

Staff Briefing



# Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs

September 19, 2006

Legislative Program Review  
& Investigations Committee



## Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee voted in April 2006 to conduct a study of the coordination of adult literacy programs. The study is focused on: examining how adult literacy services are funded, delivered, and overseen in Connecticut; and determining if the state's current system for providing adult literacy programs is efficient and effective and what, if any, improvements in coordination are needed.

This report provides background information developed by the committee staff to date on the types of literacy services available to adults in Connecticut, who provides them, and who receives them. An overview of the ways adult literacy programs are coordinated and monitored is also included. In addition, preliminary staff analysis of funding resources and student performance measures for adult education participants is presented. More comprehensive analysis of the costs and outcomes of adult literacy services and the efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery network will be in the staff findings and recommendations report.

### Background: Literacy Definitions and Needs

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the term literate has come to have a different meaning than the once commonly held notion of just being able to read at grammar school level and write one's name. There is general agreement adults need an array of reading, writing, communication, quantitative, and even technology skills to function effectively in today's world.

Literacy is usually measured on a continuum of skill-based proficiency. While there is not one accepted goal or standard for adult literacy, many experts agree high levels of English language proficiency and problem-solving skills, and more than a high school diploma, will be required with increasing frequency for a family-supporting job, particularly in Connecticut. Effective adult literacy services not only help people become more productive workers and better parents and citizens, but are an important way to promote self-sufficiency and economic development.

Adult literacy is not defined in state law and Connecticut has not adopted any formal policy statement regarding the goals of its publicly funded adult literacy services. To develop a working understanding of adult literacy definitions and measures, program review staff reviewed the relevant literature. (Findings were summarized in an update document provided to the committee in June; see Appendix B.) For the purposes of the committee study, the following definition from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), which is incorporated in federal adult literacy legislation, is used:

- an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society.

Also for study purposes, adult literacy programs and services mean publicly funded activities intended to improve the reading, writing, math, and English speaking skills of individuals age 16 and over who are not enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education programs.

As the following sections of this report show, adult literacy programs in Connecticut are not part of any formal system, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, common procedures, centralized data, and shared resources. Planning, funding, and service delivery is fragmented and no single organization coordinates information on available programs and their results. Effective coordination of adult literacy programs can promote cost-effective service delivery and allocation of limited resources to services with the best outcomes.

**Service needs.** There is significant need nationally and in Connecticut for the services provided through adult literacy programs. The primary target populations are individuals with low levels of literacy and those with limited English proficiency. Data from the most recent national study of adult literacy rates (the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, NAAL) indicate the reading and math skill levels of many American adults are below what is needed for most well-paying careers or admission to postsecondary education and training programs.

The 2003 assessment results for each state have not been finalized. Until they are released, the best available information on literacy needs for Connecticut and other states are from the first national assessment, the National Survey of Adult Literacy (NSAL), which was conducted in 1992.<sup>1</sup> In addition to producing data on literacy rates nationwide, researchers used the survey data to develop state-level estimates of adult literacy proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

The NSAL measured the literacy of U.S. adults on a five-level scale, with Level 1 the lowest, and Level 5 the highest, proficiency. According to research sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA), a family-supporting job in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires at least NSAL Level 3 literacy skills. Based on the NSAL state estimates, about 41 percent of Connecticut's population age 16 and over (more than 1 million individuals) were at NSAL Levels 1 and 2, or below the NGA benchmark for adult literacy.

A study of adult education systems in New England conducted for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation in 2002 by Jobs First, a nonprofit research organization, showed substantial unmet need and demand for literacy services in all six states in the region.<sup>3</sup> The study defined demand as the number of adults with low literacy skills who acknowledge a need for adult education services, which earlier research found to be about 20 percent of those with

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that even when final results from NAAL are published, accurate comparisons between the 1992 and 2003 national assessments are not possible since they used different scales to measure adult literacy levels.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Reder, *Synthetic Estimates of Literacy Proficiency for Small Census Areas*. Portland State University, prepared for U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. October 1997 (revision for Internet publication).

<sup>3</sup> Jobs for the Future/Nellie Mae Education Foundation, *Rising to the Literacy Challenge: Building Adult Education Systems in New England*. April 2002, Revised March 2003.

literacy levels at NSAL Levels 1 and 2. The Nellie Mae study estimated Connecticut's unmet demand for adult basic literacy skills and ESL services at 181,000 individuals in 2002.<sup>4</sup>

## **Report Organization**

This briefing report consists of four sections. Section I summarizes the key state and federal mandates concerning adult literacy (more details are provided in Appendix C) and briefly describes the main types of publicly funded programs and services aimed at improving adult literacy skills. Section II contains an overview of the key roles and responsibilities for adult literacy services in Connecticut. Initial analysis of the state's adult literacy funding resources is presented in Section III. A profile of the participants of Connecticut's adult education programs, the state's primary resource for adult literacy services, is provided in Section IV

Given the many laws, agencies, and organizations, and the wide range of programs and services adult literacy encompasses, a large number of terms and acronyms are included in this report. A list of the most commonly used adult literacy acronyms and their definitions is provided in Appendix A.

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<sup>4</sup> Calculated as: State Population at NSAL Literacy Levels 1 and 2 (1,070,000) times 20 percent (214,000) minus number of adults participating in mandated adult education programs (32,470).



## Overview

Adult literacy services in Connecticut, as in other states, are not delivered through one program administered by a single state agency. Instead, they are a collection of programs delivered primarily through adult education, higher education, and workforce development systems. A variety of federal, state, and local government entities fund and administer services intended to improve the basic academic skills and English language proficiency of adults. Although not included in the scope of this study, it is important to note adult literacy services are also supported and provided by many different private organizations including nonprofit, community-based organizations, unions as well as businesses, and proprietary schools.

This section highlights the major legislative mandates concerning adult literacy and briefly describes the main types of basic literacy programs currently provided for adults. An overview of the main roles and responsibilities for delivering and overseeing adult literacy services in Connecticut and preliminary information on available funding services follow in Sections II and III, respectively.

## Major Legislative Mandates

Connecticut's adult literacy activities are subject to state and federal mandates. The main state laws pertaining to adult literacy are the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) sections concerning adult education (C.G.S. Sections 10-67 through 10-73c). At present, the primary federal legislation on adult literacy is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). Both the state and laws are summarized below, while major provisions of each are described in more detail in Appendix C.

