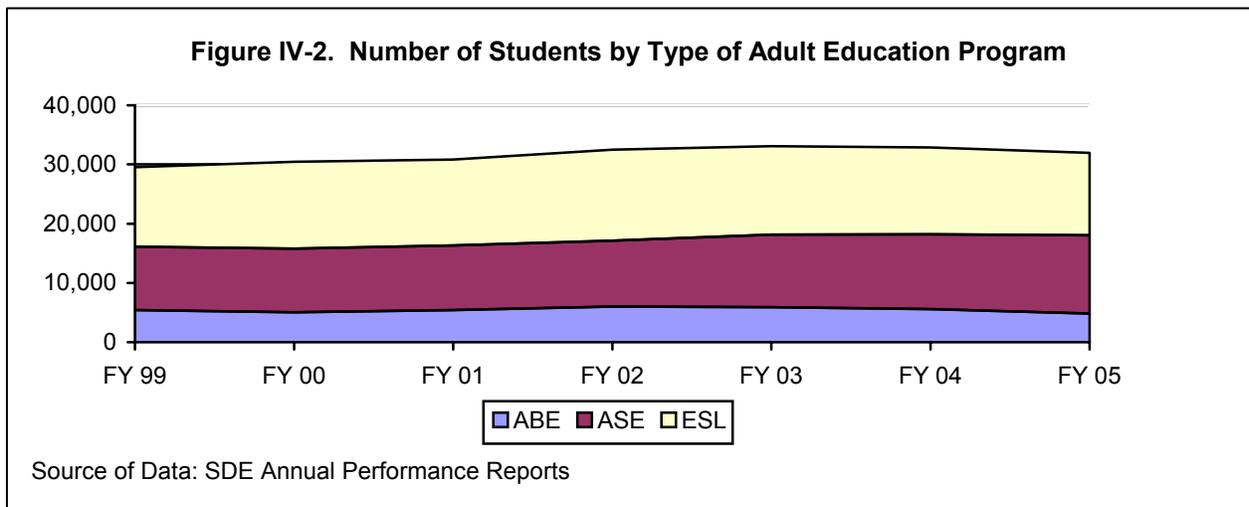


Figure IV-2 illustrates the total number of students attending ABE, ASE, and ESL programs each year from FY 99 through FY 05. In general, the number (and percentage) of students attending by program category has remained stable over the time period shown. Students attending ESL classes consistently represent the largest portion (at least 44 percent) of the total student population. More than one-third of adult education students (between 34 and 41 percent) participated in the ASE program and about 17 percent on average were ABE students.



In Connecticut and nationally, based on the most recent available comparative data, the greatest portion of adult education students attend ESL programs -- about 44 percent in FY 04. Unlike most states, Connecticut has a larger percentage of the student population enrolled in secondary level programs (ASE) than in basic adult education (ABE) classes. For FY 04, about 17 percent of the state's student population was enrolled in ABE programs as compared to the

national rate of nearly 40 percent; almost 38 percent of the Connecticut adult education population attended ASE programs while the national rate was just under 17 percent.

### **Adult Education Student Profile**

State Department of Education demographic data on the adult education student population were used to develop a profile of the individuals that participate in adult education programs. The analysis is based on data from FY 99 through FY 05, which are the most recent available. The general profile of the adult education population in Connecticut has remained fairly consistent over this time period and can be summarized as follows:

- Most adult education students (69 percent) are identified as belonging to a minority race or ethnic group; Hispanic or Latino students represent the largest percentage (about 40 percent).
- More than half of adult education students (52 percent) are between the ages of 25 and 59, often considered the prime employment years.
- One in five adult education participants are between 16 and 18 years old; these students are legally entitled to attend a public comprehensive high school unless expelled or they chose to withdraw.
- Female students comprise a slight majority (53 percent).
- The fastest growing segment of the adult education population is Hispanic/Latino persons between the ages of 45 to 59 who are enrolled in English as a Second Language programs.

There have been some fluctuations in the demographic make-up of the adult education student population, as the more detailed information on race, ethnicity, gender, and age provided below demonstrates. However, according to SDE, none of the changes to date appear to be significant enough to require any major alteration in its adult education mission, policy, procedure, or funding practices.

**Race and ethnicity.** As shown in Table IV-1, the racial and ethnic breakdown of students attending adult education programs has remained relatively the same since FY 99 with the majority of students (at least 64 percent) identified as members of a minority group: African American (Black), Hispanic or Latino, and Other (i.e., Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander). Less than one-third are Caucasian (White).

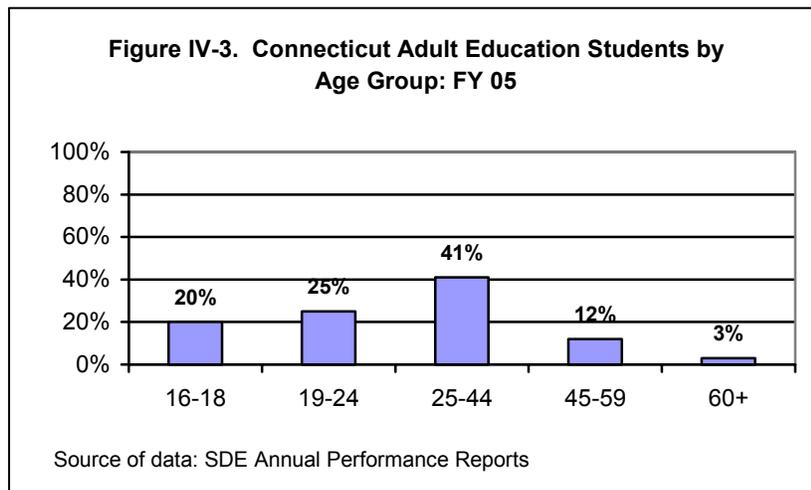
One trend is the gradual increase in portion of students in the Hispanic/Latino group while the Caucasian student population has been slowly declining. SDE staff noted a growing number of Hispanic/Latino students are from Central and South American countries (e.g., Brazil, Ecuador) and most are participating in ESL classes.

Table IV- 1. Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Connecticut Adult Education Students									
FY	Caucasian (White)		African American (Black)		Hispanic/Latino		Other*		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
FY 99	10,367	35%	5,817	20%	10,869	37%	2,490	8%	29,543
FY 00	10,960	36%	5,905	19%	11,204	37%	2,376	8%	30,445
FY 01	10,281	33%	5,882	19%	12,306	40%	2,375	8%	30,844
FY 02	9,768	30%	6,710	21%	13,512	42%	2,480	8%	32,470
FY 03	9,342	28%	6,869	21%	14,337	43%	2,514	8%	33,062
FY 04	9,442	29%	6,885	21%	14,279	43%	2,272	7%	32,878
FY 05	9,011	28%	6,798	21%	13,980	44%	2,169	7%	31,958

\*Other race/ethnicity category includes; Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander.

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports

**Gender and age.** In each of the fiscal years examined, the division between male and female students has been nearly equal, with females being a slight majority. In FY 05, for example, females student represented 53 percent of the total adult education population.



Similarly, during the seven fiscal years under review, the age make-up of the adult education population has fairly consistent. The FY 05 data presented in Figure IV-3 is typical of the student breakdown by age grouping. More than half of all adult education students that year (52 percent) were between the ages of 25 and 59, which are usually considered prime employment years.

Trends in the adult education student population by age group, as measured by annual percent change, are shown in Table IV-2. In summary, analysis of these data shows:

- Adult education students between the ages of 25 and 44 represented the single largest number of students.
- However, students in the 19-to-24 and the 45-to-59 age groups showed the most growth; each increased about 20 percent between FY 99 and FY 05.
- Adult learners in the 45-to- 59 age group showed the most consistent growth, experiencing a small decrease (1 percent) in only one fiscal year (FY 04).
- The 19-to-24 age group experienced overall growth of about 20 percent between FY 99 and FY 05 but increases in FYs 00-02 were followed by declines in FYs 03-05. This age group experienced the greatest single-year growth, increasing 15 percent from FY 01 to FY 02.

- Between FY 02 and FY 05, the number of students in the 16-to-18 age group increased by 12 percent, while the number in most of the older age groups declined or showed a small percentage increase. SDE staff noted students in this category predominately participate in ASE programs, especially the adult high school credit diploma program.
- Over the seven-year period, there has been a sizeable decrease (25 percent) in the adult education student population who are 60 and older.

FY	16-18 Yrs		19-24 Yrs		25-44 Yrs		45-59 Yrs		60+ Yrs	
	#	% change	#	% change						
FY 99	6,103		6,700		12,586		3,075		1,079	
FY 00	6,340	3.9%	6,818	1.8%	13,072	3.9%	3,183	3.5%	1,032	-4.4%
FY 01	5,979	-5.7%	7,165	5.1%	13,351	2.1%	3,426	7.6%	923	-10.6%
FY 02	5,759	-3.7%	8,216	14.7%	14,020	5%	3,556	3.8%	919	-0.4%
FY 03	6,165	7%	8,460	3%	13,873	-1%	3,705	4.2%	859	-6.5%
FY 04	6,411	4%	8,248	-2.5%	13,721	-1.1%	3,656	-1.3%	842	-2%
FY 05	6,430	0.3%	8,045	-2.5%	12,989	-5.3%	3,687	0.8%	807	-4.2%

\*Growth is measured as the percent change between each fiscal year. A positive number indicates an increase and a negative number indicates a decrease.

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports

Program participation by age group for FY 04 is presented in Table IV-3. The FY 04 data were used to allow for comparison with the most recent national statistics on the age breakdown of students in ABE, ASE, and ESL program. Connecticut's patterns in program enrollment by age group were found to be consistent with national averages. In summary, the table shows participation in the three adult education programs varies with age: older learners are more likely to be in the ESL program while most of those under age 25 are participating in secondary and, to a lesser extent, basic adult education programs.

Program	16-18 Yrs.		19-24 Yrs.		25-44 Yrs.		45-59 Yrs.		60+ Yrs.		Program Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ABE	928	14%	1,632	20%	2,278	17%	616	17%	122	14%	5,576 (17%)
ASE	4,993	78%	3,942	48%	3,055	22%	570	16%	67	8%	12,627 (38%)
ESL	490	8%	2,674	32%	8,388	61%	2,470	68%	653	78%	14,675 (45%)
<b>Total No.</b>	6,411	(19%)	8,248	(25%)	13,721	(42%)	3,656	(11%)	842	(3%)	32,878 (100%)

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Report: FY 04

**Employment status.** At the time of their enrollment, adult education students report on their employment status. Unemployed participants further report whether they have a goal of obtaining employment or whether they are not seeking to enter the job market at this time. Table IV-5 presents four years of information on how many students reported being employed or unemployed at the time of their enrollment .

In all four years shown, at least 43 percent of the students reported being employed when they enrolled in an adult education program. Each year, about one-third of participants were unemployed but seeking employment while the remaining 23 to 25 percent reported they were unemployed and not intending to enter the job market at the time of enrollment.

<b>Table IV-5. Participant Employment Status On Entry to Adult Education</b>								
<b>Reported Status</b>	<b>FY 02</b>		<b>FY 03</b>		<b>FY 04</b>		<b>FY 05</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Employed</b>	14,388	44%	14,155	43%	14,297	43%	13,847	43%
<b>Unemployed/Seeking Employment</b>	9,989	31%	11,402	34%	11,385	35%	10,724	34%
<b>Unemployed/Not Seeking Eemployment</b>	8,093	25%	7,500	23%	7,196	22%	7,387	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,470</b>		<b>33,057</b>		<b>32,878</b>		<b>31,958</b>	
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports								

### **Adult Education Student Performance**

Program review committee staff examined outcomes of Connecticut’s adult education system as measured by the five federal NRS core performance measures: (1) educational gain; (2) high school completion; (3) transition to postsecondary education; (4) obtain employment; and (5) retain employment. Students set goals for themselves based on these measures when they enter adult education programs and program outcomes are based on the percentage of students who achieve their goals.

The program review analysis of students outcomes, presented in more detail below, generally found:

- Connecticut has met or exceeded the national standard for all core measures except for the number of adult education students transitioning into postsecondary education.
- Overall, adult education student performance has been relatively constant.
- Most ABE and ESL students achieved some educational gain and almost all of those with gains advanced at least one performance level.
- Very few ABE and ESL students (less than 5 percent) dropped out.
- Adult education students attended on average 85 hours per fiscal year.
- On average, ASE and ESL students with higher proficiency levels attended more hours than their counterparts entering at lower proficiency levels; the pattern was opposite for ABE students -- students at lower proficiency levels attended, on average, more hours than higher proficiency level students.
- Only about half of the students awarded a GED diploma prepared for the exam through an adult education program.
- The number of adult education students with a goal of transitioning to postsecondary education and training programs is very small, typically less than 100 per year.

