



Dallas Independent School District

**FINAL REPORT OF 2007-2008
Evaluation of the Adult Basic Education Program**

EA08-196-2

**DEPARTMENT OF EVALUATION
AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

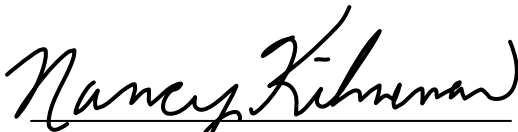
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Adult Basic Education
2007-2008

EA08-196-2

Rebecca Dyer, B.S.

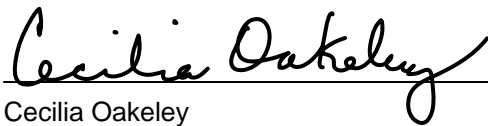
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FINAL REPORT ADULT BASIC EDUCATION 2007-08

Project Evaluator: Rebecca Dyer, B.S.

ABSTRACT

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program is a federal and state funded program designed to provide free educational opportunities to adult learners and educationally disadvantaged adults in Dallas and Rockwall counties. ABE partnered with various agencies to implement the program. Classes were held at 98 different neighborhood locations (77% were DISD sites). Programs provided the opportunity to acquire functional skills necessary to enhance the quality of student's lives as workers, family members and citizens. English as a Second Language, English for employment opportunities and English in the workplace curriculum were available. El Civics provided citizenship instruction for recent immigrants to empower them to actively participate in their communities. Adult Secondary Education is a path to earn a GED. Students must be 18 years or older to enter the program. Of the 7,399 students enrolled, the largest ethnicity (81%) was Hispanic. Of these, 70% were females; the greatest number spanned the ages of 25 to 40 years old. Male Hispanic students from this same age group were also highly represented. More than two percent were over the age of 60. Students were given state assessment tests and then placed in the appropriate class for instruction. Average attendance was 83 hours per student. Almost half progressed one or more functional levels.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program is a federal and state funded program designed to provide free educational opportunities to adult learners and educationally disadvantaged adults in Dallas and Rockwall counties. The ABE program provided classes for eligible adults allowing them the opportunity to acquire functional skills necessary to enhance the quality of their lives as workers, family members and citizens. Classes were held at 98 different neighborhood locations (77% were DISD sites). Programs provided were:

- **Basic Literacy** skills in reading, writing, mathematics and English as a Second Language (ESL).
- **Computer instruction** to obtain workforce skills while engaging in technology and English as a second language.
- **EI Civics instruction** that introduces concepts required to become productive community members and U.S. citizens.
- **GED program** for DISD students who did not graduate, parents and other family members. This program is also referred to as Adult Secondary Literacy.
- **Community Liaison-led counseling sessions** on parenting skills, substance abuse, supporting children's school achievement, paving the road to college and professional workforce skills.

These programs help bridge the gap between DISD schools and parents as they become involved in ABE school-based programs, learning along with and supporting their children in the same school buildings. The Adult Basic Education program is responsible for bringing in the highest percentage of parents into our schools. This program creates positive involvement in communities since classes are also held in churches, libraries and housing projects throughout the area. Parents can become contributing members and actively, meaningfully involved in educational environments. The collaboration with many community partners allows all parents to receive community services that are often too far from their homes that they are not knowledgeable about, or are afraid to approach. The Adult Basic Education Department of the

Dallas Independent School District (DISD) manages the program for Dallas and Rockwall counties.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Adult Basic Education funds were used to provide instructional and other program-related services in English and Spanish. Besides books, materials, and staff salaries, program funds provided professional development to teachers, aides, instructional coordinators, test administrators, and community liaisons. This report examines the context of the program, and the budget and implementation of the program. The grant cycle ran from August 2007 to July 2008.

MAJOR EVALUATION QUESTIONS

2.1 Summarize the goals and characteristics of the program.

Methodology

Interviews with the Adult Basic Education program manager and other personnel identified program context information. Printed materials from the funding grant, the Adult Basic Education Handbook and the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) report were consulted to aid with program descriptions.

