Promising Practices for Transitioning Students from Adult Education to Postsecondary Education

A Review of Literature with Implications for California Community College Practitioners

Sharon Seymour

In Association with the Center for Student Success/RP Group and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Basic Skills Initiative
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is part of the Basic Skills Initiative aiming to build a toolkit for community college practitioners in basic skills. The series of literature reviews began in 2007 with the publication of Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success (also known as the Poppy Copy). This review is one of a number of follow up projects to the original Poppy Copy. The author surveyed published literature and other sources to prepare this report, which was then read by members of the faculty review panel identified below.

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The RP Group/Center for Student Success (CSS)

The Research and Planning (RP) Group is the professional organization representing California community college research, assessment, and planning professionals. The RP Group provides leadership in research, analysis, and planning issues for California community colleges. Through liaisons with other professional groups including the California Community College System Office, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Community College League of California and others. The RP Group provides support for institutional and system-wide decision making and policy
development related to research, planning, and assessment. The RP Group also supports faculty and staff development in a variety of areas including research, assessment, and evaluation.

The Center for Student Success (CSS) is the research and evaluation organization of the RP Group. Founded in 2000, the Center provides research and evaluation services for community college organizations and programs. Among the Center's many contributions to the California community colleges are research to identify the performance measures for the AB 1417 Performance Accountability project; the environmental scan data for the California Community Colleges Strategic Plan; numerous research studies on effective practices for recruiting, retaining, and graduating community college students in nursing and allied health care professions; and evaluations of community college technology training programs. The Center's website serves as an easy-to-use archive for effective practices in the areas of healthcare training programs; student success; learning assessment; planning; evaluation; and diversity practices.
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Executive Summary

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems recently reported that the United States seriously risks losing its edge in global economic competitiveness because those entering the workforce do not have the same level of educational attainment as their counterparts in many other countries (Jones & Kelley 2007). In the United States too few students complete high school, too few high school graduates and GED (General Educational Development) completers go to college, and too few college entrants obtain degrees. This report examines the literature on practices and programs that look toward improving the transition of students from adult education to postsecondary education.

From a review of more than 40 references, a total of 18 practices emerged. They are organized in the same four major categories used in Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges (2007) from the Center for Student Success:

A. Organizational and Administration Practices
B. Program Components
C. Staff Development
D. Instructional Practices

Area A: Organizational and Administrative Practices

A.1 Improving transition of students from adult education to postsecondary education is an institutional priority.

A.2 Faculty and staff of transition programs are resourceful, experienced, and committed to serving the students.

A.3 Strong collaborative partnerships across college programs and with adult education programs, business/industry- and community-based organizations serve transitioning students. These partnerships create or expand pathways to employment and provide additional support services.

A.4 Institutions have innovative and flexible admissions and enrollment policies that facilitate transitions.

A.5 To evaluate effectiveness of courses and programs, student-data systems track transition-student movements across programs as well as their outcomes.

Area B: Program Component Practices

B.1 Awareness, orientation, and postsecondary exposure activities inform adult education students and help them navigate college admissions, enrollment, financial aid processes, and available academic/student support services.
B.2 A comprehensive system of transition support services exists and is characterized by a high integration of academic and life skills services. This includes policies and programs to help ease the financial burden of postsecondary education.

B.3 Personalized support, such as peer mentoring, tutoring, or case management, is provided before, during, and after transitioning.

B.4 There are effective matriculation services, including assessment that is aligned between adult education and postsecondary programs.

Area C: Staff Development Practices

C.1 Instructors receive opportunities for staff development as well as for learning and gaining experience teaching in both adult education and postsecondary programs.

Area D: Instructional Practices

D.1 Adult education and postsecondary curriculum are aligned, sequential, and progressive to provide a seamless pathway for transition students.

D.2 Instruction is contextualized so that transition students see the connection between the basic skills and academic or vocational content.

D.3 Curriculum and scheduling are designed to be flexible, chunked, and modularized with multiple entry and exit points.

D.4 Sufficient language (ESL) instruction is provided for English-as-a-second-language learners.

D.5 Instruction and curriculum are designed and delivered in a way that integrates a variety of instructional methodologies; i.e., collaborative learning, team teaching, technology, tutoring, and independent study.

D.6 Institutions provide accelerated courses/programs that give transition students the opportunity to meet short and long-term goals more quickly.

D.7 Programs link education to careers and include career planning as a part of the curriculum to enable transition students to learn about possible careers and the corresponding educational pathways.

D.8 Adult education and postsecondary curriculum are aligned, sequential, and progressive to provide a seamless pathway for transition students.
Introduction

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEEMS) reported that the United States seriously risks losing its edge in global economic competitiveness because those entering the workforce do not have the same level of educational attainment as their counterparts in many other countries (Jones & Kelley 2007). The report, Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce and the Increasing Need for Adult Education and Literacy, states that the demographic profile of those who will be entering the workforce in the coming decades is very different from that of previous generations. There will be increases in the numbers of minorities, especially Latinos, and decreases in the number of whites. Past data shows that those who are increasing in numbers are least likely to graduate from high school, and if they do, they are less likely to attend college and successfully complete a program of study. It is not, however, strictly a problem for minorities. Educational attainment for whites, especially males, is declining too.

For all groups in the U.S, too few complete high school; too few high school graduates and GED (General Educational Development) completers go to college; and too few college entrants obtain degrees. A report from the Council for Adult and Experimental Learning (CAEL 2008, p. 7) states, “Demographic patterns demonstrate that relying on the traditional K-16 pipeline to meet the educational and workforce needs of our states and the nation will not be enough.” The Mounting Pressures report concludes that the U.S. cannot remain internationally competitive without providing better education to older adults who dropped out of high school or completed high school but did not go to college. This is especially true in California and a number of other states.

The report that follows introduces background data on students who do not go directly from high school to college. (These students are described in the definitions below.) The report continues with a review of programs that appear to be effective and also suggests areas for further research. The hope is that practitioners will find this information useful and will become part of the cadre of professionals who help to determine what does and does not work and who help to implement those practices that are most promising.

Definitions

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions of adult education, adult basic education learners, adult English language learners and transition students are used:

**Adult Education.** Adult Education includes the following components: Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction for raising adults’ basic reading/writing and mathematics skills beyond the ninth-grade level; Adult Secondary Education (ASE) for upgrading knowledge and basic skills to high school level equivalency and preparing students for high school equivalency tests such as the GED; English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, workforce instruction, and contract education training.

Traditionally, adult education courses or programs carry no academic credits, are either degree- or non-degree, and often are free of charge. Which institution delivers adult
education programs varies, depending on the district and state. California offers programs primarily through the K-12 adult education division, while 14 community colleges provide it in their districts.

**Adult Basic Education Learners and Adult English Language Learners.** Adult education programs serve both native English speakers, commonly referred to as ABE students, and those whose first language is not English, commonly referred to as ESL students. ABE students attend ABE (Adult Basic Education) or ASE (Adult Secondary Education) classes to learn basic skills, obtain a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate such as a GED (General Equivalency Diploma), or achieve other goals related to work, family or further education. Speakers of English as a second language attend ESL classes to improve their English language skills and achieve goals similar to those of native language speakers. Sometimes, ABE/ASE classes include both native speakers and English language learners. The practices reviewed for this report may be useful to programs that serve ABE and ESL students in separate classes, or both types of students together in one class. The type of service is noted where known. Important differences between ABE learners and English language learners affect the instruction each type of student needs as shown in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Basic Education Learners</th>
<th>Adult English Language Learners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typically have strong speaking and listening skills</td>
<td>Often need to concentrate on speaking and listening skills, especially in beginning level classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand one or more varieties of spoken English including non-standard, elliptical forms, (e.g., paper or plastic?) idioms, (e.g., give me a break) and patterns used in U.S. culture (e.g., Americans say ma'am, but not madam)</td>
<td>May be familiar with Standard English or a variety of English spoken in homeland, but not be familiar with elliptical forms, idioms, or U.S. cultural patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May have a vocabulary in English of 10,000-100,000 words (Hadley, 1993)</td>
<td>May have an English vocabulary of 2,000-7,000 when beginning academic studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May feel comfortable when books, Web sites, and class materials are written in language similar to spoken language</td>
<td>May need to learn informal spoken English to understand some written material (e.g., Like soccer? rather than Do you like to play...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most likely did not finish secondary level education</td>
<td>Level of education varies widely from no formal education to graduate or professional degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May focus on obtaining GED (General Educational Development) credential or transitioning to higher education (although learners have many other goals as well)</td>
<td>May focus on learning basic conversational English first before working to obtain the GED credential or going on to or continuing higher education. Some may also focus on passing the U.S. citizenship test)</td>
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Effective instructional practices in ESL are described in *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success* (2007). The Council for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) provides guidelines for teachers who are new to working with adults learning English, a list of references for more information about instruction options, and other helpful information on principles of second language acquisition, factors to consider when planning a workplace program for immigrant workers, etc. See the frequently asked questions page on its website at [http://www.caal.org/caela/esl_resources/faqs.html#Eight](http://www.caal.org/caela/esl_resources/faqs.html#Eight).

**Transition Students:** In this report, Transition Students are defined as students who move from adult education to postsecondary education programs.

**Background Information**

**Current Low Educational Levels**

The majority of the fastest growing jobs in the country will require postsecondary education, according to U.S. Department of Labor data from 2002, (Alamprese, 2005). Yet, according to U.S. Census 2005 data cited in *Mounting Pressures*, large numbers of working-age adults (18-64) have low educational attainment.

- More than 25 million adults in the United States (14.1 percent of adults age 18-64) have not completed high school or the equivalent; in California it is 18.9 percent (4.1 million).
- Among those with less than a high school diploma, approximately 35 percent have dropped out before 9th grade; in California it is 48 percent.
- 8.3 million individuals with a high school diploma or less, speak English poorly or not at all; in California it is 2.6 million.

**Effects of Increasing Educational Levels**

Many benefits are derived from advanced education. Income rises with educational level, bringing benefits to individuals as well as the nation. “As a consequence of their higher rates of employment and annual earnings as well as their higher marriage rates, higher home ownership rates and lower rates of institutionalization, adults with more schooling generate substantially more favorable fiscal impacts for federal, state and local governments,” says a report prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL) (Khatiwadi et al., 2007).

The relationship between income and educational levels is supported by U.S. Department of Labor data from 2002, cited in *Helping Adult Learners Make the Transition to Postsecondary Education* (Alamprese, 2005). In California, working-age residents with college degrees are 27 percent more likely to participate in the workforce than those with less than a high school diploma. Their earnings over a lifetime are more than twice as much (CAEL, 2008). According to U.S. Census 2005 data reported in *Mounting*
Pressures, 28.8 million (3.7 million in California) with a high school diploma or less are not earning living wages (Jones, 2007).

A study for the Community College Research Center Teacher’s College, Columbia University, provides evidence that increased education is linked to increased income even for those who start at lower levels. It compared earnings of those who completed at least one year of college credits and earned a credential with those who earned fewer than ten college credits. Those who started in ESL and had one year of college-level credits and earned a credential had an average earnings advantage of $7,000 more a year in the job market than those who completed fewer than ten credits. Those who started in Adult Basic Education (ABE) or had a General Education Diploma (GED) had an $8,500 advantage. Students entering with a GED, had a $2,700 advantage; and entering with a high school diploma, gave a $1,700 advantage.

Higher educational levels bring other personal benefits to individuals as well. These include opportunities to have better working conditions, enjoy a greater social status, and to change jobs or move to a different location. Higher levels of education are also associated with increased participation in civic life and a better quality of life, including better health and an increased participation in leisure activities (CAEL, 2008).

**Enrollment in Adult Education Programs/GED Attainment/Postsecondary Education**

The CAEL 2008 report (p. 10) highlights “the importance of adult education in helping to close the growing gap between this nation’s postsecondary attainment and that of other leading countries.” Yet, enrollments are low in adult education programs: only one in four adults with less than a high school education participates in any kind of further education or training compared with one in three high school graduates (Strawn, 2007). For many who do decide to further their education, adult education programs is a starting point. Adult education can provide a path for making the transition to postsecondary education for the many adults who do not complete high school or do not enroll in postsecondary education immediately after completing high school.

Percentage of U.S. residents with less than a high school diploma enrolled in adult education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Nationally</th>
<th>California</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 16-24:</td>
<td>27.8 %</td>
<td>38.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 25-44:</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>25 %</td>
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2005 U.S. Department of Education figures reported in *Mounting Pressures.*

Unfortunately, of those who express interest in postsecondary education, only a small percentage enrolls in postsecondary education after participating in ABE programs. Only about 20 percent of ABE learners in 2002-03, who indicated postsecondary education as their goal, enrolled in postsecondary education or training according to data available from the Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS) for federally funded programs operating under the Workforce Investment Act, Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Over 65 percent of GED examinees in 1999 wanted to pursue
further education, according to American Council of Education data (2002). However, data compiled by Tyler (2001) indicate that only 30-35 percent of GED recipients received any postsecondary education and only five to ten percent attend for at least one year (Alamprese, 2005).

**Implications for Community Colleges**

U.S. Department of Education data reported in *Mounting Pressures* show that considerable numbers of U.S. residents do not enroll in college directly after high school.

- Over a third, 35.1 percent, of U.S. residents, 36.1 percent in California, who were first-time college students enrolled in-state were not directly out of high school.
- Nearly half of those who delayed enrollment, 48.7 percent of U.S. residents, 45.9 percent in California, enrolled in two-year institutions.