- Adult education students with a goal of employment were more likely to be employed than those students participating in adult education for educational enhancement purposes.

**National performance statistics.** The U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) annually produces a report to Congress that provides performance data for each of the core NRS measures on a state-by-state basis as well as aggregate national ratings. According to the OVAE report for FY 04, which is the most recent available:

- 43 states met or exceeded the national average educational gain for ABE programs and 39 states met or exceeded ESL educational gain averages;
- 40 states met or exceeded the national average for high school completion;
- 43 states met or exceeded the national average for students transitioning into postsecondary education and training;
- 40 states met or exceeded the national average for obtaining employment; and
- 41 states met or exceeded the job retention national averages.

Connecticut met or exceeded the national average for all core measures in FY 04 except for the number of adult education students transitioning into postsecondary education and training. One problem with this measure is Connecticut did not receive a sufficient survey response rate from its adult education students to allow OVAE to validate the state's outcome data. SDE is working to improve its data reporting for this measure and believes a more representative sample will show the number of adult education students who transition into postsecondary education programs, in fact, meets or exceeds the federal target.

**Measuring educational gain.** The National Reporting System, as described in detail in Appendix D, defines educational gain for ABE and ESL programs as the percentage of learners who complete one or more educational function (or proficiency) levels as measured through a standard assessment process. NRS requires that each state establish assessment procedures that identify an ABE or ESL student's initial educational functioning level and then periodically measures education gains in terms of advancement in proficiency level. Students must be assessed at intake (pre-tested) to establish a baseline, and, after a certain period of instruction, post-tested to measure gain.

For students enrolled in Adult Secondary Education Programs (i.e., GED, credit diploma, or external diploma programs), the student's entering educational functioning level is determined based on the high school credits earned prior to enrollment. In accordance with changes that took effect during FY 06, however, Connecticut is implementing a standardized initial assessment process for all ASE students.

Table IV-6 shows the number of Connecticut students by baseline educational proficiency for the ABE, ASE, and ESL programs each year from FY 02 through FY 05. As noted above, entering educational functioning level for ABE and ESL participants is based on

their intake assessment scores, while ASE students are placed on the basis of their earned high school credits.

<b>Table IV-6. Entering Adult Education Students Population by Educational Functioning Levels</b>				
<b>Levels</b>	<b>FY 02*</b>	<b>FY 03</b>	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05**</b>
<b>Adult Basic Education</b>				
Beginning Literacy	693	679	848	823
Beginning Basic Education	689	660	839	874
Intermediate Low	1,902	1,634	1,640	1,367
Intermediate High	2,734	2,948	2,249	1,734
<b>Adult Secondary Education</b>				
Low	9,397	10,533	10,164	10,400
High	1,700	1,697	2,463	2,807
<b>English as a Second Language</b>				
Beginning Literacy	1,716	991	1,000	1,013
Beginning	4,293	4,425	4,309	4,033
Intermediate Low	4,495	4,416	4,366	3,990
Intermediate High	2,534	2,674	2,615	2,640
Low Advanced	2,317	2,405	2,385	2,201
High Advanced	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32,470</b>	<b>33,062</b>	<b>32,878</b>	<b>31,882</b>
*First year of reporting based on proficiency levels.				
**Beginning in FY 05, to protect confidentiality, certain U.S. Department of Education data and tabulations containing information about individuals are suppressed from public reporting. Totals shown for FY 05, therefore, may underrepresent the number of students in a category.				
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports				

The patterns in entering education functioning levels of adult education students has remained basically the same across the four fiscal years shown in the table. One notable difference occurred in baseline proficiency of ABE students between FY 04 and FY 05. SDE staff attributed the decline in the ABE intermediate categories to the impact of the cap on state adult education funding in terms of reducing access to services and the number of adults served. Department staff did not believe the drop necessarily indicates students were entering at lower educational functioning levels.

<b>Table IV-7. Connecticut Adult Education Students Pre- and Post-Tested for Education Gain</b>				
<b>Pre/Post-Tested</b>	<b>FY 02</b>	<b>FY 03</b>	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05</b>
<b>Percent YES</b>	50%	56%	62%	63%
<b>Percent NO</b>	50%	44%	38%	37%
<b>Total No.*</b>	21,373	20,832	20,251	18,743
*ABE and ESL students, but not ASE students are included in the measure at this time.				
Source of data: State Department of Education				

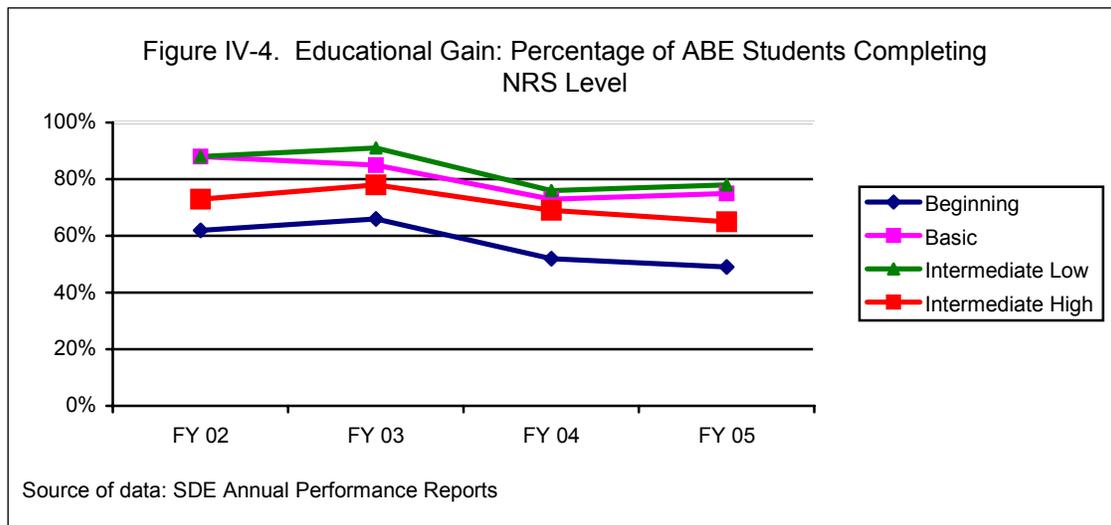
**Testing.** In addition to student performance targets, OVAE also has established a target for the percentage of students a state pre- and post-tests to determine educational gains. The current federal goal is 50 percent. As shown in Table IV-7, at least half of the students enrolled in ABE and ESL programs were pre- and

post-tested in each fiscal year under review. The percentage has steady increased over time and reached almost two-thirds of all students in FY 05.

**Educational gain.** Data regarding education gains is compiled only for those students taking both the pre- and post-tests. The data on gains are tracked by type of program and by entering educational functioning levels of the students. The performance gains of Connecticut ABE and ESL students based on the difference, if any, between their pre-test (baseline) scores and post-test scores for FYs 02 through FY 05 are illustrated in Figures IV-4 and IV-5, respectively.

Federal law requires states to report performance not only by the total number of students who complete an educational functioning level, but also by those who separate from the program before completion, and those who remain within their entering educational functioning level. Performance information for students who separate (drop out before completion) and those who do not complete a level as well as for students who make gains is summarized below for ABE and ESL programs.

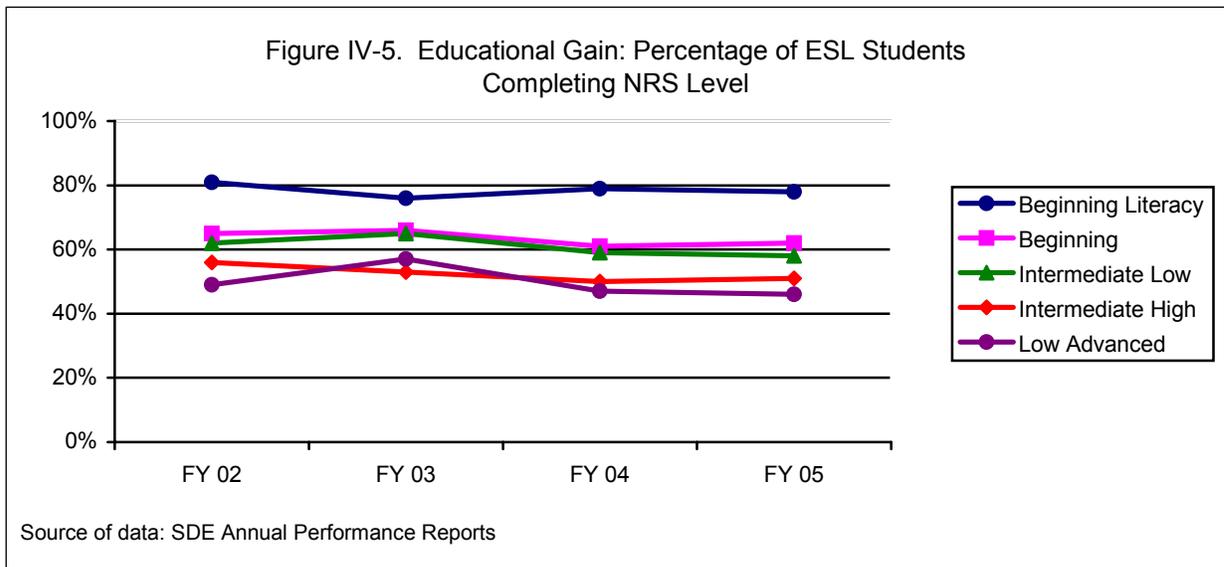
**Adult Basic Education.** Figure IV-4 shows most students in each of the ABE levels made educational gains by achieving post-test scores that allow them to complete the proficiency level in which they were initially placed. Overall, about 75 percent of the ABE students pre- and post-tested made gains.



Furthermore, almost all ABE students who completed a NRS level -- on average, more than 95 percent -- advanced one or more educational functioning levels based on their post-test results. Less than 5 percent of these ABE students were ineligible to advance to the next proficiency level and so remained in the level in which they were initially enrolled. ( Students must score at least one point more than the maximum score for a level to advance to the next proficiency level.).

Very few ABE students drop out: overall, less than 3 percent separated before completing their education functioning level. Each year, fewer than a third of the ABE students continue within the same proficiency level. While these students may have showed some educational gain, their post-test scores are not sufficient to advance to a higher NRS education functioning level.

**English as a Second Language.** Figure IV-5 illustrates the educational gains achieved by ESL students who completed a level. The trends for ESL students are similar to those for the ABE students. In general, most ESL students within the five educational functioning levels showed educational gains by completing a level.<sup>20</sup> Of those completing a level, a large majority, 80 percent, advanced one or more levels.



At the higher ESL levels (intermediate high and low advanced), less than half of the students complete a level at the time of post-testing during a given fiscal year. Very few ESL students (less than 2 percent overall) dropped out before completing a program.<sup>21</sup>

**Hours attended.** The number of attendance hours is not a federal core measure but it is an indicator of program performance tracked by SDE. Over the past seven fiscal years, at least 80 percent of enrolled adult education students attended class for at least 12 hours. In fact, during FY 05, 85 percent of adult education students met the NRS standard for program participation.

<sup>20</sup> The ESL high advanced level is not included because there were no students in that level during the fiscal years under review. SDE historically does not serve students in the highest level. Students at this level typically are well educated in their native language and require very technical skills training. These students generally are referred to the state's community colleges for instruction. In fact, the adult education systems in most states do not serve this population. As a result this level has been eliminated by OVAE beginning in FY 07.

<sup>21</sup> SDE staff believe ESL students are, in general, very motivated students, although they attend, on average, fewer class hours than ABE and ASE students. While these students may remain in an educational functioning level for longer periods than other adult education students, they tend to continue in an adult education program and eventually achieve the proficiency needed to advance.

Table IV-8 present information on average of hours of adult education student attendance for the period FY 02 through FY 05.<sup>22</sup> Overall, adult education participants (all students who attend at least 12 hours per fiscal year) attend 85 hours per fiscal year on average. As the table indicates, average attendance hours varies by program category and educational functioning level.

<b>Table IV-8. Average Hours Attended Per Student by Entering Educational Functioning Level</b>				
<b>Entering Educational Functioning Level</b>	<b>FY 02</b>	<b>FY 03</b>	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05</b>
<b>Adult Basic Education</b>				
Beginning Literacy	98	95	85	88
Beginning Basic Education	108	100	86	92
Intermediate Low	90	81	63	64
Intermediate High	111	100	80	75
<b>Adult Secondary Education</b>				
Low	92	96	100	98
High	179	174	156	145
<b>English as a Second Language</b>				
Beginning Literacy	60	51	56	58
Beginning	67	62	66	65
Intermediate Low	64	61	59	63
Intermediate High	76	68	67	70
Low Advanced	65	68	68	66
High Advanced	0	0	0	0
<b>ALL LEVELS TOTAL AVERAGE</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports				

ASE and ESL students with higher proficiency levels tended to attend class for slightly more hours per year than students in the lower entering educational functioning levels. For example, in FY 05, high-level ASE students attended class an average of 145 hours compared to 98 hours for students at the lower ASE levels. ESL students with highest entering educational functioning level attended for 66 hours compared to 58 hours for ESL students with lowest proficiency.