**State law.** In 1902, Connecticut began requiring its large school districts (at least 10,000 residents) to provide evening schools for persons over 14 years old, marking the origins of the adult education requirement in Connecticut. In 1921, any school district regardless of size, upon the written application of 20 or more persons, was required to provide school for non-English speaking adults. These schools were free to town residents. By 1943, requirements for general adult education and for educational services for non-English speaking adults were codified together in the statutory section.

Since 1974, state statutes have required all local and regional school districts, regardless of size, to establish and maintain, either alone or in cooperation with another districts or certain organizations, a program of adult classes for residents age 16 or older who are no longer enrolled in public school. By law, each district's mandated adult education program, which must be provided free of charge to eligible residents, is to include: instruction in Americanization and U.S. citizenship; English for adults with limited English proficiency; and elementary and secondary school completion programs or classes.

Districts are reimbursed by the state for their costs of providing mandated adult education programs on a sliding scale that is based on relative wealth. At present, the state adult education

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grant, which is administered by the State Department of Education, reimburses districts' eligible costs at rates ranging from 0 to 65 percent.

**Federal law.** The first federal adult literacy legislation (The Adult Education Act) was enacted as part of the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the basis for national anti-poverty policies and programs. Over the next 30 years, the federal grants were provided to states to support adult literacy activities under a series of legislative provisions that became increasingly focused on workforce development concerns. Currently, AEFLA, which is Title II of Public Law 105-220, The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), is the main federal law pertaining to adult literacy.

The 1998 WIA legislation was a major reform of federal adult education, employment, and vocational rehabilitation programs aimed at creating an integrated system of workforce training and education for adults and youths. In addition to replacing about 60 existing federally funded adult education and employment training programs, the act mandated, for all WIA-funded activities, including adult education: service delivery through local "one-stop" centers; unified state plans for workforce investment; and a performance accountability system with standard outcome measures and reporting requirements.

Under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provisions of WIA, block grants are provided to states through the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) for basic education and literacy programs for adults age 16 and over who lack basic skills, a high school diploma, or English proficiency. U.S. DOE also must provide technical assistance to states, review and approve state plans, and monitor and report on each state's performance of adult literacy activities.

AEFLA grants can be used by states for adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, or English literacy services. The designated state administering agency, which is the State Education Department in Connecticut, can retain a portion of the federal funds for administration and leadership activities but the majority (82.5 percent) must be distributed on a competitive basis to eligible local service providers which may include school districts, community colleges, and nonprofit, community-based organizations.

Eligibility for AEFLA grants requires states to appropriate matching funds and maintain their overall spending levels on adult education and literacy services. States must also negotiate annual performance targets in three core areas (i.e., demonstrated improvement in literacy skills, high school completion rates, and employment and postsecondary education/training rates) and report on their progress through an automated monitoring system established by U.S. DOE.

## **Adult Literacy Programs**

Adult literacy programs are generally considered to be instructional services intended to improve the reading, writing, listening, and math skills of individuals who are not enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education, as well as the English language proficiency of adult speakers of other languages. Programs specifically aimed at improving English language skills



are commonly known as English as a Second Language (ESL).<sup>5</sup> For the most part, adult literacy programs are aimed at bringing the learner's academic and English language skills to the level represented by completion of a secondary school education program.

Services for improving adult literacy skills are delivered through a number of sources including: the traditional adult education system operated by local school districts and overseen by the State Education Department (adult education programs); as part of job training and workforce development efforts (workplace literacy programs); in conjunction with early childhood education initiatives (family literacy programs); and within continuing education courses as well as remedial academic classes at community colleges and other postsecondary institutions (developmental education programs). A description of each of these four main types of adult literacy programs -- adult education, workplace literacy, family literacy, and developmental education -- follows.

**Adult education.** In accordance with federal mandates, all states, under different organizational structures and with differing levels of resources, operate free, public education programs for adults that include the following instructional services: basic literacy skills; secondary adult education and high school completion; and English language acquisition. Many states include U.S. citizenship instruction in their programs, reflecting the historical beginning of state adult education as "Americanization" services for recent immigrants.

Eligibility for free, public adult education generally is limited to persons age 16 and over who lack a high school credential, the skill levels associated with a secondary school education, or English language proficiency. Table I-1 below provides a general description of the four types of instructional programs typically provided through state adult education systems.

As Table I-1. indicates, there is more than one way to obtain a secondary school completion credential through state adult education programs. Individuals can: 1) earn the number of credits needed to meet graduation requirements by taking courses through their school district's adult high school program; 2) be certified as having a secondary school level of education by passing an equivalency test, the General Educational Development (GED) examination; or 3) in some states including Connecticut, meet high school completion requirements by demonstrating their academic skills through a life-experience assessment process. Table I-2 compares the three types of adult high school completion options as they exist in Connecticut.

In most states, adult education programs are overseen by state education departments and local school districts are common program providers. In some states, community college systems have primary responsibility for adult education while state labor departments are the lead agencies in a few others.

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<sup>5</sup> Other terms for ESL programs are: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); English for Nonnative Speakers; and English for Adults with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Adults who participate in ESL programs may or may not be literate in their own language. Some ESL participants are only seeking improved English language proficiency while others may first need to improve their English language skills and then go on to other types of adult literacy programs.

**Table I -1. State Adult Education Instructional Programs**

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
<b>Adult Basic Education (ABE)</b>	Instruction in basic reading, writing, computing skills for adults functioning at lower literacy levels to just below high school level. Completion of an ABE program is intended to prepare an individual to benefit from secondary-level educational instruction and improve opportunities for employment and meeting adult responsibilities.
<b>Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/High School Completion</b>	Instruction for adults whose literacy skills are at approximately the secondary school level and who are seeking a high school diploma or equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development certificate. Diploma programs require adults to earn a minimum number of credits in a prescribed set of academic areas comparable to a school district's graduation standards. GED programs provide instruction to help individuals prepare to pass a five-part standardized test that demonstrates attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school education program.
<b>English as a Second Language (ESL)</b>	Instruction for adults who lack English language proficiency and are seeking to improve their ability to understand, speak, read, or write in English. Courses are available at different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) and are intended to develop language skills needed for employment, other education and training, and successful adjustment to life in the United States.
<b>Citizenship</b>	Instruction for foreign-born individuals who wish to become United States citizens. Civics education courses are intended to prepare adults for the Immigration and Naturalization citizenship process and are sometimes integrated with English language instruction.
Source of Data: SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education	

Adult education services are typically delivered in classroom settings, sometimes in local public schools but often at separate, adult education facilities (e.g., adult education centers) as well as in various locations in a community (e.g., libraries, community centers, churches) to improve accessibility. While sometimes referred to as “night school,” adult education programs usually offer both daytime and evening classes, and some may even schedule courses on weekends. In general, adult education programs, particularly those provided by school districts, are headed by a director, who functions like a principal, and have their own administrative staff and educational support positions, such as guidance counselors and social workers.