Further, ESL and basic education students do not show great success in community college. A longitudinal study of students in 34 community and technical colleges in Washington (Prince & Jenkins, 2005) shows the following:

- Only thirteen percent of ESL students went on to earn at least some college credits.
- Less than one percent of ESL students who started with less than a high school diploma earned a GED or high school diploma in five years.
- Less than one third of ABE/GED students enrolled in college credit courses.
- Only four to six percent of ABE/GED students earned 45 or more college credits or earned a certificate or degree in five years.
- Twenty-nine percent of those who started with a GED and 35 percent of those who started with a high school diploma earned at least 45 credits or a credential in five years (Prince & Jenkins, 2005).

Taken together this data shows that many students do not advance to higher education despite expressing the desire to do so, many who do delay their education start off at community colleges, those who start in ABE and ESL are less likely to advance, and those who come to community colleges often do not complete a degree. Given these statistics, community colleges have an opportunity to be more responsive to this population both in attracting students and in assisting them to further their education. Community colleges, with their more affordable education, developmental education programs, and open door policies are the most attractive postsecondary institutions for adult transition students. Community colleges, however, cannot do this in isolation.

The literature reviewed for this report states a clear need for greater collaboration between colleges and other institutions if the transition rate of adult education students to postsecondary education is to be increased. “The college is part of a constellation of institutions and agencies that have responsibility for helping low skilled workers advance” (Duke and Strawn, 2008, p. ii).
Collaboration between institutions has been initiated in various ways across the nation. The National College Transition Network (NCTN), a project of World Education’s New England Literacy Resource Center, supports ABE staff, programs, and state agencies in establishing and strengthening ABE-to-college transition services by providing technical assistance, professional development, collegial sharing, advocacy, and increased visibility for transition efforts. In the NCTN New England ABE-to-College Transition Project, 25 programs partner with 30 colleges in six states. Some states, such as Kentucky, have developed policies to create a seamless transition between adult education and postsecondary education. In many cases, colleges, local governmental agencies, community-based organizations, and others have initiated collaborations in their area.

In California, 14 community colleges offer adult education programs, either ABE/GED or ESL, or both, in their district. But most California community colleges do not offer and may have little or no relationship with adult education programs in their area. California community college administrators and program coordinators/chairs in these districts may need to take the lead in creating relationships with adult education programs to develop transition programs. This report can be of use to both community college and adult education leaders as they strive to increase transitions of adult students.

Definitions and Notable Practices in this Report

The practices in this report have been chosen based on evidence found in the existing literature. From a review of more than 40 references, a total of 18 practices emerged. They are organized in the same four major categories used in Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges (2007) from the Center for Student Success (see page 8).

This document has adopted the following definitions of effective practice, promising practice, evidence-based research, data, and evidence-based programs.

**Effective practice:** Organizational, administrative, instructional, or support activities engaged in by highly successful programs, as validated by research and literature sources relating to transitioning students from adult to postsecondary education. This definition of effective practice has been slightly adapted from the definition that was used in Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success (2007).

**Promising practice:** Organizational, administrative, instructional, or support activities engaged in by programs that have not been validated by research and literature sources, but are judged by experienced and knowledgeable practitioners in the field as having the potential to be highly successful. The guiding questions used to identify promising practices include the following: What information did you draw on in selecting this practice as promising? What formal or informal evidence do you have of impact and outcomes of this practice? What research needs to be done to establish it as a best practice?
Evidence-based research: This research identifies reliable and valid solutions to problems of educational practice. A quality research study is one that does the following:

- Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment.
- Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn.
- Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers, and across multiple measurements and observations.
- Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparatively rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

Data: “Discrete, objective facts about events” that are unprocessed and available for interpretation. Most government-funded programs are required to collect data, or facts and figures, to determine the program’s effectiveness, but these data are not always used in a systematic method for research or evaluation purposes.

Evidence-based program: Using a balance of sound theory and relevant empirical evidence combined with the judgment of knowledgeable and experienced practitioners to make informed decisions about how a program or practice is implemented or delivered.

Effective or Promising?

This document makes clear that there is little evidence-based research completed to date on transitioning students from adult to postsecondary education. Hence, the practices in this report fall mostly into the “promising,” rather than the “effective,” category. However, a considerable number of reports have been written by national commissions, researchers, and experts in the field that draw on the experience and knowledge of practitioners and researchers and the findings of case studies. Many reports provide descriptions of individual transition programs deemed to be models or to be successful. Due to the lack of quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of particular practices, and because much of the literature reports a combination of successful practices or strategies, it is difficult to ascertain the effects of any individual practice/strategy. The author includes documentation of success where available. Despite the abovementioned limitations of this report, the fact that many noted experts and researchers in the field have agreed on what works provides good reason to consider implementing these practices.

The Need for More Research

There is indeed a critical need for data on an institutional level and across institutions on adult student success and the practices that contribute to it. One of the three critical recommendations in a report for the NAACL, *Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment*, is to “increase state capacity to track individual outcomes across adult and postsecondary education and training services, over time, and into the labor market; and use this data to set goals for improvement” (Strawn, 2007, p. ii).
Practitioners, including instructors, counselors, tutors, administrators, service providers, and students, can contribute to the knowledge base by conducting systematic, intentional, and field-based inquiry in their daily practices. Through analytical and reflective practice, practitioners can:

- Reflect critically on their own practices.
- Review related research in their area of interest.
- Pose questions for inquiry arising from their own settings, prior experience, and goals for teaching and learning.
- Develop analytical approaches for resolving issues (Sherman & Taylor, 1997, p. 1).

A beginning list of research topics related to transitioning adult education students to postsecondary education is included in this report. Practitioners are encouraged to add to the collective knowledge of promising practices.

**Literature Review**

The main body of this report focuses on a review of the current literature. The review is divided into four areas of practice, and each area is further sub-divided by key elements that contribute to effective practices in that area. Each key element is followed by examples and models that demonstrate the element’s effectiveness.

**Area A: Organizational and Administrative Practices**

**Area B: Program Component Practices**

**Area C: Staff Development Practices**

**Area D: Instructional Practices**

**Area A: Organizational and Administrative Practices**

**Effective strategies:**

A.1 Improving transition of students from adult education to postsecondary education is an institutional priority.

A.2 Faculty and staff of transition programs are resourceful, experienced, and committed to serving the students.

A.3 Strong collaborative partnerships across college programs and with adult education programs, business/industry- and community-based organizations serve transitioning students. These partnerships create or expand pathways to employment and provide additional support services.

A.4 Institutions have innovative and flexible admissions and enrollment policies that facilitate transitions.
A.5 To evaluate effectiveness of courses and programs, student-data systems track transition-student movements across programs as well as their outcomes.

A.1 **Improving transition of students from adult education to postsecondary education is an institutional priority.**

Adult education students are often served by institutions outside of the community college system in many parts of the nation, especially in California. Therefore, both the community colleges and the institutions offering adult education must make it an institutional priority to transition adult students to postsecondary education. A study by of numerous ABE programs by Zafft, Kallenback, and Spohn (2006) recommends that a **system-wide goal of postsecondary readiness** be established.

**Strong leadership** is one indication of institutional commitment. Commitment of the college and the college president is identified as a key success factor for the Nashua Adult Learning Center in New Hampshire and the Success Program at Cape Cod Community College, according to an evaluation report on the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project (Gittleman, 2005). Dorcas Place Adult and Community College of Rhode Island, another National College Transition Network (NCTN) model program, report that their program is strengthened by the fact that key people at the community college know that their college president supports the collaboration with Dorcas (NCTN, 2008).

Strong support by top leadership is identified as a success factor for the Pasadena Math Jam Project. This atypical adult education program (because it is a non-credit course offered to students already accepted to the college) provides a two-week, free, non-credit pre-algebra course for under-prepared first-time students at Pasadena City College. Of the 72 students in the first cohort, 89 percent were retained and 56 percent increased their placement by one level after being retested (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007).

Chisman (2004) underscores the key role of strong leadership in providing effective transitions in a study on adult education and literacy and community colleges in Kentucky. Those involved in two of the adult education programs studied—1) the collaboration between Jefferson Community College and the program at Jefferson County Schools and 2) the program at Owensboro Community Technical College—agreed that strong leadership was crucial to their programs’ success. A report on exemplary career pathways programs (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, and Sunderman 2007) draws a similar conclusion. Administrators play a key role in promoting transitions according to a Center for Adult English Language Acquisition brief, “Supporting Adult English Language Learners Transitions to Postsecondary Education” (Matthews-Aydinli, 2006).

**Having the same administrator supervising adult education as well as basic skills education at the college** is a characteristic of exemplary collaborations, according to a
survey of community college presidents for a study on forging partnerships between adult and developmental education programs (Boylan, 2004). This conclusion is consistent with Boylan’s findings from a literature review and site visits of four programs: Albuquerque Technical and Vocational Institute, Davidson County Community College in North Carolina, Santa Fe Community College in Florida, and Western Wyoming Community College.

**Adult education must be treated as a core, not a peripheral service,** in order to bolster linkages that transition adult-to-postsecondary students, according to a Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) report, *To Ensure America’s Future: Building a national Opportunity System for Adults, Strengthening Links between Adult Education and Community Colleges* (2005). This report draws on eight research papers, including four statewide studies of adult and developmental education in community colleges (Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon); a study of adult education in five states (California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Oregon); and a national study of community colleges, including 19 deemed exemplary, in state adult education systems. It concludes that **transitions must be an official priority of state and federal policy.** For example, as a statewide policy Kentucky requires a seamless adult education to postsecondary transition. The report states:

> “The national goal must be to create seamless pathways of opportunity that lead large numbers of low-skilled adults through the adult education system and into post-secondary education.”

**Organizational integration** is a promising practice, with ABE programs treated as valued administrative functions, according to the *ABE to Community College Transitions Project,* an Office of Vocational and Adult Education-sponsored study. (U.S. Dept. of Education, OVAE, 2007).

**A clear commitment to enrolling and serving low-skilled adults** is a key characteristic of an exemplary career pathways program, according to a study that reviewed the literature and used interviews with administrators at 27 career pathways programs and collected data at three programs (Bragg et al., 2007).

**Sufficient funding** is another indication of strong institutional support. Combining a range of public and private funding is a promising practice, according to *Breaking Through* (Liebowitz and Taylor, 2004) as well as Boylan (2004). The cost and economic benefits of funding transitions programs should be assessed and funding be made available, according to a review of the NCTN programs conducted by Zafft et al. (2006). Similarly, *To Ensure America’s Future* (CAAL, 2005) concludes that special funding must be provided for transition initiatives. Procuring access to additional funding and in-kind resources is a promising practice for ABE programs, according to the *ABE to Community College Transitions Project* (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

**A.2 Faculty and staff of transition programs are resourceful, experienced, and committed to serving the students.**
Adult to postsecondary transition programs may exist formally or informally at institutions. If no such program exists, the literature recommends that one be formed with a focus on improving transitions (See A.3). Resourceful, experienced, and committed faculty and staff are key elements of such programs. The literature does not provide quantitative evidence of how faculty and staff influence the success of transition students. Professionals will agree, however, that having experienced, resourceful, and committed faculty and staff is an important feature of an effective program.

Faculty members are committed and oriented to serving adult students. The dedication of administration and faculty is cited as a key success factor for two of the three case studies on career pathways programs for a National Research Center for Career and Technical Education report (Bragg, 2007). Faculty members must understand the students they serve. Adult learners must be recognized as a diverse and complex set of individuals, the Emerging Pathways project emphasizes. This project surveyed more than 700 institutions and did a longitudinal case study at community colleges in nine states (Pusser, 2007).

Providing personal attention is another way of demonstrating commitment to transition students. A personal approach that fostered good communication with everyone involved was a key success factor that led to a decline in drops/withdrawals of transition students for the Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona, from 30 percent in 1999-2000 to less than five percent in 2002-03, and an increase in transitions, from 73 percent to 95-100 percent (Lombardo, 2004).

Site visits to four exemplary programs led Boylan (2004) to conclude that the presence of servant leaders (faculty and staff committed to maximizing the potential of individuals) and learner-centered values throughout the college were necessary conditions for effective collaboration between adult education and postsecondary programs. In these programs, a student-oriented philosophy, either stated or understood, guided instruction and relationships among the professionals and their students.

An evaluation study of the 21 programs in the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project found that these model programs had knowledgeable, experienced, resourceful, and committed staff and leadership (Gittleman, 2005). Leaders who have a deep knowledge of resources can facilitate program development (Bragg et al., 2007).

The authors of Pathways and Outcomes, a longitudinal study of non-credit ESL students, conclude that “unless program managers, teachers, and students are joined in an enterprise that expects a high level of achievement, and unless they reinforce each other in the belief that this is both possible and necessary, the prospects of improvement are diminished” (Spurling, Seymour, & Chisman, 2008, p. ix).

Alamprese (2004) identifies three emerging model transition approaches (awareness and orientation, counseling and referral activities, and comprehensive program models) that were designed based on the experiences of ABE and community college staff who work
with adult learners and **can identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities adult learners need to succeed in postsecondary education.**

Adult and developmental education linkages are strengthened when adult education faculty are given the **same pay, benefits, professional development opportunities, and roles in college governance** as developmental education faculty, according to a report based on eight studies of adult and developmental education programs, including profiles of 19 community colleges. (CAAL, 2005) The report also states that **adult education managers should have the same place in the college management system** as other managers. Hiring and supporting a sufficient number of **full-time instructors** is a promising practice, according to the *ABE to Community College Transitions Project* (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2007). The useful practices identified by this study emerged from interviews with program directors, instructors, counselors, tutors, and volunteers at 16 ABE programs in four states (Florida, Kentucky, Washington, and Wisconsin) with high transition rates as calculated through program-level and student-level administrative data. Administrators and faculty from nearby community college were also interviewed.

“One of the most important things that colleges and other adult ESL providers can do to improve program quality and increase student learning is to hire highly qualified faculty,” states a study of five exemplary community college adult ESL programs. “And the best way to accomplish this is to hire faculty with extensive professional training in teaching ESL – ideally MA degrees in TESOL or related fields” (Chisman & Crandall, 2007, p. 85).