Among the ABE students there was an opposite pattern. Lower functioning level ABE students attended for an average of 90 hours in FY 05 whereas the higher functioning level ABE students attended for 70 hours.<sup>23</sup> Higher functioning ABE levels, in general, require less remedial instruction than the lower levels, but are still in need of very basic educational skills.

SDE attributes the slight drop in the number of student hours attended in FY 04 and FY 05 to the state cap on adult education funds that resulted in a decrease in available services and the total number of students enrolled. ABE classes showed the largest decline in student hours over those two fiscal years.

<sup>22</sup> The total number of attendance hours was divided by the total number of students within each educational functioning level to calculate an average number of hours per students.

<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, the entering educational functioning levels were grouped as lower and higher. ABE lower entering educational functioning levels included beginning literacy and beginning basic education and the higher levels included intermediate low and high. ASE levels were already grouped as low and high.

**High school completion.** The NRS core measure for high school completion rate is the percentage of adult learners with a high school completion goal who earned a high school diploma or recognized equivalent (GED or EDP). Table IV-9 shows the number of credit diplomas, GED diplomas, and external diplomas awarded to ASE program students during FYs 02 through 05.

Table IV-9. High School Completion Credentials Awarded to ASE Students								
	FY 02		FY 03		FY 04		FY 05	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
GED	3,479	70%	2,697	64%	2,841	58%	2,949	59%
Credit Diploma	1,391	27%	1,411	33%	1,907	39%	1,889	38%
External Diploma	135	3%	115	3%	128	3%	141	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,005</b>		<b>4,223</b>		<b>4,876</b>		<b>4,979</b>	
Source of data: State Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education and Nutrition Programs								

The majority of students over the four-year period were awarded GED diplomas. The State Department of Education reported, however, that only about half of those students earned their GED diploma after preparing for the test through an adult education program. The other students passed the GED test without participating in adult education, although they may have received other types of preparation services (e.g., through Literacy Volunteers or public library or other community-based literacy programs). Because SDE administers the GED testing program, data are collected for all students earning a GED, whether they prepared through an adult education program or other means.

The number of GED diplomas awarded dropped from 3,479 in FY 02, when almost 70 percent of ASE students awarded a diploma earned a GED, to 2,697 (58 percent) in FY 03. SDE attributed the decrease to a new, more rigorous version of the examination introduced in January 2002, which fewer students successfully completed in FY 03. The number of GED diplomas awarded increased in FY 04 and again in FY 05. Education department staff noted changes made to the adult education program curriculum in response to the new GED test may be part of the reason for the improvement.

In regard to credit diplomas, almost 40 percent of ASE students meeting high school completion requirements were issued a credit diploma in FY 04 and 05. This was up from about one-third of students in FY 03 and less than 30 percent in FY 02.

**Postsecondary education.** Another core federal performance measure is the percentage of adult learners who set a goal to continue their education at the postsecondary level and who actually enter postsecondary education or training after completing an adult education program. To collect this outcome information, SDE surveys adult education students with a goal of entering postsecondary education to determine whether their status. OVAE requires a 50 percent survey response rate for the data to be considered valid. Until FY 05, Connecticut did not meet the NRS survey response rate for national comparison purposes.<sup>24</sup> According to SDE, Connecticut achieved a 66 percent response rate that year due to substantially increased survey follow up efforts.

<sup>24</sup> SDE had a 22 percent survey response rate in FY 02, 49 percent rate in FY 03, and 32 percent rate in FY 04.

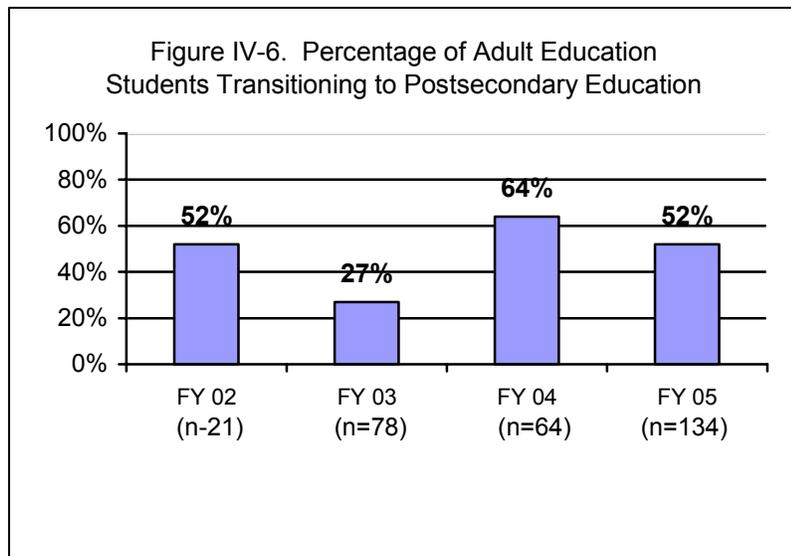
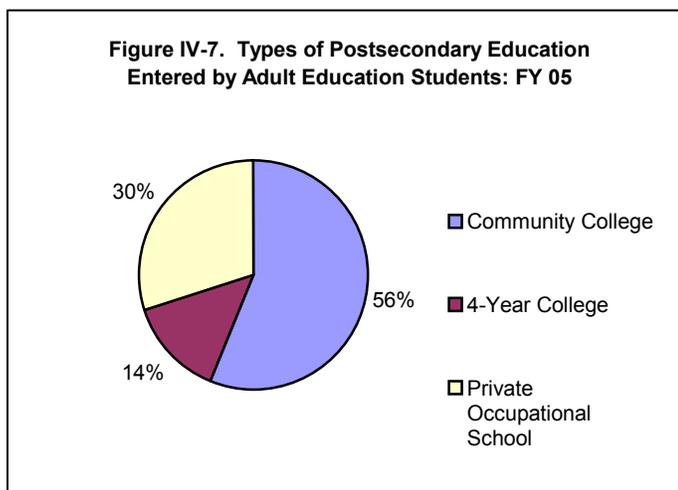


Figure IV-6 shows the percentage of students with the goal of transitioning from an adult education program to a postsecondary program who achieved that goal each year from FY 02 through FY 05. This measure ranged from 27 percent to 52 percent. However, as the figure indicates, the total number of students represented is very small. As noted earlier, SDE staff believe that the actual number of adult education students who go on to postsecondary education and training programs is much larger

and are planning to develop better data needed to support this contention.

SDE began collecting data on the types of postsecondary education programs in which adult education students enrolled in FY 05. Information was compiled for 70 students that year and is summarized in Figure IV-7. The figure shows, just over half of these students (56 percent) transitioned from an adult education program to a community college while the remainder enrolled in either a private occupational school or a four-year higher education institution.



At this time, there is little additional outcome information about adult education students who transition to postsecondary education programs. SDE can not, for example, readily compile information on the number of students who complete postsecondary education programs or what types of degrees, certificates, or licenses they earn. Confidentiality issues, incompatible automated information systems, and limited research capacity are among the reasons for the lack of data on long-term program results.

**Employment.** There are two core NRS measures related to employment. One is the percentage of unemployed adult learners with an employment goal who obtained a job within one quarter after exiting adult education programs. The second is the percentage of adult learners with a job retention goal who entered employment within one quarter after exiting a program and were still employed in the third quarter after program exit.

SDE and the state Department of Labor work collaboratively to gather and analyze data for the two NRS employment measures. SDE compiles a database of adult education students with employment goals and that is matched to information in the DOL employment system by social security numbers. (Students who do not have or do not provide social security numbers cannot be included.) DOL provides SDE with data on whether students entered employment or retained employment. Aggregate, but not individual, wage data are also provided.

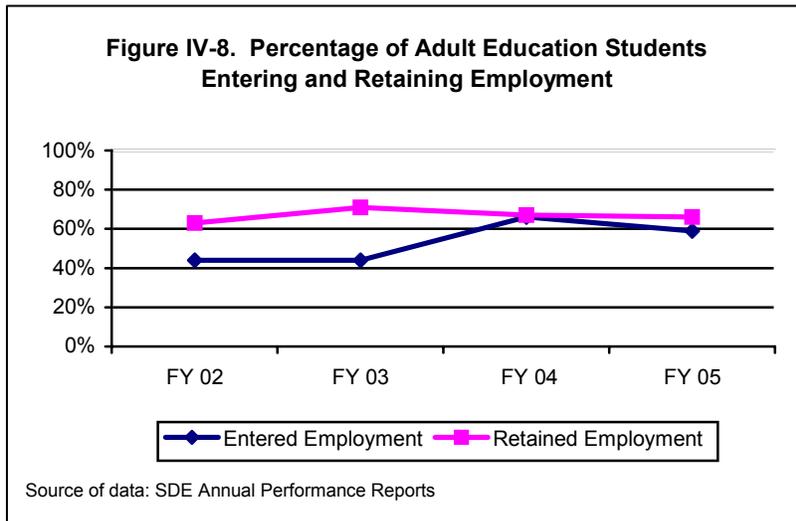


Figure IV-8 shows the percentage of adult education students with an employment goal who entered employment or who retained employment. The portion of students entering the job market increased significantly during FYs 04 and 05. In each year, more than half of the students with a goal of employment had jobs, up just over 40 percent in FY 02 and FY 03.

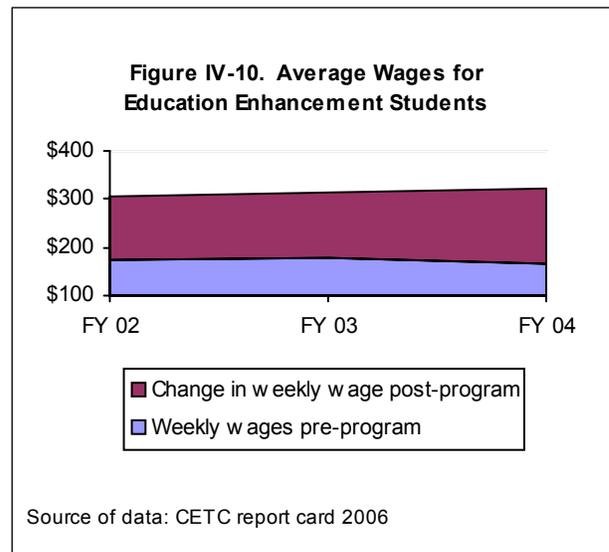
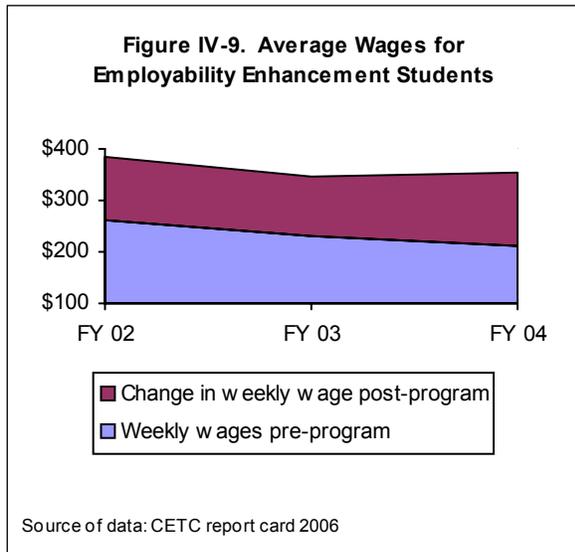
The percentage of adult education students with an employment goal who retained employment has remained relatively steady during the period shown in the figure. Each year, about two-thirds of the students achieved their job retention goal.

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, as statutorily required, reports on the results of all state workforce development programs including adult education programs. Its annual *Report Card for Employment and Training Programs* includes information on average wages of participants by program. Trends in wages earned by adult education students for FY 02 through FY 05 reported in the 2006 report card are shown in Figures IV-9 and IV-10. The data were analyzed separately for students with employment goals and those with educational goals.

Overall, during FY 02 through FY 04, CETC found students participating in adult education program for employability enhancement were more likely to be employed pre- and post-program than those students participating for education enhancement. The CETC report also showed:

- In FY 04, employability enhancement students were earning an average of \$355 per week after completing an adult education program as compared to an average of \$320 per week earned by education enhancement students.
- Upon completion of an adult education program, both groups, on average, increased their weekly earnings. Education enhancement students had a higher average wage increase than employability enhancement students: \$153 per week in FY 04 compared to \$142.

- However, the average weekly wage for both groups was below the self-sufficiency threshold for a single person, \$390 per week, used by CETC.<sup>25</sup>
- In FY 04, 62 percent of the employability enhancement students were employed upon completion of an adult education program whereas half of the education enhancement students were employed.
- Six months after completing an adult education program, 82 percent of employability enhancement students had retained employment compared to 78 percent of education enhancement students.



