

California Department of Education, Adult Education Testimony
Little Hoover Commission
Respectfully submitted by Dr. Patrick Ainsworth, Director of Secondary, Career,
and Adult Learning Division
and Ms. Debra Jones, Administrator, Adult Education Office
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Thank you for the opportunity to address the Little Hoover Commission and to share the vital issues surrounding adult education and the impacts of the current budget reductions. Adult Education has a long history in California serving adults since 1856. The first classes were taught in the basement of Old St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco to Chinese immigrants. Since that time, the program has grown, and in 2008 adult education served 1.2 million adults.

The current fiscal crisis has impacted hundreds of thousands of adults in California. Flexibility has redirected the Adult Education budget of 634 million dollars to the kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) system to be used for any educational purpose. School districts and school boards have had to make difficult decisions in this time of limited resources. It is estimated that half of the 2011 adult education budget was spent on adult education.

I am here with Ms. Debra Jones to answer the questions you posed. We will be happy to provide more information as needed.

What are the key functions and core mission of the state's Adult Education programs? How do these differ from those programs offered through the community college system? How do the student populations and outcomes differ between the two systems?

Over 5.3 million Californians lack a high school diploma. This number does not include the English as a Second Language (ESL) population that may have a diploma but does not speak English well; nor does it include the large population of adults who receive diplomas but require remedial instruction in order to be prepared for postsecondary education or careers. Half of those 5.3 million adults have educational attainment levels below the ninth grade, yet only 1.1 million adults, roughly 21 percent, are receiving these services through adult schools and community colleges each year.

The key function and core mission of Adult Education is to provide educational services in four core areas: (1) ESL; (2) Adult Secondary Education (ASE) grade levels 9–12; (3) Adult Basic Education (ABE) grade levels 0–8; (4) and Career Technical Education (CTE). Eighty-seven percent of all Adult Education students are enrolled in these four program areas.

Three hundred adult schools, 40 community-based organizations, 13 library literacy programs and 17 community colleges are awarded Workforce Investment Act (WIA),

Title II grant awards through Adult Education. Classes are taught in over 700 sites, including schools, workplaces, public service agencies, and One-Stops.

Although the program areas are consistent with those offered in the community college system, Adult Education serves a different student demographic. The Adult Education students tend to be older than community college students, and they have lower levels of educational attainment than community college students. Adult Education serves more female students and a higher percentage of the students are of Hispanic origin. Forty-five percent of Adult Education students lack a high school diploma and one-third are unemployed. The following table illustrates the primary and secondary goals reported by students in Adult Education for the 2009–10 year.

Total Enrollment		
WIA, Title II 2009–10	696,831	
Primary or Secondary Goal	Primary Goal	Secondary Goal
High School Diploma	91,192	27,307
Get a Job	13,715	44,980
Retain Job	5,441	23,229
Enter college or training	3,831	27,436
Improve basic skills	213,203	95,520
Improve English skills	303,308	74,142
Personal Goal	27,645	261,858
Family Goal	5,238	22,788
U.S. Citizenship	6,573	7,802
Military	303	1,933
Work-based project	462	1,343
Other Attainable Goal	4,390	21,401

The United States Department of Education National Reporting System sets the standards for literacy and core performance outcomes for Adult Education. Performance based outcomes include literacy gains at all levels of ESL and secondary education. The California Department of Education (CDE) is held accountable for core performance measures including job attainment, job retention, acquisition of a high school diploma, and transition to postsecondary education and training. These outcomes are annually reported to the federal government and to the governor.

How has the recent funding flexibility affected the range of programs offered through Adult Education, particularly for those students who want to continue on to a community college? Has this policy changed the way Adult Education programs work with community colleges?

The following table illustrates the decrease in enrollments from 2008–09 to 2009–10. Although data is not yet available for 2010–11 it is anticipated that there will be further reductions in enrollment.