Goals of the program. Local communities have demonstrated need for additional adult education and literacy activities and services. The provider aimed to identify, recruit and serve individuals in the community who are most in need of literacy services, including individuals who are low income or have minimal literacy skills and who have a need to receive citizenship/civic awareness. This includes immigrants and the limited English proficient (LEP). Since 80% of ABE participants are parents of DISD students, a major goal was to provide a bridge to narrow the gaps for students by educating their parents. Quality parent education can empower participants to support the educational growth as well as their involvement in the education of their children. The ABE program provided flexible schedules and support services (counseling and community referrals) that were necessary to enable individuals to attend and complete programs.

Characteristics of the program. The program collaborated with various local agencies: Dallas Housing Authority, United Way, AVANCE, Mexican Consulate, LIFT, Catholic Charities, churches, Texas Workforce Centers, Even Start, Dallas Urban League, Richland Community College, school districts, and Dallas Public Libraries. Members from these agencies sat on the ABE Community Advisory Board.

The ABE program welcomes all participants, including adults and students in need of the programs offered. Students must be 18 years or older. For 17-year-olds to enroll, they must be officially withdrawn from school and have parental approval. High school seniors who have completed all classes and final exams, but have not passed the four *TAKS* tests, can take GED instruction. Adult Basic Education also holds classes in two correctional facilities in the area.

GED, or General Educational Development, includes five subjects for instruction: Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Writing Skills and Reading. GED tests are available in English, Spanish, French, large-print, audiocassette and Braille.

English as a Second Language (ESL) is separated into four levels: Introduction, Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. If the need is for English for employment opportunities, Texas Industry-Specific ESL curricula are available. The ESL component also offers computer training.

EI Civics offers civics and citizenship instruction for recent immigrants to empower them to actively participate in their communities or to prepare for U.S citizenship.

The ABE Department employs effective, highly qualified, part-time personnel as instructional coordinators, teachers, community liaisons, substitute teachers, instructional aides and testers. Classes are held primarily in the evenings or on weekends. A limited number of classes are held on weekdays.

Seventy-one Instructional Coordinators oversee the 98 sites. They are charged with recruitment, registration and orientation of the students. Instructional Coordinators supervise classes to ensure that the teachers' lesson plans and instructional strategies are in keeping with the program guidelines and procedures to meet local, state and federal requirements.

Instructional Coordinators set up testing, continually update student rosters, and meet monthly with teachers to share data from progress testing.

Teachers work closely with the instructional coordinators in recruitment, registration and orientation of students. They review and use test data for instructional purposes. In addition to teaching, they set up student folders, are familiar with textbooks and ABE curricula and ensure that monthly paperwork is prepared accurately and properly. For the 2007-08 year, 158 part-time teachers were employed. Four teacher assistants aided them. A pool of substitute teachers was available to step in where necessary.

Seven Community Liaisons assisted the program director, specialists and instructional coordinators with the implementation of the program. Liaisons were key figures in assuring accuracy with the registration, orientation and goal setting process. They prepared, distributed, collected and analyzed the Student Needs Survey. Liaisons maintained an activity log listing presentations made or facilitated, one-on-one student sessions, referrals made to community or government agencies, and a list of outreach activities that students participated in. They served on Advisory Committees and presented staff development sessions.

Four specialists were involved with implementation of the ABE program as a whole. They facilitated professional development and ensured consistency within the program. The specialists made visits to each site at least once each quarter and submitted Weekly Site Visitation Reports to the grant manager.

Assessment. Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) was used as a comprehensive performance accountability system. Using TEAMS, staff recorded and entered student, class, provider and staff development information, assessed the effectiveness of the activities and program and developed a continuous improvement plan of adult education and literacy activities.

State-mandated adult literacy assessments were used to determine a participant's beginning or baseline level and performance or progress. The Commissioner of Education mandated that the *Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)* be used for initial placement and measurement of progress through the six levels of ASE learning. The *Basic English Skills Tests*

(*BEST*) was used to measure the six functioning levels of English as Second Language (ESL) students. The *BEST Plus* is a computerized version of the *BEST* test. Testing identified scores in literacy and oral language. Teachers targeted instruction towards the domain of significance, or the students' main area of need, either literacy or oral language.

