



 **BreakingThrough**
Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers

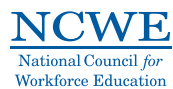
Better Together:

Realigning Pre-College Skills Development Programs to Achieve Greater Academic Success for Adult Learners

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Part of a series of state policy reports from *Breaking Through*

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STATE POLICIES THAT HELP LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS

The sweeping economic changes of recent decades have left many working families wondering how they will be able to maintain or improve their current standard of living. The American industrial economy of the early twentieth century, which relied on unskilled labor, has given way to a knowledge economy that demands higher levels of education and skills. For workers seeking to gain the further education now required, the venue of choice increasingly is the community college, with its capacity to provide both postsecondary credentials and advanced skills training. In most cases, these students are older than traditional college students, they have families, and they must continue to work while they study. Frequently, they arrive on campus unprepared to succeed in an academic setting.

This is the backdrop for *Breaking Through*, a multiyear initiative of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. *Breaking Through* is helping community colleges identify and develop institutional strategies that can enable low-skilled adult students to enter into and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs at community colleges. *Breaking Through* currently has projects at 26 community colleges in 18 states.

As a major strand in the initiative, the Ford Foundation has funded research and analysis on state policies that can support these institutional strategies. Several reports will provide insight into key state policies that can be most influential in helping low-skilled adults enter and succeed in college and careers:

Overcoming Obstacles, Optimizing Opportunities:

The challenges brought by a rapidly changing economy for the average worker—and the role of state policy and community colleges in addressing this challenge. This overview was prepared by the Center for Law and Social Policy.

Student Financial Aid Policy: Innovative state policies that finance education for “workers who study”—that is, those who work full time (or close to it) and study part time.

Better Together: State policies that help or hinder community colleges in aligning adult education and academic remediation programs to better serve working adults with basic skills deficiencies.

State Institutional Funding Policies: How state-level community college funding policies might impede or facilitate the development of programs designed for the adult learner.

All reports will be available at www.breakingthroughcc.org, www.jff.org, and www.ncwe.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

States seeking to be economically competitive increasingly confront the challenge of high numbers of lower-skilled working adults whose proficiencies do not match the requirements of the high-skilled businesses and industries they are trying to recruit and retain. In addition, lower-skilled workers seeking family-supporting careers must strive to increase their skills and often must attain a postsecondary credential. Community college occupational and technical degree programs provide a nexus to address the convergence of these two goals. Yet the critical challenge remains: how can states help working adults bolster pre-collegiate skills that restrain them from taking full advantage of these college credit-level career and technical programs? *Better Together* offers examples of a better way to meet this challenge through the alignment of two distinct systems for strengthening pre-collegiate skills: adult education and developmental education.

Rationale for Alignment

Adult education is a joint program of the state and federal governments to increase the educational proficiency of adult learners. Developmental education, housed within postsecondary institutions, is designed to help college students with pre-collegiate skills. Both programs serve populations with similar needs and characteristics and help them increase their skills and thus enhance their career opportunities.

All states have adult education programs and, within postsecondary institutions, developmental education programs, creating the potential for states to build on existing capacity. However, given different funding streams, governance struc-

tures, service delivery mechanisms, and the educational focus of their particular target populations, a key challenge is that these programs are often parallel and not integrated. The result is an inefficient use of state and federal public resources, duplication of services, and uncoordinated outcomes in terms of helping adult learners transition to college-credit academic work.

Aligning these programs—not merging them—creates more efficient distribution of scarce public resources to both, while allowing each to focus on its own areas of comparative strength to achieve greater academic success for adult learners. Adult education programs can concentrate on adult learners who are in community college and have very-low skills or multiple skill deficiencies. Developmental education can address adult learners who have skill deficiencies in only one area and whose skill levels are higher.

Three Innovative Alignment Efforts

Through alignment, three partnerships between adult basic education and developmental education programs have tapped into the particular assets of both programs to support adult learners with lower skill levels. All are drawn from innovative community college practices identified by *Breaking Through*, a multiyear initiative of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education. *Breaking Through* is helping community colleges identify and develop institutional strategies that can enable low-skilled adult students to enter into and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs at community colleges.

In Louisville, Kentucky, Jefferson Community and Technical College and Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education have observed increases in positive student outcomes as a result of its Education Enrichment Services program. Students test into higher-level developmental or college-level courses; over 80 percent of students in the 2005-06 cohort skipped one or more developmental courses as a result of the program. The retention rate for these students has also increased, with a cumulative retention rate of 72 percent. In addition, students are saving money: in the 2006-07 fiscal year, students in the program saved over \$450,000 in tuition for developmental education courses they did not need to take.

In Lexington, North Carolina, the Achieving College/Career Entry—ACE—program at Davidson County Community College trains its advisers to ensure that they are positive and encouraging as they explain to students why they are being referred to adult education. Instructors have observed that students place into upper-level developmental education courses; some students, with additional review, place directly into college-level courses. ACE students are noted as completing their pre-college skills development with a more critically defined goal for themselves, a stronger work ethic (especially in math), and a better understanding of the relevance of basic skills to the academic rigor required in their chosen occupational paths. The development of the program has also increased collaboration between adult education and community college faculty.

In Portland, Oregon, students in the Adult Basic Skills Program at Portland Community College subsequently test into higher-level developmental education or college-level courses. Students also incur significantly lower costs for their pre-college skills development and gain access to the support services that help to ensure their success. In addition, the Adult Basic Skills Program is strengthening the connections between adult basic education and developmental education programs on the four PCC campuses, providing opportunities for additional collaboration to promote student achievement.

Recommendations for State Policymakers

Kentucky, North Carolina, and Oregon have all forged a strong focus on the issues surrounding remediation, as their economies have undergone significant restructuring from a lower-skilled, high-wage industrial concentration to higher-skilled, high-wage sectors. Their aligned programs resulted from institutional innovation, supported by several state policies and actions, such as establishing state-level administration and coordination, greater performance accountability, and more flexibility in local college decision making.

Better Together offers several recommendations to help these states expand their programs and to assist other states that desire to integrate similar strategies into their pre-college skills development approaches:

- ***Incorporate Pre-College Skills Development into State Policy Goals:*** Link the need for aligning adult education and community colleges at the state level to the necessity of increasing the skills of lower-skilled adults to accomplish the state's high-priority economic development agenda.
- ***Coordinate the Administration of Pre-College Skills Development Programs to Promote Alignment:*** Invest authority for and coordination of alignment in a high-level state entity. States can further promote coordination by allowing dual enrollment so adult education and community college programs can share credit and revenue, and allowing flexibility in local decision-making on key policy issues.
- ***Improve Performance Measurement and Data Tracking to Emphasize Results:*** Develop specific performance measures to promote alignment and transitions, with an emphasis on program quality, and enhance tracking systems to collect data about student progress, transitions, and outcomes.
- ***Strengthen the Capacity of Pre-College Programs to Implement an Aligned Approach:*** Build out from the areas of greatest capacity, and develop a pedagogical “community of practice” that includes adult education and developmental education instructors.

Better Together:

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INTRODUCTION

States seeking to be economically competitive increasingly confront the challenge of high numbers of lower-skilled working adults whose proficiencies do not match the requirements of the high-skilled businesses and industries states are trying to recruit and retain.¹ In addition, lower-skilled workers seeking family-supporting careers must strive to increase their skills and often must attain a postsecondary credential. Community college occupational and technical degree programs provide a nexus to address the convergence of these two goals. Yet the critical challenge remains: how can states help working adults bolster pre-collegiate skills that restrain them from taking full advantage of these college credit-level career and technical programs? This report offers examples of a better way to meet this challenge through the alignment of two distinct systems for strengthening pre-collegiate skills: adult education and developmental education.²

Key Questions

Through an examination of three innovative partnerships between adult education programs and developmental education in community colleges, *Better Together* explores three questions:

- What latitude do states have to realign their adult education and developmental education resources and still be in compliance with relevant federal laws and regulations?
- What state policies seem to have encouraged or enabled the colleges in question to have innovated as they did?

- What policies should be adopted by states seeking to align their resources more rationally in this way to increase academic success for lower-skilled adult learners?

Rationale for Alignment

All states have adult education and, within post-secondary institutions, developmental education programs, creating the potential for states to build on existing capacity. Both programs serve populations with similar needs and characteristics and help them increase their skills and thus enhance their career opportunities. However, given different funding streams, governance structures, service delivery mechanisms, and the educational focus of their particular target populations, a key challenge is that these programs are often parallel and not integrated. (*See Overview of Pre-College Skills Development Programs below.*) The result is an inefficient use of state and federal public resources, duplication of services, and uncoordinated outcomes in terms of helping adult learners transition to college-credit academic work.



This report explores a strategy that states can utilize to align these programs to address pre-college skills development. While not merging these two programs, alignment allows a better focus in each program on areas of comparative strength, with adult education programs concentrating on adult learners who are in community college and have very-low skills or multiple skill deficiencies, and with developmental education addressing adult learners who have skill deficiencies in only one area and whose skill levels are not very low. Through this alignment, states might use resources more effectively, resulting in:

- Greater academic success for adult learners;
- More efficient distribution of scarce public resources;
- No duplication in services; and
- Better connection between public resources and desired state goals for lower-skilled adults.

The alignment of adult education and developmental education is an opportunity that states cannot afford to ignore. States already invest considerable resources in addressing pre-college skills development, with estimates of \$1 to \$2 billion a decade ago likely to be significantly larger today (Breneman & Haarlow 1998). Yet the need remains great—as evidenced by the over 60 percent of community college students who need to strengthen their pre-college skills in at least one course (Levin 2007). While not a panacea, the programs profiled here suggest the prospect of leveraging federal investments for greater effectiveness. What these programs did, and how they did it, offers some guidance to states seeking policy solutions to this critical issue.

To compete in a global economy, states need to attract and expand high-wage industries, and their ability to do that depends largely on the availability of an educated, skilled workforce.

OVERVIEW OF PRE-COLLEGE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Two different programs are available to help adults strengthen their “pre-collegiate” academic skills: adult education and developmental education.

Adult Education

Adult education is a joint program of the state and federal governments to increase the educational proficiency of adult learners.

