Adult Basic Education Program: 2007-08

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At-a-Glance

The Adult Basic Education Program (ABE) 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 classes provide the opportunity to acquire functional skills necessary to enhance the quality of student's lives as workers, family members and citizens. Classes were held at 98 different neighborhood locations (77% were DISD sites).

Programs Offered

Basic Literacy concentrates on skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ESL. EL Civics instruction introduces concepts required to become productive community members and U.S. citizens. The GED program is for DISD students who did not graduate, parents and other family members. Computer instruction was offered at four sites and designed to enhance workplace skills, embrace technology and teach English as a second language. Community Liaisons 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 learn along with and support their children in the same school building. Eighty percent of ABE students are parents of children attending a DISD school. Adult Basic Education is responsible for bringing in the highest percentage of parents into our schools. Sixty DISD employees in the Maintenance and Custodial Services are taking classes to learn English or earn GEDs.

Characteristics of the Program

Various local agencies collaborated with ABE: Dallas Housing Authority, United Way, AVANCE, Mexican Consulate, Catholic Charities and other churches, Texas Workforce Centers, Even Start, Community Colleges, school districts and Dallas Public Libraries. Members from these agencies sit on the ABE Community Advisory Board. 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.

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 the weekend. 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.

Student Demographics

Students must be 18 years or older to enter the program. 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 tests. Adult Basic Education also holds classes in two correctional facilities in the area.

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 (68% of total Hispanic females). Male Hispanic students from this same age group were also highly represented (57% of total Hispanic males). Of the total student population, 67% were female and 33% were male. More than two percent were over the age of 60.

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 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 measuring progress of 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 identifies scores in literacy and oral language. Teachers aim instruction towards the domain of significance, or the student's dominant area of need, either literacy or oral language.

**New Initiatives in Implementation**

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. ESL teachers completed 515 hours of training and GED teachers completed 24 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 implementation procedures. Evaluation forms collected by the ABE staff at the end of training sessions praised information provided on a number of topics as thorough and valuable.

Computer instruction curriculum was piloted at four locations. Students obtained workforce skills and learned to access information via technology, to support their children’s education. A total of 93 DISD parents graduated from the computer instruction classes. This strand will be expanded next year at more locations.

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 with stipends for accurate and timely data.

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

Teachers, in conjunction with students, regularly updated Student Profile forms, written 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.

Specific duties were enumerated for the Instructional Coordinators to complete each month. They were charged to oversee 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 monitoring of the testing environments were part of their duties. They 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.

**Achievement Outcomes**

Achievement outcome is measured when the student is leaving the program or at the fortieth hour of instruction. Average attendance was 83 hours per student. Students enrolled in ESL classes averaged the most hours (86), followed by Basic Literacy (75) and GED (61). Forty percent completed at least one level of achievement, 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. A large portion (42%) of ESL students completed one or more levels of the program.

**Retention**

To be counted as "retained", students must have a beginning 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. The lack of child care and transportation was reported as a barrier to recruitment and retention.

For more information, see EA08-196-2, available at www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/, or contact Rebecca Dyer at 972-925-6404.