Curriculum. The curriculum selected for the program was based on learner outcomes or skills, was consistent with and supportive of adult learning theory, and was supported by research and knowledge of effective practice. The Texas Curriculum Frameworks was used as a guide for instruction. The instructional program is built upon the language, experience and prior knowledge of the learner. Instruction is in English, culturally sensitive, and is active and interactive.

Students were placed in class levels based on the outcomes of the *BEST Plus* or the *TABE*. English language instruction was provided to ensure that the students have the skills needed to successfully complete their GED, compete in the workplace and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Instructional activities provided learning in real life contexts. Materials used included the Foundations, Side by Side and Pre-GED and GED books for the appropriate instruction. Curriculum to learn basic computer usage was piloted at four locations. Students obtained workforce skills and how to access information via technology, to support their children's education.

2.2 Summarize the new initiatives for the 2007-08 program implementation.

The Program Manager's office was negatively impacted by a fire in their office in January. Much of the organizational planning and work was lost due to the fire.

Teacher Training. A major goal for the 2007-08 year was to expand training for teachers and instructional coordinators so that the program was more consistent across the 98 sites. DISD students are relatively transient from school to school, so it follows that the parents will move from site to site for Adult Education. ESL teachers completed a total of 515 hours of training and GED teachers completed 204 hours of training. The 71 Instructional Coordinators attended 270 hours of staff development. This was the first year instructional coordinators and testers met as whole groups to plan assessment and implementation procedures.

Adult Computer Training. Computer instruction curriculum was piloted at four sites. It was designed to enhance participants' workforce skills using technology. Computers were also incorporated to teach English as a Second Language. A total of 93 Dallas ISD parents graduated from the computer instruction classes. This strand will be expanded next year at more locations.

TEAMS Reports. Teachers and Instructional Coordinators teamed together to keep accurate enrollment data, attendance, and educational gain records to complete the TEA required Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) reports. Staff was awarded stipends for accurate and timely data.

Advisory Board. The program manager instituted regular Advisory Board meetings with various ABE staff members and community partners to improve the program.

Student Profiles. Teachers, in conjunction with students, regularly updated profile forms. The forms documented performance on a continuum of mastery of skills in each subject area. These mastery profiles were kept in the students' portfolios along with samples of work documenting mastery.

Instructional Coordinators. Specific duties were enumerated for the Instructional Coordinators to complete each month. They were charged with overseeing implementation of program guidelines and procedures to meet local, state and federal requirements. They assured accurate enrollment procedures were followed and conducted student orientations. Coordination of the academic assessment plan and monitoring of the testing environments were part of their duties. Coordinators analyzed and presented TEAMS data to teachers and students to continuously improve student retention and achievement. Coordinators monitored the instructional sites and provided assistance to teachers as needed. Instructional Coordinators reported directly to the program manager.

Retention. To be counted as "retained", students must have had an assessment test and a progress test after 40 hours of instruction. Program managers reported a 67% retention rate. Teachers often phoned their students to encourage them to attend class. Lack of child care and transportation were reported as barriers to recruitment and retention.

2.3 What were the student characteristics?

The ABE program welcomes all participants, including adults and students in need of the programs offered. Students must be 18 years or older. For 17-year olds to enroll, they must be officially withdrawn from public school and have parental approval. Only in the case of a court mandate may 16-year olds enroll. High School seniors who have completed all classes and final exams, but have not passed the four *TAKS* tests, can take the GED instruction and tests. The number of participants enrolled in ABE was tracked through TEA's Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS). Of the 7,399 students enrolled, the largest ethnicity (81%) was Hispanic (Table 1). Of these, 70% were females; the greatest number spanned the ages of 25 to 40 years (68% of total Hispanic females). Male Hispanic students from this same age group were also highly represented (57% of total Hispanic males). This age group corresponds with the correct age to be parents of DISD students, as are 80% of all ABE students. Also enrolled in ESL and adult literacy classes were 60 DISD employees from the Custodial and Maintenance Departments, who may fall into this group of parents of DISD students. In the category of 16- to 18- years old (8% of total enrollment), there were more Black and Hispanic males than females. Of the total student population, 67% were female and 33% were male. More than two percent were over the age of 60.