Population and Goals. Adult education programs have a broad mandate and can serve populations with skills levels ranging from no reading/writing/math, to below the high school level (adult basic education—ABE), to those with high school-level skills who are also seeking a high school credential (adult secondary education—ASE). It also serves adults who have limited English proficiency (English literacy).

Program goals, which are often defined by the participants, can include increasing literacy skills for personal enrichment, employment attainment or advancement, and transitions to postsecondary education. Nonetheless, programs must demonstrate learning gains for their participants, using standardized assessments conducted upon entrance and periodically throughout the course of study (U.S. DOE 2005). Traditionally, adult education programs have not been a resource for developing pre-college skills in adult learners already in community college.

Financing. States receive federal grants for adult education under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA; Title II of the Workforce Investment Act), which is administered through the U.S. Department of Education. The Office of Vocational and Adult Education awards these grants and requires states to use over 80 percent of these funds for programs that improve pre-collegiate skills for adult learners, who often receive these services free of charge (U.S. DOE 2005).³ States have great latitude in how they administer adult education dollars. While co-investment is required, states vary widely on the

extent to which they contribute their own funds to supplement federal dollars. States that invest more in adult education have greater flexibility in how they govern these programs; some states develop other funding criteria in addition to federal requirements.⁴

Administration. At the state level, adult education programs are often administered by the state department of education; in a quarter of the states, however, the state department of postsecondary education oversees adult education programs (Morest 2004). How adult education services are delivered also differs across states; the most prominent delivery organizations are local school districts (54 percent), community-based organizations (24 percent), and community colleges (17 percent) (U.S. DOE 2005). Federal rules shape the delivery of service in adult education, mandating, for instance, the use of only federally approved assessment tests for participants. States may further define these requirements, for example, by choosing one or two tests to be used by all adult education programs.

Outcomes. Federal outcomes tracked for the program include progress within a level, advancing to another level, and progress in or achievement of a participant-defined goal (including transitions to the workforce or postsecondary education). According to the most recent data, 30 percent of participants who defined going to college as a goal upon entry into adult education programs transitioned into postsecondary education or training (U.S. DOE 2005). However, this population represented a very small proportion of participants in adult education programs. States may delineate additional outcomes these programs must attain as a result of their co-investment in them.

Developmental Education

Developmental education, housed within postsecondary institutions, is the second program designed to help adults with pre-collegiate skills.

Population and Goals. The goal of developmental education is to prepare adult learners to achieve access and success in postsecondary level work (ECS 2002). Students who are underprepared for

college-level work, as assessed by college placement tests, are referred to developmental education. Students may be younger learners just graduating from high school or older working adults (Adelman 1996; Ignash 1997). More than a quarter of developmental education students are 30 years or older (Woodham 1998), and some estimates place adult learners at 40 percent of the remedial population (Ignash 1997).

Financing. Funding for pre-college skills development programs is determined by states as part of their funding plans for two- and four-year postsecondary education.⁵ Every state funds developmental education in some way, whether as part of general funding to community colleges or other postsecondary institutions or as earmarked funds for developmental education to these colleges. In most states, developmental education courses receive about the same per-student funding as regular credit-level courses. In Georgia and Illinois, developmental education receives less funding, while in Arkansas, Massachusetts and Nevada, it receives more (ECS 2002; ECS 2000). Developmental education is also financed through student tuition or fees, or may receive funding as part of local government contribution to postsecondary institutional budgets. In some instances, local postsecondary institutions subsidize the cost of developmental education with their own resources (ECS 2002).

Administration. States vary in where they house state-level administration or governance of developmental education. Some place this responsibility within their community college systems, while others invest it in higher education commissions. Increasingly, states have assigned the provision of developmental education to community colleges, with the assumption that these institutions, given their open enrollment policies, are better equipped to teach these courses (ECS 2002; Adelman 1996).

States determine how community colleges will deliver developmental education or leave these decisions to local institutions. Remedial courses may be offered in separate developmental education departments, the courses may be integrated into academic departments (English and math), or a combination of the two. In most states, develop-

mental education courses do not count toward the credits students need for a degree. However, these courses often count toward the “institutional credit” for calculating the enrollment on which states base full-time equivalency (FTE) funding formulas (ECS 2002). Developmental education also counts toward the “academic load” used to determine student eligibility for financial aid. Many states allow students to dually enroll in occupational programs while taking developmental courses, although they often cannot take general education courses until the prerequisite developmental courses have been completed (ECS 2002). Developmental education does not typically include adult basic education, GED, or ESL programs.

Outcomes. Students who need to take just one or two pre-college skills development courses to get to college-level proficiency perform at comparable levels of degree completion success to students who were not required to take any developmental education courses (Adelman 1996; NCES 2001). Most students can complete developmental education courses within a year or less (Lewis & Ferris 1996). However, the likelihood for degree completion decreases as the number of pre-college skills development courses students need increases (e.g., one or more courses in reading, writing, and math) (Adelman 1998). In addition, if the pre-college skills development required is extensive or in reading, or if the student is an African-American or Latino, students are significantly less likely to complete a degree (McCabe 2000; Weissman, Bulakowski, & Jumisko 1997).

THREE EXEMPLARY EFFORTS TO ALIGN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

States seeking to tap into an underutilized and under-skilled talent pool to fuel and sustain their economic growth must find solutions to increase skill levels and credentials. However, adult learners with low-level skills are far less likely to succeed in developmental education. On the one hand, many of these programs are not equipped to address the needs of students with very low pre-collegiate skills. These students often languish in lower-level developmental education courses until they run out of financial aid resources or drop out altogether. On the other hand, adult basic education programs have greater experience and expertise in helping adults with multiple skills deficiencies progress. However, these programs transition relatively few adults to postsecondary education. Furthermore, while adult education programs can serve college students with lower skill levels, many are too disconnected from community college programs to coordinate their programs well.

Three partnerships between adult basic education and developmental education programs, through alignment, have tapped into the comparative strengths of both programs to support adult learners with lower skill levels. All are drawn from innovative community college practices identified by *Breaking Through*, a multiyear initiative of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education. *Breaking Through* is helping community colleges identify and develop institutional strategies that can enable low-skilled adult students to enter into and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs at community colleges.

One program features a collaboration between an independent adult education provider and a community college: the Education Enrichment Services program in Louisville, Kentucky, links the adult education program operated by the Adult and Continuing Education division of the K-12 school district, Jefferson County Public Schools, with Jefferson Community and Technical College.

The other two partnerships, both of which are affiliated with *Breaking Through*, connect adult education programs administered by community colleges with the developmental education programs in these colleges: the Achieving College/Career Entry program conducted by Davidson County Community College in Lexington, North Carolina; and the Adult Basic Skills Program run by Portland Community College in Oregon.⁶

Program Enhancements Emerging from Aligned Approach

A strong impetus for the creation of these three aligned programs has been the high proportion of students requiring pre-college skills development upon acceptance into the respective colleges (ranging from 41 percent in the Education Enrichment Services—EES—program to 70 percent in the Achieving College/Career Entry—ACE—and Portland Community College programs). Given this need, the programs share several enhancements resulting from their alignment that extend beyond the services offered by community colleges or by their developmental education programs alone.

Expanded Pre-College Skills Development through Adult Basic Education Program. All three programs focus on helping adults with lower-skill levels strengthen their pre-college skills through adult basic education programs. These adult learners would have been assigned to low-level developmental education courses based on their college placement test scores. The aligned programs, however, allow these students to receive specialized assistance focused on their lower skill levels, and at little or no cost. To facilitate this placement in adult education, the colleges allow students to enroll concurrently in higher-level developmental education or college-level courses, while attending adult basic education classes to address their areas of greatest need. Once pre-college skills development is complete, students are tested again to determine where they place next.

More Instruction Focused on Skills Gaps. Beyond the college placement tests, the aligned programs use the more refined adult education assessment tests (i.e., TABE and CASAS) to hone in on the

areas where students are having the most difficulty. The instructional approaches used then focus on addressing those needs, often through a combination of innovative pedagogical practices. These include learning communities or other small group approaches in the EES and ACE programs, intensive classes to accelerate skills development in EES, and modular or integrated classes in the Adult Basic Skills Program. All three programs integrate some form of computer-based instruction.

Greater Supportive Services to Promote Persistence and Retention. Building on a strength of adult education programs, and to further encourage students' skills development, the aligned programs offer supportive services above those that the community college offers alone. These include learning disability assessments, as well as assistance in addressing life challenges (e.g., child care, transportation, and other needs). The EES program, for example, has partnered with community-based organizations to help adult learners address issues ranging from the need for eyeglasses to homelessness. Program administrators in all three programs note that, were it not for the aligned programs, many of these community college students would have lacked access to these services, which could have threatened their retention and program completion.

Shared Instructional and Other Resources. The aligned programs share faculty and instructional resources across adult education and developmental education programs. For example, the EES program has made its Web-based PLATO software available to the developmental education faculty, who otherwise would not have had access to this instructional tool. While the level of partnership varies, staff of all three programs state that it is significant. All identify increased collaboration between adult education and developmental education programs as an important and positive outcome. This collaboration can lead to additional opportunities for cooperation to facilitate transitions and address challenges in pre-college skills development, as the EES program in Kentucky realized.

For the most part, these programs operate with existing adult education and community college resources. The services are financed primarily through adult education budgets, although support for the EES program includes some external grant funds. In the 2005-06 academic year, program costs and scale ranged from \$51,000 in the ACE program serving 300 lower-skilled adult learners, to \$289,000 in the EES program serving over 1,000 lower-skilled adult learners.

Results of an Aligned Approach

State officials and program administrators in the three states note that realigning adult education and developmental education has facilitated greater academic achievement for adult learners. Although data for the ACE and Adult Basic Skills Programs are not yet available, Jefferson Community and Technical College and Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education have observed increases in positive student outcomes as a result of the EES program. Students test into higher-level developmental or college-level courses; over 80 percent of students in the 2005-06 cohort skipped one or more developmental courses as a result of the program. The retention rate for these students has also increased, with a cumulative retention rate of 72 percent. In addition, students are saving money: in the 2006-07 fiscal year, students in EES saved over \$450,000 in tuition for developmental education courses they did not need to take.

