

California Adult Education

California Workforce Investment Act Title II Program Implementation: Voices from the Field Executive Summary



Program Year 2005
July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005

California Workforce Investment Act, Title II, Sections 225,
231, and English Literacy Civics Education
Program Implementation:

Voices from the Field

Executive Summary

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The ***California Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II Program Implementation, Voices from the Field, Program Year 2005, July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005*** report was prepared by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), Foundation for Educational Achievement, for the Adult Education Office, California Department of Education. CASAS activities are funded by a contract under Public Law 105-220 and are administered by the Adult Education Office.

This Executive Summary provides highlights from the *California Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Title II Program Implementation, Voices from the Field, Program Year 2005, July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005* (Voices) report. The purpose of the Voices report is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of WIA Title II in California at state and local levels during the 2004-05 year. The Voices report identifies program and instructional implementation processes and activities that agencies found effective in having a positive impact on student participation and learning outcomes in the areas of basic literacy skills, English language acquisition, and secondary level completion. In addition, the document highlights trends over time and provides recommendations to the California Department of Education (CDE) for consideration in supporting continuous improvement of adult literacy programs. To facilitate continuous improvement, adult educators can use information contained in the document to:

- Obtain information about the effectiveness of WIA Title II services providers
- Identify strategies, processes, and barriers to attaining the core performance goals
- Identify best practices and emerging needs
- Evaluate the outcomes and extent of WIA Title II program improvement
- Inform the WIA Title II reauthorization process

Fiscal year 2004-05 represents the sixth year of WIA Title II implementation. Each year California has seen an increase in both the numbers of students served and agencies serving them. Over the five-year period, annual student enrollments increased from 644,062 in 2000-2001 to 848,220 in 2004-05, an increase of 31.7 percent. The number of WIA Title II funded agencies has increased steadily from 195 in 2000-2001 to 304 in 2004-05. The number of small agencies funded under WIA Title II increased substantially over the five-year period (50 agencies in 2000-2001 to 118 in 2004-05) as did the number of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) (13 in 2000-2001 to 54 in 2004-05). CBOs made the most dramatic increase — a 433.1 percent increase in enrollment compared to 2000-2001.

The 304 WIA Title II funded agencies in 2004-05 served a diverse adult student population located throughout the state and representing over 150 language groups. The agencies vary in size — from large to small — and in program type — from CBOs to library literacy programs, adult schools, community colleges, county offices of education, state agencies, and jails. Their focus is to assist adults in acquiring the basic literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, mathematics, and problem solving, enabling them to become productive citizens of their city, state and country. Toward that end, agencies reach out to their communities, recruit students with literacy needs, provide appropriate orientations, assess students' needs and goals, track their progress through the system, and assist them in meeting their future goals.

Report Data Collection Sources

The Voices report synthesizes information from several sources: (1) the *2004-2005 Survey of WIA Title II Programs in California* (WIA Title II Survey); (2) oral and written feedback from the State Leadership projects, the Program Evaluation Team, and

regional and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) National Summer Institute focus groups; (3) student data collected from the Tracking of Programs and Students (TOPSpro™)¹ system; and (4) instructor data collected from the annual *Instructional Questionnaire WIA Title II Programs*² sent to instructors throughout the state. Survey respondents represented 263 (86.5 percent) of the 304 WIA Title II funded agencies. The major purpose of the focus groups and the Program Evaluation Team feedback was to clarify and interpret the survey data and to document in a systematic fashion what is working in local programs and identify strategies that are making a difference in agency classrooms in student persistence and attainment of learning goals and outcomes.

Data Quality Improvement

California WIA Title II providers continue to demonstrate improved data collection expertise and a desire to report clean and accurate data. The state has implemented quarterly data submission in response to the National Reporting System (NRS) Data Quality Standards and in compliance with 2002-03 federal requirements. The submission of quarterly data has assisted California WIA Title II agencies in their continuous efforts to improve the quality of their data. Responses to the WIA Title II Survey indicate that one of the highest rated management strategies for both 2003-04 and 2004-05 was “assigning an assessment coordinator” and that one of the highest priorities for program improvement each year has been improving data collection, uses, and outcomes.

Accountability and Student Performance

NRS Literacy Skill Level Completion

Beginning in program year 1999-2000, California negotiated statewide performance goals for its adult education providers. For each succeeding year, the goals were renegotiated for 11 NRS levels based on actual performance, and to reflect a continuous improvement in student performance levels.³ From 1999-2000 to 2003-04 California met or exceeded its NRS Core Performance Goals.