### Adult Education Program Demand and Availability

PRI staff, with the assistance of the Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education, sent a questionnaire in October 2006 to the directors of all 47 state-funded adult education program providers. The questionnaire requested information on program schedules, as well as class sizes, waiting lists, enrollment policies, staffing, and services for adults with special needs. (See Appendix J for a copy of the survey form.) Completed surveys were received from 33 providers (a 70% response rate), who represented all types and sizes of programs, including all the large regionalized programs.

**Waiting lists.** The results from the PRI survey of adult education program directors found about two-thirds of the programs that responded (22) maintain some type of formal waiting list; about half of those with lists (15) and one without a formal list reported having learners waiting for class openings as of November 2006. All but one had students waiting for ESL services and three-quarters (12) had waiting lists for basic skills and high school completion courses.

<sup>25</sup> See CETC, *2006 Report Card for Employment and Training Programs: Covering Programs July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2005*, (June 2006), p.4.

**Program offerings.** At present, citizenship classes, adult basic education, high school completion through the General Education Development examination, and ESL programs are available to some extent to eligible adults in every community in Connecticut through the state's adult education providers. However, the Credit Diploma Program, an optional offering for high school completion, is not provided in 23 towns. The External Diploma Program, another high school credential alternative, is available in only about half of towns in the state (83).

Many adult learners have work and/or family obligations, as well as transportation and child care issues, that complicate their participation in adult literacy programs. It is generally agreed flexible schedules that include evening and weekend classes, summer programs, and multiple locations, particularly at worksites, best meet the needs of adult learners. There are substantial differences among the state's adult education programs in terms of when and where services are provided.

The program review survey of the state's 47 adult education providers showed most (72% of the 32 that supplied complete responses) offer their core programs (ABE, GED, CDP, ESL) in the evening. Fewer (44%) offer all four programs during the day but over 80 percent did have daytime GED and ESL classes.

In contrast, 80 percent of the 32 surveyed program providers offer no weekend classes. More providers operate summer programs; almost half (15) offer ABE, GED and ESL classes in the summer and nearly one-third (10) also offer a summer CDP program. One-quarter of the providers (8) offer one or two types of summer programs but the remaining 28% (9) have no summer courses.

State Department of Education (SDE) data on adult education program provider sites for 2005, the most recent available, show nearly half of the 47 program providers in the state (22) offered instruction at 3 or fewer sites; almost one-quarter (11) operated at only one site. A little more than one-third (17) of the adult education providers had more than 3 but fewer than 10 different locations for services.

The larger regionalized programs including those run by regional education service centers and the largest cities tend to provide services at more sites. In 2005, eight providers operated at 10 or more locations and up to a total of 30 different sites (in New Haven; the others were: Hartford--17, Vernon Regional--17, Danbury Regional--16, Education Connection--15, Norwich--14, Middletown--13, and Bridgeport--10).

**Intensity.** Research shows most adults who attend basic education programs make learning gains; furthermore, as students receive more hours of instruction, they make greater gains.<sup>26</sup> In Connecticut, the intensity and duration of instructional hours available to students varies among adult education providers.

According to education department staff, the majority of adult education programs provide less than six hours of instruction per week. The typical program offers classes, usually

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, *Rising to the Literacy Challenge: Building Adult Education Systems in New England*, Jobs for the Future for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, March 2003, and *New Skills for a New Economy*, MassInc. (previously cited).

two hours long, two nights per week over a 12 to 13 week long semester, and runs two semesters a year.

However, some programs provide daytime classes five days a week and have evening classes on three to four nights. A few providers operate on a trimester schedule or have 16-week semesters, and others are beginning to offer “bridge” semesters, or short (e.g., two-week) sessions between the fall and spring semesters or during the summer.

The results of an SDE preliminary analysis of the adult education system’s instructional capacity based on FY 05 data are summarized in Table IV-10. The table shows the estimated average weekly intensity of classes, in terms of class hours offered, for each main program area. From these data, it can only be said some providers are offering more and some are offering less intensity than the estimated average. More analysis would be required to know about the extent of the variation in hours of instruction available to adult learners across programs.

<b>Table IV-10. Weekly Intensity of Adult Education Classes: FY 05</b>			
<b>Program Area</b>	<b>Number of Classes</b>	<b>Estimated Average Duration in Weeks</b>	<b>Estimated Average Hours Per Week</b>
ABE	618	16	8
CDP	2,655	15	4
ESL	1,044	14	7
GED PREP	535	15	7

Source of Data: SDE Adult Education Unit, preliminary analysis of CARS system data, November 2006

**On-line instruction.** One effective way adult literacy programs can expand access to services is through computer technology, such as offering “virtual” classes or distance learning and making online instruction available. A number of adult education programs, some community-based organizations, and certain public libraries are using technology to provide literacy services. Little is known about the extent of these practices across all systems involved in adult literacy.

About half (25) of the adult education providers in the state are involved to some degree in the system’s virtual high school at this time. Greater participation is anticipated later in the 2006-2007 school year when the state education department adds GED preparation to the virtual high school offerings.



### Findings and Recommendations

Effective adult literacy services not only help people become more productive workers and better parents and citizens, but are an important way to promote self-sufficiency and economic development. Coordination can promote cost-effective service delivery and ensure limited resources are allocated to programs with the best results. Academic research has shown well-coordinated service systems depend upon three main elements: 1) clearly defined roles and responsibilities; 2) centralized information; 3) and shared resources.<sup>27</sup>

The program review study found adult literacy programs in Connecticut are not part of any formal system, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, consistent procedures, centralized data, and shared resources. Planning, funding, and service delivery is fragmented and no single organization coordinates information on available programs and their results. The committee's overall assessment concerning the adequacy, consistency, and accountability of the current adult literacy services is summarized below.

The committee concluded a number of improvements are needed to ensure adult literacy programs meet the critical needs of Connecticut adults who lack the basic skill levels and English language proficiency required for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This chapter also presents the committee's recommendations for addressing identified deficiencies in terms of each of the three key elements of coordinated service delivery.

### Overall Assessment

There are a number of adult literacy providers and a wide range of basic skill and ESL programs in Connecticut. As described in earlier chapters, they include but are not limited to: mandated adult education courses available at no cost for residents of every town in the state; workplace English as a Second Language and basic skills instruction sponsored by employers and workforce development programs; remedial math and reading classes and community education courses at community colleges; family literacy services at community centers, Head Start programs, and public libraries; and one-on-one tutoring and basic skills instruction offered by Literacy Volunteers and other nonprofit organizations.

**Unmet need.** The best available estimates, however, show only a small fraction of adults in need of basic skills and English language instruction are being served. The need for adult basic skills and ESL services far exceeds current program capacity. There is little hard data on unmet demand, but estimates developed for the mandated adult education system and presented in Chapter I indicate at least 181,000 more adults in Connecticut would participate if services were available. At current funding levels, the system serves about 32,000 adult learners a year.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *Literature Review on Service Coordination and Integration in the Welfare and Workforce Development Systems*, Urban Institute, 1999; *Improving Public Transportation Services through Effective Statewide Coordination*, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2002.

Significant additional resources would be required to provide basic adult education services to the approximately 500,000 adults in the state lacking a high school diploma or English language proficiency.<sup>28</sup> New public funding in the amounts required to adequately address unmet need is unlikely. Cost-effective use of existing resources, which can be achieved through targeted investment and good coordination, is imperative for improved service delivery.

At present, spending per student in the adult education system, the state's main resource for adult literacy services, averages roughly \$1,250. Total funding for adult education has held steady at a little more than \$40 million in federal, state, and local monies in recent years.

A goal of reducing unmet need by 10 percent over five years (50,000 total individuals) through expanded adult education services, would take more than a 30 percent increase (\$12.5 million) in the current system's annual budget. On average, total funding for adult education, adjusted for inflation, grew about 3 percent per year during the past ten years (FY 96 through FY 05).

**Service disparities.** Access to adult literacy services varies throughout the state, but the lack of a comprehensive program inventory makes it difficult to determine the extent of gaps in service delivery. However, it is clear from the data on adult education program offerings presented in the previous chapter that opportunities to participate in that system are not equal for all state residents.

Disparities in funding may be contributing to inequities in adult education services. For FY 05, adult education program spending per student among the 47 local and regional school district providers ranged from \$305 to \$3,432, not including any competitive federal grant funding that is received by some districts. (Total -- federal, state, and local -- funding per student ranged from \$343 to \$3,726.) The median, or midpoint, state and local combined spending per student by the school district program providers in FY 05 was \$1,140 (and \$1,293 including federal funds).

National research provides some evidence that better student outcomes are related to program factors that generally entail higher costs, such as: quality instruction (well-trained, experienced teachers); program intensity and duration (more hours of instruction at many times and locations); and strong supports for students, such as full-time, professional counselors and help with transportation and child care.<sup>29</sup>

Program review committee staff analysis of certain cost and outcome data for Connecticut adult education programs did find a moderate positive relationship between funding

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<sup>28</sup> This number from the 2000 Census data represents the 426,553 residents over 18 who do not have completed high school and the 92,851 residents over 18 who report speaking English not at all or not well. There is overlap among these groups so the 500,000 estimate of need may be somewhat high. However, it could also be argued that some persons with a high school diploma may have not literacy skills at the high school level as it is known a significant number of high school graduates who attend community colleges are not able to read or do math at levels needed for postsecondary work.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, *Rising to the Literacy Challenge* (previously cited) and National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) 2006 Study Circle reading materials on student persistence (unpublished).

per learner and overall program quality. PRI staff examined the correlation between each program's budget per enrolled student and a measure of overall program performance developed by the state education department staff. The measure is a composite score based on outcome indicators in five key areas (i.e., recruitment, retention, assessment, goal setting, and student achievement) compared to state median performance. The analysis was limited to programs with total enrollments over 100 (34 of the 47 total provider programs) because high costs per student in the case of small programs could be due largely to their size. A statistically significant positive relationship ( $R = .473$ ) was found between total spending per enrollee and the composite score for overall program performance.

The relationship between resources, services, and results, however, is not well understood. More study would be needed to determine, for example, what spending levels are most cost-effective (e.g., what types and amounts of investment result in more comprehensive and better quality service) and how regionalized service delivery impacts efficiency and program scope and quality.

**Duplication.** There are also overlaps in some areas of service delivery, although like gaps, the extent is hard to assess without a comprehensive inventory of resources. One example of overlapping roles is that both the adult education system and the community colleges are providing basic skills and ESL instruction to prepare students for postsecondary level work. Both systems also provide adult basic literacy services through their customized workplace education programs.

While duplication is not necessary inefficient, particularly when demand for services exceeds supply, it is not clear if these providers are “playing to their strengths” and making the best use of limited literacy resources. In terms of the developmental education classes provided by community colleges, there is also a financial issue for students. While adult education courses are free for eligible students, individuals must pay for remedial classes taken at community colleges and generally do not earn academic credit for them. Although financial aid may be used for developmental education courses, students who do so will have less aid to apply to their postsecondary level credit classes.

**Consistency.** Good progress has been made in establishing a standardized literacy skill assessment process within the adult education and workforce investment systems. However, the community college system uses a different student appraisal tool, the Accuplacer test, to evaluate incoming students and make placement decisions, which complicates comparisons of skill level information. In addition, what some program providers are calling a “transition gap” is occurring because student performance standards between the secondary and postsecondary systems are not aligned.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The education department is studying the “transition gap” issue. It is working with adult education providers and the community colleges to better align curriculum as well as high school completion/postsecondary entrance standards. Initial research indicates the majority of adult education graduates have CASAS scores around 235, or in the low secondary range; it appears scores at the high secondary level, at least 246 and above, are needed to succeed in postsecondary programs. Similarly, the score required to pass the GED examination (450 overall with at least a 410 in each test area) is not representative of the level of proficiency required for a college level class. Preliminary analysis shows an overall GED score of at least 500, and some believe 550, is required for a successful transition to postsecondary education.

As noted in earlier chapters, both adult education providers and staff at the state one-stop career centers are required to use the nationally recognized Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (discussed in detail in Chapter II and Appendix D), to measure initial literacy levels of clients and to track learning progress. Except for the GED test, a universal exit standard for high school completion, based on CASAS scores or other measures of literacy levels, has not been established in Connecticut. A large number of students who have completed adult education high school diploma programs (as well as many graduates of regular comprehensive high schools) and students who have attained the passing score for the GED, end up being placed in developmental classes at community colleges based on their Accuplacer scores.

There is also no consistent referral policy or process among the systems involved in adult literacy services. The regional workforce boards that oversee the one-stop centers have policies about what types of clients should be referred to adult literacy services -- adults without any high school credential, for example. Their policies, however, are informal and there is little follow up on results. Few adult education programs have developed links with their area one-stops for referring students for employment and training services.