The three programs also suggest a promising approach to a more rational deployment of state resources. The alignment of adult education and developmental education programs in community colleges has allowed the redistribution of some resources to address the pre-college skills development needs of adults with very low skill levels or multiple skills deficiencies, while reducing to some degree the duplication of services for these adults.

Challenges in Implementation of an Aligned Approach

Addressing pre-college skills development in this aligned approach has faced some challenges, such as the need to build stronger awareness and collaboration between adult education and developmental education administrators and faculty. However, these difficulties have not been insurmountable, and the responses appear to have resulted in stronger relationships, yielding other benefits for adult learners.

The programs also have found it necessary to address the stigma of adult education for community college students. In the EES program in Kentucky and the Adult Basic Skills Program in Oregon, for instance, the services are designed so that students receive the same scheduling, curricula, and other college perks as students not enrolled in adult education for their pre-college skills development. The ACE program in North Carolina also provides training to its advisers to ensure that they are positive and encouraging as they explain to students why they are being referred to adult education. In addition, the programs have increased their attention to the registration process to ensure that lower-skilled adult learners are not concurrently enrolled in classes (developmental or credit-level) for which they do not have the basic skills to succeed.

Policy Actions and Barriers

All three aligned programs resulted from institutional innovation, supported by several state policies that facilitated or encouraged their development by motivating these community colleges to respond to other state policy goals or concerns. One important priority in each state is economic development. All three states have forged a strong focus on this issue, as their economies have undergone significant restructuring from a lower-skilled, high-wage industrial concentration to higher-skilled, high-wage sectors. This has, in turn, served as a strong motivator for innovative approaches to facilitating skills development that are embedded in or underlie other state policy goals: for example, to increase enrollments or to improve retention, success in pre-college skills

development, and program completion rates for adult learners.

Policy Actions

State-Level Administration and Coordination.

One important policy has been the assignment of responsibility to a state-level agency to promote the connection and integration of adult education and developmental education. In North Carolina and Oregon, this authority was invested within the agencies overseeing community colleges: the North Carolina Community College System and Oregon's Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. Building on this capacity makes sense for states because most adult education services are provided by community colleges, and the administration of the state adult education program was placed within these agencies to facilitate alignment. In Kentucky, adult education services are delivered mostly by the local K-12 systems, although community colleges and some community-based organizations also deliver services. Here, authority for and coordination of alignment was incorporated into a newly formed umbrella organization, the Council on Postsecondary Education, which oversees both the state adult education agency (no longer housed in the department of education) and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

Performance Accountability Policy. Structural changes alone are not sufficient. States have found it useful to have performance accountability policies that address key outcome goals. Kentucky has developed a state accountability framework that centers around five questions. The first encourages a focus on effective transitions and pre-college skills development programs by asking, "Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?" In addition, Kentucky has performance benchmarks to measure successful student transitions (e.g., progression from ABE/GED to the community college system), as well as advancement through the system (e.g., developmental education needs and success, GPA, retention and credentials earned). The Council on Postsecondary Education oversees performance on each element of Kentucky's five-question framework.

Similarly, the North Carolina Community College system has defined 12 Core Indicators of Success to promote quality in community college programs and services, with both technical assistance to facilitate achievement of these benchmarks and potential sanctions for continued noncompliance (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser 2006). Several performance measures are especially relevant to the ACE program: program unduplicated headcount (enrollment totals); curriculum (or credit-level) student retention and graduation; and success in developmental education. North Carolina recently added adult basic education outcomes to its accountability system.

In the same vein, *Oregon Shines* offers a continuous and overarching framework for the coordination of adult education and community colleges. Under this agenda, the goals of providing greater educational opportunities to increase literacy, math, and other skills necessary to create a competitive workforce and better-paying jobs for residents are tied to specific benchmarks implemented by the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. These benchmarks are monitored by the Oregon Progress Board, a state leadership organization created by the legislature and chaired by the governor (Walker & Strawn 2004). Both Kentucky and Oregon also have regular audits of their adult education programs, with both states generating expectations that these programs will align with community college-level programs to facilitate the transition and academic success of adult learners.

In Kentucky and North Carolina, aggressive enrollment targets for credit programs are set for each community college by the state. North Carolina has instituted performance-based funding that rewards community colleges for program completion and increases in enrollment; both Oregon and Kentucky are moving toward this approach for adult education programs in 2008. Kentucky and North Carolina have program sanctions for failure to reach enrollment

targets, although Kentucky has been careful to set performance targets in accord with a clear understanding of the capacity of the institutions and programs.

Transitions and Pre-College Skills Development Policies and Goals. Two of the three states have implemented particular transitions and pre-college skills development policies to promote alignment. Kentucky requires adult education and community college programs to collaborate in order to promote transitions to college-level work. North Carolina tracks transitions as a system-level goal, which raises the importance of this issue for community colleges. Kentucky has established a legislative mandate for community colleges and adult education programs to improve pre-college skills, and the state's assessment and placement policy explicitly allows referral to adult education for pre-college skills development as an option for interested colleges.

Dual Enrollment. Whether it exists as an explicit state policy or the state allows institutions to adopt it at their discretion, dual enrollment has been a significant tool for facilitating alignment between adult education and community college programs. The policy has allowed these programs to share credit and revenue generation from enrollments, thus addressing a potential barrier to coordination and cooperation.

The emphasis of the policy varies. In Kentucky, the value of dual enrollment is in providing joint recognition for achievement of enrollments that count toward the state-mandated targets for adult education programs and community colleges. In North Carolina, its significance relates more to FTE reimbursements. (*See Impact on Community College Revenue Generation, p. 9.*)

State Flexibility in Local Community College Decision Making. The three innovative programs have taken advantage of substantial state flexibility to aid the integration of pre-college skills development across adult education and developmental education. Thus, the community colleges offering these programs can make decisions about key issues that are, in some instances, counter to state policy but critical to local program implementation; in others, programs can decide how to address issues for which there is no specific state policy. In Kentucky, for instance, Jefferson Community and Technical College has raised the statewide cut score for placement in developmental math to facilitate the assignment of students falling below that score to the EES program (adult education program). North Carolina and Oregon allow local community colleges to make decisions on mandatory placement for pre-college skills development. Oregon also allows community colleges to set the cut scores to determine which students need pre-college skills development and to determine the use of dual enrollment policy for adult learners.

Significant State Investment in Adult Education. One reason that these states have had so much latitude in aligning programs is that state funds account for a significant proportion of their adult education budgets—from 66 percent in Kentucky to 80 percent in Oregon. This investment indicates a high degree of state commitment to adult education as a resource in increasing the skills of lower-skilled adults. In contrast, state funds account for only 25 percent of their total adult education budgets in several states (e.g., Kansas, Mississippi, and Texas).

Policy Barriers

For the most part, these three programs have shown that states can restructure their resources to implement aligned models and still comply with federal laws and regulations. Nonetheless, federal and state policy barriers have slowed down all of the programs.

Federal and State Policy Conflicts. One example is Kentucky's attempts to streamline the assessment process by correlating adult education

assessment tests with community college's placement tests. The development of these correspondence tables would allow adult learners to take just one test—the adult education assessment test—to determine where students needed to begin their pre-college skills development in adult education, and one test—the college placement test—to determine where they should be placed in the college once their pre-college skills development in adult education was complete. Given federal policy requirements on the use of particular assessment tests in adult education, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education does not allow the use of these correspondence tables. As a result, community college students in Kentucky have to take both tests at the outset. In a display of institutional flexibility, however, Jefferson Community and Technical College does accept the correspondence table conversion of the adult education assessment test to place students at the end of their pre-college skills development. Other community colleges in Kentucky are exploring the use of the correspondence table in this way.

Impact on Community College Revenue Generation. The effect on revenue generation presents perhaps the greatest state policy barrier to the alignment of adult education and developmental education programs. Since adult education programs are offered free of charge for adult learners in most states, community college concerns about loss of revenue can affect placement decisions. North Carolina community colleges receive a lower reimbursement rate for adult education than for developmental education due to lower contact hours, creating an institutional disincentive for placing students in adult education even if this is the better place to address their pre-college skills development needs. ACE program administrators have worked hard to make the case that greater success in basic skills development would yield higher revenue generation in the form of increased retention of lower-skilled students.

The EES program in Kentucky has made a similar argument, although students referred to adult education from Jefferson Community and Technical College are almost completely covered by

adult education dollars because their skill levels indicate that they are eligible for these services. The Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education also has strong capacity to expand its services as an adult education provider, and it operates in a state policy context that rewards increased enrollments in adult education with greater state resources. Furthermore, given the “benchmarking” funding approach in Kentucky and the state’s dual enrollment policy, community college revenue is not reduced by referring students to adult education.

In Oregon, a longstanding state policy provides the same rate of FTE reimbursement for adult education students and other community college students. This has eliminated the concern about revenue displacement.

Still, the experiences of these three institutions suggests that states seeking to implement the aligned approach will have to consider two important issues related to revenue sharing: where adult education services are offered (inside community colleges or not), and the capacity and financial resources of adult education providers to absorb additional students. It is likely that most adult education programs interested in aligning programs will need some level of increased or redistributed funding, at least at the outset, to enhance their capacity to strengthen pre-college skills in community college students.

Limited Analysis of Program Effectiveness. The states have not aided community colleges in developing robust data systems that make it possible to track and evaluate the effectiveness of institutional innovations like these aligned programs, especially because the data tracking and analysis capabilities across the three programs vary. The Kentucky community college system, which has been a strong supporter of the EES aligned program from the outset, has moved more in this direction by recommending, through its Developmental Education Task Force, a more formal evaluation of EES to assess the potential for replication in other postsecondary institutions. (Kentucky Developmental Education Task Force 2007)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS

Several recommendations are offered to help the three states expand these programs and to assist other states that desire to integrate similar strategies into their pre-college skills development approaches:

Incorporate Pre-College Skills Development into State Policy Goals

Link the need for aligning adult education and community colleges at the state level to the necessity of increasing the skills of lower-skilled adults to accomplish the state's high-priority economic development agenda. The experience in all three states is that low skill levels threatened economic competitiveness, and this was a strong impetus to engage state agencies and other relevant stakeholders in promoting alignment. Tying alignment to high-priority goals for the state may also help to reduce “turf” issues that yield resistance to alignment. States need to have a strong commitment to adult education and developmental education, with significant investment of state dollars in both programs.