**Table I-2. Adult Education Secondary School Completion Options in Connecticut**

	<b>Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD)</b>	<b>General Educational Development (GED)</b>	<b>External Diploma Program (EDP)</b>
<b>Method</b>	Academic Credits (classroom and approved independent study)	Standardized Examination	Portfolio Assessment
<b>Requirements</b>	Obtain minimum of 20 academic and elective credits through prescribed plan of course work (districts may enhance diploma requirements)*  One credit course must be at least 48 hours in length  Diploma program must comply with SDE administrative requirements and only use certified teachers/counselors	Pass GED examination (a standardized, national, five-part test including a writing sample, developed by the American Council on Education)  Applicants must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months.	Complete portfolio that demonstrates skills and competence in particular job, talent, or academic area gained through life experiences (no classroom instruction)
<b>Credential</b>	School District Diploma	Connecticut High School Diploma	School District Diploma
<b>Providers</b>	Adult Education Programs operated by Local Education Agencies (local or regional school districts and Regional Education Service Centers)	All Adult Education Programs; variety of community organizations	Adult Education Programs (at their option)

\*Credits must be distributed as follows: 4 English; 3 social studies including American history and ½ civics/government; 3 math; 2 science; 1 Arts/Vocation Education; 7 Electives

Source: PRI staff analysis of SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education materials

**Workplace literacy.** Basic literacy courses, GED programs, and English language instruction also can be included among an array of job preparation or career development activities offered by a nonprofit training program operator or local social service agency. Employers sometimes arrange to have adult literacy services provided on the job site and customized to meet their workforce needs for English language proficiency and/or basic academic skills. Programs that provide adult literacy services in the context of employment are commonly referred to as workplace literacy or workforce education programs.

Local adult education programs, community colleges, and private training companies are among the typical providers of customized adult literacy services for businesses. In addition to job-related academic and ESL classes, the programs may offer participants specific career training. Some workplace literacy programs also make available transportation assistance, child care, and other supports, and some employers allow participants to attend classes on work time with pay.

**Family literacy.** In recent years, adult basic education has been blended with early childhood education, parenting instruction, and adult education to create family literacy programs. These intergenerational programs are targeted at increasing the literacy skills of low-income families with the goals of improving economic opportunities for the parents and the academic success of their children.

Federal funding has been provided to states through the U.S. Department of Education for family literacy services called “Even Start” programs since 1989.<sup>6</sup> Program eligibility is limited to parents who have a child under age 8, lack a high school diploma and/or basic reading skills, or need English-as-a-second-language skills. Priority for services is given to families most in need and hardest to serve (i.e., those with the lowest incomes and education levels), with the intent of helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low literacy levels.

Local education agencies, in collaboration with a community-based organization including a public agency, higher education institution, or other nonprofit organization, may apply to operate an Even Start Program. Adult education services are one of the five required components of the program. The other four components are: early childhood and/or school-age education (up to age 8); parents and children learning together; parent education and support; and literacy-based home-visits.

Even Start is a relatively small federal program; the total federal appropriation for FY 05 was about \$225 million and Connecticut received a grant of just over \$1.7 million. Nine programs that served a total of 450 participants (adults and children) at an average cost of \$3,794 were operational throughout the state that year.

In response to concerns about disappointing results and several negative national evaluations, financial support for the Even Start program has steadily declined since FY 03. The federal appropriation for Even Start was cut by more than half between FY 05 and FY 06 and funding for the upcoming federal fiscal year is in question.

**Developmental education.** In some cases, individuals have high school completion credentials but still lack the reading and math skills necessary to be successful in postsecondary education or career training programs.<sup>7</sup> To address this problem, many higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, offer developmental education courses that provide remedial instruction to raise the literacy skills of enrolled students to at least a beginning postsecondary level. The term developmental education is also used to describe programs of academic instruction made available for incumbent workers who may have a high school credential but need to upgrade basic literacy skills in order to improve their job performance and/or advance their careers.

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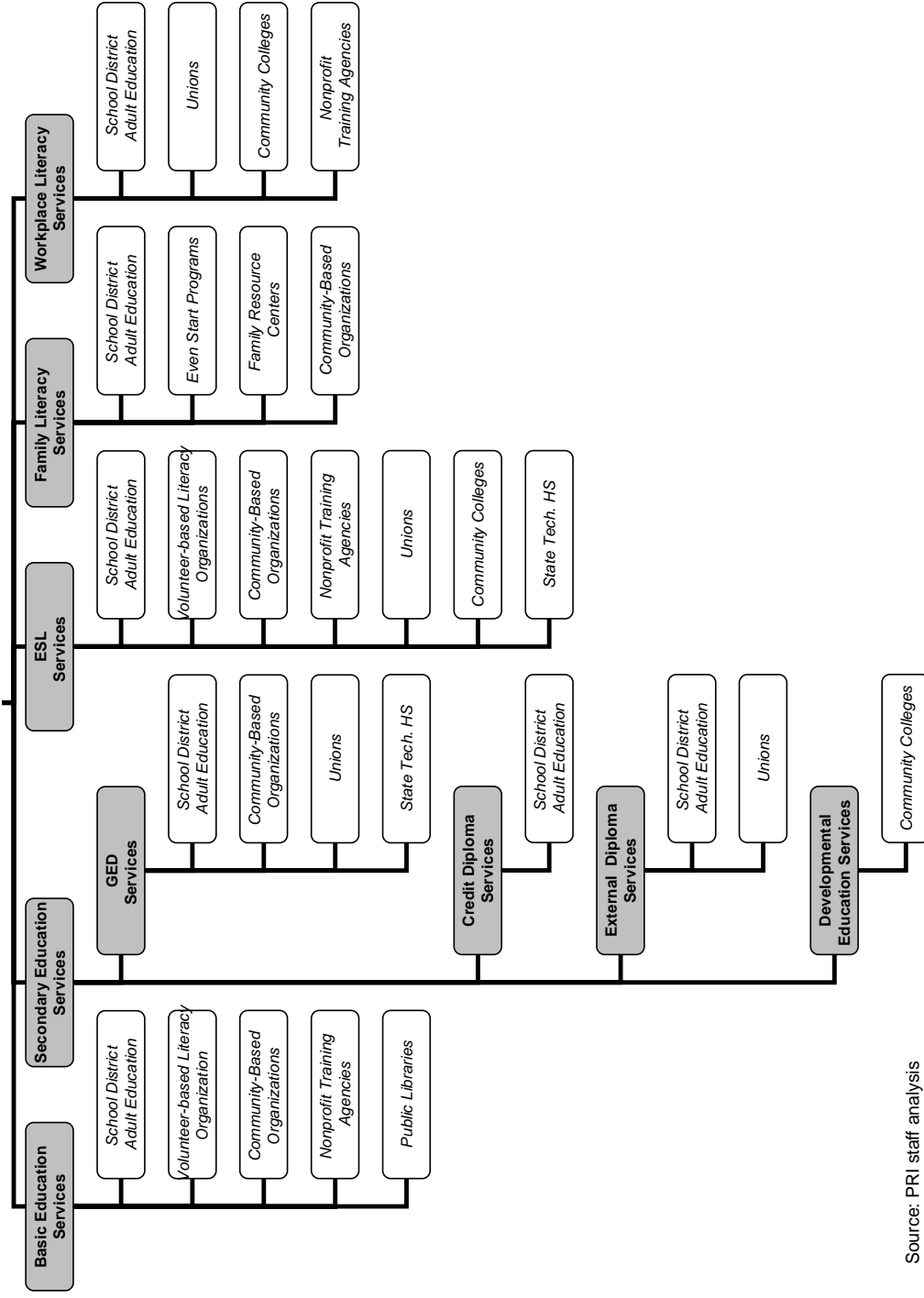
<sup>6</sup> Even Start was created under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), P.L. 103-382, Title I, Part B.