According to college presidents surveyed by Boylan (2004), the comparable qualifications of faculty members in both adult education and developmental education programs at their institutions allowed them to teach in both programs and discover overlaps. Details on a variety of issues, such as faculty load, curriculum, grading, and so forth, would need to be worked out locally.

**A.3 Strong collaborative partnerships across college programs and with adult education programs, business/industry- and community-based organizations serve students moving from adult to postsecondary education. These partnerships create or expand pathways to employment and provide additional support services.**

Establishing **formal collaboration between departments at the college** offering both adult and developmental education is an emerging model approach (Alamprese, 2005). A partnership between the Tacoma Community College Division of Continuing Education and the Tacoma Community College Division of Workforce/Basic Skills was a key feature of a Child Development Associate Program. It prepared students with very low basic skills to get an industry-recognized Child Development Associate credential and to enter a one-year para-education certificate program or a two-year associate of applied science degree program (Women Employed, 2005).

The Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona found that developing relationships with the for-credit staff was a key to success. It launched a transition program after the state
legislature changed existing regulatory language in 1998, allowing community colleges to provide ABE service. The program’s Transitions Coordinator established relationships with financial aid, admissions, advisement, and ESL faculty and staff at the other community colleges in the district (Rio Salado does not offer credit ESL). Its drop/withdrawal rate decreased, and the transition to credit of non-credit transition students increased (Lombardo, 2004) (For success data see p. 19 of this report).

Pasadena City College in California found that strong collaboration across many college programs was a successful element of its Math Jam: Jumpstarting Success in Pre-Algebra Program. This atypical adult education program for under-prepared first-time students is a free, two-week, non-credit, pre-algebra program designed to mitigate high drop/fail/withdraw and low completion rates of the basic skills math sequence (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007; see success data on p. 9 of this report).

A report on state policies and community college practices for non-credit workforce education found that articulation between the non-credit and credit programs was important. The programs must have parallel and integrated structures. Collaboration within institutions is key to avoiding duplication and to developing a seamless movement of students between both non-credit and credit (Van Noy et al., 2008; also Boylan, p. 10 of this report).

Collaborative partnerships between postsecondary and adult education programs are critical to serving transition students. It is not the norm in the United States for postsecondary institutions to provide adult education, which is under the governance of community college boards or other postsecondary authorities in only 13 states (Chisman, 2005) and in California is offered in only 14 community colleges.

Chisman (2004) identifies collaboration as an emerging model, based on a study of programs in Kentucky, which requires collaboration between adult and postsecondary education. The basic logic is that adult education handles the lower end of developmental education. The statewide policy is intended to create a seamless system of education programs between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE). The state emphasis on transitioning adult students to college has paid off. The 1998-99 transition rate of 12 percent increased to 21 percent by 2005-2006 (Duke & Strawn, 2008).

A Kentucky study by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy profiles several collaborative programs. The Mayo Campus of the Big Sandy Community and Technical College District collaborates with the adult education program in Johnson County, emphasizing the precise determination of the skills students must master to get a GED or score high enough on the COMPASS test to undertake academic work. It also provides individualized and competency-based instruction to meet student needs. Up to 98 percent of students with a postsecondary goal entered postsecondary education in 2002-03, and data from 2000-01 show that 90 percent of adult/developmental education students in credit courses graduated from college. Also in Kentucky, Jefferson County Community College collaborates with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), agreeing in June 2003
that JCPS would handle the lower level of the college’s developmental education program (Chisman, 2004).

Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, California found that partnerships with other educational institutions in the area were essential for the success of its Ladders Project, which was formed to help underrepresented and low-income adults move through the educational programs and into the workforce. Faculty members from the Adult School and the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) provide most of the vocational ESL component in the Ladders program (Mazzeo et al., 2003).

An evaluation of the 21 model programs in the New England ABE-to-College Transition project found that a strong partnership between the adult and college programs was crucial, and that these adult programs share some characteristics: strong relationships with appropriate people in the college who can advocate for and deliver services to students, partnerships formed over time and characterized by a high degree of coordination, and a knowledgeable and resourceful program staff. The report recommends strengthened college partnerships focusing on maximizing the shared responsibility (Gittleman, 2005).

Colleges that do not provide adult education must form collaborative arrangements with adult education providers, concludes a Council for Advancement of Adult literacy report (CAAL, 2005). These collaborations should include the sharing of faculty, staff and support services; creation of jointly administered programs; and establishment of mutual expectations about the requirements for college entry (for scope of study see also p. 10 of this report).

Zafft et al. (2006) recommend long-term partnerships between adult and postsecondary education be developed. The authors surveyed 23 existing ABE and ESL programs, held phone or face-to face interviews with transition program coordinators, and drew on their own knowledge of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project.

Connecting ABE and ESOL to workforce and mainstream college programs is a promising strategy for providing integrated instructional structures and services, according to Breaking Through (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004; see basis of study on p. 15 of this report).

Collaborations are most effective when there is a systematic and structured transition program. Some programs, for example, establish a schedule for college admissions staff to meet with ABE classes and provide follow-up information on the admissions process. Some states, such as Idaho, are developing routine transition activities where ABE staff work with admissions and counseling staff (Alamprese, 2005). Community college presidents surveyed believed that collaboration was more likely to happen if policies promoting collaboration existed (Boylan, 2004).

One benefit of collaboration between the postsecondary institution and the adult education institution is that facilities can be shared. The Sumner Adult Education
Program in Maine, one of the three model programs chosen for a case study for the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project evaluation report, cited the co-location of their program with the college program as a success factor (Gittleman, 2005). Another report on the same project notes that model adult education programs found community colleges helpful in providing staff and space for transition classes as well as college orientation services (Alamprese, 2005). Bragg’s interviews with administrators at 27 career pathways programs found that all of the programs drew on the resources of the local community college for some aspect of administration and delivery (2007). Boylan (2004) also concludes that the sharing of appropriate program facilities made for effective links and collaboration between adult and developmental education.

To increase collaboration between adult and postsecondary education programs, shifts in state policy are required, Alamprese (2005) concludes, noting that state adult education offices could play an important role in facilitating relationships. The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) report (2005) on strengthening links between adult education and community colleges also calls on states to encourage better integration of adult education and colleges, remove state regulatory barriers, and reimburse adult education service at the same rates as credit. Breaking Through found that the level of funding for students in non-credit and developmental education, to a large extent, shaped the community college’s capacity to create pathways for students with low skills (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

Partnerships with industry and workforce programs are critical in certificate or workforce programs that prepare adult students for employment. Employers can provide skills assessment, curriculum review, work-based learning, project-based assessment, and job placement among other supports.

The Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults: A Program Development Guide cites several examples of partnerships between education and industry. For example, the Essential Skills Program in Denver prepares students for jobs in high-demand occupations and articulates with the next educational level. This program cited the importance of employer involvement in identifying labor-market needs, ongoing curriculum design, and provision of internships and jobs. Of 1,000 completers, 35 percent have gone beyond the certificate and moved on to college (Women Employed, 2005).

Key features of model career pathways programs studied for a National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) report includes partnership with employers and links with employers in developing curriculum. One exemplary program studied Shoreline Community College in Seattle and cites its well-established partnership with industry as a key success factor. It partnered with the regional auto sales and service industry to provide a certificate of proficiency for students completing ABE or ESL. Six of ten pilot program completers have entered factory-sponsored associate degree programs. Industry provided an advisory board, paid internships, and employment. The college recruited and provided the training and certification, counseling, funding, and leadership (Bragg, 2007). Actively engaging employers to develop learners’ skills for
real jobs is also a characteristic of the model programs cited in *Breaking Through* (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

**Partnerships between educational and community-based organizations (CBO’s) and other community agencies** aid transition students. These partnerships can provide an array of instruction and services that the educational institution cannot offer alone. For example, CBO’s may provide case management, methods, and curriculum for teaching ESL, while the college provides vocational curriculum, computer labs, and articulates the basic skills courses with the technical certificate and occupational degree programs. These partnerships are often cited as a key success factor for transition programs.

Examples of collaborations among several entities abound. The College Gateway Program in San Mateo County, California cites the public/private partnership among colleges, workforce system, CBO’s, and two foundations as a key feature in a program that prepares low-skilled individuals for college-level work in biosciences and allied health. Forty-five students enrolled in August 2005 with an 82 percent completion rate. Seven students entered a bio-manufacturing program, 13 were working towards an AA degree at Skyline College, and 13 were continuing in general education at Cañada College (Women Employed, 2005).

National Council of La Raza (NCLR) partnered with *Carreras en Salud-Instituto del Progreso Latino* (IPL) and other community-based organizations, Daley College, community colleges, and the Metropolitan Chicago Health Care Council to develop a health care pathway program for adult Latinos, most of whom are limited-English speakers. As of June 2007, 423 students have participated in this program. The completion, licensure, and employment rate of the pilot and first cohort group was 73 percent. Another 56 students have continued in the program with 94 percent retention (Bragg, 2007).

Several of the model programs described in *Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults: A Program Guide* (Women Employed, 2005) exemplify partnerships between educational, workforce, and other organizations. One example is Portland Community College’s Access College Education (ACE) in Oregon, which partnered with the college’s Steps to Success Welfare-to-Work Program, WIA Dislocated Worker program, and One-Stop Career Centers. Nearly half of the first cohort completed the program in one or two terms and entered college courses either during their second ACE term or after.

The Community College of Denver provides a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) ladder, funded by the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development. About 70 percent of students complete the Essential Skills Program and 25 percent continue into postsecondary education (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004). Bragg (2007) also cites partnerships with CBO’s as a key feature of the programs he studied.

Partnerships between educational and outside agencies can create programs that provide **supplemental student services** that the educational institution may not be able to offer by itself. Collaboration with human service agencies or workforce training programs that
assist ABE students in overcoming academic, financial, and personal barriers boosts the ABE program’s ability to help students navigate the path to postsecondary level, according to the ABE to Community College Transitions Project (U.S. Dept of Education, 2007).

A.5 Institutions have innovative and flexible admissions and enrollment policies that facilitate transitions.

Several studies of model programs cite dual/simultaneous enrollment as a factor that increases transitions. Dual enrollment works in a variety of ways. In some cases, the students attend both adult education and developmental education classes at the same time. In a study of adult education and community colleges in Kentucky, Chisman (2004) found this kind of dual enrollment to be a means of overcoming barriers to transitions. Making the enrollment count towards both the adult education programs and colleges helps overcome the fear of losing students to one or the other system. For example, at the Mayo Campus of the Big Sandy Community and Technical College District, most classes are mixed-ability, serving both adult education and developmental students. Instruction is individualized and competency-based; there are no set courses. (See Chisman’s success data on p. 30 of this report.)

Washington’s I-Best program (Integrated Basic Education and Training) uses the dual enrollment approach by providing students with ABE/ESL instruction and occupational training in the same class. ABE/ESL and professional-occupational instructors teach together in the classroom, and students earn credits towards certificates or degrees. Percentages of I-BEST students who earned their first 15 college credits were much higher than those of students who tried college course work in different ways (53 percent of I-BEST ESL students, compared with 11 percent or others, and 61 percent of ABE/GED students compared with 26 percent of others.) I-BEST students also completed 30 or more units at higher rates than ABE/GED students enrolled in other ways (32 percent for I-BEST students compared with 11 percent for others) (Duke & Strawn, 2008).

Dual enrollment in adult and postsecondary education was a key feature of the GED Plus model developed by Zafft, et al. (2006), one of the five models chosen for study. Programs that followed this model were Highland College in Illinois, West Kentucky Community and Technical College, New Haven Adult Education Program, and Urban League of Greater Hartford, both in Connecticut. The report’s authors conclude that state-level discussion and action on dual enrollment policies could make transition programs easier to implement. The ABE to Community College Transitions Project also identifies offering simultaneous enrollment opportunities as a promising practice (U.S. Dept of Education, 2007).

Providing credit for completion of work in non-credit courses is another promising practice. San Jacinto North Community College in Texas, a model program cited by Leibowitz and Taylor (2004), provides linked courses in which continuing education and credit-level students take the same course with the same curriculum. If the continuing
education students want to enter career credit-level programs, they can petition to get credit for their work in the linked courses. Northern Virginia Community College developed a systematic process for applying noncredit work to credit for degree programs at its Medical Education Campus. Offering the opposite—allowing students to take a credit course for non-credit to get the flavor of a credit course—is cited as a promising approach in a study of workforce education (Van Noy, Jacobs, Korey, Bailey, Hughes, 2008).

Enabling ESL students to follow a non-linear path of enrolling in credit and non-credit classes at the same time gives them the opportunity to achieve near-term goals. Evidence shows this may motivate them to persist and transition. At Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, 25 percent of students in the academic non-credit Basic ESL program (BSL) established to meet the goals of what had been the lower-credit level program, take both credit and non-credit classes. The students who entered the BSL program in Fall 2002 subsequently enrolled in credit ESL/developmental English courses and took one or more academic courses or vocational career courses at higher rates than those in the non-academic ESL program (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). A Bridge to an HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration) program at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois found that one of its essential components was having students enroll concurrently in a vocational course (the first in a four-course program) and a non-credit Vocational ESL Support Class. In the first cohort, nine of 15 students completed the vocational course with a 3.9 GPA, and six continued coursework in the certificate program (Bell, et al., 2008).

One longitudinal study found that allowing students to take non-credit courses in ESL and other subjects simultaneously resulted in higher transition rates. Non-credit ESL students at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) who enroll in non-credit classes in other subjects (most often business and ABE/GED classes) are six times more likely to transition to credit than those who take general non-credit ESL classes only. They are also nearly two-and-a-half times as likely to transition as those who take both general non-credit ESL and focus ESL classes (Spurling, 2008).