Coordinate the Administration of Pre-College Skills Development Programs to Promote Alignment

Invest authority for and coordination of alignment in a high-level state entity. Investing this responsibility in a high-level, high-profile state entity seems to be critical to moving alignment beyond a good idea to a practical reality. In states where the community colleges provide almost all adult education services (as in North Carolina and Oregon), centralized administration under one agency may be enough to increase coordination and integration. In states where adult education services are delivered primarily outside of community colleges (as in Kentucky), a combination of an overarching coordinating body and state incentives may be necessary.

Allow dual enrollment for adult education and community college programs. In each of the three aligned programs, dual enrollment policies allow concurrent enrollment in both adult education and developmental education/credit-level courses. This has been critical to the implementation of these programs. Two important benefits result from these policies. First, both adult education and community colleges can receive “credit” for students who are dually enrolled, allowing both programs to meet enrollment targets and receive revenue (e.g., federal or state grants, FTE reimbursements, tuition fees). Second, dual enrollment policies promote transitions from pre-college courses to credit-level courses and enhance student motivation to complete pre-college skills development.

Allow flexibility in local decision making on key policy issues. States have shown some flexibility in adjusting policies to better meet the goals of the programs (as with cut scores in Kentucky) or allowing institutions to set policies that do not exist in the state legislative or administrative codes (as with dual enrollment policies in Oregon). Because some state policy issues in implementing an aligned approach cannot be anticipated, flexibility in responding to potential policy barriers and efforts to address these barriers, at least at the outset of alignment, are important to effective implementation.

Improve Performance Measurement and Data Tracking to Emphasize Results

Develop specific performance measures to promote alignment and transitions, with an emphasis on program quality. Alignment is insufficient if adult education and developmental education programs are not effective in increasing basic skills, retention, transitions from pre-college courses to credit-level courses, and successful performance in credit-level courses. States need to set strong performance measures to promote quality programming and attention to key outcomes. These measures should be mandated by the state, with benchmarks for acceptable levels of performance. States should also provide clearly defined, performance-based rewards and sanc-

tions. Performance measures should focus on key outcomes, which might include increased transitions from pre-college programs (adult education or developmental education) to credit-level programs, increased retention of students with lower skills, and required levels of successful performance for students exiting pre-college programs.

Enhance tracking systems to collect data about student progress, transitions, and outcomes. To assess the effectiveness of the aligned approach, community colleges and the state must be able to determine if, how, and how well better alignment is addressing the need to strengthen pre-college skills. First, since the data systems utilized by adult education programs and community colleges often track different outcomes, a common set of measures must be developed to assess the aligned approach. Second, these data tracking systems must be sufficiently linked to track students from adult education through developmental education to credit-level courses. States should enhance the capacity of community college tracking systems to assess measurable results from pre-college skills development efforts.

Strengthen the Capacity of Pre-College Programs to Implement an Aligned Approach

Build out from the areas of greatest capacity. Adult education programs have limited capacity, and some argue that they lack enough resources to address their current needs. States should utilize the adult and community college programs with the greatest capacity to pilot the aligned approach. By starting with these programs, states can increase the likelihood of success and learn from their experiences about how to build the capacity of other programs to scale up the approach. States can then expand to include other programs. As does Kentucky, states can provide pilot grants or incentives for adult education programs and community colleges to develop aligned programs to address pre-college skills development. One potential resource for these grants is each state's bonus performance funding for exceeding OVAE's adult education performance measures.

Develop a pedagogical “community of practice” that includes adult education and developmental education instructors. States should identify and disseminate best practices in pedagogical approaches in both adult education and developmental education. States may benefit from the development of a statewide “learning” group, with leaders and instructors from both adult education and developmental education, that can address linking professional development to desired stated outcomes. This group could promote the utilization of the most effective instructional approaches in both programs.

The challenge of strengthening pre-college skills for lower-skilled working adults cannot be ignored by states seeking to be economically competitive. Integrating adult education and developmental education in aligned programs like the three discussed in this report offers states an opportunity to address this challenge by deploying existing state (and federal) resources more effectively. States should consider how their policies can motivate and facilitate the adoption of this aligned approach to improve skills development for lower-skilled working adults. ■

Three Case Studies: Innovative Alignment Programs and State Policies That Help Them Succeed

Several community colleges in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Oregon have aligned their adult education and developmental education programs in response to extensive remedial needs. In each state, policies enable or support the innovations.

KENTUCKY

Jefferson Community and Technical College and Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education, Louisville, Kentucky

Background

Jefferson County Community and Technical College, serving 14,710 students in fall 2006, is the largest institution in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The two-year college provides a comprehensive array of services, including Associate's degrees; pre-baccalaureate education; diploma and certificate programs in occupational fields; adult, continuing, and developmental education; customized training for business and industry; and distance learning.⁷ JCTC serves a large population of adult learners; the average age of the student population is 26. Seventy-five percent of students work at least part time, while over two-thirds attend college part time. Of the nearly 2,300 students who enrolled for the first time in fall 2006, 41 percent required pre-college skills development.

Similarly, Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education is the largest adult education provider in Kentucky. JCPSACE serves almost 25,000 adults per year through a comprehensive set of programs, including adult basic education, English as a Second Language, professional and personal development, customized

workforce training, and education and job placement services for youth. Approximately 14,000 learners in adult basic education were served in 2005-06. Over the past four years, JCPSACE has awarded nearly 5,000 GEDs and has helped over 5,000 students transition to postsecondary education.⁸

These two institutions recognized that both were addressing the pre-college skills development needs of adult learners with very low skills, and in the process duplicating efforts to some extent. To conserve scarce resources, these two institutions joined together to form the Educational Enrichment Services program (EES—pronounced “ease”). A joint committee oversees the program.

Program Description

Launched formally in fall 2003, the EES program is part of a larger Transitions Program at JCPSACE.⁹ Data analyzed by JCTC revealed that a large number of students were placed in lower-level developmental education classes, and that these students had poor completion and retention outcomes. Kentucky, through the Council on Postsecondary Education, set aggressive enrollment and degree attainment goals for both JCPSACE and JCTC. Better connections between adult education and the college were needed in order to increase participation and completion in both adult education and postsecondary education (Schneider 2007). By aligning adult education and developmental education, the EES program develops a more seamless and accessible pre-college skills development approach. In addition, adult students who are at the start of their postsecondary career are placed where it is most appropriate for them and where they are more likely to succeed.

Jefferson Community and Technical College students who are accepted into the college without SAT or ACT scores are required to take the COMPASS test to determine placement in reading, writing, or math courses (see Table 1).

Students can opt to take a two-week preparation course offered by JCPSACE to help them prepare for the COMPASS exam. In addition, students who place close to the college-level cut score can receive supplemental instruction, often provided by adult education programs, to help improve their scores when they retake the test. In 2006, the joint committee of JCPSACE and JCTC raised the cut scores for the EES program to allow more students to benefit from its services. In addition, it launched a formal program for English language learners. The need for assistance to this population was so great that JCPSACE has now doubled the number of ESL classes it offers (Schneider 2007).

Although most EES students have a high school diploma or GED, the program is geared toward improving basic skills in reading, writing, math, or English as a Second Language so that students can be better prepared for college-level courses. Upon placement in EES, adult learners also take the TABE assessment test, one of several federally mandated assessment tests for adult education. The TABE helps to identify more specifically the beginning skill levels students have and where the gaps in their skills are. At no cost to the student, adult learners are then placed into EES classes for up to a semester to address these deficiencies. The classes combine classroom instruction in a cohort-learning model with self-paced learning in JCPSACE’s state-of-the-art instructional computer labs using individualized, Web-based PLATO software. Often courses are intensive, with added support that allows students to gain the skills they need in less time. Frequently, EES students are dually enrolled in adult education at JCPSACE and in developmental or college-level courses at JCTC, thus counting toward the enrollment targets of both programs.

Significant efforts are made to integrate the EES classes into the student’s overall college experience—through scheduling, design and curricula,

Table 1. Cut Scores at JCTC on COMPASS for Placement in Various Courses and Programs

For English-speaking students	EES Program (JCPSACE)	Developmental Education (JCTC)	College-Level Courses
Math	< 27	28-100	30-100*
Reading	< 51	51-64	65-80
English	< 21	21-69	70-100

For ESL students	EES Program (JCPSACE)	Developmental Education (JCTC)	College-Level Courses
Listening	< 67	68-91	91-100
Reading	< 64	65-91	91-100
Grammar	< 41	42-89	92-100

** Note: Students place into college-level courses based on their scores on the algebra portion of the COMPASS test. Scores for students placed into EES and most developmental education courses are based on the pre-algebra portion of the COMPASS test.*

and other college perks—to create a more seamless transition into college courses and avoid any stigma associated with being referred to adult education. When students complete their pre-college skills development, they are assessed again on TABE, and the results are converted to a COMPASS score that is accepted by JCTC for placement in higher-level developmental education or college-level courses. An increase in the minimum ACT admission scores in 2009 is expected to increase the number of students requiring the services of the EES program by 33 percent, making the alliance between JCPSACE and JCTC even more critical to help retain and advance these students (Schneider 2007).

Aligning Instructional and Other Resources

The EES program grew out of, and continues to foster, alignment between the adult education program and the community college. Through EES, adult learners at JCTC gain access to supportive services that might not otherwise be available, including the assessment of learning disabilities. Some EES instructors are trained in PowerPath, a comprehensive screening of a variety of possible learning issues, from vision and hearing issues to distractibility. These instructors work individually with struggling EES students to

create specialized strategy plans for students to use their entire academic careers.¹⁰ They also address a range of life issues—from eyeglasses to homelessness—in collaboration with community-based organizations.

Adult education faculty, who have qualifications comparable to those of developmental education faculty, also co-teach in some developmental education classes. These shared faculty resources increase adult education’s knowledge of the requirements for developmental education, allowing it to better prepare students for both developmental and college-level courses. Furthermore, developmental education faculty can access TABE testing through JCPSACE to get a more prescriptive or diagnostic assessment of the learning needs of developmental education students than COMPASS offers (Chisman 2004). Shared professional development opportunities through the state-level adult education and developmental education associations further enhance the knowledge of both faculty about effective instructional practices for adult learners.

