

EAST SHORE REGION ADULT & CONTINUING EDUCATION
E R A C E

Serving Branford, North Branford, Guilford, Madison & Clinton
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Good Afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and the Higher Education Committee.

My name is Thomas Vecchitto representing ERACE, a 5 district regional adult education program from the towns of Branford, Clinton, Guilford, Madison and North Branford. ERACE supports **HB 6321 – An Act Concerning a College Transition Pilot Program** and I want to thank Representative Abercrombie for initiating this pilot.

I would like to highlight two ERACE programs currently implemented for the adult learner - Transition and STEM:

1. ERACE's Transition to Post-Secondary Program is designed to provide credit diploma, GED and NEDP students from Branford, North Branford, Guilford, Madison and Clinton with the skills necessary to successfully transition to a post-secondary school or training program of their choice. Our target population consists of individuals with multiple barriers to educational attainment including adults 16 years and older who are school dropouts, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, single parents and displaced homemakers. The majority of our students falls into the 16-19 year-old age bracket and have gaps in their K-12 education. Our goal is to eliminate those academic skill gaps and provide a bridge to post-secondary education.

ERACE provides a Transitions program consisting of direct instruction, research, academic skills training, guest speakers, school visits, and counseling services to give our students the required skills and support necessary to successfully complete the post-secondary program of their choice

Students get the opportunity to meet with a member of the admissions office from at least five different area schools including trade schools, community colleges, and four year colleges. The admissions representatives help our students make a seamless transition to their institutions. ERACE is part of the High School Partnership Programs at both Gateway Community College and the Porter and Chester Institute of Branford which provide our students the opportunity for dual, concurrent enrollment.

Math is said to be the “gate-keeper” to post-secondary education. It is estimated that approximately 70% of students are not ready for a college level math course once they graduate high school. ERACE has developed a placement test to predict how students will do on the Accuplacer Placement Test, which is used at all Connecticut community colleges and many state universities. We have aligned our math course curriculum with the developmental course curriculum at Gateway Community College. Our Transitions program continues to work on the gaps in math education through ModuMath interactive computer software and On-line Bridges Math course. At the end of the Transitions course, students will take an “Accuplacer” post-test to determine the math course they would potentially place into, either college level or developmental

Technology is incorporated throughout the Transitions course. We are fortunate to conduct classes at Branford High School and have access to several computer labs. Students use O*NET and the internet to research careers and schools, Bridges On-Line math course to improve math skills, specific websites that teach about the community college system and study skills and word processing for all major written assignments.

Our curriculum also includes a section that will help prepare our students for the world of work. Our students write a resume aboard the Connecticut Department of Labor’s Career Express bus, which comes to our Branford site each semester. Two nationally-certified resume writers teach the students how to make a polished resume that they can use when applying for a job or to an educational program.

STEM Initiative

ERACE has now completed a full year of the STEM initiative. We have met the goals which we set forth at the beginning of this project, which were:

- To create a “Math Academy” to increase participants’ math skills so they will place into a college level math course or the highest level developmental course at either Gateway Community College (GWCC) or Middlesex Community College (MXCC) after leaving adult education
- To increase this targeted population's entry into and timely completion of post-secondary STEM coursework and programs at GWCC or MXCC.
- To improve writing skills

Our STEM initiative contained three components: a Math Academy, a Writing Academy and a STEM Career Academy, which involved our guidance department and our district’s STEM coach. Below are the results for each component.

The STEM Math Academy was designed to help students review the math skills needed to successfully place into a college level math course. For the foundation of the Math Academy we used the Online Bridges Math Program provided by the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School, which reviews the concepts found on the Accuplacer Placement Test that is given at the community colleges.

The Stem Career Academy

The Stem Career Academy was designed to help students learn about their interests, skills and abilities and their needs as it applies to developing an individual *Education and Career Plan*. The Stem Career Academy used the Integrated Career Awareness Curriculum and the expertise and experience of the two counselors.

The largest benefit for our students is that they are acquiring the skills that are necessary for a successful transition to college. The Math Academy and the Writing Academy are directly working on the concepts and skills that students will need in order to place into college levels courses. The group has gained confidence in basic math development and writing, as well as in test-taking. They have had the chance to take the actual Accuplacer

Test for practice. The participants also have the opportunity to explore the STEM careers that they find interesting, while at the same time having trained staff members guiding their way through the STEM portal.

In conclusion, ERACE would be honored to be one of the three programs to pilot Bill # 5417. Currently we are confident that ERACE has demonstrated the ability to provide both the staffing and curriculum to meet the needs of the adult learner that wants to pursue a college education.