Offering students admissions/enrollment incentives can promote transitions. Pasadena City College found that allowing students to retake the placement test, guaranteeing a math class, and providing a free textbook so long as they continued passing math classes, were successful elements of its atypical adult education program, Math Jam. Of the 72 students who enrolled in the first cohort, 92 percent qualified for the Fall-Life-Lines program, which included counseling, tutoring, and a free textbook (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007; see also p. 9 and 30 of this report).

A.6 To evaluate effectiveness of courses and programs, student-data systems track transition-student movements across programs as well as their outcomes.

The literature provides evidence of the value of established data systems for tracking students to document rates of transition and to discover practices that promote transition.
City College of San Francisco’s data systems enabled the research office to conduct a seven-year longitudinal study of its non-credit ESL for a report published by the Council for Advancement of Adult Learning (CAAL). This study found that over a seven year period, eight percent of non-credit ESL students (3,232 students) transitioned to credit. Students who received matriculation services (placement testing, orientation, and counseling) were about 50 percent more likely to transition to credit than those who received no services.

This study also found that ESL students who took advantage of “program enhancements” were more likely to transition to credit. Using data available from the college student records, the study examined three types of enhancements: (1) taking other non-credit courses at the college; 2) taking ESL focus classes, which concentrate on one skill, in addition to taking general ESL classes focused on all language skills (listening/speaking/reading/writing); and 3) taking accelerated non-credit ESL courses designed to move the student through two levels of ESL in one semester. Fourteen percent of students who chose at least one enhancement transitioned, compared with three percent of those who took general non-credit ESL and had no enhancement, and 45 percent of those who chose all three enhancements transitioned (Spurling et. al, 2008).

The Rio Salado College Transition program in Arizona cites tracking students as one of its challenges and has developed a program-specific Access database to meet this challenge. It has documented a dramatic and consistent decline over four years in drops/withdrawal rates for the non-credit transition program (pass rates in college-level ESL classes rose from 73 percent in the first year to 95 percent, and 100 percent in subsequent years) (Lombardo, 2004).

Data collection is an emerging area of service, Alamprese (2004) notes in a review of the state of transition activities. Policymakers in Oregon and Idaho are tracking ABE student enrollment in colleges. Nellie Mae ABE to College Transition Project programs are also collecting data on outcomes.

Unfortunately, data on transition student progress and success, particularly longitudinal data, do not appear to be commonly collected in any uniform manner. Boylan (2004) found little consistency in the evaluation of outcomes, although community college presidents he interviewed attributed some of their programs’ success to having a lot of information about students.

The call for increased data collection is a common theme in the literature. One of three recommendations in a report prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy is to “increase state capacity to track individual outcomes across adult and postsecondary education and training services, over time, and into the labor market;” and to “use this data to set goals for improvement” (Strawn, 2007, p. ii). A report (Pusser, et al., 2007) on a Lumina Foundation for Education-funded Emerging Pathways project on adults’ success in college recommends the development of instruments for tracking credit and non-credit courses, student enrollments, and resource allocation to credit and non-credit.
More than 700 institutions were surveyed, and a longitudinal case study based on 180 interviews at community colleges in nine states was completed for the report.

Transition programs could be easier to implement with **state-level discussion and action leading** to the replacement of labor-intensive student tracking systems with cross-systems or integrated automated student record systems, Zafft et al. (2007) conclude. The use of data to show policymakers the relationship between human capital development and economic development is a promising approach to increasing transitions, according to the U.S. Department of Education ABE-to-college symposium, which called for rigorous experiments to test promising approaches (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Tracking basic participation and demographic data is one of the steps adult learning and skills training programs must take, according to the CAEL Inventory of Adult Learning Models and Innovations (2006). A key recommendation of the ABE-to-College Transition report is the implementation of a five-year longitudinal study of project students who move to postsecondary education. The longitudinal study would gather data on assessment testing, college level course enrollment, and college persistence (Gittleman, 2005).

The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy report (2005) recommends the development of student data systems for both formative and summative research on linkages between adult education and community colleges.

The Breaking Through Initiative recognizes that data collection and retrieval are major challenges in helping low-skilled adults succeed. The Initiative published a **document with data tools** that can be used by community colleges and adult education programs. The document includes a campus data toolkit that describes a variety of data collection methods and recommends a common data core that colleges should collect (Ewell, 2008).

**Area B: Program Component Practices**

B.1 Awareness, orientation, and postsecondary exposure activities inform adult education students and help them navigate college admissions, enrollment, financial aid processes, and available academic/student support services.

B.2 A comprehensive system of transition support services exists and is characterized by a high integration of academic and life skills services. This includes policies and programs to help ease the financial burden of postsecondary education.

B.3 Personalized support, such as peer mentoring, tutoring, or case management, is provided before, during, and after transitioning.

B.4 There are effective matriculation services, including assessment that is aligned between adult education and postsecondary programs.
B.1 Awareness, orientation, and postsecondary exposure activities inform adult education students and help them navigate college admissions, enrollment, financial aid processes, and available academic/student support services.

Professionals agree that many adult education students are not well informed about postsecondary education’s opportunities and payoffs and the necessary steps for transitioning. Although the literature does not provide evidence that orientation/awareness activities are specifically tied to improved or successful transitions, some adult education program staff members have found such activities to be a key to success.

Several of the programs in the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project found that orientation/awareness activities are a key program component. For example, the Success Program at Cape Cod Community College offers a two-day, 20-hour orientation that gives students a comprehensive overview of academic and social goals and builds motivation. As a result, at least one person emerges as the class “mother,” who stays in contact with the other students and often writes a newsletter that follows up on program graduates (NCTN, 2008). Through the “mother” and newsletter, graduates learn from each other about the postsecondary experience.

The Adult Learning Center in Nashua, New Hampshire identifies exposure to the real world of college as an important factor for student success. Data from Spring 2000 to Summer 2004 showed that of 129 students, 70 percent completed the 30-week program, 56 percent finished one or more college semesters, five earned an AA degree, and one transferred to a four-year college (Gittleman, 2005).

The Transitions Program for ESL students at Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona considers the preparation students receive from transition advisors before enrolling in credit classes to be a success factor. The program has three transition advisors who focus on recruiting students from advanced non-credit ESOL classes. They visit classes and give PowerPoint presentations on programs, support services, ways to prepare for college, etc. Students are invited to contact and meet an advisor two or three times to discuss goals, motivation, and preparedness. They also visit the college with the advisor, take the placement test and a short tour, and are given assistance with admissions (Lombardo, 2004).

Learning how to move on to postsecondary education is especially important for ESL students who are unfamiliar with the American educational system. Lack of information about postsecondary education has been identified as one of the barriers for immigrant students in the United States (Erisman, 2007). LaGuardia Community College in New York provides several college preparation activities for ESL students in its adult continuing education (ACE) program, including one-on-one counseling, workshops, and visits to classes. Topics covered include how to apply for financial aid and obtain scholarships, discovering career options, how to complete the college application, how to select a CUNY College, what college requirements exist, and how to register for classes, credits, majors, degrees, etc. (Blaber & Housel, 2008 and Erisman, 2007).
Seminole Community College in Florida, one of the five exemplary colleges studied for a Council for Advancement of Adult Learning (CAAL) report on adult ESL, has a Moving On program designed to help students learn about postsecondary education options. It requires ESL students in the adult education Intermediate and Advanced ESL Levels to attend a two-hour seminar on the American educational system. Students leave the seminar with a general knowledge of their options. This is supplemented by bimonthly follow-up seminars and support from three ESL program specialists and an Educational Planner (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

Several studies conclude that more aggressive efforts must be made to educate adult students about college opportunities and the benefits of obtaining a college education. Van Noy et al. (2008) found that students needed guidance to become aware of how non-credit courses lead to degree-applicable courses (Van Noy, et al., 2008). Adult learners must be given detailed information on the impact of credit-bearing and non-credit courses on postsecondary attainment and lifetime earnings, according to a report from Lumina (Pusser, et al., 2007).

A next step to increasing transitions is building incumbent workers’ awareness of opportunities for postsecondary education and its payoff in the workplace, according to the participants in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education Symposium on Adult Basic Education to Community College Transitions (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Providing postsecondary exposure, for example, holding the ABE program near the local community college, was found to be a promising practice by the ABE to Community College Transitions Project, as it gave ABE students a chance to adjust to a college environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Zafft (2006) identifies the dissemination of information through presentations and workshops as a key component of the advising model, one of five model program types cited in his study.

Intensifying recruitment and providing better orientation were two strategies for increasing transitions identified in the CAAL report (2005). Alamprese (2004 & 2005) cites evidence that programs were offering a variety of activities to help students navigate the admissions and financial aid bureaucratic maze and orient them to college culture and the services and facilities.

The number of adult students who enroll in college-level programs and thrive could rise if more aggressive efforts were made to better inform students about college education opportunities, conclude the authors of a study that tracked 34,956 adult education and credit students at 34 community and technical colleges in Washington state. A clear map of educational pathways (the authors termed this an education transit system) should be provided to indicate where students could stop and re-enter (Prince & Jenkins, 2005).
Several studies specifically call for the provision of career pathways information to help students learn the steps towards earning the education they need for their career goal. Policymakers and educators must be explicit about the pathways that connect non-credit and credit programs as well as short-term non-credit training and degree and certificate programs (Van Noy, et al., 2008). One of the elements of the successful I-BEST program at Renton Technical College is clear educational pathways and career ladders information (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005).

B.2 A comprehensive system of transition support services exists and is characterized by a high integration of academic and life skills services. This includes policies and programs to help ease the financial burden of postsecondary education.

A comprehensive system of integrated academic and student service support services is important for increasing student success, according to the literature (it is also a further sign of institutional commitment to facilitating transitions.) One example of integrated services is the partnership between Capital IDEA and Austin Community College in Texas, which was formed to enable underemployed and unemployed adults to attend college full time. This partnership provides a large array of services including long-term counseling and education and support assistance. Participants meet weekly with peers and a career counselor to focus on case management, mutual support, counseling, study skills, financial management, parenting skills, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. Program graduates have tripled their pre-program earnings and graduated at nearly twice the rate of Austin Community College students who did not receive program supports (CAEL, 2006).

The Breaking Through initiative at Central New Mexico Community College has a comprehensive student support system featuring achievement coaches to help with course selection, academic advice, personal counseling, getting bus passes, textbooks, finding housing/clothing and peer mentors, financial aid, and campus resources. Apprenticeship partners offer pairing for course and registration fees, donated funds for goods and supplies, and a kick-off celebration. In the first six months of the program 33 students were retained from the first cohort, 23 were pursuing certificates and degrees, and seven were accepted into apprenticeships. Of the participants who took the WorkKeys test, 90 percent improved their scores (Cross Mwase, 2007).

The programs selected for the Nellie Mae Educational Foundation’s New England ABE-to-College Transition Project to provide models of adult education transition services have developed an array of services generally organized in three areas: academic preparation, counseling, and mentoring (Alamprese, 2005). Breaking Through, a report for Jobs for the Future and National Council for Workforce Education, identifies integration of instructional structures and services as a significant promising practice. This includes connecting ABE and ESL to workforce and mainstream college programs, the integration of development and degree programs, use of a range of public and private funding sources, and the identification of clear transition paths for students. Breaking
Through is based on a literature review, site visits to innovative colleges and programs, interviews with practitioners and researchers, special sessions at national conferences, and a convening of practitioners to discuss their programs and review preliminary research findings (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2005).

The College of New Rochelle in New York has designed an educational model that addresses the needs of adults returning to school. The program provides a variety of support-related activities such as bereavement sessions, academic and personal improvement workshops, etc. Within a 30-year history the college has graduated more than 11,000 men and women (CAEL, 2006).

Several reports conclude that offering comprehensive integrated academic and student support services is a promising practice, including: Breaking Through (Liebowitz and Taylor, 2005); Helping Learners Make the Transition to Postsecondary Education (Alamprese, 2005); (Bragg, 2007); CAEL (2006); Zaft et al. (2006); Women Employed (2005).

Provision of support services that help students address personal barriers is a promising practice in the ABE to Community College Transitions Project, which cites three approaches being used in the 16 model programs it studied: 1) referrals to a network of support services in collaborating community colleges; 2) referrals to local human services and workforce training agencies; 3) reliance on ABE instructors for support and encouragement (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Matthews-Aydinli, (2006) found the following practices: 1) addressing nonacademic factors such as lack of transportation and childcare, limited time to attend classes (e.g., the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, Tacoma Community College, the National College Transition Network model programs, and programs studied for the Breaking Through project); 2) providing orientation to students (National College Transition Network, I BEST and others); 3) addressing academic factors (I BEST and others). For intensive support services tailored to the expected challenges of a specific pathway, see also Zafft et al. (2006), Women Employed (2005), and Breaking Through (Liebowitz and Taylor, 2004).

Boylan (2004) also found some evidence that effective programs offer both adult and developmental education students access to the same support services. This is a common characteristic of collaborative adult and developmental education programs, according to a survey of community college presidents he conducted and literature he reviewed.

Some state assistance for offering support services is required, according to Alamprese (2005) in a study of adult-to-postsecondary assistance programs, concluding that state adult education offices could fund the design of models of counseling services. Studies and reports indicate that financial aid or financial assistance of some sort is needed to help transition students succeed. Many transition students face difficulties in pursuing postsecondary education because of financial difficulties. They are often
working adults with low incomes and may not have the time to attend school full time to be eligible for financial aid. Sixty-eight percent of the students in the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project are employed, and 47 percent work more than 35 hours a week. Seventy-nine percent had an income of $25,000 or less, 28 percent earned less than $5,000, and 38 percent received some kind of public assistance (Gittleman, 2005). Working full time while enrolled is one of the six characteristics for non-persistence on a postsecondary risk index (Reder, 2007).