Administrators for both programs note that resources gained for one entity often benefit the collaboration as a whole, creating spillover effects. For instance, while the EES program is supported primarily by the adult education budget, at a cost of \$280,000 annually for over 1,000 students, Jefferson Community and Technical College also expends more than \$6,000 per semester on a free, one-credit college and career exploration course, General Education 100, for over 400 GED students.¹¹ Both programs help these students transition into JCTC when their GEDs have been obtained, seeking resources from a number of sources (Employment and Training Reporter 2007). Other endeavors include GED express (an intensive preparation course for high-performing GED students striving to transition into community college), a free online English 101 enhanced pilot course to help 60 GED completers jumpstart

their college career, and adult education initiatives that are linked to specific career pathways in the community college. Without these connections to adult education, JCTC would lose many students; the EES program helps them see postsecondary education as a doable next step.

Implementation Challenges

While JCTC and JCPSACE are both committed to making the partnership work, the EES collaboration has confronted several challenges.

First, OVAE rejected efforts to streamline the assessment process by engaging ACT (a national testing vendor) to develop a TABE-COMPASS concordance table. Because JCPSACE was not allowed to convert COMPASS college placement test scores to TABE scores at the beginning of pre-college skills development, thus requiring both assessments, JCTC agreed to accept TABE scores converted to COMPASS scores at the end of EES pre-college skills development, streamlining placement into the next level beyond EES.

Second, the statewide cut scores for math originally were set so low that few students would be referred to the EES program. Given local flexibility, the partners raised the cut score to facilitate the assignment of adult learners with very low skills to the EES program.

Third, at the outset, the adult education and developmental education faculty did not know each other well. Leaders in both institutions had to persist in efforts to build confidence in the professionalism of adult educators and foster collaboration between them.

Program Results

JCPSACE has tracked the progress of the EES students in the KCTCS PeopleSoft database. Although corresponding its non-credit database to the college’s credit database has had some challenges, JCPSACE has been able to observe that students have placed into higher-level developmental education, and that some were placed directly into college-level courses. Over 80 percent of 1,000 lower-skilled adult learners in the program skipped one or more developmental

courses, and over 70 percent of these students were retained.

The sharing of faculty, facility, and instructional resources (e.g., PLATO software) is also perceived as an important result of the EES collaboration. By focusing on the strengths of adult education and developmental education, and sharing successful strategies through joint professional development opportunities, the partnership has promoted cooperation geared toward better transitions and cost effectiveness and greater student success (Chisman 2004).

Supportive Policies in Kentucky

The alignment of adult education and community colleges in Kentucky began with a strong economic imperative: research indicated that in order to be economically competitive and achieve a higher quality of life, the state needed to increase the number of residents receiving postsecondary credentials dramatically. Thus, to reach the projected national average in 2020, the state needed to produce twice as many working-age adults with Bachelor's degrees or higher (Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education 2005). With high poverty levels and low literacy rates, the state soon determined that adult education must transition more adult learners to college, and colleges, especially community colleges, must do a better job retaining these learners and helping them to succeed.

Coordination of Community College and Adult Education Services

The policy levers for this integration occurred through two pieces of legislation. The Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, enacted in 1997 and commonly referred to as House Bill 1, reformed postsecondary education. It created the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, merging Kentucky community colleges with the technical colleges. This legislation also created an independent coordinating body, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. Oversight of the KCTCS was placed under this new body, which has its own board of directors and is loosely aligned with the Kentucky Department of Education.

The postsecondary reform law set an overarching goal: a standard of living and quality of life that meets or exceeds the national average. It also specified two key strategies: increase educational attainment at all levels, and mandate KCTCS to increase access, improve pre-college skills development, and embrace an economic and workforce mission (King-Simms 2005). To facilitate the implementation of these strategies, the act enabled an assessment and placement policy that allows community colleges to place low-level students in adult education programs for pre-college skills development.

The second law, the Adult Education Reform Act, was enacted in 2000. Its major focus was to pull the Kentucky Adult Education department out of the Workforce Development Cabinet and place it under the oversight of the freestanding Council on Postsecondary Education. With oversight of both adult education and the KCTCS system under one umbrella, the state strengthened the opportunities and structures for alignment. In addition, both laws provided mutual and overlapping goals for KCTCS and adult education to address pre-college skills development needs.

Kentucky created a KCTCS/KYAE Joint Working Group to develop recommendations for collaboration in transitioning students. Members of the group then “went on the road,” presenting the recommendations. Through 10 regional meetings across the state, the working group brought adult education and developmental education faculty together to talk about their overlapping shared mission and target population. The faculty from both programs were encouraged to get to know each other and explore ways to better collaborate. Pockets of collaboration began to develop without any funding, including a collaboration between JCPSACE and JCTC, building on the college's new visionary leadership.

With WIA performance bonus funding for meeting or exceeding its Title II performance goals, the state invested in several transitions pilots (including three pilots within community colleges, one of which was Jefferson Community and Technical College). The funding provided about \$50,000 per pilot over a two-year period. Case studies from these pilots were developed and then disseminated across the state to increase knowledge of promising transition models.

Using two state welfare-to-work programs, Kentucky further piloted approaches to transitions with TANF recipients who were either college students in its Ready to Work program or higher functioning ABE/GED students in its Work and Learn program. An important lesson learned was the vital need for support services to assist lower-skilled adult learners as they seek to address their skills development needs.

Finally, the development of the COMPASS-TABE concordance table to better align assessment for college placement provided additional opportunities to rally adult education and developmental education programs around the need to increase collaboration for results, despite the challenge by OVAE in the use of this tool.

Performance Accountability Framework

The Council on Postsecondary Education created a state accountability framework for high-level coordination and oversight, centering it around five critical questions. The first question, “Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?” promotes a focus on effective transitions and pre-college skills development programs. The state also has performance benchmarks to measure successful student transitions (e.g., progression from ABE/GED to postsecondary), as well as advancement through the system (e.g., developmental education needs and success, GPA, retention, credentials earned). At least a quarter of adult education programs receive financial and performance audits each year; programs that fail to meet performance standards must complete a

self-assessment and develop a technical assistance plan to address areas needing improvement. In its oversight, the Kentucky Adult Education department seeks to promote an environment of continuous improvement for all adult education programs (Kentucky Adult Education 2005).

The state also uses rewards and sanctions to promote collaboration. On the one hand, the state provides \$20,000 in bonus funding out of Kentucky Adult Education resources for adult education programs that effectively transition students to postsecondary. On the other hand, programs that fail to meet their enrollment and other performance benchmarks are placed on probation in the first year, and they may have their funding withdrawn if improvements are not demonstrated in the following year.

While Kentucky state policy provides strong motivation for alignment, the level of collaboration between adult education and developmental education varies widely across the system’s 16 community colleges, with many local flavors. Because of “turf issues,” some partnerships between community colleges and adult education have not worked well. One state official notes that “good programs will find opportunities to collaborate, no matter what”; the official also acknowledges that the state-level framework supported by the governor’s office, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and the leadership at Kentucky Adult Education and KCTCS caused these relationships to happen in some cases where they would not have, especially in the absence of incentive funding.

Despite the variety of alliances, the JCPSACE and JCTC partnership is noted as the most extensive. Still, other postsecondary institutions, such as Gateway Community and Technical College, Southeast Community and Technical College, West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and Madisonville Community and Technical College, are now seeking to implement models similar to the EES approach, with the referral of lower-skilled adults learners to adult education for pre-college skills development at the core of their efforts. A recent Kentucky Develop-

mental Education Task Force report recommended that the state evaluate the success of the JCPSACE/JCTC program to assess the potential for replication of this particular aligned approach to pre-college skills development by other postsecondary institutions (Kentucky Developmental Education Task Force 2007).

Dual Enrollment Policy

The Joint Working Group that led to the creation of the EES program recommended the use of dual enrollment for adult education, which was then actively promoted by the Council on Postsecondary Education. Dual enrollment has proven to be an important state policy for the EES program, allowing both adult education and community colleges to jointly count adult learners toward the aggressive enrollment targets set by the state for each.

Significant State Investment in Adult Education

The substantial state investment in adult education provides an important reason and the room for Kentucky's high level of innovation. Federal funding is only a third of the Kentucky Adult Education budget. As a result, the state has considerable leverage in determining policies and direction. One key focus is the requirement that adult education instructors have degrees and credentials. Not only does this necessity improve quality of instruction, but it also helps to promote collaboration as community college faculty recognize that adult education instructors have comparable levels of education. To build on this requirement, the state is working on integrating professional development between adult education and development education, going beyond sharing information about learning opportunities.

Another important reason for innovation may be that Kentucky community colleges are not funded through FTE reimbursement. Instead, all public community colleges and universities are designated as benchmark institutions. Their funding is negotiated with the Council on Postsecondary Education, using institutions across the country as benchmarks and aligning funding with these institutions. Thus, in addition to dual enrollment poli-

cies, this funding approach for community colleges removes a disincentive to referring low-level adult learners to adult education for pre-college skills development.

Summary

On the whole, Kentucky state policies have been very supportive of collaborations between adult education and community college developmental education programs. Beyond allowing space for the development of these alliances, state policy has sought to motivate these connections aggressively. As a result, several community colleges have adopted versions of the aligned pre-college skills development approach, building on the capacity that exists within local adult education programs. As the state continues its dynamic efforts to address pre-college skills development and increase postsecondary attainment, and as evaluation data from the EES program become available, more community colleges may adopt this approach to increase remedial success.

NORTH CAROLINA

Davidson County Community College, Lexington, North Carolina

Background

Originating as an Industrial Education Center created to provide education and training for adults seeking employment in the manufacturing-based economy, Davidson County Community College is now a comprehensive community college serving 16,500 students each year on two campuses and two satellite centers. DCCC offers courses in more than 50 programs to prepare students for employment opportunities, transfer to four-year colleges, and achievement of personal and professional goals. It works closely with local business and industry to provide customized programs, services, and courses, and also offers non-credit and credit distance learning courses. The college serves a significant number of adults; the average age is 36.¹² Seventy percent of entering students require pre-college skills development in at least one course.