Only the North Central workforce board has established a formal system for tracking referrals of one-stop center customers to adult education programs. At this time, it is not an automated process and the information is only reviewed by case managers on an individual client basis. Staff of the North Central workforce board expressed concern that the new federal common performance measures for WIA programs may act as disincentive for even assessing the literacy needs of some one-stop customers.<sup>31</sup>

It appears the only formal research done on need for literacy services and referral to adult basic education programs is a study prepared by the state education department staff for the Bridgeport one-stop center.<sup>32</sup> The study found about half of the customers entering the center (53%) had reading levels at the adult secondary level and very few (8%) were functioning at the high school level in math. About 40 percent reported not having a high school diploma or GED, but few were participating in, and few were referred to, adult education programs.

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<sup>31</sup> Beginning in July 2005, a new accountability process with common performance measures established by the federal government for WIA adult and youth programs and several other federal employment and training programs went into effect. As the new process is being implemented, questions have developed about several definitions and policies, such as when an individual is considered to be a program participant (and, therefore, included in the calculation of performance outcomes) and what types of education and training credentials count in meeting federal outcome definition for attaining a degree or certificate. It appears that if one-stop center staff help assess a customer's literacy and other skill levels, that individual is considered a program participant. Even if they are not eligible for WIA-funded training or education services, they must be tracked and included in the population measured for outcomes. Also, the current federal definitions of credentials includes primarily vocationally related certificates, so it seems so some of the more academic credentials may not count towards positive program outcomes.

<sup>32</sup> *A Profile of the Customers Entering the Bridgeport One-Stop System between June 2003 and June 2006*, prepared by Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Education Consultant, SDE, June 2006. . The study examined the records of nearly 3,000 customers entering the center in the three-year period that contained complete literacy appraisal and demographic information. About 1,000 entrants profiled reported they did not have a high school diploma; 174 were attending adult education programs prior to coming the one-stop center and 209 were referred to programs from the center.

The Eastern region workforce board has established the requirement that anyone enrolled in a WIA program who does not have a high school completion credential must enroll in a program to obtain one. That board also instituted a standardized preliminary assessment and referral process for all customers (other than JFES clients, who have their own case managers and assessment process) coming into their one-stop centers that helps identify individuals in need of adult education services.

**Coordination.** The level of coordination of services across the three main adult literacy systems is inconsistent across the state. In some regions, good connections have developed between adult education programs, workforce boards, and community colleges, but in general, working relationships among various service providers are weak.

In some areas, coordination is facilitated by close or co-location. The New Haven one-stop center and adult education center occupy space in the same mall, as is the case in New London. In the Northwest workforce region, adult education classes paid for by the board are available everyday at one-stop sites. The Bridgeport one-stop center employs its own full-time adult education instructor to provide classes on-site and a teacher from Bridgeport adult education is also available on-site several days a week. The Manchester one-stop center operates in the same building as a satellite program of Vernon Regional Adult Education. Vernon Regional Adult Education has also worked out an arrangement with Manchester Community College to provide GED preparation classes on its campus.

The Eastern workforce region has been very active in terms of adult literacy collaboration. In 2004, the board convened a working group of all regional providers of basic literacy and ESL services to develop a service network. As part of that effort, the group completed a literacy service inventory for the region. The workforce board and the regional adult education programs in the Eastern region are collaborating on several special projects including: an intensive ESL/basic skills program for TFA recipients; and a program for out-of-school youth that combines intensive high school completion services with case management and occupational training/job placement assistance. The latter program has also developed a partnership with the area regional community college.

**Findings summary.** Program review committee research presented in this report shows there is significant unmet need for adult basic education in the state, both for academic skills and ESL, and a lack of effective coordination among the many and varied service providers. There are gaps as well as overlaps in service delivery, inequities in access to opportunities for instruction, and barriers to collaboration and shared resources. In Connecticut, the current capacity of adult literacy programs is checked by funding levels that have stayed essentially the same over the last ten years. Competition for limited public resources contributes to unmet demand as well as fragmented service delivery.

Moreover, a mechanism to promote a systematic, strategic approach to providing services that meet identified adult literacy needs is lacking. There is no single state entity in charge of overseeing or acting as a “champion” for adult literacy services. In addition, there is no central source of good information on who needs what services, who is being served, and who is providing what services at what locations and times.

The committee recommendations discussed below are designed to enable the state systems with key roles in adult literacy -- adult education, workforce investment, and regional community colleges -- to 1) better coordinate their activities and 2) collaborate more effectively with the many other entities involved in basic skills and ESL instruction. Among these potential partners are: public libraries; the K-12 education system and the state's secondary vocational schools; public and private postsecondary institutions; unions as well as businesses; and a wide variety of nonprofit, community-based organizations, including faith-based agencies.

The main purpose is to establish a state-level structure that can provide leadership, forge partnerships, and prioritize and direct the allocation of limited resources. The goal is a cost-effective service delivery system that produces literate adults, ready for the workforce, family and community obligations, and life-long learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Clear Roles and Responsibilities**

Adult literacy services are not delivered through one, cohesive system in Connecticut or other states. Multiple service providers and systems are not necessarily a problem, because the large and diverse need for services requires a range of options and level of resources that is beyond the capacity of one state agency. At the same time, cost effective service delivery across agencies and systems requires strong coordination to ensure efficient division of labor and effective collaboration among providers with similar goals.

*In Connecticut, no single organization oversees all the various adult basic skills and ESL programs available throughout the state or has responsibility for systematically assessing service delivery and outcomes. To date, state efforts to coordinate policies, programs, and resources across service systems have been piecemeal and ad hoc.*

**Adult literacy needs.** The populations needing adult basic education are diverse, not only in terms of age and ethnicity, but in literacy levels, learning styles, employment status, and living situations. Individuals seeking services may be young drop outs who need only a few credits to complete high school diploma requirements or adults with very low literacy levels, often complicated by learning disabilities, who require significant time and support to get to a high school level of proficiency. Others seeking services are not literate in English and some of those lacking English proficiency are not literate in their own languages.

Adult learners have different needs for access to services. Some are not employed and can attend programs everyday to gain the skills needed to enter the workforce or reenter in better jobs. Many others are working (e.g., 43 percent of all Connecticut adult education students) or have family obligations and can only participate when schedules are flexible and sites are convenient.

Adults with low literacy levels are also likely to have limited incomes and many face the child care and transportation issues associated with poverty. Others with special needs for literacy services include adults with disabilities and many inmates of the correctional system. Given this diversity, it is not surprising that the adult literacy service system consists of many different programs and is beyond the jurisdiction of any one agency.

**Current systems.** As described in Chapter II, three separate state systems in Connecticut share primary responsibility for adult literacy programs at present:

- the adult education system carried out by local school districts under the supervision of the state education department;
- the workforce investment system operated by the regional workforce boards under the direction of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission and the Office of Workforce Competitiveness in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Labor; and
- the regional community college component of the state higher education system, which is overseen by a system chancellor and governed by a board of trustees.

Public libraries are another statewide system with a major, but generally unrecognized, role in supporting literacy. A number of libraries in the state currently operate family literacy programs and provide citizenship and ESL services to adults in their communities. Some also offer adult basic education classes and access to on-line education courses including General Education Development preparation. To date, public libraries have been underutilized partners in the state efforts to improve adult literacy levels. This is due both to budget constraints at most public libraries and the lack of state leadership in coordinating delivery of adult literacy services.

Several state agencies have indirect adult literacy roles. For example, many consider a highly skilled, literate workforce essential to strong economic development. Connecticut's state economic development agency, the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), participates in adult literacy planning and policy development mainly through its membership on CETC. Within DECD, there is one staff person assigned fulltime to workforce development matters, including services for improving basic academic skill levels and English language proficiency of potential and incumbent employees.

A state agency with a strong interest, although no direct role in adult literacy, is the Department of Social Services. DSS is administrator of the state's welfare program -- Temporary Family Assistance and its work component Jobs First Employment Services., which is operated by the state labor department. The goal of the JFES program is to enable individuals to become independent of welfare by the end of 21 months, to remain independent, and to meet federal rates for participation in employment or training activities. To meet employment goals, many JFES clients need to improve their basic academic skills and English language proficiency, usually within a relatively short timeframe. Recently, DSS and the JFES staff at DOL have begun new efforts to work with adult education and employment training providers to help develop, and in some cases fund, literacy services that meet the special needs of the welfare-to-work population.

The Department of Correction, as noted in Chapter II, is the state's largest adult education provider but does not operate like the other programs in the system. All DOC educational services are provided through its own legally constituted school district (Unified

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School District #1) and include: adult basic education, GED preparation, English language instruction, an external diploma program, vocational educational/career certificate programs, and special education for eligible younger inmates (i.e., certain students up to age 21). It does not offer a credit diploma program due to the transient nature of its population. However, while DOC operates differently and serves a unique population, its concerns and goals are much the same as for other adult literacy providers -- improving basic skills and English language proficiency for better employability, more effective parenting, and successful transition, both to the community and to postsecondary education and training.

**Current coordination.** Chapter II describes how delivery of literacy services is integrated at the client level to some extent through the mandated partnerships at the *CTWorks* one-stop career centers. At the same time, the adult education, workforce investment, and community colleges remain separate service systems, each with its own mission, planning process, target population, automated information system, performance standards, and reporting procedures.

CETC, as the statewide workforce investment board, has statutory responsibility for coordinating and overseeing all employment and training programs. The commission has addressed some aspects of adult literacy needs as part of its broad workforce development mission. However, its main orientation is meeting the workforce needs of Connecticut businesses, not the goals of adults with low literacy levels. Similarly, the community colleges board of trustees and the state board of higher education both have responsibilities for coordinating academic programs, including any basic skills instruction. Their emphasis, however, is on postsecondary level education for adults not adult basic education.

In managing all mandated adult education programs, the State Department of Education has standardized a number of administrative procedures and coordinated data collection and outcome reporting. In terms of the scope and schedule of course offerings, service eligibility and participation and exit standards, however, school districts retain considerable local autonomy over their program operations. In addition, the education department has no authority over adult basic education services provided through community colleges or workforce investment programs.

At its own initiative, the adult education unit of SDE took on the task of establishing the Statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee, an informal mechanism to coordinate the efforts of all parties involved in workforce education. In addition to developing statewide guidelines about workforce education, the group has had some success in building regional partnerships of adult education, community colleges, and other service providers for delivering customized, on-site basic education programs for incumbent workers. However, the committee has no formal status or independent funding source. Also, its present efforts are concentrated on adult literacy services related to specific employer needs.

The absence of an effective structure for broadly addressing literacy issues and coordinating efforts across systems prompted establishment of at least two community-based advocacy organizations -- the Greater Hartford Literacy Council and the Greater New Haven Literacy Coalition. Both groups have undertaken activities on a regional level to identify needs and inventory resources. They also try to raise awareness about literacy problems, particularly

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the special issues facing adults with low skill levels and limited English proficiency. Within each region, area program providers and stakeholders have come together voluntarily to deal with service coordination issues, such as how to make the best use of existing resources and avoid program duplication. Neither organization, however, has any formal standing or authority.

**Policy and plans.** *There is no official state policy with a clearly defined purpose and specific goals and objectives concerning adult literacy.* The statutory mandate for free adult education does imply a state commitment to providing all residents the opportunity to obtain basic literacy skills. Also, the state board of education adopted a policy statement on adult education in 2002 that addresses accessibility, quality, and accountability. The statement, while detailed and action-oriented, covers only activities within the board's jurisdiction (mandated adult education), not the full spectrum of adult literacy programs.

In their planning documents, the state and regional workforce investment boards recognize the importance of adult literacy programs to achieving economic goals. But these plans do not set out a comprehensive strategy for efficient and effective delivery of basic skills and ESL services to adults throughout the state.

*There is also no requirement for comprehensive, strategic planning concerning all adult literacy services.* SDE prepares and periodically updates the state plan for adult education to meet federal requirements under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. CETC is responsible for developing and revising the federally required state strategic workforce development plan. Both documents address some aspects of adult literacy services, but neither can be considered a strategic guide for achieving specific, systemwide goals related to the academic skill levels and English language proficiency of adults in Connecticut.

**Accountability.** *Oversight of adult literacy services as an interrelated system is not assigned to any one organization and outcome data are not centralized.* At present, performance measures related to adult education, workforce investment, and community college adult literacy programs are reported in individual documents related to each system. Performance data are maintained in separate, and generally incompatible, automated information systems.

Some measures of performance related to workforce goals, such as attaining employment, and wage gains following program completion, are gathered from all employment and training programs including adult and postsecondary education by CETC. They are presented in the "report card" the commission is mandated to prepare each year for the legislature.