A statewide longitudinal study, *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skilled Adult Students*, tracked a cohort of 34,956 students in ABE and credit programs at 34 Washington community colleges and found that financial aid was associated with a higher chance of success. Unfortunately, many students who went beyond ESL or ABE/GED did not receive these services (Prince & Jenkins, 2005).

A study by John S. Levin (Pusser, et al., 2007) cites financial aid as one of the four categories of needs for adult learners in the highest risk categories. Programs must find ways to ease the financial burden of training and learning, states a CAEL report (2006). Boylan (2004) notes that students—often the poorest ones—who needed to take a lot of developmental education courses were in danger of running out of financial aid before degree completion.

Many sources discuss the importance of providing information and assistance on how to navigate the bureaucratic maze in applying for financial aid. Most programs examined by Bragg (2007) offered help with financial aid, which is an essential topic to be covered in orientation and counseling activities (Alamprese, 2004 & 2005). Preparing students to meet financial aid challenges is cited as a success factor by staff at the Sumner Adult Education Program in Maine, a New England ABE-to-College Transition Project program (Gittleman, 2005).

Several reports state the need for changes in federal and state financial aid policies. One major recommendations in a report for the National Commission on Adult Literacy is “to adapt financial aid policies to the needs of lower-skilled adults and support their success in adult and postsecondary education and training” (Strawn, 2007, p. iii). The participants in a symposium for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education on Adult Basic Education to Community College Transitions also called for changes in federal and state policies and the creation of a more flexible financial aid system to support part-time students (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Institutions have found a variety of other means, besides offering financial aid, for helping students with the costs of postsecondary education. Some colleges offer free tuition hours or scholarships. In Oregon, students get a tuition waiver for six hours at Chemeketa Community College. At Rogue Community College, those who get a GED or high school diploma get a chance to buy one credit and get one free for up to six free credits.
At Casper Community College in Wyoming, learners with a GED get four hours of free tuition. At Western Wyoming Community College, those with a GED can apply for a scholarship for a full year of free tuition (Alamprese, 2004). The Jefferson Community College and adult education program in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCP) reached an agreement to secure funds for scholarships to GED students (Chisman, 2004).

The Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center in Providence Rhode Island, a New England ABE-to-College Transition Project program, uses some of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant money and a private anonymous donation to purchase seats in a credit class for a cohort of at least five students in three different courses (NCTN, 2008). Students in Access College Education, a program at Portland Community College, Oregon, may have tuition paid through welfare-to-work and dislocated worker programs, and students with a GED get one free semester of college.

At least one program, the CUNY Language Immersion Program, is heavily subsidized by the college to keep fees low. This is a successful, intensive, non-credit English and academic preparation for students who have been accepted into degree programs but whose English is not yet adequate for college level classes (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

Others programs offer paid internships, subsidized work programs, or assistance with other fees/costs. Students in the Essential Skills Program at the Community College of Denver, which prepares students for high-demand occupations, get paid internships. At the Career Pathways program at Madisonville Community College in Kentucky, the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program pays for tuition, uniform, books, supplies, and certification fees for 15 students per year with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding. It also places graduates in subsidized work programs, with WIA funding paying for the first 500 hours of salary (Women Employed, 2005).

Childcare and transportation assistance was a key feature of all three programs chosen for site visits by Bragg (2007). Help in finding services such as childcare, transportation, housing, and medical expenses is a common feature of the model bridge training programs studied for the Bridges to Careers for Low Skilled Adults: A Program Developmental Guide (Women Employed, 2005).

Other ways being used to reduce educational costs include allowing students to concurrently enroll in developmental and credit-bearing courses, giving credit for non-credit courses, and providing free courses and support services to bring students to college level. All four colleges Boylan (2004) visited for his study on forging partnerships between adult and developmental education allow students to concurrently enroll. Davidson County Community College in North Carolina deliberately elevated the GED exit standards so that GED students would be ready for college level and would not need—and thus, would not need to pay for—developmental education coursework. Santa Fe Community College in Florida and Western Wyoming Community College provide free lab-based non-credit courses serving both adult and developmental education students; students may also use them to meet developmental education requirements after completing the courses. Santa Fe Community College and
Albuquerque Technical and Vocational Institute provide free academic support services to help students bypass developmental education. Frequently, students who fall below the cut score are still placed in regular college courses and given strong academic services.

Sometimes an external partner provides financial assistance. Capital IDEA, a workforce intermediary that partners with Austin Community College, pays for tuition, fees, books, and childcare. Participants graduate at nearly twice the rate of Austin Community College students who do not receive Capital IDEA supports (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

**B. 3 Personalized support, such as peer mentoring, tutoring, or case management, is provided before, during, and after transitioning.**

A study found guidance and mentoring among the four types of needs of adult learners in the highest risk categories (Pusser et al., 2007). Several successful transition programs described in the literature indicate that provision of such personalized support is a key program component.

Mentors in the ABE-to-College Transitions Project Community Education Project in Holyoke, Massachusetts provide information and support during the transition period and are available during the students’ first year in college. Holyoke Community College students, most of whom come from ABE classes, are hired as mentors. The mentors also serve as classroom assistants in the college transition class and provide individual support for students in the matriculation process. The program serves 36 students a year, and as of 2006, more than 90 students had graduated from the Community Education Project and matriculated to college (CAEL, 2006). The Sumner Adult Education program in East Sullivan, Maine provides mentors to ABE graduates during their first semester of college; they are available throughout the students’ time at college (Alamprese, 2005).

The RIRAL ABE-To-College program in Pawtucket, Rhode Island cites monthly in-house mentoring sessions as a promising practice. The sessions include guidance in skills and goal setting, advising on individual and group interaction with classmates and instructors, and introducing students to valuable resources. Of the 17 students mentored in 2005, eight continued on to postsecondary education and five remained in touch with the mentors. In spring 2006 ten students were being mentored in their first year in college. There were 12 requests for mentors from students planning to begin postsecondary education in fall 2006 (NCTN, 2008). The U.S. Department of Education Adult Basic Education to Community College Transitions Symposium (2007) also identified the provision of mentoring services as a promising approach.

**Tutoring** is another promising type of support service, according to the *ABE to Community College Transitions Project* report (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Individual tutoring increases transitions, according to the CAAL 2005 report on strengthening links between adult education and community colleges. The Madisonville Community College Career Pathways project in Kentucky found individualized and small-group tutoring to be a key factor in preparing students to transition into a nursing assistance program or higher level of nursing education (Women Employed, 2005).
The Rio Salado College program has three full-time transition advisors, who recruit students from ESOL classes, meet them individually two or three times to discuss goals, motivation, and preparedness, and help them complete initial paperwork. They also visit the college with the students and assist them with the admissions process. The drop/withdrawal rates of non-credit transition students have significantly declined, and the pass rates in credit ESL classes have significantly increased since the program started (Lombardo, 2004).

Having career coaches who help students negotiate pathways and provide support was a key program feature of the Greater Cincinnati Health Professions Academy, a partnership between The Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and various employers, educators, and workforce organizations. Students with less than a 9th grade level education could move on to Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) or unit clerk programs after taking a basic skills course in health care. Unit clerk and state-tested classes graduated 80 students in 2005, of whom 56 were working and four had gone on to another level of education (Women Employed, 2005).

Case managers were a success factor in the Career Pathways Initiative at Ouachita Technical College (OTC) in Arkansas (Bragg, 2007). Case management was also a key element in the successful Renton Technical College I-BEST LPN program for ESL students (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005). Likewise, the Capital IDEA program, partnering with Austin Community College, provides case management among several support services to students (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).


**B.4 There are effective matriculation services, including assessment that is aligned between adult education and postsecondary programs.**

Several studies provide evidence that aligning student matriculation in adult education and postsecondary programs helps place students into the appropriate program, strengthens the links between adult and postsecondary programs, and results in increased student success.

The Career Pathways initiative at Ouachita Technical College (OTC) in Arkansas, an exemplary career pathways program, tries to find appropriate placement for every individual who contacts the college workforce center. It directs students who lack a high school diploma or score below 10.5 on the TABE (an instrument commonly used in adult education), to ABE/GED/developmental education classes. Those with a GED or high school diploma who may need just a brief development education program go directly to
OTC where they take a three-month program before entering college classes. This program helps students experience success with a short-term goal, demonstrate responsibility for attendance and participation, and make the transition to college-level classes (Bragg, 2007).

In a study of adult education and community colleges in Kentucky, Chisman (2004) found an emerging model of adult education serving as the lower level of developmental education. For example, in June 2003 Jefferson County Community College and Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) agreed that JCPS would handle the lower level of the college’s developmental education program. Treating adult education as the lower level of developmental education could strengthen linkages, according to the 2005 CAAL study. Boylan (2004) concludes that some students at the lower end of developmental education might be best placed in adult education where the programs are free, designed to address the lower skill levels, and have greater flexibility, and that some adult education students might be best placed in developmental education programs to possibly speed their entry into college.

In some cases, there is no operational distinction between adult education and developmental education, so students do not need to be matriculated into one program or the other. Mayo Campus of the Big Sandy Community and Technical College District in Kentucky is responsible for both adult and developmental education in Johnson County. There are no set courses; all instruction is individualized and competency-based. Most classes are mixed-ability and the emphasis is on determining exactly what skills students must master to get a GED or score high enough on the COMPASS test to undertake academic work. Adult education students get the same rights and privileges as credit students, including financial aid and career counseling (Chisman, 2004).

Aligning assessment can help determine where students are best placed, whether in adult or developmental education programs. Aligning adult education services with college placement decisions is a major policy recommendation in a report on the challenges in assessing for postsecondary readiness, prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy. “A first step might be to compare the range of content and skills required on commonly used college placement tests and their parallel in adult education program common assessments” (Mellard and Anderson, 2007, p. 1).

An exemplary ESL program at Lake County Community College in Illinois uses the CELSA for placement into both a non-credit English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program and its credit ESL program. Transition rates to credit are higher for the EAP students than for the non-EAP, non-credit students. Bunker Hill, another exemplary ESL program described in the CAAL report, uses the REEP writing test for both credit and non-credit. From Spring 2001 to Fall 2005, 17 percent of BSL students placed in credit ESL and seven percent placed in credit academic classes (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

One characteristic of collaborative adult and developmental education programs, according to community college presidents surveyed by Boylan (2004), is the use of the same assessment instrument for both programs, or some way of correlating scores of
different instruments. Boylan also cites efforts to ensure consistency between exit standards for adult education and entry for developmental education as a characteristic of collaborative adult and developmental education programs.

Such assessment alignment, however, is apparently not common. Boylan (2004) found that adult and developmental education programs frequently use different assessment instruments. He notes that there was no uniform definition of what skill levels place students into developmental education, and there was a gray area where the skill levels of adult education and developmental educational students were about equal. One academic advisor interviewed said that students who scored in the higher ranges of the adult education TABE were probably equivalent to students who scored in the lowest ranges of ASSET (an instrument commonly used in colleges).

Unfortunately, there is very little research on the effects of providing different types of matriculation services to adult students, but a recent study in one college shows that receipt of matriculation services is positively related to transition. A seven-year longitudinal study of non-credit ESL students at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) found that receiving matriculation services increased student transition rates to credit courses. Students who received all three services measured -- placement testing, orientation and counseling -- before or just after enrolling in non-credit ESL classes were 50 percent more likely to transition to credit (Spurling, et al., 2008, see more success data on p. 18, 19, 42, and 45 of this report).

Flexibility in applying matriculation services, such as allowing students to retake the placement test after offering short courses designed to help them increase their test scores, is a promising practice found in several programs. Under-prepared first-time students in Pasadena City College’s Math Jam take a two-week non-credit course and then retake the placement test. Fifty-six percent of the students in the first cohort increased their placement by one level (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007). Jefferson County Community College in Kentucky offers a three-week college preparation program to help students with low COMPASS scores. When retested with COMPASS, all students were able to skip at least one developmental education course; 59 percent were able to skip more than one (Chisman, 2004).

Targeting students most likely to benefit is cited as a promising practice in the Breaking Through report, which recommends that the focus for adults with 6th to 8th grade level skills should be to help them develop their pre-college skills. The focus for adults with 8th to 10th grade skills should be to help them develop college-level skills and facilitate their entry into credit programs (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

Identifying a target audience of those soon to be admitted to postsecondary, was one of six program characteristics that strengthened ABE programs’ ability to help students navigate from ABE to postsecondary, according to the ABE to Community College Transitions Project (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Alamprese (2005) found that when identifying a target population of students who are most likely to transfer, programs often focused on those who were close to receiving a GED or high school diploma, under
the assumption that they had the skills to achieve the scores needed on college placement
tests. Anecdotal information, however, weakened these assumptions. GED scores may
not be reliable predictors of learners’ success in entering college; learners may need
academic skills enhancement to meet postsecondary requirements.

Area C: Staff Development Practices

C.1 Instructors receive opportunities for staff development as well as for learning
and gaining experience teaching in both adult education and postsecondary
programs.

Effective practices for professional development of developmental education faculty and
staff have been described in Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success, the initial
publication in this series from the Center for Student Success (2007). The literature
review on adult to postsecondary transition also provides evidence that professional
development and opportunities for instructors and staff to work collaboratively may lead
to greater success for transition students.

Instructor collaboration and training are especially important in vocational programs. The
I-BEST program in Washington pairs an ESL/ABE instructor with a technical/
occupational instructor to concurrently provide literacy education and work-skill
development. I-BEST students earned five times more college credits and were 15 times
more likely to complete workforce training than regular ESL students in the same amount
of time. A key element of the Renton Technical College I-BEST Licensed Practical
Nursing (LPN) program, which is particularly successful in transitioning ESL
students, is the training of non-ESL faculty to use strategies that worked with ESL
students (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005; see p.
17, 31, and 34 of this report for more success data).