With unemployment growing as a result of manufacturing layoffs, Davidson County Community College sought ways to increase its student population and to increase student retention and success. A majority of new students admitted were placed into one or more developmental education courses (called preparatory in North Carolina to avoid attaching any stigma). Students with very low skills were being left behind in these courses, which were moving too fast for them. As part of its preparation for the Southern Accreditation for Colleges and Schools process in 2001-02, DCCC conducted a strategic study that focused on addressing the needs and success of low-performing students in developmental education.

While there were personal and informal relationships between adult education (called basic skills in North Carolina) and developmental education, the reaccreditation process helped Davidson see the need for a more formal and deliberate collaboration. An important result of this self-study was the Achieving College/Career Entry (ACE) program, which was developed to create a seamless transition from basic skills to credit courses for college students with low skills. Given that both adult education and developmental education were dealing with the same type of students, ACE was built on the institutional view that adult education/basic skills is critical to the mission of the college and should therefore be an integrated part of the college's programming.

Program Description

ACE was initiated in 1999 as one component of an assessment and placement approach. Once students are accepted into DCCC, they take the ACCUPLACER placement exam. As an institutional policy, mandatory placement is then based on overall test scores (*see Table 2*).

The ACE program is operated by the DCCC's basic skills/adult education unit. In addition to providing pre-college skills development for students who place at the lowest level, the program provides the quick review to prepare students who are close to college-level placement. These students then take the placement test again, with the goal of moving directly into college-level courses.

Many ACE students already have high school diplomas but still need to master some material. ACE program faculty and administrators provide training to student advisers to help them explain the levels for placement and to be positive and encouraging with students wherever they land on this continuum. The goal is to avoid having students attach any stigma to their need for pre-college skills development (Boylan 2004).

At a cost of about \$51,000, less than 3 percent of the adult education budget, ACE served about 300 students in 2005-06 in an individualized program based on student needs. Often literacy skill levels of students in the program range from second or third grade to eighth grade. Students referred to the program are assessed again using the TABE test, one of several federally mandated assessment tests for adult education students, to determine their grade-level score, establish a benchmark, and identify where to begin skills development. Pedagogical methods include a combination of small groups, computerized instruction, and individualized texts. Pre-college skills development averages three or four months, depending on whether the student is working on one or more subject areas, and it is offered at no cost to the student. Students can be dually enrolled in ACE and in developmental education or college-level courses, and the ACE courses count toward a student's full-time academic load. Because the students have below high school

Table 2. Cut Scores at DCCC on ACCUPLACER for Placement in Various Courses and Programs

	ACE program	Developmental Education	College-Level Courses
Writing	20-40	41-85	86-120
Reading	20-38	39-79	80-120
Math	0-19	20-120	75-120*

* Note: Students place into college-level courses based on their scores on the elementary algebra or college-level math portion of the ACCUPLACER test. Scores for students placed into ACE and most developmental education courses are based on the arithmetic portion of the ACCUPLACER test.

skills, even if they have a GED, they still qualify for adult education services and may participate in the same classes as other adult education students. Community college students in the ACE program also receive access to support services, including learning disability assessments. When the pre-college skills development is complete, students take the ACCUPLACER test again to determine where they are placed next for college-level courses or for additional pre-college skills development through adult education or developmental education. Students often transition to college-level reading and writing, although some frequently need some additional work in math, particularly algebra.

Aligning Instructional and Other Resources

The developmental courses are embedded in the academic departments, although cross-curriculum developmental courses are offered in reading and English/writing to enhance and focus the developmental education experience. Students receive computer-aided instruction and can also receive reinforcement of their skills development through peer tutors, professional writing and math coaches, and a Learning Assistance Center located in the same building where developmental education courses are held. Often, the computer programs used in developmental education are the same ones used in adult education, but at different skill levels. This facilitates student transitions to developmental education and college-level work, as adult learners don't have to learn how to use a new program.

As much as possible, the college seeks to infuse a strong focus on technology into its adult education and developmental education programs. The use of various electronic media helps to capture the attention and increase the engagement of younger learners who are more familiar with these tools, while building bridges for non-traditional students who must learn to function in media rich postsecondary education classrooms and workplaces. For example, Davidson utilizes SMART classrooms in developmental education, allowing instructors to project lectures onto SMART boards or panels. These lectures are then saved electronically and posted on classroom electronic

bulletin boards; students can access and review them as many times as needed to master the material. Through funding gained from a local company, the ACE program will incorporate a SMART classroom into its operations in spring 2008.

ACE faculty worked closely with math and other college faculty to gain support for the program. The instructors continue to work closely with department chairs to make sure the skills they are teaching are relevant to various courses of study. For example, at the request of the Early Childhood Education program, ACE added oral presentations into the basic skills development. Furthermore, through its *Breaking Through* efforts, adult education is also working closely with college faculty to facilitate career exploration for basic skills students who have not yet enrolled in the college. Based on their preferences, students can then receive pre-college skills development that is contextualized in and aligned with the requirements of college-level courses in these occupational programs.

Adult education and developmental education share some adjunct faculty and instructional resources (e.g., the learning labs and reading software), increasing opportunities for coordination. The college president and other institutional leaders strongly support both adult education and developmental education programs (Boylan 2004). High-level leadership within the community college are involved with adult education classes and students on a regular basis (e.g., through ad hoc workshops on taking the ACCUPLACER placement test), encouraging faculty to collaborate as well. Faculty also share new and effective instructional techniques through joint, college-sponsored, professional development activities and informal cross-participation in state-sponsored, professional development opportunities for adult educators and developmental educators.

Implementation Challenges

Because Davidson County Community College houses developmental education courses within academic departments (math, English), coordinating adult education with these programs to implement ACE has required some effort. One of the challenges in implementing the ACE program has been the difference in funding allocations between adult education and developmental education. Adult education programs receive funding based on contact hours for each student, while the college receives reimbursement for students based on its FTE enrollments. The college receives a lower reimbursement for adult education students (84 percent) due to contact hours that are lower than those of developmental or college-level students, creating concern about loss of revenue for the college for students who are referred to ACE (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser 2006). However, for the most part, the college seems to view the ACE program as an FTE generator: the more quickly and seamlessly ACE helps students achieve success in basic skills and increase student retention, the more quickly they will move into credit-level programs with higher FTE reimbursements.

Program Results

While outcome data for the approximately 300 students served in the ACE program thus far are not available yet, several results are apparent. Instructors have observed that students place into upper-level developmental education courses; some students, with additional review, place directly into college-level courses. ACE students are noted as completing their pre-college skills development with a more critically defined goal for themselves, a stronger work ethic (especially in math), and a better understanding of the relevance of basic skills to the academic rigor required in their chosen occupational paths. The development of the program has also increased collaboration between adult education and community college faculty.

DCCC plans to expand the ACE programs to its two satellite locations in spring 2007.¹³ Interest in the program is growing in the community college system as well: several other North Carolina community colleges interested in replication have visited Davidson to learn about the model.

Supportive Policies in North Carolina

Beyond institutional support, the ACE program emerges from a state policy environment that encourages alignment between adult education and community colleges. The roots of this state policy support lie in the designation of community colleges as the primary, although not exclusive, provider of adult education services and the state-level administration of adult education within the State Board of Community Colleges and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS).¹⁴

Community College Administration of Adult Education Services

The NCCCS developed in response to the tremendous change that was occurring in the state as the economy transitioned from an agricultural economy to a manufacturing-based economy. As state policymakers recognized the need for residents to acquire more education, they established plans for the development of state-supported community colleges. Originally, both adult education and community colleges were administered by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education. When control of the community colleges was moved to a separate State Board of Community Colleges in 1979, adult education—given its focus on adults—was also placed under the authority of this board. Furthermore, the colleges were given a comprehensive mission that included continuing education, adult education, and curriculum or credit programs, and that continued to position the community colleges as a “backbone of the state’s economic and workforce development” (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser 2006). As one state official noted, the integration of these programs allowed the community colleges to be more responsive to economic needs because businesses and their employees could gain access to basic skills, customized training, and other

academic preparation as part of one coordinated package located in one place.

In recent years, the 58 North Carolina community colleges have continued to be at the center of economic revitalization and reskilling efforts as job displacement has grown due to the moving, downsizing, or closing of many manufacturing companies. The state has demonstrated strong ongoing support for basic skills, matching the federal contribution of approximately \$15 million for adult education by at least 75 percent.

Performance Accountability Framework

While not a direct impetus for the development of the ACE program, several state policies are related to the increased enrollment, program completion, and remedial success rates it seeks to accomplish. Like many community college systems, North Carolina has developed performance measures to promote institutional accountability to state-defined outcomes. In response to a legislative mandate in 1999, 12 explicit performance measures, called Core Indicators of Success, have been developed to ensure program quality in community college programs and services.¹⁵ Community colleges that do not meet performance benchmarks on these indicators must submit an action plan to the State Board of Community Colleges on how they plan to improve their performance. Continued non-performance might result in program termination or other state penalties (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhuser 2006).

Two performance measures—program unduplicated headcount (enrollment totals) and curriculum (or credit) student retention and graduation—track enrollment, retention, and completion success. Enrollment goals are set by the state for each college. These performance measures are then tied to performance-based funding incorporated in the community college funding formula. Thus, building on a base of \$20,000, community colleges receive \$50 for every GED graduate, \$150 for every adult high school graduate, 25 cents for every FTE from the age 15-64 target population, and \$10,000 for every percent the community college exceeds the statewide average in enrollment of the target population. Federal

adult education funds are also distributed to community colleges as a percentage of their state allocations.

Measures that relate to success in pre-college skills development include the progress of basic skills students, developmental course passing rates, and performance of developmental students in college-level courses. Overall, these measures suggest that lower-skilled adult learners in North Carolina community colleges are making considerable progress. In the 2006-07 school year, using federally designated outcome measures, 80 percent of basic skills students on average progressed within a level, completed a level or goal, or advanced to the next level. The same proportion (80 percent) passed developmental courses with a grade of C or better. Finally, 88 percent of developmental education students in the state passed the subsequent college-level courses. A recently mandated statewide cut score is expected to increase the number of students requiring pre-college skills development, especially in math, making accountability to student success even more important.