In 2004-05, California’s fifth year of implementing the pay-for-performance system, the state met or exceeded seven of its 11 NRS Literacy Skill Level goals. It should be noted that of the four levels where there was no attainment of the literacy goal, three goal levels were set substantially higher than goal levels set in prior years, whereas the seven levels where the literacy goal was attained had more moderate goal increases.

¹ Tracking of Programs and Students (TOPSpro™) is a state-mandated, trademarked software system that automates CASAS test scoring, tracks student assessment and learner results, offers agencies tools to communicate program effectiveness, and generates reports that help instructors and students link assessment to instruction.

² The *Instructional Questionnaire WIA Title II Programs* includes questions related to topics such as class size and location, schedules, instructional focus, student goals, and use of technology.

³ California State Plan includes provision of instruction for six levels Adult Basic Education (ABE) /Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and five levels of English as a Second Language (ESL), for a total of eleven NRS educational functioning levels.

Of the 848,220 learners enrolled in WIA Title II classes in California in 2004-05, 591,893 (69.8 percent) met the requirements for inclusion in the Federal Tables. Federal Table 4b shows that of the 591,893 students statewide who qualified for inclusion in the Federal Tables, 320,504 (54.1 percent) took a pre- and posttest. Of those 320,504 students, 201,584 (62.9 percent) completed a level. Based on the data in Federal Table 4b, learners at all levels with paired (pre- and posttest) data exceeded all NRS Core Performance goals for 2004-05. The challenge to California WIA Title II agencies is to increase the numbers of students with paired data.

Core Performance Follow-Up Measures

In addition to the Core Performance Literacy Skill level completion, the NRS requires agencies to follow up on specific WIA Title II students who left the program. Local agencies must report outcomes for those learners who selected one of the following four goals: (1) enter employment; (2) retain employment; (3) enter postsecondary education or training; and (4) attain a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED).

California agencies mailed surveys to all enrollees that met NRS requirements on three of the four core performance measures (entered employment, retained employment, or entered postsecondary education or training). The response rate in 2004-05 was 16 percent. California met two of four performance goals for follow-up measures, based on a data match for obtaining a GED and on survey data for the additional measures.

In their responses to the WIA Title II Survey and focus group questions, providers cited the transience of the population as a barrier to tracking students who left the program. They also noted the minimal response rates from students to the follow-up survey and the reluctance of students to provide the types of information requested, because of privacy concerns. Add to this the agency labor and costs involved, and consensus was that the follow-up by mail survey required disproportionately high effort and expense.

Data match, using a unique student identifier to match students with specific databases in order to determine which students achieved Core Performance Follow-Up Measures, would eliminate the need for a mail survey by documenting employment-related goals and goals of entry into postsecondary education for WIA Title II programs. Data match would provide continually updated, reliable, and comprehensive information to accurately reflect program success and assist in targeting program-level improvement, as well as, inform policy decisions and state-level action. Data match also would enable agencies to track students between programs or sites. Students who appear to have exited a program are often enrolled in other programs or locations within the city, county, or state. Lack of data match hampers the ability of the state to capture more complete and accurate data on these students as well as on the Core Performance indicators.

EL Civics

In 2004-05, of the 848,220 WIA Title II learners, 200,863 (23.7 percent) were English Literacy Civics Education (EL Civics) learners. These learners were enrolled in the Citizenship Preparation program, the Civic Participation Program, or both. Of the 11,913 Citizenship Preparation students who took the government and history test, 81.6 percent passed. Of the 4,197 Citizenship Preparation students who took the oral CASAS Citizenship Test, 70.5 percent passed. Of the 144,210 Civic Preparation students who attempted additional performance assessments, 83.2 percent passed.

Effective Program Management Strategies

Since the inception of WIA Title II in 1998, the focus of local agencies has expanded from primarily reporting attendance to documenting student performance — a shift driven by incentives and legislative requirements. As agencies respond to current accountability requirements, they realize the advantages of having accurate student performance data. In 2000-2001, 98 percent of survey respondents reported that accountability requirements had noticeably affected their agencies and strained their resources. A year later the 2001-02 survey respondents reflected progress in implementing accountability systems and improving data quality. In 2002-03 and 2003-04, providers cited the focus on data quality control as an effective strategy. In 2004-05, with 87 percent of California's WIA Title II Agencies responding to the WIA Title II Survey, the respondents continue to provide evidence that the majority of local providers: (1) continue to improve their ability to collect and report complete and accurate data in full alignment with the NRS requirements and data quality standards; and (2) are building the capacity to use their current data to analyze and leverage program strengths and identify strategies for continuous instructional and program improvement.