<sup>7</sup> According to data from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, nearly 25 percent of all adults in the U.S. with prose literacy skills at the Below Basic Level, the lowest of the four NAAL levels of literacy, had been awarded a high school diploma.

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The main types of adult literacy services and typical providers in Connecticut are illustrated in Figure II-1. As the figure shows, several state agencies, local school districts, parts of the public higher education system, unions and businesses, and an array of nonprofit agencies and community-based organizations are involved in the delivery of adult literacy services. Major roles and responsibilities for providing, funding, and overseeing adult literacy programs in the state are described in the next section.

Figure I-1. Types of Adult Literacy Services and Common Providers in Connecticut



Source: PRI staff analysis

## Section II

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### Roles and Responsibilities

Adult literacy services in Connecticut are not delivered through one, cohesive system and no single state agency oversees or coordinates all programs. At present, three state systems have key roles in providing adult literacy services: the adult education system; the workforce investment system; and the community college system. Major adult literacy responsibilities carried out by each one are described below. Current state efforts to coordinate adult literacy activities across these systems are also highlighted.

#### Adult Education System

In Connecticut, the State Department of Education and local school districts have central roles in the state's mandated adult education system. In addition to the programs provided by local and regional school districts, some adult education services are delivered by nonprofit, community-based organizations and state agencies. Adult education functions carried out by the department, and school districts and other providers are outlined below.

**State education department.** The main adult education duties of the State Department of Education are: planning and reporting on programs and services in accordance with federal and state requirements; administering federal and state funding; and monitoring and providing technical assistance to program providers. These responsibilities are carried out by the department's Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education.

At present, five education consultant positions within the bureau are assigned to adult education functions although one is vacant due to a recent retirement. The department's adult education staffing dropped to its current level in FY 03, following implementation of the state's early retirement program, from a peak of 10 filled consultant positions in FY 01.

**Consultant duties.** The adult education consultants are responsible for developing state plans and federal grant applications, processing state grant applications, directing state-level initiatives to improve services, and serving as liaisons to agencies and organizations with links to adult education. As part of the bureau's monitoring responsibilities, the consultants review program and financial data from each provider, conduct site visits, and work with providers to address performance problems.

**Professional development.** The bureau uses some of the federal funding it receives for statewide leadership activities to contract with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) for professional development services for adult education teachers, administrators and other program and support staff. CREC established and operates the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN) to provide a variety of services, including: workshops on instruction techniques in all academic areas; training on administrative policies and procedures; technical assistance on student appraisal and assessment tools; facilitated discussions on adult education topics; and classroom materials and other resources.

**Accountability.** The State Education Department is responsible for meeting federal as well as state accountability requirements for adult education activities. Like all states, Connecticut must report program outcomes to the U.S. Department of Education through the National Reporting System (NRS), the performance monitoring process mandated under AEFLA.

The federal NRS establishes five core measures for assessing program effectiveness: demonstrated literacy skill improvement; high school completion; entered postsecondary education or training; entered employment; and retained employment. Each year, states must negotiate targeted levels of performance for each core measure and report progress toward their goals to the U.S. DOE. The department's adult education staff are responsible for setting Connecticut's performance goals and tracking and reporting results for the NRS core measures.

To carry out this function, the bureau uses the Connecticut Competency System (CCS), an internal accountability process developed by SDE in the late 1980s that integrates assessment of student performance, curriculum development, and instruction. It is based on the standardized, competency-based assessments developed for adults by Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), an independent, national testing organization overseen by a consortium of adult education program providers, employment and training professionals, and business and industry representatives. (More details on CASAS and the NRS core measures are provided in Appendix D.)

Adult education, family literacy and any other program providers funded by the bureau are expected to meet CCS performance standards and data collection requirements as well as follow the system's student assessment procedures. The system is intended to help assure effective service delivery by all providers, as well as comply with NRS performance monitoring requirements.

As part of the CCS accountability process, the bureau developed an automated information system called the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) to collect and report demographic and performance data on all adult education participants. CARS is an Internet-based comprehensive database that can be used by adult education program providers to report required information to the bureau, as well as to generate information for their own management and planning uses.

The bureau also uses CARS to implement a data-driven accountability and program improvement system it created in 2004. Each year, performance profiles based on CARS data are developed by bureau staff. The profiles encompass program effectiveness indicators beyond the NRS core measures of student outcomes, such as recruitment (meeting demand for services), student retention, and utilization of instruction. The profiles are used by bureau staff to provide feedback to help providers improve overall performance and to target technical assistance.

