

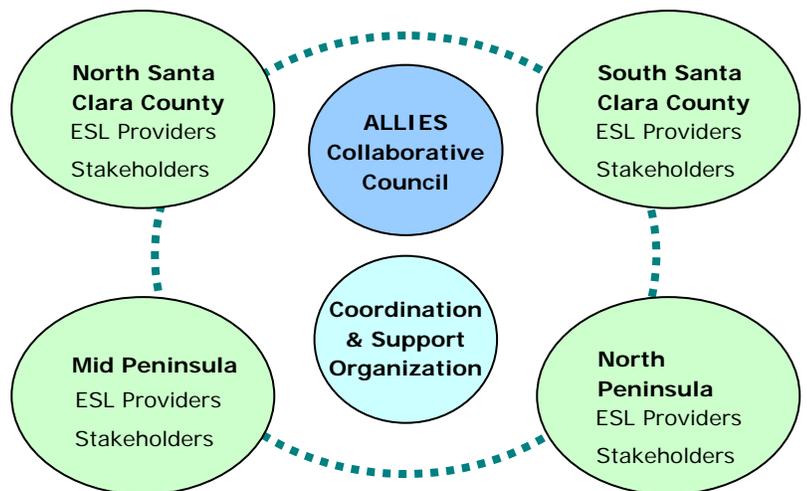
Little Hoover Commission Testimony Paul Downs, ALLIES Network Consultant

1. How, when and for what purpose was the ALLIES Network Formed?

ALLIES is a multi-stakeholder coalition dedicated to expanding opportunities for adults to learn English in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. ALLIES was formed to ensure the Silicon Valley region has a clear strategy for realizing the benefits of a robust adult English language acquisition strategy at a time of severe budget constraints. The premise of ALLIES is that a broad problem affecting many individuals, families and stakeholders requires community-wide collaborative solutions.

The initial activities to create ALLIES took place from October 2009 to October 2010. At that time, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation sponsored five exploratory meetings with community college representatives from San Mateo and Santa Clara County. The community college representatives invited the adult schools to join in developing a planning grant proposal for ALLIES in November 2010. The grant was approved in December. A steering committee representing three adult schools and four community colleges, supported by a project consultant, started work in January 2011.

ALLIES is currently conducting planning and action research to establish the collaborative infrastructure needed to align and leverage Adult English Language Acquisition systems and key stakeholders across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties to meet the needs of adult language learners. This is intended to address the growing demand for high-quality English language programs in our region at a time of significant budget reductions. The network will promote coordination between the community colleges, adult schools, employers, labor, workforce agencies, community-based organizations, and foundations to expand the use of best practice ESL and vocational ESL (VESL) programs. The plan will create a roadmap or framework that will guide providers of English Language classes as they collaborate in the years ahead to better serve immigrants who wish to acquire English skills.



Draft Organizing Concept for ALLIES

How We Will Achieve Change

As shown in the diagram, four sub-regional coalitions will bring together providers and stakeholders to create community-wide solutions to curriculum, barrier removal, assessment, workforce alignment, data systems, and in other areas. The regional Collaborative Council will raise funds, identify regional projects and advocate for the mission in consultation with the sub-regional coalitions. A support organization will provide coordination, training, fundraising, and measurement services.

Success Indicators

The Network will aim to achieve measurable results in the following areas:

- College degrees and certificates
- Transitions to college and post-secondary training
- Job entry, retention, advancement
- English language competency gains (ARCC and CASAS gains)
- Civic participation
- Alignment of adult English language acquisition programs to regional workforce needs

Benefits

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees estimates that as much as 66% of the need for adult English Language acquisition in the Silicon Valley Region is not being met. Addressing this need will put English language learners on a path to family-sustaining jobs that support the regional economy. Self-sufficient adults with English language competency are better able to support their children's educations and contribute to community life. Overall, enhancing the language competencies of language learners will create important fiscal, economic, community and civic benefits.

2. To what extent did participant schools and colleges work together before joining the ALLIES Network?

The Sequoia Unified High School District Adult Education Program and Cañada College had been collaborating. (Representatives of those institutions will address this work.) There were other 1:1 collaborative efforts, but no regional collaboration. The Adult Schools have an ESL coordinating group in Santa Clara County.

3. Have members discussed on-the-ground barriers or challenges to partnering? If so, what are some of the challenges they have identified and could he state play a role in alleviating some of them?

The main barriers discussed is the time and effort required to collaborate and lack of common data systems . Other challenges are, in some cases, competition for resources and difficulty in finding partners to collaborate in the other institution.

The state can play a role in providing resources to support collaborative planning. This could include funding to support coordinator/facilitators and providing training and capacity building for collaboration. The state can also provide policy guidance and education to increase the interest and buy-in of local partners to collaborate. The state could assist in establishing a common or aligned data system between the two segments. Finally, the state can provide alternative financial models that might

mitigate a perception of competition for ADA/FTES while funding the collaborative infrastructure needed for success.

4. How has participation in the network improved coordination between neighboring Adult Education schools and community colleges in ESL programs?

Seven local Adult School and Community College groups met in Spring 2011 to launch the collaborative effort. From Gilroy to South San Francisco, ESL practitioners explored a range of strategies. They will continue their work in the fall and beyond. Initial options being explored include:

- Alignment of assessments
- Orientation of adult school students regarding community colleges
- Faculty/teacher observation of partner institutions
- Tracking the movement and success of students between systems
- Relationship building
- Co-location of classes

5. In your opinion, how could the state encourage more integration at the local level to ensure that students who take ESL courses through Adult Education programs, if interested, successfully transition to a community college?

The state can play a significant role. In part this is addressed in the answers to question 3, above. However the most impactful way the state can support adult school to college transitions to create statewide policies and initiatives that support such transitions. The California Budget Project recommended examples of such changes in May 2011:

- California should view its Adult Education Program and community college basic skills programs as components of a common effort and establish goals for the system as a whole, to enable all residents to make the greatest possible contribution to the economic and civic life of the state.
- The specific goals of California's basic skills system should be twofold: To transition increasing numbers of individuals with weak basic skills into postsecondary education or jobs with opportunities for advancement, and to increase the share of basic skills students who complete a certificate or who transfer to a four-year college or university.

6. In your opinion, what are the benefits of maintaining basic skills programs in both the Adult Education and community college systems? Are there some categories of courses that are more appropriate for one system than the other? Is there a need to further clarify delineation of service?

Both systems have significant strengths. The benefit of keeping both systems as part of one integrated basic skills system is to leverage the expertise in adult education housed in the Adult Education system and the ability to connect to post-secondary opportunities in the community colleges. Delineating makes sense with lower skill levels handled by the adult schools, in general, but the better concept is to find ways of integrating the two systems seamlessly. For example, co-location of classes and shared or aligned assessments and instruments have potential. (See Kentucky.)

7. In your opinion, what could the state do to encourage more regional collaboration in partnerships like the ALLIES Network? Based on your experience, what are the necessary ingredients for a successful regional effort?

The state could set up and support a process of regional collaboration. The ACET center concept in the Adult Education Strategic Plan (April 2011) is a good model. Local leaders in both segments and stakeholder communities need to be encouraged and supported in working out their own solutions. Ingredients for success include:

- Shared definition of the problem
- Shared goals, metrics and data systems
- A clear and structured collaborative process supported by adequate resources
- Clear state policy guidance and support
- A grass-roots and action orientation to build on strengths of local ESL professionals