A question on the 2004-05 WIA Title II Survey asked respondents to indicate, from a list of effective program management strategies, which strategies they found to be most effective. The strategies identified as “very effective” by more than 65 percent of respondents who used the strategy were: (1) provide a coordinator in charge of assessment; (2) reassign or add staff to data collection and accountability responsibilities; and (3) set up data quality control processes. In addition, successful program strategies for 2004-05 included providing targeted training and professional development for all staff to improve assessment procedures, data collection, data analysis, data reporting, and the use of this data to facilitate and document continuous improvement at both the classroom and program management levels.

The 2000-2001 survey respondents reported that developing systemized approaches to improving their assessment and data collection processes had the positive impacts of: (1) shifting many of the data collection responsibilities away from classroom instructors; and (2) providing more efficient and accurate processing of data. The 2004-05 survey respondents reported that the same strategies continue to be just as effective today.

Program Improvement

2004-05 WIA Title II Survey respondents identified their agency's highest priority for program improvement in 2005-06. These priorities fell into ten general categories that include (in order from most to least responses):

1. Increasing student persistence
 - The key factor survey respondents identified as having the most positive impact on student persistence was instruction targeted to students' needs and goals. Additional factors considered to positively affect student persistence include the alignment of curriculum and instruction and student perception of individual teachers.
 - The key factor survey respondents identified as having the most negative impact on student persistence was multi-level classes.
2. Implementing or improving a process related to persistence, such as student orientation, goal-setting and feedback processes, etc.
3. Providing or improving professional development
 - The highest priorities for professional development in 2005-06 were:
 - Administrators and program coordinators: (1) budget issues; (2) EL Civics; and (3) California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and GED
 - Instructors: (1) instructional strategies and research-based methodologies; (2) using data analysis and TOPSpro™ reports to target instruction; and (3) curriculum development, improvement and revision
 - Other staff: (1) data quality improvement; (2) data collection and TOPSpro™ implementation; and (3) communication skills and customer service
4. Upgrading or writing new curriculum to include aligning curriculum to state, CASAS, or EL Civics standards and objectives
 - Of the instructional strategies that instructors employed in 2004-05, the two most effective in improving student persistence and enhancing learning outcomes were: (1) targeting instruction to students' needs and goals; and (2) aligning curriculum and instruction with identified student needs and goals.
 - Respondents from agencies with EL Civics Civic Participation programs noted that the greatest benefit of Civic Participation implementation that affected the

agency as a whole was enhanced or improved curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

5. Increasing outreach and enrollment

6. Restructuring classes and/or adding programs

7. Increasing student outcomes or achievement

- When agencies take steps to improve the numbers of students with paired data, they help increase student outcomes or achievement.
 - One positive effort in this direction is that the percent of learners without a valid instructional level has decreased annually (from 3.2 percent in 2001-02 to 1.6 percent in 2004-05). This decrease may reflect the continued efforts of agencies to improve their data collection processes.
 - One area targeted for improvement is the percentage of learners with less than 12 hours of instruction. Currently it remains at a level above 20 percent annually. This factor presents a challenge to agencies to continue to work more closely with students to overcome barriers to initial attendance and persistence. These are barriers over which agencies can exert the most control.

8. Addressing the potential impact of the CAHSEE

- Survey respondents with programs currently affected by an increase in younger students concerned about passing the CAHSEE identified some of the impact these students are making on their programs, such as (1) increased student interest or increased offerings in CAHSEE remediation or preparation classes, including math and English; (2) difficulty the staff and older students had dealing with the behaviors of younger students; (3) increased student interest or enrollment in GED or high school diploma programs; and (4) increased demand on program services and resources (counseling, registration, orientation, staffing, materials, etc.).