**School districts.** While a variety of organizations can, and do, provide adult education services in Connecticut, school districts have a statutory responsibility to provide or arrange for free mandated adult education programs (i.e., adult basic education, secondary school



completion, ESL, and citizenship) for eligible residents of their communities.<sup>8</sup> Some districts provide all mandated adult education services with their own staff and other resources. Others directly provide parts of their programs, adult basic and secondary education for example, and contract out for some services like ESL programs. School districts are not required to provide any services directly and may, by law, make “cooperative arrangements” with adult education programs in other districts or regional education service centers (RESCs) to serve their residents.<sup>9</sup>

At present, school districts in 125 towns are adult education program cooperators and districts in 44 municipalities are program providers. As Figure II-1 indicates, cooperating districts tend to include the smaller, more rural towns across the state. (Appendix E lists all the providers and the cooperating district municipalities they serve.)

**Program providers.** Connecticut’s adult education system currently includes a total of 71 school districts and other organizations that receive state and federal grant funding to provide mandated adult basic and secondary education, English literacy, and citizenship programs. Figure II-2 lists all the providers in the state by category.

As the figure shows, most adult education program providers, 44, are local and regional school districts and three are RESCs. Another 16 providers are what are known by state statute as “cooperating eligible entities” (CEEs), the public or private organizations that provide certain types of adult education classes or services to school districts and RESCs under formal agreements. CEEs, in a sense, act like subcontractors, independently performing specified activities but funded through the main provider organization’s adult education budget.

The majority of CEEs are local Literacy Volunteers (LV) agencies. Literacy Volunteers are local affiliates of ProLiteracy America, a nonprofit educational organization of volunteer-based adult literacy service providers. Through LV programs, trained volunteers provide adult learners one-on-one or small group instruction in basic literacy skills and ESL. Literacy Volunteers agencies have a long history as critical partners for adult education programs in Connecticut and across the country because they can provide quality individualized instruction, which adults with very limited literacy and/or English language skills need, at a relatively low cost.

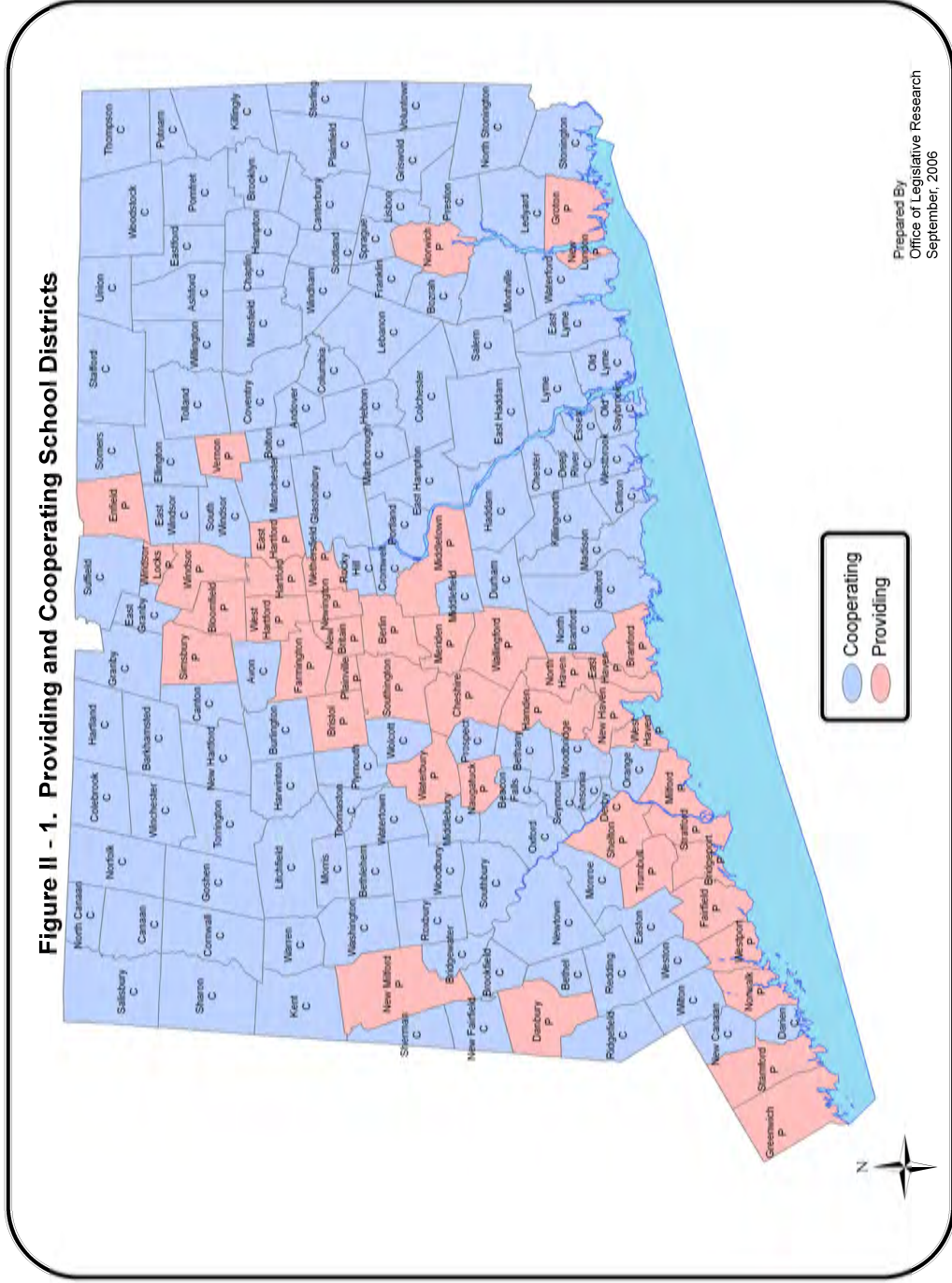
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<sup>8</sup> Most district adult education programs also offer various general interest, recreational, vocational and continuing education courses, usually for a fee, to their residents as part of their mission to support life-long learning. Sometimes referred to as enrichment courses, these services are not eligible for state or federal adult education grant funding and are not subject to monitoring and reporting requirements. Some districts use revenues generated from enrichment courses to help support their mandated adult education services.

<sup>9</sup> RESCs are education agencies formed by multiple school districts in a region to cooperatively provide programs and services. There are six RESCs statewide and three, Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), EastConn, and Education Connection (EdConn), currently provide adult education programs.