The legislative employment and training report card, however, provides just a partial picture of certain results related to adult literacy; it is not a full assessment of systemwide effectiveness in improving the English literacy levels of Connecticut adults. Further, the commission is working to improve the quality of some data included in the report card (e.g., figures on entry into postsecondary education or training, which are self-reported, may not be reliable) and the comparability of certain measures across systems (e.g., student transition to postsecondary programs is defined differently by adult education providers and community colleges).

Effective coordination of programs and services occurs when roles and responsibilities, including authority for systemwide strategic planning, coordination, and oversight, are clearly defined. A formal vision and mission statement can clarify the purpose of a service system, foster consensus about goals, and guide strategic planning.<sup>33</sup> A strategic plan, based on a vision statement jointly developed by all stakeholders, provides a roadmap for meeting clearly defined common goals. It precisely describes the ways to achieve them, including who is responsible and how it will be funded.

Without clearly defined goals and roles, and an effective mechanism for systemwide coordination, service delivery, funding, and responsibility for results is likely to be fragmented. The lack of strong leadership and the absence of a unifying vision, mission, and strategic plan, impedes cost-effective programming and weakens accountability. Inefficiencies and inequities in service delivery can occur while opportunities to leverage resources and improve program quality through collaborative arrangements can be missed.

*Connecticut's overall adult literacy goals, and the roles required to implement them, are not clearly defined in statute or any state policy document. There is no legislative mandate for a unified policy, comprehensive strategy, or effective leadership mechanism for improving adult literacy levels in the state. Responsibility for adult literacy is divided among all three levels of government and across a number of agencies, organizations and programs, with no center of authority for systemwide strategic planning, coordination, and oversight.*

To promote effective coordination of adult literacy programs, roles and responsibilities must be clarified by taking the following steps: adopt a formal vision and mission statement; establish a strategic planning process; and create a leadership entity. **Specific committee recommendations regarding each step follow:**

**1) Adopt a vision and mission statement that clarifies the purpose of adult literacy programs and services in Connecticut, emphasizing the goals of helping adults develop the literacy skills they need to function as productive citizens in work, family, and community environments.**

No current mission of any of the agencies and systems involved in adult literacy combines the education, economic development, and social welfare goals the services are intended to address. In contrast, the mission statement of the Massachusetts Adult and Community Learning Services Division of the state education department, adopted in 1993, is to provide every adult "...with opportunities to develop literacy skills needed to qualify for further education, job training, better employment, and reach his/her potential as a family member, productive worker, and citizen." This statement recognizes the multiple goals of adult literacy services and reflects the need for a combined effort across state agencies and systems to achieve them.

Once a clear mission and vision statement is established, the state can set specific statewide goals for adult literacy to serve as benchmarks for measuring progress and to guide

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<sup>33</sup> The essential elements and the benefits of a system-wide vision and mission statement and strategic planning process are discussed in detail in the program review committee report, *Economic Development Considerations in Transportation Planning*, December 2000. See pp. 70-77.

strategic planning. Examples of possible state goals include: reducing the number of adults without a high school diploma by 10 percent a year over the next ten years; increasing the portion of adults with literacy skills at the intermediate or higher levels to 75 percent by a certain date; providing a minimum of 150 instruction hours to at least one in every three adult education students; and ensuring every student who receives an adult education high school credential has achieved at least the minimum placement score needed for success in postsecondary education and training programs.

**2) Develop a three-year strategic plan that defines roles, identifies priorities, and directs funding for an adult literacy service system in Connecticut. Among the specific areas addressed by the plan shall be the following:**

- e) Leadership, support, and service delivery roles of all system components, examining in particular**
  - i) governance responsibility for adult education;**
  - ii) ways to promote regionalized service delivery and partnerships; and**
  - iii) system “infrastructure” needs (resources and support for overall administration, management, research, and coordination).**
  
- f) Priorities for services, including**
  - i) intensity of available programs (quality versus quantity of instruction);**
  - ii) access (improving outreach) and retention (improving learner persistence); and**
  - and**
  - iii) target populations.**
  
- g) Analysis of funding requirements, identifying at a minimum**
  - i) estimated resources needed to implement plan goals and objectives;**
  - ii) current sources of funding and possibilities for reallocation; and**
  - iii) potential alternative and new sources of funding sources.**

**The plan shall be developed every three years by the adult literacy leadership board recommended below. The board shall review the implementation status of the plan and make any necessary revisions annually. The board shall designate regional planning workgroups consisting of representatives of adult literacy stakeholders to assist in developing and reviewing the state strategic plan for adult literacy.**

The strategic plan for adult literacy should be a blueprint for coordinating funding and service delivery. The process should begin on a regional level with an identification of resources and needs within each area of service. Stakeholders within each region should be brought together to determine roles and form partnerships. A framework for this process is in place through the regional workforce coordination committees created as part of the SDE workforce education initiative. However, it is occurring on an ad hoc basis, with differing levels of success in each region. Under the recommendation, the process is formalized.

Furthermore, at present, there is no effective way to examine and try to resolve adult literacy issues that cut across jurisdictions and have competing purposes. The recommended strategic planning process will provide this important function. For example, the process can

address four critical issue areas identified during the committee study but beyond the scope of the current review, that center on questions of adult literacy roles and priorities. These issues -- governance of adult education; instructional intensity; target populations; and resources -- are discussed in more detail in Figure V-1 at the end of this chapter.

**3) Establish an adult literacy leadership board consisting of nine voting members appointed by the governor and the legislature. The governor shall appoint five members including the chairperson. The speaker of the House of Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall each appoint one member.**

**The voting members shall be representatives of the key stakeholders in the adult literacy system including but not limited to: public and private adult literacy service providers, such as local and regional adult education programs, community colleges, volunteer literacy organizations, and community-based organizations experienced in adult literacy programs; public libraries; adult literacy advocates; businesses with employees in need of improved basic skills and English language proficiency; organized labor; and regional workforce investment boards.**

**The term of office of the members shall be for four years. The board may create officers other than the chairperson as it deems necessary from among its members. All actions of the board shall require the affirmative vote of at least five voting members serving on the board, which number shall constitute a quorum.**

**The commissioners of correction, education, higher education, economic and community development, labor, and social services, the director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, and the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or their designees, shall serve as nonvoting, ex officio members of the board.**

**The board shall:**

- a) develop the vision and mission statement and strategic plan recommended above by July 1, 2008;**
- b) submit recommendations to the governor and legislature for sources and levels of funding to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan each year;**
- c) establish performance measures for the adult literacy system and use them to track progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan; and**
- d) report to legislature and the governor each year by July 1 beginning in 2008 on progress made in developing and subsequently implementing the strategic plan, based on the established performance measures.**

**The board shall also be responsible for developing and maintaining centralized system information and for promoting coordination through regional planning, community partnerships for service delivery, and mechanisms for sharing resources, as discussed below.**

**The board may call upon state agencies and offices, including but not limited to the departments of education, higher education, labor, economic and community development, and social services, the workforce competitiveness office and the board of trustees for the community colleges for information, reports, and assistance as it may need to carry out its duties.**

**The board shall be scheduled to terminate five years from its effective date unless reauthorized by the General Assembly. During the year prior to automatic termination, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee shall conduct a sunset review and report its findings and recommendations regarding continuation, modification, or termination of the board for consideration by the General Assembly during the next regular legislative session.**

This recommendation is modeled on the current state Transportation Strategy Board, which has had some success in collaborative goal setting and planning and getting the attention of policymakers on systemwide transportation issues. To a certain extent, the proposed adult literacy board is a formalized version of the statewide workforce coordinating committee, which is one of the only ways state agencies and stakeholders currently are brought together to plan and collaborate on the delivery of adult literacy services on a regional and systemwide basis.

The committee believes a new entity with coordinating authority and focused on adult literacy issues is the best way to provide leadership in this critical area. A body with only broad advisory status is unlikely to have same impact on service delivery as a board that can develop policy and recommend funding priorities. Further, a group comprised of those with the most interest and understanding of adult literacy issues, and outside of state government, is more likely to develop a plan and policies that have broad support and reflect a consensus about priorities.

### **Centralized Information**

*There is no central information source for all adult literacy services to assist statewide planning and collaboration. The outcome data public programs are required to collect are not compiled in a single source to aid evaluation of results by providers, funders, and policymakers and determine the status of adult literacy in Connecticut.*

At present, to inventory the adult literacy services available in the state it is necessary to contact agencies involved in each component system. At minimum, this includes: the state education department; the state labor department and OWC; the regional workforce investment boards; and the community colleges and the higher education department.

Even with this effort, data on what private sector providers (businesses, community- and faith-based nonprofits, labor organizations and advocacy groups) are doing is, for the most part, unknown. Furthermore, in a number of cases, individual service providers must be contacted to identify funding levels, obtain figures on demand and participation, and determine the types and amounts of services are provided.

*There is no centralized information on waiting lists for services and in most case, no requirement that providers maintain that data.* Estimates of need and demand for services is based almost exclusively on census data or Connecticut-specific projections based on results from the 1992 National Survey of Adult Literacy. An assessment of the literacy levels of all Connecticut adults has never been conducted. However, the results of the PRI survey of adult education program directors indicate significant unmet demand for ESL services and basic skills and high school completion courses. As noted in Chapter IV, almost 70 percent of the 22 program providers that maintained formal waiting lists reported they had learners waiting for mandated adult education class openings and all but one has a waiting list for ESL classes.

*An inventory that learners, providers, advocates, and case managers could use to find out about current services throughout the state including when and where they are offered is not available.* Partial directories have been prepared by the regional literacy councils but have not been routinely updated, which limits their usefulness to individuals trying to find specific services. The Connecticut “Infoline” on-line directory and community referral service, which is a partnership of local United Ways and the state, has listings for some adult literacy services within its education category but it is not a comprehensive inventory. An online, interactive database of adult literacy services in Massachusetts was put in place by the state education department in March 2006. It provides users with easily accessible, detailed information on public and private programs throughout that state.

*For the most part, data about specific adult literacy programs and services are maintained in separate, incompatible automated information systems operated by each major component of the system.* Data are not linked so individuals can be tracked across systems to find out learner success rates or what services seem to work best with what types of adults.

Comparisons of adult literacy program information across systems, particularly learner outcomes, are also made difficult by inconsistencies in how data are defined and reported. For example, the way the performance indicator “entered postsecondary education or training” is measured differs between community colleges and adult education programs. The colleges count all incoming students enrolled in their academic credit programs as entering postsecondary education. In accordance with federal reporting requirements, when evaluating performance of adult education and other WIA-funded programs, only the individuals who indicated a goal of postsecondary education/training and achieve it are counted. Even though other adult education graduates (with different goals, such as improved skills or employment) may be attending college or participating in advanced vocational training, they are not be included in the relevant outcome measure. This is one of several recognized weaknesses in the federal accountability process, which are currently under review at the national and state levels.

*Various federal privacy law requirements and administering agency policies also restrict access to each system’s data, even for research purposes.* At present, to ensure privacy, it is labor department policy not to provide wage data on individual basis -- although aggregated information is available in a variety of formats -- to other state agencies such as the education department or entities like workforce boards and adult education providers that are trying to evaluate program results. Federal privacy requirements also have prevented research staff in the community colleges and the SDE adult education unit from sharing student records in order to track transition success.

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*There is great need for program evaluation and research but little capacity for that function within any of the systems involved in adult literacy.* Existing staff resources are devoted primarily to the analysis required to meet federal and state funding provisions. Little attention can be given to: 1) better understanding the experiences of learners (e.g., the time to complete programs, the extent of repeated courses, the factors that contribute to learning gains, persistence, and program completion); and 2) identifying programs and practices that have the best results (e.g., the impact of class size, teacher qualifications, duration and intensity of instruction, on student performance). The state education department has developed a good information system with accurate, reliable data that is accessible to all providers as well as the adult education consultants. However, neither state nor local staff have much time to review and use it use for evaluating costs, activities, or outcomes to improve program performance or to identify best practices.

In well-coordinated systems, good quality data on programs and services are centrally collected to provide comprehensive information to all administrators, policymakers, and users with common goals. Centralized data increase awareness of who's doing what, what is available and what is not, so gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for collaboration can be more readily identified. It promotes better planning and strengthens accountability by allowing outcomes to be monitored and compared. Greater efficiency and customer satisfaction are also possible through better matching of programs and services to learner needs.

The unknown inventory of adult literacy services impedes planning and contributes to inefficiencies and unmet need. Program providers and policymakers don't have all of the information they need to assess effectiveness of services and identify ways to improve outcomes or increase efficiency. The lack of system wide performance data makes it difficult to pinpoint responsibility for results or know if adult literacy policies and programs are having their intended impact.

At present, there is no mechanism or authority for developing and maintaining information on adult literacy services in a central location or for resolving privacy issues to permit data sharing for research purposes. Virtually no staff resources at the state level are allocated to these system management functions.