Program	2008–09	2009–10	Decrease
ESL	444,492	324,123	27%
ASE	226,053	194,156	14%
CTE	180,494	94,483	48%
ABE	76,516	68,175	11%
Citizenship	2,985	1,050	65%
Adults w/ Disabilities	26,839	12,146	55%
Health and Safety	26,911	9,466	65%
Home Economics	17,371	7,475	57%
Parent Education	67,688	24,089	64%
Older Adults	142,319	41,690	71%
Total	1,212,068	776,853	36%

Eighty-seven percent of Adult Education students are enrolled in the four core program areas of ESL, ASE, ABE, and CTE. The largest percent of students who transition from the Adult Education program to the community college come from the ASE and ESL programs.

The impact of the budget reductions and redistribution of adult education funding resulted in cuts to most adult schools. Schools report teacher lay-offs and waiting lists for classes. The capacity to serve students is diminished for both systems by the current economic climate, and yet the need for adult education services has not diminished. The Adult Education program and the community college system recognize that coordination of services between systems is necessary to create a seamless transition for students from one program to another.

How do the Department of Education and the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges coordinate at the state level to oversee these programs? How could the state improve coordination between these two offices to maximize the state’s investment in Adult Education?

The CDE and California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) continue to discuss the implications of coordinating at the state level to maximize the state’s investment in Adult Education. A strategic effort by CDE and CCCCCO is required to address the issues of educating California’s adults in these times of limited resources. The administration and staff of both systems have met to share information. The CDE and CCCCCO have identified key areas that support the goal of creating an aligned system that efficiently and effectively meets the goals of adult students in California:

- Professional development
- Course articulation agreements
- Curriculum and instruction that includes pathways
- Aligned readiness assessments
- Data collection and tracking of student outcomes
- Bridge programs

The CDE recognizes that both systems together must take a strategic and coordinated approach to addressing and resolving the issues that surround the education of adults in California. We look forward to sharing in a more collaborative environment.

Over the course of this study the Commission has heard from a number of witnesses who have suggested the need to strengthen the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges. Would changes to the authority and function of the Chancellor’s Office improve your office’s ability to partner with the community colleges? If so, how?

We do not presume to know what changes are necessary to the authority and function of the Chancellor’s Office to improve the CDE’s ability to partner with the community colleges. However, we have agreed with the CCCCCO to continue to work together to develop a more seamless delivery system that supports student successful transition to the community colleges.

Coordination, collaborations and partnerships between adult schools and community colleges exist across the state in isolated efforts. Some of the best practices include formalized bridge programs, articulated course sequences, aligned career pathways, co-location and aligned assessments. However, these programs are independent of each other, and have not been taken to scale. Every adult school and every community college is autonomous. Each local effort is an independent partnership.

Currently there is no mechanism to replicate best practices. For example, students leaving Adult Education could be better prepared for admission to the community college if there was a common assessment of college readiness. As it is, each college creates its own placement assessment and that differs from the assessment a student is given at the adult school. The lack of coordination at the state level makes it difficult to affect systemic change.

What are the benefits of maintaining adult education 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 this delineation of service?

Student demographics are different in each system. Forty percent of Adult Education students do not have a high school diploma, and 50 percent enter the system to improve their English skills. Approximately 186,000 students are enrolled in the high school diploma program in Adult Education. It is estimated that 15 percent of Adult

Education students are annually prepared to enter the community college system. These students perform at the high levels of ASE and ESL basic skills in the CDE system.

The CDE has used federal dollars through the years to build a strong infrastructure in terms of accountability, technology, and professional development through its core leadership projects. Historically the Adult Education infrastructure was built on serving students needing to improve their basic skills. Adult Education serves the lowest learners...those who speak little to no English. The accountability system, the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), technology, and professional development are keenly structured to serve those hardest to reach and to serve.

The local adult schools have strong partnerships with K–12 districts. The ESL classes are held on school campuses and are filled with the parents of K–12 students who engage in their children’s learning while improving their own basic skills. Some programs provide literacy programs that focus on a child’s success in school. Learners whose primary goal was family-related cited increased involvement in their children’s education (21 percent) and children’s literacy (15 percent), and meeting a personal (55 percent) and family goal (48 percent). These learners also showed significant community-related outcomes.

Another function of Adult Education is to provide remediation courses and credit recovery to high school students who are in jeopardy of graduating with their class. These programs are easily coordinated between adult schools and high schools. Annually, 75,000 high school students take a class from Adult Education.