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Figure II - 1. Providing and Cooperating School Districts



**Figure II-2. Connecticut Adult Education System Providers (2006)**

**School Districts (44)**

Bloomfield Adult Education  
Branford Adult Education (ERACE)  
Bridgeport Adult Education  
Bristol Adult Education  
Cheshire Adult Education  
Danbury Adult Education (WERACE)  
East Hartford Adult Education  
East Haven Adult Education  
Enfield Adult Education  
Fairfield Adult Education  
Farmington Adult Education  
Greenwich Adult Education  
Groton Adult Education  
Hamden Adult Education  
Hartford Adult Education  
Meriden Adult Education  
Middletown Adult Education  
Milford Adult Education  
Naugatuck Adult Education  
New Britain Adult Education  
New Haven Adult Education  
Newington Adult Education  
New London Adult Education  
New Milford Adult Education  
North Haven Adult Education  
Norwalk Adult Education  
Norwich Adult Education  
Plainville Adult Education  
Shelton/Valley Reg. Adult Education  
Simsbury Adult Education  
Southington Adult Education  
Stamford Adult Education  
Stratford Adult Education  
Trumbull Adult Education  
Vernon Adult Education  
Wallingford Adult Education  
Waterbury Adult Education  
West Hartford Adult Education  
West Haven Adult Education  
Westport Adult Education  
Wethersfield Adult Education  
Windsor Adult Education  
Windsor Locks Adult Education

**RESCs (3)**

Capitol Region Education Center  
Education Connection  
EastConn

**CEEs (16)**

Family Services Woodfield  
Literacy Volunteers - Danbury  
Literacy Volunteers - East Hartford  
Literacy Volunteers - Enfield  
Literacy Volunteers - Greater Hartford  
Literacy Volunteers - Meriden  
Literacy Volunteers - Middletown  
Literacy Volunteers - New Britain/Bristol  
Literacy Volunteers - New Haven  
Literacy Volunteers - New London  
Literacy Volunteers - Norwich  
Literacy Volunteers - Stamford/Greenwich  
Literacy Volunteers - Waterbury  
Urban League  
Waterbury OIC  
YMCA of Metro Hartford - Read to Succeed

**Other (8)**

Department of Corrections  
APT Foundation  
Bullard Havens Tech. High School  
Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum  
Housing Authority of Ansonia  
Housing Authority of Meriden  
Mercy Learning Center  
NW CT Community Technical College

Source of Data: SDE Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education

The remaining eight adult education providers are an assortment of entities that include: the Department of Correction; one community college; one state technical high school; two local housing authorities; and three nonprofit community-based organizations. Unlike the school district providers, they operate programs with very targeted literacy services and/or populations and receive only federal adult education funds through SDE.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of the correction department adult education program, the services provided by these organizations are projects in areas designated by the state as priorities for federal adult education grant funding, such as workplace education, transition to postsecondary education, and family literacy. (The state's priority funding areas are discussed in more detail in Section III.)

**Main duties.** Adult education program providers have direct responsibility for mandated literacy services. Their duties include: assessing and counseling students; developing and providing instructional programs; meeting all financial and performance reporting requirements; and staffing, scheduling, and other related support and administrative functions.

There are few state-level standards for the mandated adult education programs beyond the minimum requirements set in statute for an adult high school credit diploma. School districts and other adult education providers have considerable control over the amount, type, and quality of instructional services they offer so there can be significant variation among programs.

The state does require that adult education teachers be certified and all programs have guidance counselors. However, the conditions of employment for adult education staff are decided by the program providers. For the most part, even in school districts, adult education staff positions are part-time and few are part of collective bargaining units. In some districts, even the director of adult education is a part-time position

**Program statistics.** Basic enrollment and budget information for each provider for FY 05, the most recent available annual data, is presented in Appendix F. In that year, total providers numbered 74, including three community-based organizations (shown in italics in the table) that received federal adult education funding in FY 05 but did not subsequently apply for any grants

There is a wide range in enrollment numbers among all providers, from as small as five students in one program operated by a CEE (Waterbury OIC) to over 3,200 in the New Haven Adult Education Program. Among just the school district and RESC programs in FY 05, the smallest was in Simsbury with 24 students, the largest in New Haven, and the median program size was 283. As would be expected, the school district programs in the larger cities have the most students. Eight district programs (New Haven, Hartford, Stamford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Danbury, Norwich and New Britain) and the Department of Correction each had enrollments of over 1,000 students and together accounted for almost 60 percent of adult education students statewide.

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<sup>10</sup> At one time, DOC did receive federal funding for adult education activities but since FY 05, it has not applied to SDE for any federal grant monies. The department, which is one of the largest adult education program providers, funds its adult education activities primarily from General Fund appropriations and other federal funding sources.

Operating budgets for adult education programs also vary greatly in size. In FY 05, funding levels ranged from just under \$20,000 for Waterbury OIC, a cooperating eligible entity that only provides adult basic education services to over \$6 million for the Hartford Adult Education Program. A total of 12 programs, all school district providers, had funding levels of more than \$1 million but in general, adult education budgets are relatively small. The median funding level for school district and RESC programs in FY 05 was about \$378,000.

Program review committee staff is examining the data SDE compiles on funding, participation, utilization, performance for each of the adult education providers in the state. Analysis of this information will be included in the findings and recommendations report. At this time, the department does not maintain centralized information on program waiting lists or course schedules (e.g., availability of daytime, evening, weekend and summer courses, number of classes offered per course per week, etc.). Committee staff is working with the education department and adult education program directors to develop data that will permit some assessment of the demand for services as well as service accessibility and intensity.

### **Workforce Investment System**

Connecticut's workforce investment system, under state and federal mandates, incorporates a variety of state agencies and programs as well as local and regional entities, community-based organizations, and private providers involved in employment training and work-related education. The purpose of the workforce investment system is to improve the quality of jobs and workers in Connecticut and support economic development by ensuring the availability of a skilled, competitive workforce. While adult literacy activities are not the system's focus, they are a key priority according to the state's most recent two-year workforce investment strategic plan.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the system's current structure and responsibilities is based on requirements contained in the 1998 federal Workforce Investment Act. WIA mandates planning and policy-making groups at both the state and local levels and an integrated, one-stop service delivery network for employment, education, and training programs. The main components of Connecticut's workforce investment system at present are:

- the Connecticut Department of Labor, the state agency designated to administer WIA Title I and Title III employment and training programs and responsible for the employment portion of the state's welfare-to-work program, Jobs First Employment Services (JFES);
- the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), which is staffed by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), and serves as the state-level workforce investment policy board mandated by WIA;

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<sup>11</sup> State of Connecticut, *Final Strategic Two-Year State Workforce Investment Plan for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Workforce Investment Systems) and The Wagner-Peyser Act: State of Connecticut for the period of July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007.*

- five Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), which are the local policy boards required under WIA; and
- *CTWorks*, the state's system of one-stop job service centers.