**The program review committee recommends that under the direction of the adult literacy leadership board:**

- 1) a statewide automated inventory of adult literacy services that can be accessed by the public online, and includes a description of the type of service, the time and place it is offered, and any eligibility requirements or fees, be established and maintained;**
- 2) all adult literacy service providers be required to maintain waiting lists and report that information in accordance with standards developed by the board;**
- 3) state agencies with automated information systems containing data related to adult literacy services work together to overcome the restrictions that impede the sharing**

of program data for research purposes and develop ways of using their systems to track individual progress and service outcomes; and

- 4) a state “report card” on the status of adult literacy in Connecticut be prepared and presented as part of the board’s annual report recommended earlier. The adult literacy report card should include, for each major component of the adult literacy system (e.g., adult education, family literacy, workplace literacy, developmental education): a description of funding levels and sources; numbers and demographics of the individuals served, and performance measures for key adult literacy outcomes such as learning gains, program/credential completion, success in employment or postsecondary education/training, and indicators of community participation (e.g., attain citizenship, voting, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc.).

The program review committee further recommends at least two full-time education consultant positions be added to the adult education unit of the State Department of Education to provide sufficient capacity to collect and analyze information on available services and program outcomes and to carry out research on adult education program effectiveness and best practices. As part of its strategic planning responsibilities, the leadership board should also determine whether additional staffing is needed at the state level by other systems with adult literacy responsibilities, including public libraries, to carry out these functions.

As noted in Chapter II, professional staffing for the SDE adult education unit was reduced by half (from 10 to 5 education consultant positions) about four years ago. The unit director position also was eliminated and management responsibilities for all adult education functions were transferred to the head of a newly combined division for early childhood, career and adult education.

At this time, only four consultant positions are filled, while the adult education unit’s responsibilities continue to expand. According to the division head, the unit is able to carry out its funding and basic compliance activities but has little or no capacity for technical assistance and local development, data management, or new initiatives. It is his opinion at least a seven-member unit is needed to carry out current duties and better serve the needs of the system’s approximately 33,000 students and more than 70 program providers.

Additional staff recommended for the education department and for other agencies, as determined necessary, will be critical resources for supporting the strategic planning, system oversight, and statewide policy development activities of the adult literacy leadership board. Expanded resources within the agencies responsible for adult literacy services would be in lieu of providing staff for these functions directly to the board.

## **Shared Resources**

*Overall, it is clear that collaborative approaches are the most cost-effective way to deliver quality services to the adult literary target population. There is general consensus that integrating adult basic education with job training in a work context is the most effective way of improving literacy levels of incumbent workers. Similarly, studies have shown family literacy*

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programs, which blend adult and early childhood education with parenting skills training and other supports, can be highly successful in raising the literacy levels of both parent and child. As noted earlier, undereducated, unemployed, and underemployed adult learners have diverse and multiple needs that require a wide range of instructional options and support services and more resources than are currently available.<sup>34</sup>

Among the benefits of collaboration to adult literacy program providers is the ability to: 1) optimize limited resources by sharing staff, facilities, administrative support, and, ideally, funding; and 2) provide better quality and a broader scope of services through effective program coordination. *Strong working relationships among adult literacy stakeholders within a region - employers, adult education providers, local schools, community colleges and other higher education institutions, workforce boards, job training providers, organized labor -- make shared resources and coordinated service delivery possible.*

In several regions of the state, informal partnerships have developed among area program providers to deliver integrated workplace education services to employees of local businesses. In some areas, adult education providers, workforce boards, local community action agencies and in some cases, a region's community college, are working together to pool funding and other resources to operate programs designed to improve the job prospects of JFES clients with limited literacy and other employment barriers.

Public-private partnerships between local libraries and Literacy Volunteer agencies have a long history throughout the state. By combining resources -- the libraries' space and administrative supports and the tutors trained by Literacy Volunteers -- both organizations are able to expand their capacity to serve their clients without increased cost. As discussed in Chapter II, LV agencies in their capacity as "cooperating eligible entities" with adult education programs also have allowed those providers to substantially increase access and service quality in a very cost-effective manner. At the same time, the LV agencies benefit from their relationship with the adult education system; they gain opportunities for professional development, administrative and financial support, and space, which is a problem for many literacy service providers.

Public libraries are a particularly valuable partner for adult literacy programs since they are a low cost way to increase access to services. Many libraries, especially ones in urban areas, are open at night and on weekends, which are the best times for adult learners. They are located in almost every town in the state and the larger libraries often have several neighborhood branches. Most have computers and other technology available for public use and professional staff trained to support adult literacy. Libraries also tend to be a "neutral" environment for those adults with negative educational experiences, which can help encourage participation in literacy programs.

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, *Rising to the Literacy Challenge* (cited earlier); *New Skills for a New Economy* (cited earlier); *Forging New Partnerships: Adult & Developmental Education in Community Colleges*, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, Working Paper #8, December 2004; *Wising Up: How Government Can Partner with Business to Increase Skills and Advance Low-Wage Workers*, Center for Law and Public Policy, April 2006; *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity*, Workforce Strategy Center, December 2006.

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*However, several factors present impediments to successful collaboration among adult literacy providers. These include: fragmented and inflexible funding sources; inadequate resources for adult literacy services overall; and a lack of resources dedicated to building and maintaining partnerships for coordinated service delivery.*

The separate funding streams of each major system impose restrictions that make it difficult to share resources. For example, most federal WIA monies are directed to certain eligible groups (youth, dislocated workers, welfare-to-work clients) and cannot be used for other purposes. Community colleges have very little funding flexibility. Their academic courses including developmental education classes entail tuition costs and fees while noncredit community education courses including basic skills, ESL, and customized workplace education all operate on cost-recovery basis.

The largest and most stable source of funding for adult literacy services appears to be the federal, state, and local money allocated to adult education. As discussed in Chapter III, the total annual budget for adult education programs throughout the state in the past few years is just over \$40 million; almost half comes from local government and in some communities, the local share ranges up to 100 percent of program costs. While local funding reduces the state's cost burden and provides some budget stability, it can make programs parochial and inhibit outreach.

Pooling of resources among adult literacy providers has occurred, but only on a small scale. It generally happens when the money comes from outside the traditional funding streams, such as through federal bonus grants (e.g., through WIA and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, programs), special appropriations, or philanthropic foundation grants. Overcoming funding "silos" is a major challenge since much of money for adult literacy services comes through federal grants that are beyond state control.

The adult education system has achieved a substantial degree of regionalized service delivery. The regional programs and large providers that act like regional programs typically can offer more instructional options at more sites and more times than single district programs. Economies of scale allow them to have better administrative support and information technology, full-time counselors, and dedicated space for offices and classrooms. In the past, the education department offered bonuses to districts that developed regional adult education programs. Despite the many benefits of regionalized service delivery, no additional funding is currently provided for adult education programs that serve multiple districts.

Workforce board and adult education staff in the Eastern part of the state attribute much of that region's success in developing partnerships to deliver literacy, employment, and social services to their highly regionalized adult education programs. While the Eastern workforce investment region encompasses 41 towns, they are all served by four adult education providers and only one, Groton, serves a single school district. One RESC (EastConn), a regional adult education program (Vernon), and two large district providers (Norwich and New London) serve all the remaining towns in the region.

Another benefit to regionalized adult education services is having fewer individual providers for the state education department to manage and monitor. A small total number of programs could permit staff to concentrate more effort on assessing performance and providing

technical assistance; less time could be spent on separate compliance reviews and reports, as well as travel for field visits and meetings. At present, most of the 47 adult education providers (28) serve a single municipality, including the state's three largest cities (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven). The other 19 providers, which include two RESCs, serve from one to 16 cooperating districts.

The only firm data on funding levels for adult literacy programs are from the adult education system, which is, by far, the largest single resource for adult basic skills and ESL services. It appears none of the systems involved in adult literacy in the state have adequate funding to meet current demand or expand service levels. Competition for limited funding can inhibit resource sharing among providers. Fragmented funding sources confuses accountability for literacy results.

As discussed in Chapter III, with its \$40 million annual budget, the adult education system is the state's major adult literacy resource. Despite the large need, adult education programs have been "flat-funded" in recent years and state financial support has declined when adjusted for inflation. Adult education programs are in competition with the K-12 system in their districts and are generally a lower priority. To support their mandated classes, a number of programs use revenues they raise through their enrichment courses.

While it is likely there are other resources being used to support family literacy programs, the only readily identifiable public funding is the federal money the state receives for the Even Start program. At this time, less than \$2 million is available for the whole program and only a portion is used for adult literacy services.

Within the regional workforce boards, basic skills and ESL instruction competes for training funds with vocational and occupational training, the main mission of workforce development programs. As noted in Chapter III, WIB executive directors report resources available to the boards for providing adult literacy services outside of the adult education system are minimal; for FY 07, all five boards allocated about \$3.4 million for basic skills and ESL training.

There is little money for incumbent worker training and the portion available for adult literacy services is unknown but likely small. As discussed in Chapter III, DOL will be administering two new incumbent programs in the current fiscal year, although neither one provides substantial amounts of money for adult literacy services. They are, however, flexible funding sources and appear to encourage service delivery partnerships.

An estimate of the resources used by community colleges to provide basic academic and ESL courses to adults through its developmental and community education programs could not be developed within the timeframe of the committee study. These services receive little direct funding from the college budgets since they are primarily financed with student tuition and fees paid by other users (e.g., businesses and state and nonprofit agencies that purchase customized training classes) fees.

There is virtually no information readily available about other public or any private sources of funding for adult literacy. Through the committee study, PRI staff did become aware

of a variety of small, often privately funded, adult literacy programs and initiatives operating throughout the state. For example:

- The Connecticut Humanities Council (CHC) is funding a nationally recognized family literacy initiative called “Motherread/Fatherread” that serves primarily low income parents with limited reading skills and works in collaboration with local social service and adult education agencies.
- An ESL and literacy tutoring program for children and adults called “New Haven Reads” operates in New Haven with funding from several sources including a Yale alumni group, United Way, CHC, and a private foundation.
- Over the years, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has supported a number adult literacy projects in the greater Hartford area through its grants to nonprofit agencies. During 2006, the foundation engaged World Education, Inc., a nationally recognized adult literacy research organization, to review services and needs in the area. World Education was scheduled to submit its final report, which will include suggestions on the best ways to channel foundation funding to support effective adult literacy programs, to the foundation’s board of directors in December 2006.

It is likely there are many small or specialized community- and faith-based programs and private organizations that could become valuable partners in local adult literacy service delivery networks with the help of a leadership agency.

*There is no statewide policy directive or significant fiscal incentive in place to foster regional planning and service delivery partnerships for adult literacy services.* Except for state’s one-stop career center system, the collaboration among adult literacy programs that occurs now is generally informal and voluntary. While there are financial benefits for small school districts to become cooperators with large adult education programs, the state does not provide funding specifically to support collaborative delivery of any adult literacy services at present. *Furthermore, successful collaboration requires its own resources -- someone must be assigned to manage the partnership process.* Research indicates it is not so important where this management role is placed but that someone with strong organizational and communication skills oversee the process.

Combining efforts and funds allows a system to build program capacity, increase service intensity, and improve access. Effective coordination, which must include a comprehensive strategic planning process, can promote sharing of resources particularly if priorities, roles, and funding are determined through collaborative process that builds trust.

With few strong incentives to pool resources and various barriers to sharing funding, effective collaboration is unlikely. Funding levels are inadequate to meet current need or expand programs. Few resources are allocated to support collaboration and there is no guiding policy encouraging partnerships and shared resources for service delivery.

**The program review committee recommends that the board, through its strategic planning process:**

- 1) establish that collaboration and community partnerships are the preferred way of delivering adult literacy services and identify ways to modify program requirements to promote shared funding and funding flexibility; and**
- 2) develop funding policies that provide a) incentives for community partnerships of adult literacy providers and regionalized service delivery and b) financial support for regional collaboration and community planning.**

**In addition, it is recommended that the legislature, with the advice of the adult literacy leadership board, establish a new funding source for adult education and other adult literacy program providers that provides state bonus grants for good performance outcomes, including but not limited to, effective collaboration and coordinated funding and service delivery. The board should also develop a policy for providing multi-year funding to programs with records of good performance.**

**Figure V-1. Adult Literacy: Key Strategic Planning Issues**

**ADULT EDUCATION GOVERNANCE**

While the lead agency for adult education programs in the majority of states is the education department, community college systems have this responsibility in about a dozen states. Proponents of combining basic, college preparation, and postsecondary education services for adult learners within one system believe it can result in: a) stronger focus on the educational needs of adults, which differ from those of the traditional K-12 student population; b) better coordination of the limited resources available for adult learners; and c) facilitate transitions to college-level work and careers.

Placing adult education and community college programs in the same system can remove obstacles to tracking student outcomes and promote integrated information. In general, community colleges operate on schedules better suited to adult learner needs.