William Rainey Harper College found that having ESL/adult education faculty trained in
basic vocational content was an essential component of its Bridge to Heating, Ventilation,
and Air Conditioning & Refrigeration (HVACR) certificate program. Constant
communication between the Vocational and ESL/Adult Education faculty during the
semester was essential as well. Nine of the 15 students in the first of four courses in the
HVACR program completed with a 3.9 GPA, and six continued coursework in the
certificate program (Bell 2008).

According to community college presidents surveyed by Boylan (2004), 53 percent of
adult and developmental education instructors have access to the same professional
development opportunities. Faculty members receive support to attend conferences,
participate in workshops or enroll in graduate courses, and the college pays for some or
all of the costs, although only for full-timers in some cases.

Zafft et al. (2006) recommend that funding be provided for professional development
for adult education and developmental educators. Adult education instructors must
become familiar with syllabi, textbooks, and requirements for courses students will take
in college. They must understand the college placement test and become familiar with the college environment. Professional development for counselors and administrators is also recommended. Counselors must improve their career planning and advising skills.

Program administrators could use guidance in how to forge partnerships with postsecondary institutions.

Alamprese concludes that shifts in federal policy are required, and that the U.S. Department of Education could assist states in providing training and technical assistance to adult education staff on how to work with personnel from other programs (Alamprese, 2005).

**Area D: Instructional Practices**

D.1 Adult education and postsecondary curriculum are aligned, sequential, and progressive to provide a seamless pathway for transition students.

D.2 Instruction is contextualized so that transition students see the connection between the basic skills and academic or vocational content.

D.3 Curriculum and scheduling are designed to be flexible, chunked, and modularized with multiple entry and exit points.

D.4 Sufficient language (ESL) instruction is provided for English-as-a-second-language learners.

D.5 Instruction and curriculum are designed and delivered in a way that integrates a variety of instructional methodologies; i.e., collaborative learning, team teaching, technology, tutoring, and independent study.

D.6 Institutions provide accelerated courses/programs that give transition students the opportunity to meet short and long-term goals more quickly.

D.7 Programs link education to careers and include career planning as a part of the curriculum to enable transition students to learn about possible careers and the corresponding educational pathways.

Professionals and researchers who have analyzed the factors that may help increase transitions agree that greater **curriculum alignment between the adult education and postsecondary education systems is needed.** Lack of alignment is one major factor that reduces the adult education student’s prospects of earning a degree/credential, according to a report prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy. “Postsecondary education and training typically does not coordinate, dual enroll, or align services with
adult education in the way that it increasingly does with high schools,” the report states. “As a result, even adult education students who earn their GED’s generally must enroll in remediation again at the college level, at which their chances of earning a degree are slim” (Strawn, 2007, pp. i-ii.).

Several other reports, drawing on research and profiles of colleges and programs, also cite the need for more curricular alignment. The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy concludes that strengthening curricular linkages and providing articulated sequences through curricula that prepare students step by step could bolster the linkages between adult education and community colleges (CAAL, 2005). Some alignment of GED curriculum to include academic and/or student success skills is one of the key features of the GED Plus Model by Zafft et al. (2006). A key feature of the ESOL Model is a well-articulated curriculum with clear academic benchmarks. A third model, the College Prep Model, includes as a key feature direct instruction to address the gaps between GED and college-level requirements. These models were developed based on a survey of 19 adult education centers with transition components from around the United States.

The ABE to Community College Transitions Project found aligning curriculum with developmental education courses to be a promising practice. One of the six characteristics of the 16 successful programs studied for this report is the use of curricula and instructional techniques aligned with postsecondary content (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Unfortunately, Boylan (2004) found a curriculum disconnect in many places where the exit skills for adult education students did not match college entrance requirements. There is evidence in the literature, however, that some model programs are aligning adult and developmental education curriculum.

The goal of the Nellie Mae Foundation New England ABE-to-College Transition Project is to bridge the gap between the level of academic work required to get a GED or an External Diploma Program (EDP) certificate and the skills required for college-level academic work. The 21 sites in the project designed new classes in math, reading, writing, and computers that were aligned with academic content required by Community Colleges. Some of the courses are being offered on community college campuses (Gittleman, 2005; Alamprese, 2005). Three community colleges in Wyoming examined whether GED math courses prepared students to get the score on the COMPASS test required for admission. As a result, they now offer post-GED math classes to teach students the concepts they need to succeed on the COMPASS test and in their classes (Alamprese 2005). Two successful programs, Davidson County Community College in North Carolina and Santa Fe Community College in Florida, try to align GED with college entrance standards (Boylan, 2004).

Offering college preparation courses through adult education is one step to take to overcome barriers to transition, Chisman (2004) concludes. The Kentucky Educational Cooperative and West Kentucky Community and Technical College developed GED curriculum that teaches math, reading, and writing at the level required for college entry. All students are dually enrolled in the college and the adult education program.
Alignment between non-credit and credit ESL curriculum is a key feature of several successful programs cited in the literature. The I-BEST program in Washington was designed to address the problem of workforce training being a patchwork of non-credit and credit classes that are not aligned to pathways. Non-credit courses did not articulate to certificate or degree programs. I-BEST successfully paired an ESL/ABE instructor with a technical/occupational instructor to provide both the literacy education and the work skill development. A December 2005 report found that I-BEST students earned five times more college credits and were 15 times more likely to complete workforce training than regular ESL students in the same amount of time (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005).

Providing seamless transitions with a top-down design process is one of the key features of several of the exemplary non-credit community college ESL programs studied for the CAAL report (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). Lake County Community College in Illinois turned the two bottom levels of credit into a two-semester, non-credit English for Academic Purposes program with academic content. Bunker Hill Community College in Massachusetts established a three-level Basic ESL (BSL) program to meet the goals of what had been lower-credit levels. Each level is designed to prepare students for the next one. The school also offers a free, Transitions to College program, which is not an ESL program, although 90 percent of the students are non-native speakers. This program is designed for GED recipients who need to improve their skills to get into college credit courses, and the instruction is equivalent to that offered by the lower two levels of developmental education courses.

The non-credit CUNY Language Immersion Programs (CLIP) offered at nine CUNY campuses are designed for ESL students who have been accepted into college but whose English is not yet adequate and who may not be fully academically prepared for college classes. This intensive program offers English skills development taught through the arts, humanities, and sciences 25 hours a week, for 36 weeks. The program also includes instruction that develops technology, research, and study skills and knowledge of the American educational system. Most graduates transfer to degree programs at CUNY (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

A curriculum defined in terms of competencies needed to succeed in postsecondary education and jobs is a key feature of exemplary programs, according to a Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults Program Development Guide (Women Employed, 2005). The sequence of programs that prepare students to enter Biotechnology certificate programs at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is an example of this kind of curriculum. The On-Ramp to Biotech program, offered by San Francisco Works is a ten-week adult education program that trains low-income adults, who have limited or no scientific background, for careers and ongoing education in biosciences. Over 90 percent of the graduates find jobs in bioscience and/or enroll in further bioscience education. Bridge to Biotech also prepares students to enter the CCSF Biotechnology certificate programs. It is a semester-long program that provides science and math training to
underrepresented minorities whose skills are between 9th and 12th grade levels (CAEL, 2006).

**Reports from various programs indicate that they have articulated adult education and postsecondary programs in a variety of ways.** All three successful non-credit career pathways programs that Bragg (2007) studied used college development education curriculum when students needed it. This was done because of concern over the increased time and financial aid needed for developmental education courses at the college if students did not meet college placement cut-off scores.

Central New Mexico Community College, among the institutions chosen to implement a Breaking Through Initiative, has developed construction trade apprenticeship coursework that is closely related to degree course work and articulated so students can receive college credit and matriculate into certificate and degree programs. In the first six months of the project, 33 students were retained from the first cohort and 23 were pursuing certificates/degrees (Cross Mwase, 2007).

The Community Learning Center (CLC) Bridge Program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, one of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project programs, has found that assigning students portfolios is a successful strategy for focusing attention on what is important for graduation from the Bridge program. There is a master list of items students must put in their portfolios, including materials related to college preparedness (library card, etc.), computers (resume, etc.), math (study notes and exams), and writing (including learning styles and multiple intelligences inventory). Thirty-eight percent of 2003 Bridge program graduates were accepted into college, rising to 67 percent for 2004 graduates (NCTN, 2008).

Some programs have found that not only do adult education students need to develop academic skills in reading, writing, and math, but they also need to learn how to manage the pace of college curriculum and college life. Chisman (2004) found that successful programs in Kentucky taught college readiness skills not usually featured in academic programs (study and research skills, creating written and oral presentations, and general orientation to college requirements). A number of Kentucky community colleges offer short readiness courses. These are sometimes taught by developmental education programs, adult education programs or by both, with students dually enrolled.

Students in two of the programs studied for the evaluation report on the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project cited the value of the college readiness instruction they received. Nashua Adult Learning Center students in New Hampshire stressed the importance of receiving both life/study skills and the academic preparations. Sumner Adult Education Program students in Maine reported that learning how to balance and prioritize demands, organize their work, study in increments, take notes, and tape classes were success factors, in addition to the rigorous math, writing, and reading courses (Gittleman, 2005).
Alamprese (2005) found that Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon offered structured curriculum for high-level ESL learners, which simulated college by making learners maintain an academic workload with multiple courses and homework. Alamprese also found ABE programs that assigned homework.

Some professionals maintain that staff in adult education programs must believe it is possible for adult education students to transition and that it is necessary to provide a program that prepares students for postsecondary education. Both staff and students at the Nashua Adult Learning Center, one of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project programs, said that a key success factor was the staff’s and the students’ awareness that the program was not just for GED preparation, but also for larger goals beyond attaining a GED (Gittleman, 2005). Advancement and transitions could be increased if teachers, managers and students expect a high level of achievement, Spurling et al. (2008) stated after conducting a longitudinal study of non-credit ESL students at City College of San Francisco.

Professionals have called for shifts in state policy regarding curriculum. Alamprese (2005) suggests that state adult education offices should develop curriculum standards to guide ABE transition and support curriculum development, and that the U.S. Department of Education should facilitate the development of state content standards. Zafft et al. (2006) concludes that the transition programs they studied would be easier to implement with state-level discussion and action on curriculum alignment.

D.2 Instruction is contextualized so that transition students see the connection between the basic skills and academic or vocational content.

Contextualized instruction is a key feature of many successful transition programs, both academic and vocational. Much of the literature speaks, in particular, of the need to contextualize instruction to prepare students for the workforce.

The I-BEST program in Washington is a large program with proven success. This program integrates vocational and ESL instruction for students at the high-beginning level and above. Language instruction in the ESL class is tailored to the language needed to learn the job a student is training for, reports a 2005 study of 34,956 students (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges).

Although some of the programs are quite small, several with available success data have contextualized curriculum as a key component. The Community College of Denver, for example, has developed a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) career ladder. It also has an Essential Skills program, which contextualizes ABE, ESOL, and GED preparation for broad career paths: business services, early childhood education, and information technology. About 25 percent of the graduates continue into postsecondary education (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

Contextualized curriculum is a key feature of the Breaking Through Initiative Program at Central New Mexico (CNM) Community College. Students first take a three-week
course with a math and reading focus applied to the construction trades, GED test preparation, a construction lab project, and a construction site visit. Students then take a 12-week course in basic skills in math, reading, and instruction in various construction trades. Following this, students enroll in an apprenticeship program. They can begin the program without a GED with the expectation that it will be earned within a year. They can then matriculate into CNM’s certificate/degree programs. The apprenticeship course work is closely related to degree course work and articulated so that students can receive college credit for it. In the first six months of the program, 33 students from the first cohort were retained, and 23 were pursuing a certificate or degree program (Cross Mwase, 2007; see also pp. 23 & 35 of this report).

The Access College Education (ACE) at Portland Community College, a bridge program, partnered with various outside agencies to integrate basic skills, especially math and writing, into career-planning, goal-setting, and some soft-skills training. About half of the first cohort of students completed the program in one or two terms and entered college courses either during the second term or after (Women Employed, 2005).

The Lake County Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program for ESL students includes a non-credit ESL course with instruction in vocabulary development for medical and health professions, measurement terminology, and conversion formulas, reading authentic non-adapted medical material and other practices to prepare students to enter the CNA program. It also has a non-credit ESL support course, offered concurrently with a content CNA course, that provides instruction in vocabulary building, study/test-taking skills, and listening and speaking skills. Of the 21 students enrolled in the program in spring 2005, all but two passed the CNA content class and received the college’s CNA certification (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

The Bridge to HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration) program at William Rainey College in Illinois is finding success with a short Bridge to HVACR class that includes an HVACR Lab Task Orientation followed by an occupation-specific Vocational ESL (VESL) class taught concurrently with the first HVACR class in the certificate program (Bell, 2008; see also p. 18 and 31 of this report).

Other model programs that use contextualized curriculum have been identified although no success data are available. Tacoma Community College has designed a model pathways program that integrates ABE and ESL with technical career paths. In its childhood education model, low-paid childcare center workers with limited English skills enter a program that integrates the curricula of ESOL into early childhood education in a team-taught course. At the end of the program, graduates get nine credits towards a two-year degree and a certificate that entitles them to higher wages.

A partnership among Genesis Health Care Systems, WorkSource, Inc., and the Community College Consortia in Massachusetts has put together an array of programs that help workers take the next career step in health care pathways. A Career Pathways program at Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon has developed nine professional technical career pathways that provide short-term
occupational training to prepare low-literacy adults for jobs and mainstream postsecondary education (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

The SEARK College Career Pathways Pilot Project in Arkansas, an exemplary program studied for the *Bridges to Careers Program Development Guide*, provides a curriculum that is contextualized to specific jobs in its WAGE Pathways Bridge Program (Women Employed, 2005).