An overview of main provisions of WIA regarding employment and training programs and background on each system component is provided in Appendix G. Key adult literacy activities carried out by CETC, the regional boards, and the one-stop centers are highlighted below. The labor department's administration of the Jobs First Employment Services program, whose clients often are in need of adult literacy services, is also briefly described.

***CETC duties.*** CETC serves as the WIA-required statewide workforce investment policy board, with staff support and assistance provided by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. The commission, in consultation with the regional workforce development boards, is required to prepare, and update at least once every five years, a single Connecticut workforce development plan that outlines a five-year strategy for the state's workforce development system.

The plan is intended to serve as a framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of all workforce education and job training programs in the state. It is required by federal and state law to contain long-term and short-term goals, which must address accountability for provider performance, coordination of activities, and integration of funding resources, benchmarks, and performance measures.

The state strategic plan must also identify core, intensive, and training services that are available under the one-stop service delivery system. Several of these, such as initial and comprehensive skill assessments, and programs that combine workplace training with related instruction like adult education, are related to adult literacy.

Each year, CETC is required to submit, to the governor and the General Assembly, recommendations on the appropriation of WIA funds for a number of specified workforce development activities including certain adult literacy services. These include: job-related vocational, literacy, language and numerical skills training; adult workforce development services for individuals with barriers to fulltime, stable employment including language, basic skills, and occupational literacy barriers; and special grants or contracts in each region for training programs targeted for difficult-to-serve workers, including but not limited to, those with low literacy skills, limited English proficiency, or lacking a high school credential.

Since 1999, the commission has been required by state law to provide the regional workforce development boards with criteria for evaluating employment and training programs they fund. The criteria must include: a description of the amount, type, and effectiveness of literacy training; the number of persons completing job training; the gender and race of persons receiving training; occupational skill types; the number of persons who enter unsubsidized employment; the number remaining in unsubsidized employment after six months; and the earning they receive. CETC must include the board program evaluations in its statutorily mandated annual progress report to the governor and legislature.

The employment and training commission uses these evaluation criteria as the basis for the education and job training report card it has been statutorily required to develop since 1999. The report card must assess the Connecticut workforce development system's accomplishments in meeting federal accountability requirements. By law, the report card must address system effectiveness in meeting both employers' needs for educated and trained workers and clients' needs for improving their economic well-being. Each report card produced by the commission to date includes outcome information related to adult education programs and community colleges, as well as the other major parts of the workforce investment system.

**Regional boards.** At present, there are five regional boards in Connecticut responsible for developing policies for workforce investment funding and programming, as well as planning and overseeing service delivery for their geographic areas. Each regional board is listed in Table II-1.

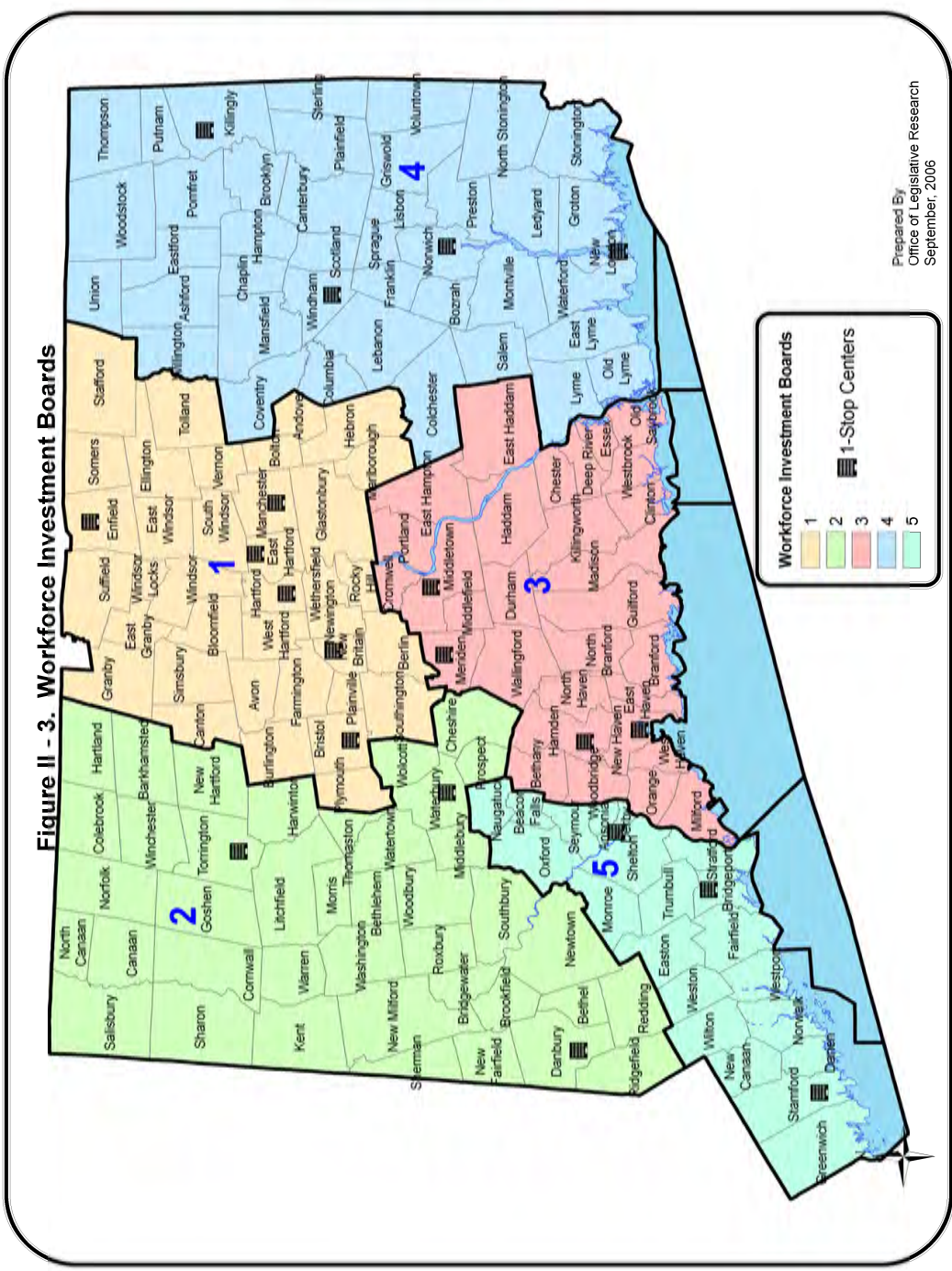
<b>Table II-1. Connecticut Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>No. Towns</b>	<b>Regional Board Name</b>	<b>WIB Office Location</b>	<b>No. One-Stop Center Sites</b>
North Central	37	Capital Workforce Partners	Hartford	6
South Central	30	Workforce Alliance	New Haven	4
East	41	Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board	Franklin	4
Southwest	20	The Workplace, Inc.	Bridgeport	3
Northwest	41	Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc.	Waterbury	3
Source of Data: Connecticut Department of Labor				