9. Improving data management, analysis, and use

- Agency data records from year 2000-2001 to 2004-05 show a steady increase in the timeliness of data submissions by agencies of all sizes, with 100 percent of large agencies submitting on time for the last three years, and 100 percent of medium-sized agencies submitting on time for the first time in 2004-05. Agencies can take steps to continue to improve data management, analysis, and use through:

- Increasing the use of student data to promote program improvement and instruction at the program level and the classroom level
- Setting goals to improve turn-around time for providing student test results and TOPSpro™ reports to teachers and students
- Meeting all quarterly reporting deadlines
- Completing the WIA Title II Survey for the 2005-06 program year
- Ensuring that all instructors complete the Instructional Questionnaire for the 2005-06 program year

10. Increasing technological integration in classrooms and programs

Resources Available for Program Improvement

The California State Leadership Projects

The four California State Leadership Projects — Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN), California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO), California Distance Learning Project (CDLP), and CASAS — offer a wide variety of support services to assist agencies in achieving the goals of program improvement. Some of the many resources available to agencies include:

- Course outlines, lesson plans, and curriculum resources
- Information on legislation, budgets, and Education codes
- Technology workshops and mentoring
- Regional training for use of data to inform instruction and improve programs
- Technical assistance including telephone, e-mail, online forums, and Web sites
- Regional network meetings for TOPSpro™, EL Civics, and use of data and reports
- Professional development workshops for instructional and administrative staff
- Focused networking meetings (Adult Basic Education [ABE], Adult Secondary Education [ASE], English as a Second Language [ESL], Community-Based Education Tutoring Program [CBET] GED, EL Civics, and CBOs)
- Distance learning listservs and online high school pilot

- Information, technical assistance, and resources for implementing distance learning

On average, 84.3 percent of agency respondents reported using all the OTAN resources either often or sometimes, 83.9 percent of the agency respondents reported using all the CASAS resources either often or sometimes, 66.2 percent of the agency respondents reported using all the CALPRO resources either often or sometimes, and 65.0 percent of the agency respondents reported using all the CDLP resources either often or sometimes.

Collaborations

Survey respondents reported involvement in a wide range of very effective to somewhat effective interactions with their local One Stops and Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). Agencies continue to focus on increasing these collaborations, thus increasing the effectiveness of the One-Stop system increasing their opportunities for providing employment-related services to adult literacy learners and providers.

Of the 253 respondents who indicated other partners with whom their agency had formed a successful collaborative arrangement, more than two-thirds cited partnerships with a government, military, or law enforcement agency; while 64 percent formed collaborations with child services agencies; and 58 percent collaborated with local community businesses or agencies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations to the CDE reflect the analysis of survey and focus group data as well as feedback from the voices from the field. The field requests that the CDE consider these recommendations to support WIA Title II agencies in their efforts to achieve the goals of California for continuous program improvement. As agencies demonstrate increased success, the strategies found to be effective continue to impact success and should continue to receive support. Recommendations from prior years and updated recommendations remain on the list if the subject of the recommendation continues to be an issue. Included is a summary of the findings that served as the basis for the ten recommendations, identified by category, that follow.

I. Data Quality, Submission, and Use

A. ACCOUNTABILITY

Findings: Data collection and quality has steadily improved as providers have adjusted to standards and requirements and set processes in place to document learning gains and outcomes. Administrative staff has progressed from struggling to achieve compliance to building capacity to submit accurate data and use the data as a management tool.

Recommendation 1:

Continue to provide training, technical assistance, and resources in support of: (1) timely submission of complete and accurate data; and (2) use of the data to drive program improvement and inform instruction.

- Use local and regional data to provide targeted training and technical assistance for those programs that continue to have difficulty in meeting standards for complete and accurate data collection.
- Ensure that systems are in place at the local program level to promote program and instructional improvement including a designated person responsible for coordinating the data collection and reporting processes.
- Assist agencies in meeting data quality standards through the expansion of key EL Civics program support services, such as program specialists.

B. DATA MATCH

Findings: Without a unique student identifier, the ability of California agencies to report a truly complete and accurate measure of core performance indicators is hampered. The mail survey process currently in use fails to provide meaningful information for program change directly related to employment and postsecondary outcomes and inadequately documents the success of state programs.

Recommendation 2:

Provide authority and resources to implement a data match system for WIA Title II agencies to more reliably collect and report core performance outcome measures, as required by the NRS.

II. Program Management

A. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Findings: The WIA Title II Survey identified “providing targeted training and professional development for all staff” as the most effective program management strategy during the 2003-04 program year. This trend continued to be one of the high program improvement priorities for 2004-05.

Areas of identified need for professional development in the 2004-05 WIA Survey:

- Administrators and coordinators: budget issues, data quality improvement, and using data analysis to inform program and instructional improvement.

- Instructors: instructional strategies and research-based methodologies; using data analysis to target instruction; and curriculum development, improvement, and revision.
- Other staff: data quality and data collection, TOPSpro™, communication skills, and cross-training.

Barriers to accessing professional development opportunities include time and distance constraints, conflict with class schedules, and budgetary considerations. Alternative modes of delivery would alleviate some of the strain and enable expanded outreach, especially for small and rural agencies.