Several studies of model programs conclude that contextualizing curriculum is a promising practice. Linking education to meaningful economic payoffs is one of four major promising strategies cited in *Breaking Through* for helping low-skilled adults enter and succeed in college and careers (Liebowitz & Taylor 2004). Key components of this strategy include focusing on high-demand occupations, actively engaging employers to help adults develop skills for real jobs, and linking the acquisition of reading, writing, math, and English to their actual use in broad occupation or career paths.

Providing instruction in basic educational and technical skills contextualized around a specific employment sector is a key feature of the Career Pathways Model, one of five models developed by Zafft et al. (2006). Curriculum focusing on the basics of communication, problem-solving, applied math, technology applications, and technical fundamentals, and taught in the context of programs and situations drawn from the workplace and postsecondary classrooms, is a key feature of model bridge training programs (Women Employed, 2005).

Bragg (2007) notes that two exemplary programs—the health pathways program for adult Latinos at Carreras en Salud-Instituto del Progresso Latino (IPL) in Chicago and the General Service Technician program at Shoreline Community College in Seattle—have strong contextualized ESL curriculum.

The CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) and the Math Jam Program at Pasadena City College are two examples of contextualized curriculum in academic preparation programs. The CLIP program, offered at nine CUNY campuses, is a non-credit ESL program that provides 36 weeks of sustained content-based teaching through the arts, humanities, and sciences. Most completers transfer to degree programs at CUNY (Erisman, & Looney, 2007). Contextualized and innovative math curriculum is a key feature of the two-week, non-credit math course offered in the Math Jam program at Pasadena City College. Over half of the students increased their math placement level after taking this course (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007).

Finally, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (2006) found that provision of an adult-centered process that makes learning relevant and integrates content is a key component of successful adult-learning and skill-training programs in an inventory of models and innovations.

**D.3 Curriculum and scheduling are designed to be flexible, chunked, and modularized with multiple entry and exit points.**
Many adult students exhibit characteristics that make it difficult for them to persist with education. That is why successful transition programs find flexible, chunked, and modularized curriculum, as well as flexible scheduling, important. A Risk Index for non-persistence, described in a *Descriptive Summary of 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students* (a U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics document) notes six characteristics of at-risk students (Reder, 2007):

- older than the typical postsecondary learner
- part-time rather than full-time
- financially independent
- working full time while enrolled
- single parents
- supporting dependents other than a spouse

The Nashua Adult learning Center Program in New Hampshire, part of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project, cites a **program design that is flexible and responsive to different types of students** as an important factor and provides some modest success data (Gittleman, 2005; also see p. 21 of this report).

A U.S. Department of Labor WIRED Initiative concludes that using delivery systems and a format that make learning accessible to the target population is a key feature of program design. Success data are available for one program studied for this initiative, the Career Pathways Program at Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon. This program provides nine modularized career pathways, from adult education and workforce development programs to credit-level occupational/technical degree programs, with multiple entry/exit and re-entry points. Degree programs are broken into modules or chunks. They serve approximately 250 students annually, and approximately 200 students enter internships each year. Another program studied, the New Faces program in Philadelphia, has created a health care ladder that takes applicants at any employment level and moves them into technical and professional positions. Students can begin with the GED, adult diploma or high school refresher program, and work all the way through college classes. No success data are available, however (CAEL, 2006).

**Having clear, easy-to-navigate transitions from non-credit to credit with multiple entry, exit, and re-entry points** is identified as a promising strategy in *Breaking Through* (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004). Modularized curriculum with multiple entry/exit points was a key feature of exemplary career pathways programs, according to a study for the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (Bragg, et al. 2007). Boylan (2004) found that ABE, ASE (Adult Secondary Education), and ESL were seen as the first steps in progression toward an AA or BA, but concludes that it must not be assumed that students have to go through all phases. Rather, procedures should allow students to change from one learning level to the next. Community college presidents surveyed by Boylan indicated that allowing students to move back and forth was characteristic of collaborative adult education-developmental education programs.
Chunking, or breaking down larger credit courses or programs into short, discrete non-credit courses is recommended in a report of state policies and community college practices for non-credit workforce education. At Lorain Community College in Ohio, for example, chunked courses are bridges to credit courses (Van Noy, et al., 2005).

Offering programs at times and places convenient to working adults was a key feature of model bridge training programs that prepared adults who lacked adequate basic skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training (Women Employed, 2005). Curriculum that is chunked into clear stepping-stones recognized by employers is a key feature of the Career Pathways Model developed by Zafft et al. (2006).

A cautionary note on providing short-term training, which results in chunking and modularizing curriculum, comes from Prince and Jenkins’ (2005) major study that tracked 34,956 students enrolled in ABE as well as credit programs students in 34 community and technical colleges in Washington. They found that short-term training focused on getting a job with little attention to educational advancement, leads to lower future earnings. Colleges should help students avoid dead-ends by providing short-term options that lead to real attainment in the long term.

D.4 Sufficient language (ESL) instruction is provided for English-as-a-second-language learners.

The need for ESL language instruction has been documented in a variety of sources. Twenty-five percent of students served in federally funded adult education programs in 2003-04 were enrolled in ESL, according to data from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) (Bragg, 2007). ESL is the largest and fastest growing adult education program at many community colleges in the country (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

The longitudinal study of 34,956 ABE students in community and technical colleges in Washington found that 35 percent started in ESL. Only 13 percent of the ESL students went on to earn at least some college credits in five years. Twelve percent enrolled in college credit beyond ESL (Prince & Jenkins, 2005).

Although not all adult ESL students want or need a college degree, some need post-ESL study, as verified by a summary of research on transitions from the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA). Linguistic skills (reading, writing, vocabulary) must be provided to help ESL students with academic course work (CAELA, 2008).

Sometimes ESL students need to transition to ABE programs in preparation for moving on to postsecondary education. In Yakima Community College in Washington, the ESL and ABE instructors have successfully collaborated in a transition program, working closely to integrate a single curricular track for a program that serves about 300 students a year. Students in ESL Level 3 take a math class taught by an ESL instructor. At Levels 4 and 5 they take a more advanced class and an ABE computer basics course taught by an ABE instructor. At ESL Level 5 they also take an ABE corrective reading
class and an ABE computer basics class taught by an ABE instructor. Twenty-six percent of ESL students in May 2006 made the transition to becoming solely ABE students and, according to a special analysis for the study, 73 percent who were enrolled in the Transitions program between 2002 and 2006 went on to become solely ABE students. Twenty percent enrolled in the college’s developmental education classes in May 2006 (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). The ABE to Community College Transitions Symposium, U.S. Department of Education, 2007, also identifies the provision of professional development as important.

A variety of ESL programs that have demonstrated some success in transitioning ESL students are described in the literature. Chisman and Crandall found that articulated programs that integrate credit and non-credit ESL curriculum promote transitions. The English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at Lake Country Community College in Illinois provides a two-semester non-credit ESL program with academic content. Of students who entered in Fall 2002, up to 39 percent were in credit ESL or developmental English or both by Fall 2006, compared with 12.6 percent of non-EAP students. The Basic ESL (BSL) program at Bunker Hill Community College is a non-credit program established to meet the goals of what had been the lower-credit ESL levels. Data from 2001-05 show that 17.9 percent of BSL students enrolled in credit ESL and seven percent enrolled in other credit courses (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

Other ESL programs with success data are:

• CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) for matriculated CUNY students with significant English-language needs (Eisman & Looney, 2007; see also p. 34 of this report);

• I-BEST program in Washington a gateway program for low-skilled adults, many of whom start in ABE/ESL programs (Washington State Board for Community and Technical projects, 2005; see also p. 17, 31, and 34 of this report);

• Bridges to Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVACR) program at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois, an example of providing ESL support classes for a vocational program (Bell, 2008).

At Tacoma Community College, one of the model programs described in Breaking Through, the dean of workforce education and the director of adult education developed a model that merges ABE/ESOL technical training (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

ESL instruction is a key feature of 27 model career pathways programs studied by Bragg (2007), especially at the health pathways program at Carreras en Salud-Instituto del Progreso Latino (IPL) in Chicago and the general service technician (GST) program at Shoreline Community College in Seattle.

A focus on advanced language skills required for academic settings; high program intensity; and well-articulated curricula with clear academic benchmarks for
admission are all key features of an ESOL model, one of the five transition models Zafft et al. (2006) developed in a study on ABE program models.

Institutions should integrate ESL education with larger strategies for student successes (such as developing student confidence, developing learning communities and providing support services such as tutoring), according to a report from Lumina (Pusser et al., 2007; see also p. 27 of this report).

Who are the ESL students who take adult education courses? Many first enroll at the Literacy or Beginning levels and have a long way to go to achieve college-level English. Although comprehensive national data on the relative number of ESL students enrolled at different levels are not readily available, a 2005-06 investigation of community enrollment patterns at a dozen community colleges found that the lowest-level students (Literacy and Beginning levels) were by far the largest proportion of ESL enrollment. ESL authorities consulted by the Council for Advancement of Adult Learning (2005) confirmed this.

National Reporting System (NRS) data from 2005-06 for all 50 states show that 48 percent of ESL students reported by states to the NRS were at the ESL Literacy or Beginning Levels (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). The actual percentage is likely to be higher since some programs do not test all of their students using NRS-approved tests and, therefore, do not report the levels of all of their students to the NRS.

Is it realistic to expect that students who start at low levels of ESL will transition? In a large longitudinal study of non-credit ESL students at City College of San Francisco, Spurling et al. (2008) found that most of those who transitioned began at fairly low levels and worked their way up to gain the English proficiency they needed to move to credit studies. Almost all students had attained the Intermediate level of proficiency or higher before transitioning. Eight percent of noncredit ESL students transitioned to credit studies. A major reason this rate was not higher is the low persistence rates of non-credit students; only 19 percent of those who began at low levels of proficiency reached an Intermediate or higher level.

Several reports call for more study of the needs of ESL students. Spurling speaks to the need for more longitudinal research to improve the understanding of the components that increase the success and transition rates of non-credit ESL students. One key recommendation of the evaluation report of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project is the further assessment of the postsecondary needs of non-native English-speaking adult learners, because these students are more likely project dropouts (Gittleman, 2005).

Professional opinion also supports more collaboration between community colleges and adult education programs in offering ESL. Crandall and Sheppard (2004) state that not all adult ESL can or should be offered by community colleges, but the latter should play a leadership role in advocating for adult students. Sheppard and Crandall conclude that in cases where adult education is offered through the community
college, the ability to help adult ESL students to transition to regular college classes partly depends on good relationships within the college, good communications, integration of curriculum, and community outreach. The CAAL 2005 report concludes that transitions from adult education to postsecondary education could be strengthened with better synergy between non-credit and credit ESL.

D.5 Instruction and curriculum are designed and delivered in a way that integrates a variety of instructional methodologies; i.e., collaborative learning, team teaching, technology, tutoring, and independent study.

Using a variety of strategies has already been identified as a promising practice in the Center for Student Success report (2007) on effective practices for improving the success of basic skills students. Active learning, engagement, collaborative learning, contextual learning, and learning communities are highlighted in that report. Similarly, the existing literature identifies the use of a variety of instructional methodologies as a promising strategy for improving transition rates.

Data available from a number of transition programs show the effectiveness of using a variety of instructional methodologies. Although most of these programs are small, the approaches they have used are worth considering given the success data they report.

The Mayo Campus of Big Sandy Community and Technical College unifies adult and developmental education. Classes are individualized and competency-based and most have mixed-ability students. According to data from 2002-03, up to 98 percent of students with a postsecondary goal entered postsecondary education. Jefferson County Community College offers individualized modular instruction and a short three-week college preparation program designed to help students with low COMPASS test scores. When retested, all students were able to skip at least one developmental education course, and 59 percent were able to skip more than one (Chisman, 2004).

One New England ABE-to-College Transition program, the Community Learning Center (CLC) Bridge Program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, found that having students do portfolios (to individualize instruction) was a successful technique. Before 2003, CLC used portfolios to keep writing assignments, but in August 2003 it shifted to an all-portfolio format. The percentage of students who applied to college by Bridge graduation jumped from 44 percent in 2003 to 83 percent in 2004, and the percentage accepted into college jumped from 38 percent to 67 percent (NCTN, 2008).

A goal of the Portland Adult Education program in Maine, another New England ABE-to-College Transition program, was to make students understand math better so that they would be successful in college. Various instructional techniques were used, including a math murder mystery, hands-on labs, and student journals. Eighty-six percent of Algebra B transition students passed the Accuplacer test and placed into college level math (NCTN, 2008).
Students in Cape Cod Success cited being able to build a **learning community** as a key factor in the program. From Spring 2002-Summer 2004, up to 83 percent of the 94 students completed the program, 78 percent completed one or more college semesters, one completed a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) degree, and four transferred to four-year colleges (Gittleman, 2005).

The students in a Bridge to Biotech program at City College of San Francisco, which prepares them to enter one or two-year certificate programs, **study in a cohort**. Over 90 percent of the program graduates work in bioscience and/or enroll in further bioscience education (CAEL, 2006). An effective cohort approach is used at the Breaking Through Initiative Project at Central New Mexico Community College. Students receive instruction in basic skills math, reading, and various construction trades in a 12-week learning community (Cross Mwase, 2007).

Staff identified having a fully integrated learning community as an essential component in the success of the Bridge to HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration) program at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois. Students were concurrently enrolled in a vocational course and a vocational support course (Bell, 2008).

The Renton Technical College LPN program, a particularly successful I-BEST program in Washington, included **peer tutoring and a language-learning lab** (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005).

