

Student Progress and Goal Attainment



Federally-Funded ABE Programs
in California 1996-97

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1996 - 1997

**Prepared for the California Department of Education
by CASAS**

Executive Summary

Introduction

Funding for basic skills instruction for educationally disadvantaged adults in California is provided under section 321 of the Adult Education Act, administered by the United States Department of Education. In California, ABE 321/326 funds supplement services for adults functioning below a high school level, or below a CASAS scaled score of 230, in Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and ESL-Citizenship programs.

ABE 321/326 funding is used to assist local and state agencies. Locally based agencies and organizations receiving funds include school district adult schools, community college districts, library literacy programs, community based organizations, county offices of education, jails, and other applicant agencies meeting California Department of Education eligibility requirements. The four state agencies receiving and disbursing ABE 321/326 money to their local programs and institutions include the California Department of Corrections, California Youth Authority, California Department of Developmental Services, and California Conservation Corps.

Data Presented

All agencies receiving ABE 321/326 funding were required to provide demographic and goal attainment data for learners enrolled between September 1 and October 15, 1996. Demographic data from a total of 136,102 adult basic education learners, enrolled in 294 local agencies and 50 state agency sites, were included in the study. From the total local agency population, a sample of 112 local agencies also collected program update and reading, math, and/or listening assessment data.

The ABE 321/326 report highlights for 1996-97 are presented in this summary.

1996-1997 ABE 321/326 Highlights

Who Is Serving California's Adult Learners?

- The majority (73.2%) of California's ABE 321/326 learners were served by school district adult schools. Other major providers were community college districts (15.2%), community based organizations (3.7%), and the California Department of Corrections (3.4%).
- Within the ABE program area, the top four providers were school district adult schools (50.9%), the California Department of Corrections (13.2%), community college districts (9.7%), and the California Department of Developmental Services (9.6%).
- For ESL, only two providers dominated: school district adult school (78.5%) and community college districts (18.7%).
- For ESL-Citizenship programs, the key providers were school district adult schools (79.9%), community based organizations (14.4%), and community college districts (5.7%)

What Were Adult Learners' Program Enrollment and Instructional Levels?

- The majority (68.7%) of California's adult learners were in ESL; 17.1 percent were in ABE, and 11.9 percent were in ESL-Citizenship.
- The majority (50.4%) of ABE learners were in the pre-beginning or beginning levels; 27.0 percent were in the intermediate level, and another 22.7 percent were in the advanced level (see Figure I.1 in Appendix I for a description of instructional levels).
- The majority (62.2%) of ESL learners were in the beginning levels (including pre-beginning); 29.0 percent were in the intermediate levels, and 8.9 percent were in the advanced level (see Figure I.2 in Appendix I for a description of instructional levels).
- The majority (59.6%) of ESL-Citizenship learners were in a beginning level; 32.0 percent were in the intermediate levels, and 8.3 percent were in the advanced level (see Figure I.2 in Appendix I for a description of instructional levels).

Who Participated in California's ABE/321 Program?

- The majority (56.2%) of learners in California's ABE 321/326 programs were female.
- The average age of ABE 321/326 learners was 36 years. The largest proportion of learners were 21 to 30 years old (32.7%), 31 to 40 years old (26.7%), and 41 to 50 years old (15.8%).

- Most ABE 321/326 students were Hispanic (61.8%), Asian (21.2%), white (10.5%), or black (3.5%).
- The majority of California's ABE 321/326 learners reported Spanish (60.9%) as their native language. Other reported languages were English (10.8%), Chinese (8.9%), and Vietnamese (6.6%).
- More than 53 percent of program learners had no high school diploma or degree prior to enrollment in an ABE 321/326 program, and 67.6 percent had completed fewer than 12 years of education prior to enrollment. A slight majority (51.7%) of ESL learners had a high school diploma or degree. Only 31.4 percent of ABE learners had a diploma or degree, while 42.9 percent of ESL-Citizenship learners had a diploma or degree.
- Improving communication skills was the primary or secondary reason for enrollment of 61.2 percent of ABE 321/326 learners. Almost 48 percent (47.7%) of learners marked continuing their education as their primary or secondary reason for enrollment, and 36.9 percent marked getting or improving a job as their primary or secondary reason.
- The primary reason learners enrolled in ABE programs was to continue their education. ESL learners enrolled to improve their communication skills. ESL-Citizenship students enrolled to gain citizenship.

What Goals Did the Local Agency Sample Population Attain?

- After 80 to 120 hours of instruction, the majority (68.6%) of learners remained in their programs. This included 75.0 percent of ABE learners, 68.7 percent of ESL learners, and 59.0 percent of the ESL-Citizenship learners.
- Of those remaining in their programs, 80.5 percent were retained at the same program level, while 9.7 percent had moved to a higher level, 7.8 percent had completed the level they had entered, and 2.0 percent had changed program.
- The most common result reported by all ABE 321/326 learners in the sample was improving communication skills (73.5%); the next most common was meeting a personal goal (27.5%).
- ABE 321/326 programs were effective at helping learners meet their goals. Learners who enrolled to get a job were more likely to get jobs than were other learners. Learners and their instructors reported that learners who enrolled to improve their jobs were more likely to get better jobs or advance in their jobs than were other learners. Learners who enrolled for citizenship were more likely to pass the citizenship test and receive U.S. citizenship, and learners who enrolled to meet a personal goal were more likely to meet a personal goal than were other learners.
- The majority (55.3%) of learners who left their programs early left for an unknown reason; that is, their instructors did not know why they had left. The most common

known reason for leaving early was a schedule conflict (8.4%), followed by getting a job (8.1%), and moving (6.8%).