There is a need to align the courses and programs offered in Adult Education and at the community colleges and to create multiple access points to each system. Research shows that in states with a coordinated approach to educating adults, including clear articulated pathways and integrated course sequences, a student learns at an accelerated pace. For example, contextualized CTE and basic skill courses may be offered by two systems in the same classroom.

Neither system has the capacity to meet the scale and diversity of need. Both systems are operating on reduced resources. The Adult Education system’s unique strengths include the physical location of hundreds of sites, the affordability of classes, the flexible enrollment strategies, the cultural competence of staff, and the recognized image of adult schools within a community as an “approachable” learning environment.

How could the state better integrate the systems at the local level to ensure that students who take courses through Adult Education programs transition to a community college without repeating coursework? Are there some districts in California that are already doing this well? What are some of the challenges to improving articulation?

Adult Education system has prioritized the transition of students into postsecondary education, training, and employment. The CDE collaborated with the National College Transition Network to offer a summit, training and ongoing professional development opportunities to local practitioners. The CDE recently received a technical assistance grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education to implement a Policy to Performance Initiative with ten local agencies. The focus of the program is to provide articulated services between the systems to promote successful transition to the community college.

Jobs in the future will increasingly employ workers with education and training beyond the high school level. Postsecondary education can provide the skills needed for these jobs. There are examples throughout California where local programs have collaborated with the community colleges to ensure a seamless transition for students. The two examples illustrate articulated programs between adult schools and community colleges:

- Successful transition programs were designed by local providers to support and mentor ESL students to allow them to transfer to credit community college courses or vocational certificate programs. Students enroll in a minimum of 12 units with at least three that are non-ESL courses. Each student is given a mentor who assists with enrollment and provides support. These mentors also expose the students to different opportunities for the future, such as scholarships and academic support resources
- A local provider restructured its ABE program to focus on helping students set clear academic and professional goals, and to run a more effective and efficient transition program to accommodate budget reductions and decreased funding. The CASAS pretest scores are used as an entry requirement to take the ABE pathways class, and students are required to maintain at least a 90 percent attendance rate in the ABE pathways class. Most students are prepared to transition into a CTE program after 40–50 hours in the pathways class.

Would there be value in consolidating some or all of the programs into a single adult education system? If so, what criteria should be considered?

According to the indicators of need used in the CDE “Needs Assessment”, it is estimated that approximately 80 percent of the need for ABE, ASE and ESL is currently unmet. Adult Education and the community colleges need to be aligned and integrated, whether or not they are consolidated. Adult Education and the community colleges serve predominately different populations. The diversity and scale of this unmet need suggests that the systems leverage their respective strengths and core missions, particularly given budgetary constraints and related capacity issues.

Locally, transitioning adult learners is key to keeping the commitment of adult basic education programs to the adult learners who have identified their long-term educational goal as entering postsecondary education. In 2009–10, 586,450 adult learners (75.5

percent) were in ABE, ASE, or ESL classes. Of these learners, 3.2 percent or 25,022, received either a high school diploma or general educational development certificate within the Adult Education WIA, Title II program. These learners are potential participants in postsecondary education and part of the pipeline of students ready to transition.

There were also 5,893 adult learners with a goal of entering postsecondary education in 2009–10, with less than half achieving this goal (2,540). Zafft et al. reported in 2006, “While adults with GEDs or other nontraditional diplomas stand to benefit from postsecondary education, very few actually go on and those that do are rarely successful.”

Finally, there is great value in coordinating and aligning services between the systems. An intended consequence of integration of the systems would be to reduce the amount and level of remediation taking place at the community college level and the California State University (CSU) system. The California State University's (CSU) assessment system found that, of first-time entering freshmen the CSUs in 2008, 47 percent still required some level of English remediation and 37.2 percent need math remediation; 27.1 percent of 2008–09 freshmen were not proficient in either English or mathematics. Estimates of the remedial need in the community colleges are higher, ranging from 70– 90 percent at some campuses. Students who are better prepared could complete degrees and certificates on a timelier and less costly basis. The Public Policy Institute of California projects that California will “under produce” college graduates and people with some level of postsecondary training to meet the growing workforce training demands. It is critical that both systems collaborate and coordinate to develop articulated pathways for all students at all literacy levels.