

Little Hoover Commission Testimony

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Thank you very much for inviting me to answer these questions for the Little Hoover Commission about my involvement on the Steering Committee of the ALLIES Network and my work for Cañada College at Sequoia Adult School.

1. What do you hope to achieve through your participation in the ALLIES Network? To what extent does your college partner with adult schools outside of the ALLIES Network?

Participating in the Silicon Valley Community Foundation Adult English Language Acquisition (AELA) discussions and on the Steering Committee of the ALLIES Network that evolved out of the AELA discussions over the past year and a half has been a very exciting professional activity. Through the ALLIES Network, I have been able to share with my community college and adult school colleagues how the informal collaboration between the ESL Departments at Cañada College and Sequoia Adult School has grown into an official collaboration with a Cañada College ESL course offered day and evening at the Adult School for the ESL students who have completed the Adult School ESL sequence and want to transition to community college. Cañada College and Sequoia Adult School have had an informal connection for many years, involving presentations to the Adult School students about Cañada College, but there was little or no follow up with the Adult School students after the presentations. At a North Fair Oaks Community Council meeting in 2010, community members asked Cañada College to consider offering college ESL and Math classes at the Adult School site. In January 2011, Cañada offered the first college ESL course at Sequoia Adult School. The relationship between Cañada College and Sequoia Adult School existed before the ALLIES Network, but the ALLIES Network has supported the connection and provided a way to share the success of this collaboration with other community colleges and adult schools.

2. Are there lessons from your experience working with Sequoia Adult School and ALLIES that you have applied, or plan to apply, to other basic skills courses?

The request of the North Fair Oaks Community Council to Cañada College was for college ESL courses and also for college Math courses. There have been preliminary discussions with the Dean of Science and Technology at Cañada about adding a Cañada College Math class at the Sequoia Adult School site. Offering basic skills level college English and Reading classes for students who complete the GED classes at Sequoia Adult School has also been discussed.

3. How could the state encourage more integration at the local level to ensure that students who take ESL course through Adult Education programs, if interested, successfully transition to community college? What are some of the barriers or challenges to successful student transitions from one system to the other?

Supporting the work of the ALLIES Network and encouraging other counties/regions to create similar networks of ESL providers is one way to encourage more integration at the local level. There are many barriers that delay and derail students from successfully transitioning from one system to

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the other: lack of knowledge about the two systems, different assessment tools, different fees, unclear goals, lack of study skills, different class schedules and semester calendars, unaligned curriculum, transportation issues and child care needs.

In the College ESL course that we have offered at the Adult School, we are facilitating the application, assessment and registration process with the students and contextualizing language skills in explaining College policies and fees, practicing study skills and introducing career and major options. The course is located at the Adult School and offered at times that are familiar and convenient for the Adult School students.

As a result of this collaboration, the Adult School teachers began discussing their ESL curriculum with the college ESL faculty and are revising their curriculum to better prepare the students for college, especially in the areas of grammar and writing.

4. What are the benefits of maintaining basic skills programs in both the Adult Education and community college systems? Are some categories of courses more appropriate for one system than the other? Is there a need to further delineate these roles?

One major benefit of maintaining basic skills programs in both the Adult Education and community college systems is to reach more students. In the case of Cañada College and Sequoia Adult School, the Adult School offers classes in the neighborhoods where many ESL and basic skills students live. If the two systems can connect effectively and align their curriculum efficiently, they can create clear pathways for students from the Adult Schools to the community colleges. Having these discussions at the local level engages the providers in dialogues that are beneficial to clarifying and delineating roles. The ALLIES Network has given ESL providers in both systems in the Silicon Valley region the opportunity to connect and have these important discussions which can lead to further clarification and delineation of roles.

5. In your opinion, would there be value in consolidating some or all basic skills programs into a single system?

Consolidating some or all basic skills programs into a single system would seem to make access to higher education even more difficult for many ESL and basic skills students. Both systems are needed to reach the diverse population of students that we have in California; however, we can do a lot more in the area of communication and collaboration between the two systems.