What Were Local Agency Learners' Pre-Test Skill Levels, and What Were their Learning Gains?

- The mean CASAS reading pre-test score for ABE learners was 220.2, for ESL learners it was 210.2, and for ESL-Citizenship learners it was 203.9.
- ABE learners in the sample scored an average of 215.4 on the CASAS math assessment.
- ESL learners averaged 204.0 on the CASAS listening assessment, while ESL-Citizenship learners averaged 202.7.
- Reading learning gains for learners in the ABE sample were, on average, 5.5 points on the CASAS scale, for learners in the ESL sample they averaged 5.5 points, and for learners in the ESL-Citizenship sample they averaged 5.3 points.
- Listening learning gains between pre- and post-tests for learners in the ESL sample averaged 3.3 points on the CASAS scale.

When Do Learners Attend Class, and What Support Is Provided?

- Most ABE/321 learners attended classes in the mornings (46.5%) or evenings (44.7%). Only 8.7% of learners attended classes in the afternoons.
- ABE/321 classes overall averaged 25.3 learners. ABE classes averaged 22.9 learners, ESL 26.1, and ESL-Citizenship 22.8.
- ABE 321/326 classes overall averaged 12.4 hours of instruction per week. ABE classes averaged 13.8 hours per week, ESL 12.6, and ESL-Citizenship 10.1.
- Slightly more than 21 percent of ABE 321/326 learners attended classes with instructional aides or tutors. ABE and ESL-Citizenship learners were much more likely than ESL learners to be in classes with instructional aides or tutors (42.5% and 41.3%).
- More than one third (38.1%) of learners were in classes that had access to computers, though only 5.6 percent of learners were in classes with computers linked to the Internet.
- The greatest emphasis of classroom instruction for ABE 321/326 programs overall was general life skills, such as computing unit pricing, interpreting transportation schedules and fares, and interpreting medicine labels. Employability/workforce literacy, citizenship, and learning to learn/study skills instruction were also emphasized.

What Were the Programs, and Who Were the Learners in the California Department of Corrections, Youth Authority, and Conservation Corps?

- Of learners in these three state agency programs, 79.9 percent were in ABE and 20.1 percent were in ESL.
- The vast majority (81.3%) of learners in these programs were served by the California Department of Corrections. Another 12.3 percent were served by the California Conservation Corps, and 6.4 percent by the California Youth Authority.
- Males were predominant in the three state agency ABE 321/326 programs (84.5%). The largest proportion of ABE 321/326 learners in the three state agency programs were 21 to 30 years old (36.7%) or 31 to 40 years old (29.9%).
- The majority (51.3%) of ABE 321/326 learners in the three state agency programs were Hispanic. Blacks constituted 23.3 percent and whites 15.9 percent of the learners. The majority (51.9%) of learners in the three state agency ABE 321/326 programs spoke English as their native language, while 42.6 percent spoke Spanish.
- Most (74.6%) learners in the three state agency programs had no high school diploma or higher degree. The majority of learners in these programs (57.6%) had between 7 and 11 years of schooling.
- The primary reason learners enrolled in these programs was education.
- The majority (52.6%) of learners in the three state agency programs were retained at the same level after 80 to 120 hours of instruction. An additional 18.9 percent left before completing their level, 9.9 percent changed program, and 8.6 percent moved to a higher level.
- The largest percentage (44.0) of learners in the three state agency programs improved their communication skills after 80 to 120 hours of instruction, while 17.1 percent met a personal goal.
- Learners in the three state agencies' ABE programs averaged 225.7 on the CASAS reading assessment. Learners in the three state agencies' ESL programs averaged 206.8 on the CASAS reading assessment.
- Reading learning gains between pre- and post-tests for learners in the three state agency ABE programs were, on average, 3.9 points on the CASAS scale. Learners in both the CDC and CCC programs gained an average of 4.2 points.

What Were the Programs, and Who Were the Learners in Special Education?

- Most special education learners were served by either adult schools (50.5%) or the California Department of Developmental Services (CDDS) (40.8%). Most of the other special education learners were served by community college districts, community based organizations, or library literacy programs.
- The majority (59.6%) of special education learners were male. Most special education learners were either between the ages of 31 and 40 (31.0%) or 41 and 50 (28.2%).
- The majority (67.4%) of special education learners were white; 16.6 percent were Hispanic, and 10.1 percent were black. The vast majority (84.8%) of special education learners reported English as their native language; 10.4 percent reported Spanish.
- Almost 84 percent of special education learners had no high school diploma or higher degree, though 8.0 percent had received a high school diploma. The majority (57.8%) of special education learners had completed fewer than 4 years of education, though a substantial minority (24.4%) had received 12 or more years.
- The majority (66.6%) of special education learners marked achieving a personal goal as their primary reason or secondary reason for enrollment. Other common reasons were communication, education, and getting or improving a job.
- The vast majority (84.4%) of special education learners were retained in their programs at the same level between completion of their entry and update records; 4.0 percent left before completing their levels, 3.1 percent changed programs, and 3.0 percent moved to a higher level.
- The majority of special education learners improved their communication skills (55.3%) or met a personal goal (49.2%); 12.8 percent got a job or a better job, and 4.5 percent entered job training.
- The mean reading pre-test score for all special education learners was 1762. Reading learning gains between pre- and post-tests for special education learners averaged 2.5 points on the CASAS scale.

For more information, please contact CASAS at 1-800-255-1036, or casas@casas.org.