Dual Enrollment Policy

Dual enrollment is a state policy that has been central to the operations of the ACE program. While the administrative statute focuses on high school students, it does not preclude the use of the policy for adult education students. Instead, this is an institutional decision, although one community college administrator noted that few colleges take advantage of it. Still, the policy has been important in allowing adult education and developmental/curriculum programs at Davidson to share “credit” for enrollment and for the revenue generated by that enrollment.

State Flexibility in Institutional Decision Making

Given that community colleges developed with great support from and responsiveness to local needs, including the creation of local boards of trustees, state policies allow great flexibility in college decision making regarding institutional policies. Therefore, other policies that seem to be relevant in the ACE program are also institutional decisions rather than state mandates. North

Carolina does not mandate placement in pre-college skills development, although mandated prerequisites for college-level courses often serve to encourage pre-college skills development. The state system also does not require college emphasis on effective transitions into postsecondary education, although this is a system goal that is tracked through the state's Critical Success Factors performance measures, thus increasing the importance of this issue for the community colleges. About 12 percent of basic skills students transferred into occupational and curriculum programs in the 2004-05 academic year.

Summary

Overall, North Carolina state policies provide a supportive environment in which local innovations to align pre-college skills development programs such as ACE might grow. The program has not encountered any state policy barriers, with the exception of the funding allocation issue. Instead, there is great flexibility for local institutions seeking to develop such approaches.

Despite these supportive policies and other innovations in adult and developmental education in the state, the ACE program is fairly unique among North Carolina institutions, with only Pamlico Community College developing a similar approach. One reason might be that initial guidance from the North Carolina Community College System suggested that alignment between adult education and developmental education in this way was appropriate “in a very limited number of cases” (NCCCS 2000). As the ACE program has been established and implemented, however, more colleges are exploring the approach with the support of the community college system.

OREGON

Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon

Background

Beginning as an adult basic education program of the Portland Public Schools, Portland Community College is now a full-fledged, comprehensive community college. As the largest postsecondary institution in Oregon, PCC serves about 91,000 full and part-time students on four campuses. The college offers two-year degrees, one-year certificate programs, college transfer programs, adult basic education, English as a Second Language, high school completion and dual credit programs, community and continuing education programs, and service-learning opportunities that foster the development of civic responsibility and engagement. PCC serves a significant population of adults: the average age is 35. About 70 percent of the students require pre-college skills development in at least one course, especially math, upon acceptance.¹⁶

Committed to educating adult students with low skills, PCC found that many of these adults were languishing in lower levels of developmental education. Faculty began exploring how to create different structures and approaches for these students. This led to collaboration with adult basic skills education to create a flexible, self-paced approach for lower-skilled students. PCC also sought to improve the retention of developmental education students, which was worse than the retention of adult education students, and to reduce costs, especially in financial aid, for these students (Walker & Strawn 2004).

Program Description

The Adult Basic Skills Program has existed since PCC's inception. Using the COMPASS test, students who are accepted into community college are assessed during the orientation and placement sessions in reading, writing, and math (*see Table 3*). Students who do not speak English well are

also given assessment tests in COMPASS ESL, particularly listening, reading, and grammar.

Once advisors communicate their assessment scores, students have the option of being referred into the Adult Basic Skills Program or taking a lower-level developmental education course. Those who choose the Adult Basic Skills Program pay \$40 per term. They are then assessed using the CASAS test, one of several federally mandated assessment tests for adult basic education students, and receive pre-college skills development in their area of need. Classrooms use instructional methods that are either modular (teaching skills in “chunks”) or integrated (combining subjects). Learning laboratories are incorporated into each classroom. Through these labs, students can receive individualized, computerized instruction using two Internet-based programs, MySkillsTutor and GEDConnection.

Because Oregon considers adult basic education students to be community college students, those in the Adult Basic Skills Program are dually enrolled in adult basic education (for federal reporting and state FTE reimbursement purposes) and in developmental or college-level courses (for tuition and FTE reimbursement purposes). Students in the Adult Basic Skills Program also access supportive services through adult basic education referrals, including learning disability assessments, child care, and transportation assistance.

When their pre-college skills development is complete, some students move from adult basic education to college-level courses. Others transition to developmental education courses that might be offered in a centralized unit, academic departments (English/math), or a combination of the two. Nonetheless, all students in developmental education receive the same curriculum regardless of where instruction is offered. Most developmental education classes are offered in traditional settings. However, PCC also offers some self-paced instruction as well as hybrid approaches that include both lecture and computer-aided instruction. The college also offers cross-curriculum classes, such as those that link reading and writing around particular topics.

Table 3. Cut Scores at PCC on COMPASS for Placement in Various Courses and Programs

For English-speaking students	Adult Basic Skills Program	Developmental Education	College-Level Courses
Math	<21	21-99	> 41*
Reading	<44	44-87	> 87
Writing	<23	23-78	>78

For ESL students	Adult Basic Skills Program	Developmental Education	College-Level Courses
Listening	<50	50-94	>94
Reading	<50	50-94	>95
Grammar	<50	50-94	>94

** Note: Students place into college-level courses based on their scores on the algebra portion of the COMPASS test. Scores for students placed into Adult Basic Skills Program and most developmental education courses are based on the pre-algebra portion of the test.*

Internal research indicates that 70 to 75 percent of students who complete developmental courses at PCC succeed at next-level and general education courses.

Aligning Instructional and Other Resources

Because PCC views the adult basic education program as part of the college, other opportunities for alignment and collaboration have developed. One way this alignment occurs is through efforts to create “one” student body. Adult basic education students who are not in credit-level programs receive the same perks (e.g., use of the library and student support services) that other college students receive, increasing the chances that these students will decide to continue their education at PCC. College advisors work closely with GED classes in adult basic education to promote student transitions into college programs.

Alignment is further promoted through the sharing of resources. Adult basic education and developmental education programs share some part-time instructors, and they have had joint professional development opportunities to educate

each other about best practices. Some developmental education programs are working with adult basic education to buy software and create a more seamless instructional approach. For example, the developmental education division on PCC's Sylvania campus has purchased computers, software, and classroom furniture to better merge adult basic education into the campus. Beyond the federal dollars and student fees, adult basic education also receives general funds from the college to cover the costs of services provided in the Adult Basic Skills Program and adult basic education in general. In Oregon, adult basic education students receive FTE reimbursements at the same rate as other college students; these funds are returned as part of the college's general fund and, based on the institution's budget, PCC then decides what proportion to reallocate to the adult basic education program.

PCC also has a Basic Skills Coordinating Council that includes deans and faculty leaders in developmental education, credit-level math and writing, and adult basic education programs (ABE, GED, ESL). The council looks at students with pre-college skills as a group and works to address institutional barriers and better coordinate the services the college provides to them. The council has integrated non-credit ESL with credit-level ESL courses. It is now aligning adult basic education and developmental education and developing a set of recommendations. A pre-college summit in summer 2007 engaged adult basic education and developmental education faculty and administrators in reviewing these recommendations and determining next steps. Among the recommendations are plans to expand developmental education offerings, including intensive (or accelerated) options that might be assigned more credits, as well as developing criteria for selection/self-selection of students for each option.

Implementation Challenges

Several significant challenges face the Adult Basic Skills Program and the continued alignment of adult basic education and developmental education.

First, Oregon has no statewide mandatory placement policy. Each community college determines its own local placement policy. Therefore, at some community colleges, students who are assessed and placed into developmental education or are referred to adult basic education may choose not to enroll in these courses. Despite efforts to integrate the basic skills program into the broader college environment, some students see a referral to adult basic education as going backward, not as advancing their educational progress.

The need for financial aid is the second reason why students may choose not to attend adult basic education remedial classes. Although the fee for these classes is nominal (\$40 per term at PCC) and assessed for all adult basic education students, it is not included in financial aid calculations because adult basic skills courses are non-credit courses. In contrast, financial aid funds can be used for most developmental education courses, even at the lower level; these funds also provide the potential for additional income beyond tuition to cover other expenses.

To address these two concerns, PCC is changing its policy in fall 2008. Pre-college skills development will be mandatory for all students who test below college-level courses. Students with low skills will continue to be referred to adult education for pre-college skills development. The lower-level developmental education courses will become a non-credit, fee-based bridge from adult basic education to higher-level developmental education or college-level courses.

A further challenge is that Portland Community College's four campuses have established different structures for pre-college skills development through developmental education and adult basic education. In some instances, the remedial courses are located in a separate developmental education unit. In other instances, the remedial courses are housed within academic departments (English and

math). One campus has a hybrid approach, with reading and writing remedial courses in a developmental unit and math offered in the academic department.

Adult basic education, which has been a part of PCC since its inception, is centralized within a single division, Adult Basic Skills Program, which functions across the entire district. Although it has a presence on each campus, the method of delivery for adult basic education services and the level of integration also vary. These different structures make it difficult to coordinate the alignment of developmental and adult basic education across campuses. For example, one developmental education program administrator noted that while the adult education program on its campus uses an integrated instructional approach (combining reading, writing, and math), breaking out the levels for each would facilitate better coordination with developmental education. Individual campuses are working to better incorporate adult basic education into the community college at the campus level. In this way, adult education administrators and faculty will also be able to participate in the planning, budget, and space allocations within each campus.

Program Results

Anecdotally, faculty note that students in the Adult Basic Skills Program subsequently test into higher-level developmental education or college-level courses. Students also incur significantly lower costs for their pre-college skills development and gain access to the support services that help to ensure their success. In addition, the Adult Basic Skills Program is strengthening the connections between adult basic education and developmental education programs on the four PCC campuses, providing opportunities for additional collaboration to promote student achievement.

Supportive Policies in Oregon

The state policy setting from which the Adult Basic Skills Program developed promotes strong alignment of adult basic education and community colleges. Over 90 percent of adult basic education services are delivered by Oregon's 17

community colleges, which have offered these services since the conception of the community college system in the 1960s. The comprehensive mission of these colleges ranges from adult basic education and workforce training to Associate's degrees and transfer to four-year institutions. Both community colleges (encompassing adult basic education) and the K-12 system were originally both administered by the state department of education (Walker & Strawn 2004).