Several reviews of model programs cite the use of a variety of instructional methodologies as a promising practice although success data were not available: the college preparation model developed by Zafft et al. (2006); Bragg on cohort-learning (2007); CAAL (2005) on strategies such as **self-paced instruction in learning lab**, **individual tutoring**, and **targeted curricular modules**.

An inventory of adult learning models and innovations identifies using **adult-centered implementation** as one of the major steps that should be followed in designing adult learning and skill-training programs. Key features of an adult-centered program include engaging the learner as an adult, drawing on the learner’s experience, varying techniques to appeal to different learning styles, and using **blended learning (online, instruction-led and hands-on)** (CAEL, 2006).

Using **lab-based and group instruction** to accommodate different learning styles was found to be a promising practice by the *ABE to Community College Transitions Project* (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). A survey of community college presidents shows that using **technology** (computers) attracts students and was a common characteristic of collaborative adult and developmental education programs (Boylan, 2004).

**Studies of vocational/career pathways programs cite the use of a variety of instructional techniques as a promising strategy.** Computer-aided instruction, the individualized instruction, and innovations such as team-teaching and project-based classes were key features of all three model pathways programs studied by Bragg (2007).
A program guide developed for bridge training programs for adults who lack adequate basic skills to succeed in postsecondary education cites instruction emphasizing learning-by-doing through projects, simulations, and labs, as a key feature of such programs. The Madisonville Community College, Kentucky Career Pathways Project, features one-to-one and small-group tutoring, flexible weekend and evening schedules for working students, and computer-aided instruction (Women Employed, 2005).

**D.6 Institutions provide accelerated courses/programs that give transition students the opportunity to meet short- and long-term goals more quickly.**

According to the literature, providing accelerated courses/programs is a promising strategy used by a variety of programs and recommended by studies of model transitions. Some of the programs are small, but their success at speeding up learning provides some evidence of a promising practice.

Some programs have been able to increase ESL students’ rates of learning by offering high-intensity courses that help accelerate transitions to credit. For example, the non-credit Lake County English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in Illinois is an eight-course, two-level program for high intermediate and advanced ESL students. Classes meet 12 hours a week for 16-week semesters, with each semester containing four four-week courses. The intensive instruction, along with an integrated curriculum and clear entry/exit criteria, has resulted in impressive transition rates. Of the Fall 2002 students, 39 percent had enrolled in credit ESL or developmental English courses or both by Fall 2006, compared with only 11.2 percent of those in regular ESL courses. Up to 14.6 percent took one or more academic courses, compared with 5.6 percent of those in regular ESL courses, and 20.7 percent enrolled in one or more vocational career courses, compared with 12.8 percent enrolled in regular ESL courses (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

A seven-year longitudinal study of non-credit ESL students at City College of San Francisco found that 31 percent of students who took accelerated non-credit courses transitioned to credit courses, compared with eight percent of all non-credit ESL students. The accelerated courses are designed to cover two levels of ESL in one semester (Spurling et al., 2008). Pasadena City College’s Math Jam offers an intensive two-week, free, non-credit pre-algebra course to jumpstart success in algebra. Students study from 9-3 five days a week (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2007; see p. 9 of this report for success data).

The Central New Mexico Community College Breaking Through Initiative program offers an accelerated basic skills and career exploration as the first component of its program for transitioning low-skilled adults into college courses and job training programs. This successful three-week course includes a math and reading focus applied to the construction trades, GED test preparation, a construction lab project, and a construction site visit (Cross Mwase, 2007; see success data on p. 23 of this report).
A number of community colleges in Kentucky offer short college preparation readiness courses. Jefferson County Community College, for example, had a **three-week intensive college preparation program** that helped students who had low COMPASS scores. When retested, all of the enrollees were able to skip at least one level of developmental education, and 59 percent were able to skip more than one level (Chisman, 2004).

The Community College of Denver has an **intensive social services GED lab** for welfare recipients, which makes it possible for students with 7th grade skills to earn a credential in four months rather than several years. Students spend half the time in classes with intensive mini-classes and half the time in independent study for up to 15 hours a week.

**Combining basic skills and workforce training** is another way of accelerating student progress. The I-BEST program in Washington was formed to speed up learning for ESL students, among other reasons. For ESL students at Level 3 and above, the I-BEST program links ESL classes with workforce education. ESL students do not have to complete all levels of basic skills before moving into workforce training. Demonstration projects were all ESL, but the model could be adopted for ABE (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005).

A desire of ESL students to begin career studies while acquiring basic skills was one reason for the creation of the Bridge to HVACR program at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois. Students take a non-credit four-week bridge to Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVACR) course and then enroll concurrently in a 16-week HVACR support class and the first course in the HVACR certificate program (Bell, 2008).

A study of state policies and community college practices in non-credit workforce education found that a more integrated approach between non-credit workforce education and credit programs could lead to **greater connections and increased movement of students across programs** (Van Noy, et al., 2008). *Breaking Through* lists “integrated instructional structures and services” as one of four major promising strategies for helping low-skilled adults enter and succeed in college. In particular, this includes connecting ABE and ESL to workforce and mainstream college programs and creating clear, easy-to-navigate transitions from non-credit to credit (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

**Another way to speed up learning is to individualize instruction and focus on only the areas in which students need to improve their skills.** For example, the Mayo Campus of the Big Sandy Community and Technical College District in Kentucky, which offers both the adult and developmental education programs in Johnson County, emphasizes the precise determination of the skills students must master to get a GED or score high enough on the COMPASS test to start academic work (Chisman, 2004).

Accelerated learning is one of the four major promising strategies identified by *Breaking Through*. The **key features identified as part of an accelerated learning approach were diagnostic assessment that created individualized competency-based**
instruction, a focus on what the learner needed to master, short-term intensive programs, and contextualized course content (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

High program intensity is a key feature of the ESOL Model, one of five model programs identified by Zafft et al. (2006). Students in the ESL Transition Program at Mira Costa College in California, for example, enroll for 12 hours a week for nine weeks for a total of 108 hours a semester.

Accelerated learning is a key component in designing progress- and success-focused programs, according to a report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (CAEL, 2006). Offering compressed programs that allow quicker completion and movement to better jobs and further education is a key feature of bridge training programs (Women Employed, 2005).

D.7 Programs link education to career training and include career planning as a part of the curriculum to enable transition students to learn about possible careers and the corresponding educational pathways.

The need for a more educated and skilled workforce to meet the skills gap has been well documented (see introduction page 1). A growing number of adults lack high school credentials. Too few are enrolled in ABE, ESL, and GED or other diploma programs, and too few transition to community colleges.

The literature documents a number of programs that are showing some success in linking education to training. Chisman and Crandall (2007) found that colleges could increase transitions by expanding career programs. Students can gain language and practical skills in vocational ESL programs (VESL) that allow a quicker transition to employment and earnings compared with the traditional model of ESL-to-academic studies, or life skills-ESL-to-a-GED. They can also use these supported career programs as the first step to higher educational programs. The Lake County Community College Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program is one example. ESL students take a one-semester preparatory VESL course before entering the CNA content course and then take a VESL support course concurrently with the CNA course. Of the 21 students who entered the program in Spring 2005, all but two passed the content class and received the college’s CNA certification.

The Essential Skills Program at the Community College of Denver offers an employment-driven basic skills program that contextualizes ABE, ESOL, and GED preparation for broad career paths: business services, early childhood education, and information technology. About 70 percent of students complete the program, and about 25 percent continue to postsecondary education (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

The Breaking Though Initiative Program at Central New Mexico Community College offers career planning and education for a career in the construction trades. The first component, a three-week course, which includes a math and reading focus applied to the
construction trades, also provides career exploration. Students next take a 12-week course in basic skills math and reading in various construction trades (Cross Mwase, 2007; see also pp. 23 and 35 of this report).

The Adult Collaborative of Cape Cod for Educational and Support Services (ACCESS), one of the New England ABE-to-College Transition programs, has always had a career-planning component. Students develop a PowerPoint presentation on choosing a career path and give it to the class. The project helps students identify a career and the corresponding educational path. Counselors provide research documents, such as the Careers for your Personality and Career Choice Guide, and students look at college catalogs and schedules. Most follow through by pursuing the major they have been researching. From the Fall 2005 cohort, ten of 13 students became actively involved in college and were on target with career plans. Data on students who were enrolled earlier in the program show that after five years, one student took the five required college courses to get the GED he needed to enter the Marine Special Forces and got in. One student was accepted in an RN (Registered Nursing) program; a single parent with three children was preparing to transfer to Wellesley; one student graduated from an LPN (Licensed Practical Nursing) program; and three were continuing their studies while working at Cape Cod Community College (NCTN, 2008).

The Access College Education (ACE) program in Portland, Oregon integrates basic skills, especially math and writing, into career planning, goal setting, and some soft-skills training. About half of the first cohort completed the program in one or two terms and entered college courses either during the second ACE term or after (Women Employed, 2005).

One of three critical recommendations in a report on policies to promote adult education and postsecondary alignment, prepared for the National Commission on Literacy, is to “integrate adult education and English language services with postsecondary training to increase attainment of credentials leading to family-supporting jobs” (Strawn, 2007).

One of the potential next steps identified by the Adult Basic Education to Community College Transition Symposium is to clearly articulate and systematically coordinate the components of career pathways to include career awareness and planning as well as academic training and provision of support services. Encouraging students at intake to set educational and career goals and develop action plans was deemed a promising practice by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education’s ABE to Community College Transitions Project (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Exposing students to the opportunities and requirements of employment and education in fields of importance to local economies—through field trips, job shadowing, internships, and other means—is a key feature of bridge training programs. (Women Employed, 2005).

Linking education to meaningful economic payoffs is one of the four promising strategies for helping low-skills adults enter and succeed in college and careers identified in
Breaking Through. A key feature of this strategy is tying the acquisition of reading, writing, math, and English skills to their actual use in broad occupations or career paths. (Liebowitz & Taylor, 2004).

The Breaking Through Initiative (2008) is providing funding and technical support to six Leadership Colleges to create and implement new or expanded programs that promote the success of low-skilled adults in occupational and technical degree programs. These colleges intend to enroll and advance 900-1,200 adults in career pathways.

Research Suggestions for
Adding to the Knowledge about
Effective Practices for Transitioning Students from
Adult to Postsecondary Education

Evidence-based practice, according to Grover Whitehurst, the director of the Institute for educational sciences (2002), is “the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction” (Miller, 2006).

The promising practices reviewed in this report drew upon professional wisdom and empirical evidence available in the literature. Practitioners (instructors, staff, program coordinators, tutors, students, administrators) acquired some of the evidence through concrete observation. Researchers acquired some of it through surveys, interviews, site visits, and their own literature review. Outcomes data, when available, are included here. In a few cases, so are data from scientific studies. However, very little scientifically based research has been conducted to date to produce data on transition student performance that can be used to compare, evaluate, and monitor progress. Much more research is needed, with practitioners as well as researchers adding to the knowledge base. The research suggestions offered here are meant to encourage this additional research.

Teacher Research. The following information comes from the website for the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University. In an “inquiry that is intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical, and contextual” (Mohr, 2008), teachers as researchers can do the following:

- Formulate questions based on their own curiosity about their students’ learning and their teaching.
- Investigate their questions with their students, systematically documenting what happens.
- Collect and analyze data from their classes, including their own observations and reflections.
- Examine their assumptions and beliefs.
- Articulate their theories.
- Discuss their research with colleagues for support, as “critical friends” to validate their findings and interpret their data.
• Present their findings to others.
• Talk to their students.
• Give presentations.
• Write about their research.

A Beginning List of Research Questions for Teachers

1. What key skills should my adult education students acquire to succeed in the next course level of the pathway to postsecondary education?
2. What instructional activities help transition students in career planning?
3. What are transition students interested in, that will help contextualize the lessons and make learning more meaningful for them?
4. What types of instructional methodologies help students learn best?
5. What do adult students need to know about transitioning to college? What do adult students who have transitioned wish they had known before their transition?
6. What are the biggest barriers that interfere with student success in school? What can I do to help them overcome these barriers?
7. What types of assessment best indicate what transition students already know and what they need to learn before I begin a unit of instruction?
8. What types of assessment best show that transition students have absorbed the skills training and knowledge they received in class?
9. How can I identify and encourage adult education students who are most likely to transition successfully to postsecondary education?
10. What learning/cop ing skills do transition students need, in addition to academic skills, that will help them succeed in postsecondary education?

Longitudinal Research

A number of the literature sources reviewed for this report referred to the need for more longitudinal research on programs and students, to extend understanding of effective transition practices. Longitudinal research conducted on programs and large groups of students can provide valuable information that administrators, policymakers, and practitioners can use to improve programs. Administrators, program coordinators/chairs and instructors are encouraged to undertake longitudinal research at their institution.

Most community colleges in California have data collection systems, although fewer adult education institutions probably do. A third of the respondents to a survey on the use of technology for evidence-gathering, conducted by the team providing assistance and support to student learning outcomes (SLO’s) coordinators in the California community colleges, reported having some sort of data-collection and reporting system in place for measuring SLO’s. Another third expressed great interest in such a system (Gabriner, 2008). Collecting data across institutional systems, that can measure the progress of students transitioning from adult to postsecondary education, remains a major challenge that could be met more easily with state and federal assistance.
Here is a brief list of some of the research called for in the literature:

1. How do we define the skills that are necessary for college readiness and success?
2. What is the best way to assess the skills needed for college-readiness and success?
3. How well do the assessment instruments used in adult education align with those used for admission to postsecondary education?
4. What types of transition/bridge programs are most effective?
5. What are the transition rates, persistence, and outcomes of adult education students?
6. What is the cost of education that prepares adult students to transition to postsecondary?
7. What curricula best meet the needs of transition students?
8. What types of support services help increase transitions and student success in postsecondary education?
9. What models of data collection are needed to share information across adult/postsecondary institutions?
References