In Connecticut, regional community colleges offer daytime, evening, and summer programming, many have child care available on-site and offer counseling and job placement services, and most have locations in urban areas, where much of the target population lives and that are accessible by public transportation.

On the other hand, having adult education within local school systems strengthens connections with the community

and links with family literacy programs. It also allows for cost-effective sharing of educational infrastructure -- facilities, technology and other support resources.

Also, there is no evidence that merely placing adult education services with a community college or other higher education system improves the transition experiences of students. Efforts must still be made to actually integrate educational services and resources and align curricula.

Furthermore, moving governance of adult education into the community college system would require resolution of two major issues: how to add authority to grant high school diplomas to the community college mission; and how to replace the significant amount of financial support local school districts give to adult education under the current structure.

In examining more fully the potential benefits to governance changes, the strategic planning process can clarify the roles of the adult education and community colleges systems. At a minimum, it can determine the most effective division of labor for providing basic adult education and developmental education. It can also continue and expand on current efforts to better align the curriculum and standards of each system.

**INSTRUCTIONAL INTENSITY**

As discussed earlier in Chapter IV, research shows intensity of instruction is the critical factor for helping adults learners make literacy gains. It appears a minimum of 100 to 150 hours of instruction is needed for most students to make significant progress (e.g., complete a literacy level as measured by the National Reporting System).

On average, Connecticut adult education participants receive 85 hours of instruction in a year; the mean for all ESL students is 65 hours. According to state education department estimates, about 31 percent of the participants in adult basic education programs attend 100 hours or more of instruction during a fiscal year while about 18 percent of ESL students achieve that level of participation.

Adults with low literacy skills, especially very limited English language proficiency, need a significant amount of service provided in a variety of forms (e.g., classroom instruction, learning laboratory time, tutoring, on-line), often in combination with counseling, and even diagnostic evaluations, to progress and succeed. As an example, many adult education experts believe individuals with literacy skills well below the high school level (e.g., those with a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level) need at least 200 hours of instruction to make

the academic gains they need to be prepared to take the GED examination.

Some adult literacy service providers, in recognition of this issue, have developed ways to offer more intensive services, particularly for adults who need to make large literacy gains quickly (e.g., JFES clients or incumbent workers with limited English proficiency). However, in trying to serve as many individuals as possible, adult literacy programs often are unable to provide the quality of instruction most learners require to make substantial progress in reasonable amounts of time.

In a number of cases, the cap on state appropriations for adult education grants has meant cut backs on instructional intensity; many programs have reported reductions in the number of community locations and the times classes are offered. Few, if any, programs have the funding levels needed to significantly expand or improve their adult literacy services.

According to the PRI survey results, it is not uncommon for programs to increase class sizes, frequently beyond the number believed best for instructional quality, to accommodate demand. About half of the programs responding to the survey (16) reported class sizes were increased to accommodate demand; 81 percent increased the sizes of adult basic skills and secondary completion classes and 69 percent increased ESL class sizes. In nearly half of the programs (15), actual average class size exceeded their goal for average class size.

The adult literacy strategic plan needs to systematically examine the issue of intensity and identify what resources are required to offer the levels and quality of instruction most students need to succeed. Without increases in funding for adult literacy services, a reallocation of resources to achieve instructional intensity will need to be considered; it is likely quality could be improved but fewer students may be served.

Efforts also must be undertaken to better understand what program providers can do to retain students and promote learner persistence, or continued participation in some form of instruction (e.g., classroom, online, self-study), until their literacy goals are reached.

#### TARGET POPULATIONS

Adult literacy services are aimed at populations with a wide range of needs that require variety of options and supports. The special needs of different types of learners and the resources required to address them have not been systematically examined.

The recommended strategic planning process provides the state with an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at the adult literacy target population and set priorities for service delivery and funding. Issues related to four groups with special needs are highlighted below.

**Out-of-school youth.** At present, about 20 percent of adult education participants are students age 16 to 18 years, most of whom have chosen not to be served within the K-12 system. In many cases, an adult education program is serving as an alternative high school for a student who is not succeeding in the regular secondary system. The majority are enrolled in credit diploma programs, the most expensive adult education service.

SDE research also shows out-of-school youth present many challenges to the system. As a group, they have high turnover and attrition rates, low academic ability, and significant emotional and behavioral issues.

The number of 16-18 year old students entering the adult education system has been increasing at a faster rate than other age groups in recent years, and individuals are coming in at a younger age and with fewer high school credits earned. Many of these students have significant educational needs, but the adult education system has fewer resources than the comprehensive public school system to support them. Furthermore, adult education students under age 21 are not eligible for special education services, even if they received them while attending regular K-12 system schools.

Providing adult education opportunities to the out-of-school youth population can be viewed as diverting already limited literacy resources from older adult learners, who unlike the out-of-school youth have no other option for free secondary school completion services. At the same time, these students are not receiving

the same supports they would in a comprehensive high school, which can be significant if they were receiving special education services.

Finally, while it can be beneficial to the younger students to be in an environment with serious, mature learners, some believe their presence reduces participation by older adults. The adult literacy strategic plan should examine ways of minimizing the participation of 16-18 year old students in the adult education system.

**Welfare-to-work clients.** Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) or Connecticut's welfare-to-work program clients represent another group of adult education students with special needs. Many have limited English proficiency and/or low literacy levels, sometimes even if they have a high school credential. These are two serious barriers to employability.

Research developed through the committee's concurrent review of the impact of Connecticut's welfare reform initiative shows that over half of the TFA recipients included in that study's client sample had literacy levels below the secondary level for reading; eight in ten had math skills at the basic or below basic levels of literacy.

In general, JFES clients are a target population given priority for training and education services. However, the time constraints and work participation requirements of the welfare-to-work program appear to interfere with effective participation in literacy

improvement programs. In addition, JFES clients may be unable to find openings in adult education classes they need at the times they can attend due to the restricted capacities of most programs.

Programs that combine intensive literacy services with vocational training in a workplace context have been found particularly successful for improving the employment opportunities of low-wage workers. Workplace education can be particularly effective for low-income working parents. The strategic plan should closely examine these types of intensive programs and develop a statewide approach for better meeting the adult literacy needs of the JFES population.

**Individuals with disabilities.** At this time, there are no good estimates on the literacy needs of adults with disabilities, including learning disabilities. Good information on what, if any, special adult literacy services are available for this population is also lacking. The recommended strategic planning process can begin to address these deficiencies.

As part of the committee study, PRI staff developed some information about the services adult education programs have in place for students with disabilities. In accordance with federal and state laws, all adult education programs make their services accessible to persons with disabilities and make reasonable

accommodations to instructional programs to meet student needs.<sup>45</sup>

The state education department provides training, technical assistance and materials to adult education provider staff on: disability and learning disability awareness; screening and assessment; instructional strategies; and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and other legislation concerning disabilities. SDE also recommends that each adult education provider designate a staff person to serve as a disability coordinator and most, if not all, have.

There is no firm data on the incidence of learning disabilities among the adult education population. However, teachers and administrator working in the system believe a high proportion of students would be helped by better screening for special learning needs as well as more counseling and instructional options for individuals found to have learning disabilities.

There is little capacity in any adult education program, and no legal obligation, for identifying and diagnosing disabilities and special learning needs. Program directors did point out to PRI staff that it is not uncommon

<sup>45</sup> Adult education programs are subject to federal laws concerning persons with disabilities, specifically Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Section 504). They are not required to comply with provisions of the federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

for their teachers to have some background and training in special education; some programs have retired certified special education teachers on staff. According to PRI survey results, almost 40% of program providers (12 of the 31 who responded to the question), also have developed courses for and target services to adult learners with special needs.

**Inmates.** As described in Chapter II, the DOC inmate population has significant literacy needs and the department has developed an extensive adult education program to address them.<sup>46</sup> However, like other adult education programs, the demand for services exceeds the agency's capacity to provide them. DOC maintains a waiting list that typically includes about 300 inmates. Additional funding to add services seems unlikely since the state appropriation for the DOC education program now is larger than total amount allocated to the state adult education grant for local providers.

The department provides transition assistance to its student to help prepare them to return to community and link them with employment opportunities after they leave the correctional system. Hard research is limited but informal analysis by DOC indicates good education and transition services are key to reducing recidivism.

The recommended strategic planning process offers the opportunity to identify cost-

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<sup>46</sup> DOC estimates about 35% of its inmate population lacks a high school completion credential. The typical United District #1 student functions at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade literacy level and is about 28 years old.

effective ways of expanding adult education services for inmates. The plan can also examine what additional steps could be taken to provide inmates participating in the DOC education program with the skills to they need to successfully reintegrate into the community.

## **RESOURCES**

Funding for adult literacy services in Connecticut comes from a variety of a public, private, and philanthropic sources, as the program review committee study demonstrates. However, there is not central, comprehensive source of reliable information on available resources. The recommended strategic planning process is a way to continue to identify funding sources as well as centrally collect and analyze data about adult literacy resources.

It is especially important for the plan to examine further the impact of local school district funding of state mandated adult education programs. As discussed earlier, adult education must compete with K-12 system spending mandates; funding levels depend largely on support from the local superintendent, school board, and taxpayers. Towns must provide the opportunity for free mandated adult education programs (i.e., basic education, secondary school completion, ESL, and citizenship) but beyond the statutory standards for an adult high school diploma, there are very few state requirements about

the quantity or quality of adult education services offered.

In theory, since the state adult education grant to towns is paid as percentage reimbursement of expenditures, the more a school district spends, the more state aid it will receive. However, with the sliding scale reimbursement (0 - 65%), there is no incentive for towns at low levels to expand their programs.

Directors also have become reluctant to request any increased funding to "grow" their programs because their local governments might end up having to take a greater share of expenses due to the continuing cap on state appropriation for adult education grants. To expand, and in some cases just maintain, mandated adult education programs, some directors find creative ways to finance services (using revenue from enrichment classes and fundraising events) and seek grants from private sources.

The existing state grant formula and funding level is not a way to promote either program stability or access to learning opportunities. In addition, the current funding mechanism and statutory eligibility requirements do not encourage outreach. By law, towns only must provide adult education to residents of their school district. There is no requirement to allow nonresidents to participate although SDE encourages programs to accept out-of-district students without charge if they have spaces available.

Based on PRI survey results, most providers allow nonresidents to attend classes if there is room but some strictly limit participation to their local residents. Fourteen of the 33 providers that responded to the question reported that nonresidents are welcome to participate at no charge if class space is available. Another three allow participation but charge the nonresident's town. Seven providers stated nonresidents are not allowed to participate in their mandated adult education programs at all and the remaining nine providers applied a variety of restrictions on participation (e.g., allow nonresidents to attend GED but not CDP classes if there is room, or allow individuals who work but do not live within the district to participate).

Data developed by SDE indicates there is not a lot of "migration" among the adult education student population. It is estimated that in any year, about 3 to 4 percent of all students are enrolled in two provider programs; only about 9 to 10 percent of the students who return to an adult education in a subsequent year go to provider different than the one they originally used. The recommended strategic plan should examine ways to revise the state adult education grant to promote access to services and make the best use of overall system capacity.

The strategic planning process can also consider possible alternatives for funding adult education. For example, it has been suggested that adult education programs could be funded in a manner similar to charter schools. This approach could eliminate the need for local

funding and significantly increase the resources available for adult education services while providing accountability and greater stability. An adult education charter school has been operating with considerable success in the District of Columbia since 1998. If the strategic planning process finds this option worth pursuing, a similar initiative could be undertaken in Connecticut on a pilot basis.

It has also been suggested that adult education could be operated like the federal WIA-funded intensive training services, with individual accounts and vouchers. Implementing such a system would take considerable restructuring of current services and systems but could, in the future, offer more direct accountability and increase access. It is an idea the strategic planning process could explore.

Potential sources for additional funding also need to be explored through the strategic planning process, particularly if any significant expansion of services is to occur. One possible new source to consider is an incumbent worker training fund, possibly financed through an employer tax.

As noted earlier in Chapter III, Connecticut funds incumbent worker training, which sometimes includes adult literacy services, primarily through a state appropriation. At present, state funding totals \$500,000, although in the past about \$1,000,000 a year was appropriated for

incumbent worker/customized job training within the labor department.

According to a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, about half of the states in the country fund worker training programs with employer tax revenues.<sup>47</sup> At least 10 of the 23 states included in the GAO study reported their employer tax-funded programs were used to provide basic skills training (math, GED preparation, ESL, etc.).

Among the states with employer-financed programs are Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island; as of 2002, the training portions of their program budgets totaled \$21.7 million, \$11.8 million, and \$3.0 million, respectively. The portion of allocated to adult basic skills and ESL training was not identified by the GAO study.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. GAO, *Workforce Training: Almost Half of States Fund Employer Placement and Training through Employer Taxes and most Coordinate with Federally Funded Programs* (GAO-04-282), February 2004.