Community College Administration of Adult Education Services

In the 1980s, as the Oregon economy changed from an industrial focus to higher-skilled sectors, unemployment was high. In response, state policymakers crafted *Oregon Shines*, a strategic plan for rebuilding the economy. The need to promote additional secondary or postsecondary education and workforce development for lower-skilled adults made adult basic education a vital service. It also served as an impetus for greater alignment as policymakers sought to coordinate services better (Zafft Kallenbach, & Spohn 2007). In fact, *Oregon Shines* set a strong state expectation for interagency collaboration (Walker & Strawn 2004).

In 1987, to make greater progress on the state's educational concerns, the legislature formed the Office of Community College Service to administer the community college system. It also formed the Oregon State Board of Education as the policymaking body for both community colleges and the K-12 system. In addition, the state board serves as a forum for both the governor's staff and other education and workforce officials to engage in high-level strategic planning that integrates responses to economic, workforce, and educational issues. The commissioner of the Office of Community College Service brought greater visibility and prominence to community colleges and their adult basic education programs by sitting on the Governor's Education and Workforce Cabinet and the Oregon WIB and through engagement with the legislature (Walker & Strawn 2004).

In 1994, the Job Training Partnership Act program was integrated into the Office of Community College Service and the agency changed its name to the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. As a result, more emphasis was placed on linking educational and workforce development programs, again promoting the need for collaboration between adult basic education and other departments and programs within the community colleges (Walker & Strawn 2004; Zafft Kallenbach, & Spohn 2007). Furthermore, with the downturn in the economy, it was useful to have adult basic education, community colleges, and workforce development all within the same agency. This co-administration promoted alignment and a comprehensive response to layoffs or economic development opportunities.

Significant State Investment in Adult Education

State investment in adult basic education remains strong, with the state matching 80 percent of the approximately \$5.6 million federal contribution.¹⁷ Furthermore, adult basic education and developmental education/credit-level students receive the same state reimbursement rate per student. This uniform rate raises the academic standing of adult basic education and indicates that it is just as important as other programs. On the one hand, the same reimbursement rate may remove the disincentive of placing students with very low skills in adult basic education to address their remedial needs. On the other hand, it can create competition to get more students into developmental education, where tuition and financial aid are attached to their enrollment. Community colleges have had to be attentive to these issues and to placing adult learners in the most appropriate place to increase their basic skills.

Performance Accountability Framework

Oregon Shines provides an ongoing and overarching framework at the state level for coordinating adult basic education and community colleges. It includes an explicit focus on increasing literacy, math, and other skills necessary to create a competitive workforce and providing greater educational opportunities and better-paying jobs for residents (Walker & Strawn 2004). These goals are then tied to benchmarks developed by the Oregon Progress Board, a state leadership organization created by the legislature, chaired by the governor, and charged with monitoring progress toward achievement of the goals in *Oregon Shines*.

Various state agencies have responsibility for achieving the benchmarks, and they connect their performance accountability measures to the *Oregon Shines* indicators. The Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development and the community colleges are responsible for the adult literacy and postsecondary credential benchmarks, which creates some incentive for ongoing alignment. In addition, Oregon is revising its funding formula for adult basic education to include performance-based funding. Programs will need to reach state-defined targets in levels of pre and post testing, educational gain, GED completion, transitions to postsecondary education, and employment placement and retention.

Oregon also promotes collaboration through another accountability framework, the Oregon Indicators of Program Quality. These evaluation standards set expectations about the alignment of adult basic education and community college programs to facilitate transitions of adult learners. Data on these evaluation standards are collected as part of a comprehensive five-year review of adult basic education programs. While the state does not impose rewards or sanctions based on performance, institutions can receive resources and technical assistance in areas needing improvement.

Aligning Instructional and Other Resources

A statewide structure facilitates coordination among adult basic education programs. Formed in 1971 and reconstituted in 1991-92 (Walker & Strawn 2004), the Council of Adult Basic Skills Development includes the lead administrators for all adult basic education programs. Other members include developmental education directors and staff of the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, the Department of Corrections, and other literacy agencies (Walker & Strawn 2004). A primary purpose of the council is to identify strategic issues and problems from a statewide system perspective and facilitate collective problem solving. For nearly a year, this organization has been discussing the issue of aligning adult basic education programs with college credit-level programs, and it is preparing a set of recommendations to present to the state. There is strong agreement that alignment needs to be defined at the local level. The council is also deliberating on the outcomes standards for which adult basic education should prepare students in order to meet the necessary prerequisites for transition to their proposed course of study.

State Flexibility in Institutional Decision Making

The legislation establishing community colleges also created locally elected boards to govern them and local taxing authority to help support them. As a result, community colleges in Oregon exercise a great deal of independence in setting their policy directions (Walker & Strawn 2004). Thus, each college makes its own decisions about a cut score for pre-college skills development, whether remedial placement is mandatory, and if dual enrollment is allowed. Yet Oregon's flexible policy environment has sparked much experimentation around alignment to provide pre-college skills development and promote transitions as well. These efforts vary greatly across the 17 colleges. Lane Community College refers students who place into lower-level developmental education to adult basic education to increase their basic skills. Linn Benton Community College allows a certain number of adult basic education students transitioning to community college to receive pre-

college skills development in developmental education without paying tuition. In Blue Mountain Community College, the adult basic education and developmental education programs have combined faculty, with all staff teaching in both programs to experience working with students along a continuum. Blue Mountain faculty members are also revising the adult basic education curriculum to align it better with the developmental education curriculum.

Summary

On the whole, Oregon state policies have supported the alignment of adult education and developmental education through such efforts as the Adult Basic Skills Program. With great independence and flexibility, encouragement and resources from the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, and no policy barriers, colleges are exploring diverse approaches to aligning remedial programs. However, the state might consider how it can use its data tracking and analysis capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of these various approaches (including the Adult Basic Skills Program), so that it can better guide college efforts toward approaches with the greatest likelihood of success.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ About half of the new jobs in the United States will require college-level skills, but 100 million working-age adults lack the skills needed for these jobs. Immigrants will account for half of population growth in the coming decade; in 2004, 34 percent arrived without high school diplomas and 80 percent were limited English proficient (Kirsch et al. 2007).
- ² For the purposes of this paper, remedial programs are defined as courses offered to help adult learners increase their academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics so they can perform college credit-level work (ECS 2002).
- ³ The federal funding formula uses Census data on the number of adults (age 16 and older) in each state who do not have a high school diploma and are not enrolled in school (U.S. DOE 2005).
- ⁴ In 2005, the total federal grants to states under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act was \$559.6 million; total expenditure including state and philanthropic contributions was approximately \$2.2 billion (using the 2003 federal-to-nonfederal ratio). Approximately 2.7 million students were served (2003 data). States vary widely in their contribution to AEFLA. In 2002, the most recent year for which OVAE provides data, Florida provided the highest proportion (90 percent); Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas tied for last place at 25 percent (U.S. DOE 2005).
- ⁵ In 2000, 42 percent, of freshmen (416,000 students) entering public two-year postsecondary institutions were enrolled in one or more developmental education classes (which likely understates the extent of the problem: second-year and beyond students are often enrolled in one or more developmental education classes). Recent, reliable estimates of costs do not seem to be readily available. Saxon and Boylan summarize data collected in the mid-1990s from various states. Two examples: Arkansas in 1997 spent \$27 million on developmental education, compared with approximately \$16.1 million on AEFLA. Illinois spent \$26.9 million on developmental education in 1996 compared with approximately \$34 million on AEFLA (Saxon & Boylan, undated; NCES 2004). Developmental education is often defined as being broader than just pre-college skills development and encompasses orientation to college, including courses on study skills and critical thinking and other support services that could be made available to all students (Illich et al. 2004). However, this paper focuses on the remedial aspects of developmental education. Developmental education is also referred to by other names, including remedial education or preparatory education.
- ⁶ See the *Breaking Through* Web site for more information on this initiative and a list of the participating colleges: www.breakingthroughcc.org.
- ⁷ Information on JCTC college and student characteristics were gathered from the JCTC Web site: www.jefferson.kctcs.edu.
- ⁸ Information on JCPS programs were gathered from the JCPC Fast Facts sheet and program staff; additional information is available at www.adulted4u.com.
- ⁹ Transitions programs seek to address the gap that often exists between GED attainment and college-level skills. These programs have a variety of models, ranging from low-intensity advising to intensive college preparatory models. See Zafft, Kallenbach, & Spohn (2006).
- ¹⁰ For more information about this learning disability screening, see www.powerpath.org.
- ¹¹ Through a similar partnership with two private colleges—Sullivan University and Spalding University—JCPSACE served a total of 1,298 students in the EES program in fiscal year 2005-06.
- ¹² Information on DCCC and student characteristics were gathered from the DCCC Web site: www.davidsonccc.edu/about/index.htm.
- ¹³ See the DCCC Strategic Planning Summary 2006-2007, available at: www.davidsonccc.edu/pdfs/StrategicPlanningSummary.pdf.
- ¹⁴ In North Carolina, all 58 community colleges provide adult education or basic skills services. In addition, 29 community-based organizations also provide these services. In some instances, the CBOs and community colleges work together to deliver basic skills services.
- ¹⁵ The Core Indicators of Success, which measure institutional performance, are a subset of the Critical Success Factors, which provide performance measures for system-wide outcomes in accord with the system's strategic plan.
- ¹⁶ Information on PCC and student characteristics were gathered from the PCC Web site: www.pcc.edu/about.
- ¹⁷ As noted in the description of the Adult Basic Skills Program, Oregon adult basic education students are reimbursed at the same rate as community college credit-level students. Adult basic education FTE reimbursements go to the colleges, and the institutions distribute them according to their budget. While \$5.6 million is available from federal adult education dollars, about \$30 million is available through state FTE reimbursement for adult basic education students. Thus, the state contribution to adult basic education is likely much greater than 80 percent, although the entire \$30 million may not be redistributed to adult basic education programs.

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Around the country, innovative community colleges are helping low-skilled adults gain the valuable skills and credentials that are the gateway to family-supporting careers. *Breaking Through*, a multi-year demonstration project, promotes and enhances the efforts of community colleges to help low-literacy adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs.

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