Table 1
Student Characteristics by Age Range, Ethnicity and Gender

Age	16-18		19-24		25-44		45-59		60 and older		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ethnicity												
Black	248	42	285	24	323	7	97	9	21	14	974	13
Asian	6	1	17	1	61	2	34	3	11	7	129	2
Hispanic	267	45	820	68	3,899	89	886	84	115	76	5,987	81
White	74	12	76	6	110	3	28	3	4	3	292	4
Other*	2	>1	4	>1	5	>1	5	>1	1	1	17	>1
Total	597		1,202		4,398		1,050		152		7,399	
Gender – Male												
Black	141	44	155	29	107	9	26	8	5	10	434	18
Asian	4	1	10	2	18	2	11	4	8	16	51	2
Hispanic	138	43	325	62	1,028	86	261	84	36	71	1,788	78
White	35	11	34	6	43	4	11	4	2	4	125	5
Other*	1	>1	3	1	4	>1	1	>1	0	0	9	>1
Total	319		527		1,200		310		51		2,407	
Gender – Female												
Black	107	38	130	19	216	7	71	10	16	16	540	11
Asian	2	1	7	1	43	1	23	3	3	3	78	2
Hispanic	129	46	495	73	2,871	90	625	84	79	78	4,199	84
White	39	14	42	6	67	2	17	2	2	2	167	3
Other*	1	>1	1	>1	1	>1	4	1	1	1	8	>1
Total	278		675		3,198		740		101		4,992	

Note. *Other includes American Indian and Pacific Islander. These totals reflect students who were enrolled during the 2007-08 school year.

2.4 What Professional Development was Offered to Instructional Coordinators, Instructors and Test Administrators?

Professional staff was required to complete a minimum of 18 professional development hours provided by ABE in conjunction with Project GREAT- North (state sponsored Getting Results Educating Adults in Texas). All professional development activities were tracked through the TEAMS state reporting system. A variety of training options was offered to make quality training more accessible for teachers. Acceptance of Non-ABE hours, such as college courses, conferences and written reports on topics related to the teacher's ABE assignment, were offered as professional development options available to teachers.

Professional Development requirements varied based on the instructors' experience. Certified teachers and degreed third year ABE teachers were required to complete 18 hours of

training. Degreed first year teachers needed 30 hours and second year ABE teachers needed 24 hours to be eligible to teach. State requirements of pre-service hours included topics related to the Texas Content Standards and Benchmarks. Local training requirements had a variety of sessions specifically about Adult Learning Instructional Strategies, Lesson Planning, Student Retention, Basic Literacy and Profiling Student needs. Specific training was offered for staff concerning Technology in the Workplace, Community Liaisons, and Testing. Evaluation forms collected by the ABE staff at the end of training sessions praised the information provided on a number of topics as thorough and valuable.

2.5 Summarize the budget and expenditures

Budget and expenditure records were provided by the program manager's office. Table 2 displays the total budget of the Adult Basic Education Program funded by the various grants. Instructors' salary was the largest portion (50%) of the ABE budget. Stipends for training and completing accurate paperwork (9%) was the next largest expenditure. Both Testers (5%) and textbooks (5%) were a notable part of the budget. Instructors accounted for a larger percentage in the other programs (correctional facilities, 95%; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, 88%; and EI Civics, 58%). DISD contributed \$4,000 to the ABE program.