Recommendation 3:

Continue to support the delivery of accessible quality professional development for all levels of program personnel (administrators, instructors, and other staff). Increase options for use of alternative delivery modes (video-conferencing, teleconferencing) and reassess agency professional development needs (as identified through the Leadership projects, regional networking meetings, focus groups, surveys, and other resources) throughout the program year.

Provide strategic targeted technical assistance to those agencies and programs that did not meet state negotiated performance goals or state performance literacy levels. Focus on both student persistence and goal attainment.

B. CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM (CAHSEE)

Findings: The first year for full implementation of the CAHSEE is 2006. Survey respondents indicated that they are anticipating a need for additional: (1) class offerings; (2) targeted professional development; and (3) program services, including counseling, registration, orientation, and instructional materials.

Recommendation 4:

Assess needs and provide resources and support for agencies experiencing the impact of the requirement that all students must pass the CAHSEE to earn a high school diploma, and addressing the needs of both concurrently enrolled high school students and adult students seeking a high school diploma.

III. Program Resources

A. STATE LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

Findings: To accomplish continuous program improvement goals, agencies anticipate increased use of the services provided by the four State Leadership

Projects. Responses to the *2004-05 WIA Title II Survey* indicated many agencies, especially small, rural agencies, are unaware of many of the resources available to them through one or more of the Leadership Projects.

Recommendation 5:

Continue to support the four State Leaderships Projects in providing targeted training and technical assistance; improving and expanding outreach; and providing project resources to all WIA Title II agencies, especially to: (1) small agencies; (2) agencies located in remote areas of the state; (3) agencies serving limited English speakers; and (4) agencies that did not meet state negotiated performance goals or state performance literacy levels.

B. TECHNOLOGY

Findings: Most agencies now have computers available with appropriate software support and use computers as a supplement to classroom instruction. Larger agencies reported using technology more often than medium-sized or small agencies. However, instructors seem to continue to rely on traditional audio-visual resources (video and audio cassettes and CDs).

Recommendation 6:

Continue to provide resources and support for (1) the identification and use of current and new technology at the program and classroom levels, (2) training in techniques for integrating computers and other technologies into instruction, and (3) technical training for instructors and other staff, specifically those in small and isolated agencies.

IV. Research and Dissemination

A. EVIDENCED-BASED RESEARCH

Findings: Research on identifying effective instructional strategies to use with the WIA Title II population is limited. Results of research conducted by practitioners with similar student populations can be very helpful to ASE, ABE, and ESL instructors as findings would likely be more applicable to their population and instructional contexts than K-12 research.

Recommendation 7:

Conduct and provide support for practitioner-based research studies related to learner success. Disseminate research for practical use in adult education programs in California that provide instruction to learners with low-level literacy skills and those with limited-English proficiency. Identify characteristics of effective ABE, ESL, ASE, and GED instructors.

B. STUDENT SUCCESS

Findings: Program success facilitates student success. Responses to the WIA Title II Survey indicate that students are experiencing greater success rates in agencies that are: (1) implementing student needs assessments, student orientation and goal setting, and targeted instruction; and (2) providing timely feedback on assessment results to instructors and students.

Recommendation 8:

Define, identify, set standards, and disseminate information at both the program management and instructional levels related to strategies that promote student persistence and goal attainment. Continue to: (1) study the effectiveness of managed enrollment; (2) identify ways to overcome attendance barriers; and (3) increase the percentages of learners who qualify for inclusion in the NRS Federal Tables. Provide professional development on the implementation of these strategies to administrators and instructors.

V. Collaboration and Coordination

A. WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS AND ONE-STOPS

Findings: Survey responses document that more than 70 percent of the agencies report some type of interaction with their local One-Stop and 65 percent indicated some type of involvement with their WIB. These percentages change dramatically when considering agency size and distance from urban areas.

Recommendation 9:

Continue to provide resources and support to expand and strengthen collaboration with local WIBs and One Stops.

B. ADVISORY GROUPS

Findings: Feedback from survey respondents, focus groups, and field-based advisory workgroups continues to provide all WIA Title II stakeholders and program providers with the opportunity to: (1) contribute to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes; and (2) participate in identifying current issues, barriers, and possible solutions that assist in the development of recommendations to the CDE.

Recommendation 10:

Continue to support WIA Title II field-level advisory groups and regional focus groups, as specified in the California State Plan, as well as other forms of communication and feedback from the field.