Table 2

Budget for Adult Basic Education by Grant

Grant	Total
ABE- Federal	2,415,948
ABE- State	387,743
Correctional Facilities	121,237
TANF Federal	333,975
TANF State	26,237
EI Civics- State	106,550
DISD	4,000
Total	3,395,690

Note. ABE=Adult Basic Education,
TANF=Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

2.6 What was the achievement outcome of the program?

Achievement outcome was measured when the student was leaving the program, or at the fortieth hour of instruction. Average attendance was 83 hours per student (Table 3). Students enrolled in ESL classes averaged the most hours (86), followed by Basic Literacy (75) and GED (61). Forty percent completed at least one achievement level, with most of those completing more than one level. One third of Basic Literacy students completed one or more levels on the *Test of Adult Basic Education* progress test. Almost half of the enrolled Basic Literacy students were in the *uncompleted* category. The uncompleted category includes those who did not test as making progress, or complete an instructional level before they left the program. A large portion (42%) of ESL students completed one or more levels of the program. About 40% of ESL students were in the uncompleted category. A small number of students were in the Adult Secondary Education program, but almost half completed one or more levels.

Table 3

Educational Gains and Attendance Hours by Program

Program	Number Enrolled	Attendance Hours	Completed One Level	Number Uncompleted	% Completed One+ Levels
Basic Literacy	1,829	137,119	607	957	33%
English Language	5,005	431,798	2,114	2,047	42%
Adult Secondary Ed.	174	10,603	81	65	47%
Total	7,008	579,520	2,802	2,598	40%

Note. Numbers uncompleted are those who did not progress test or complete a level before they left the program. These totals reflect students who completed at least 12 hours of instruction.

To address the problem of students leaving the programs because of the lack of child care or transportation, next year's budget plans to provide workbooks to take home. Participants may find more time to study if the workbooks are in the home.

2.7 Assess the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a federal and state funded program to provide Adult Education/Literacy and Workforce Skills Training. Eligibility requires that the family have children under the age of 18 years that are deprived of financial support from a parent for a reason of death, absence from the home, unemployment, mental or physical disability. Participants may be served on a case by case basis. TANF offers transitional services that help people gain employment and depend less on public aid. Families may be referred to TANF from other agencies such as Health and Human Services, Dallas Housing Authority and Adult or Juvenile courts. Partners in this program are Dallas Urban League, community centers, WorkSource Centers and Texas Workforce Commission.

Adults are pre-screened with the *Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)*, and then referred to one of the 14 TANF educational sites in closest proximity. Texas Workforce provided them with transportation, in the form of bus or gas cards, test vouchers and child care if needed.

A total of 801 students participated, averaging almost 120 hours per pupil. Seventy-six percent took ESL literacy classes; most of these were ESL Beginning Literacy. Almost half of the TANF students completed at least one functioning level.

SUMMARY

The Adult Basic Education program was under a new program manager this year. New initiatives and protocols were implemented. A major focus was making the program more consistent across all 98 sites. Professional Development for testers, teachers and instructional coordinators was mandated and tracked for compliance. Instructional Coordinators regularly met with testers and teachers at the sites to share data and information. An Advisory Board was formed consisting of various ABE staff members and community partners to review and discuss the program. Curriculum was reviewed and rewritten with lesson plans during the summer to use in the next school year. Teachers, in conjunction with students, regularly updated student profile forms that documented performance on a continuum of mastery of skills in each subject area. The profiles were placed in the students' portfolios, along with written work demonstrating

mastery. Computer instruction curriculum was piloted at four sites. Ninety-three adult students obtained workforce skills and learned to access information via technology to support their children's learning. Instructional Coordinators were assigned specific duties and reported directly to the program manager. Teachers and Instructional Coordinators teamed together to track accurate enrollment data, attendance and educational gain records to complete the TEA required TEAMS reports.

Almost 7,400 students were enrolled in Basic Literacy, ESL or GED classes and attended at least 12 hours of instruction. Average attendance was 83 hours per student. Forty percent completed at least one level of achievement, with most of those completing more than one level. The largest ethnicity was Hispanic (81%) and females were twice as likely to be enrolled in classes. The most prevalent age range was between ages 25-40 years old. This age group corresponds with the correct age to be parents of DISD students, as are 80% of ABE participants. Also enrolled in GED and adult literacy classes were 60 DISD employees from the Custodial and Maintenance Departments.

Program managers reported the largest barriers of consistent and continued attendance were lack of transportation and child care.