In accordance with federal requirements, the WIBs play the lead role at the local level in coordinating strategies and resources to meet the workforce development needs, including employment-related literacy needs, of their employers, workers, and jobseekers. Under federal law, WIBS must establish at least one one-stop comprehensive center for delivering employment, education and training services in their areas and may contract with a public or private organization to operate the centers. (With very few exceptions, WIA prohibits boards from directly operating one-stop centers.)

In Connecticut, the regional boards, in partnership with state labor department, supervise one-stop centers. In a number of cases, the centers are located in facilities leased by DOL. A map showing the state's five workforce regions, and the location of all *CTWorks* one-stop centers, is presented in Figure II-3.

All regional boards are subject to compliance and performance monitoring by DOL and are expected to conform with federal and state workforce investment policies and operating procedures. However, WIBs are also expected to tailor their activities to respond to the needs and resources of their particular service areas. As a result, funding and programming priorities, as well as the scope of services and service delivery methods, can vary from region to region.







Program review staff will be working with each regional board to develop information on available adult literacy services and programs, current partnerships and collaborative arrangements related to adult literacy, and funding sources used by the board for adult literacy activities.

**One-stops centers.** Currently there are 20 *CTWorks* career centers throughout the state (see Figure II-3) that serve as Connecticut's WIA one-stop network for employment and training services for jobseekers and employers. One-stop centers are an important initial access point to services for adults in need of improved literacy skills. One-stop centers, at a minimum, provide information about adult education programs and other literacy services through their self-service resource rooms.

When individuals have obvious English language or reading, writing, and math needs, staff may refer them immediately to the adult education system or help them access volunteer-based services (e.g., Literacy Volunteers). Literacy skill assessments are not routinely offered to all customers, as a center's primary focus is employment and the staff's main function is to help with job search and training. However, one-stop customers who are eligible for intensive WIA services, including all JFES welfare-to-work program participants, do receive a formal reading and math skills appraisal, as well as a comprehensive career assessment.

It is state policy that all one-stop centers use the same adult literacy skills assessment system as the adult education system requires for its program providers, the Comprehensive Adult Skills Assessment System. Training and technical assistance in using CASAS is provided to one-stop center case management and employment specialist staff by the State Department of Education through its adult education professional development contractor.

The one-stops use a CASAS appraisal test, the ECS-130, that measures reading and math skills in terms of employability. Unlike other CASAS tests used by adult literacy programs to measure gains in proficiency, appraisal instruments are designed to identify overall skill levels and guide placement decisions. One-stop staff use the results help develop individual employability plans for clients and make referrals to literacy services, such as adult education programs.

Program review committee staff will be developing information about the assessment and referral processes for adult literacy services at the one-stop centers, particularly for customers referred to the adult education system. Data on literacy appraisals and referrals are not routinely gathered by either DOL or SDE and the management information systems for one-stop centers and adult education programs are not linked at this time.

**DOL.** The labor department does not have any direct responsibilities for adult literacy. Its main roles in the workforce investment system include: statewide planning, funding, and monitoring duties required by state and federal law for a number of employment and training programs; managing, with the regional workforce boards, the state's one-stop center network; and administering JFES, the employment portion of the state's welfare-to-work program.

Unless exempted from work requirements, all recipients of cash assistance under the state Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) must participate in Jobs First Employment Services. JFES clients are referred to the labor department by DSS after an initial assessment of their eligibility and overall service needs.

The labor department, in conjunction with the regional workforce investment boards, is responsible for providing case management and other employment services to JFES clients to help them reach their independence goals. Part of case management, which is carried out by one-stop center staff, is assessment of the client's education and literacy skill levels to help complete the individual's employability plan. JFES case managers at one-stops use the same literacy assessment process as the adult education system and receive training through the State Education Department on how to administer the CASAS appraisal test.

If it is determined a client's literacy or English language skills are barriers to employment, the JFES program can provide training that may include GED preparation and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. JFES clients who need basic literacy skills improvement and greater English language proficiency for employability are generally referred to local adult education programs.

A June 2006 report by the state labor department on Jobs First Employment Services participants served by *CTWorks* shows many clients have literacy-related employment barriers. In that month, the lack of a high school diploma was an employment barrier for 26 percent of the nearly 8,000 JFES participants enrolled for one-stop services, low reading/math skills was a barrier for 18 percent and English language proficiency was a barrier for 11 percent.

The information systems for JFES and adult education programs are not linked, so it is difficult to track referrals to literacy services and student outcomes. Program review staff is working on developing more information on the literacy needs of JFES clients as well as the adult education and other literacy services they receive. A concurrent program review committee study of welfare reform in Connecticut is examining JFES client employment barriers, including low literacy skills. (See PRI Staff Briefing: Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative, September 19, 2006).

## **Community Colleges**

Connecticut's regional two-year public college system was created to promote access to higher education opportunities and help meet the state's demand for a skilled workforce. At present, the system includes 12 community-technical colleges that are governed by a board of trustees. The board establishes and administers academic, financial, and administrative policies. Its administrative staff, headed by a system chancellor, oversees day-to-day operations and coordinates activities among the individual colleges. The colleges, their locations, and the most recent student headcounts (unduplicated number of individuals enrolled or registered in programs) are shown in Table II -2.

While the community-technical colleges are part of the state's higher education system, a number of the services they offer are aimed at improving basic literacy skills and English

language proficiency of adult learners. In addition, like the adult education providers, their mission includes support of life-long learning. Many of the individuals taking community college courses are older, nontraditional students seeking to upgrade their skills, often for employment reasons, and a large number attend on a part-time basis.

<b>Table II-2. Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges</b>			
<b>College</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Student Headcounts</b>	
		<b>Credit Program Enrollments (FT &amp; PT) Fall 2005</b>	<b>Non-Credit Program Registrations Annual 2004-05</b>
Asnuntuck	Enfield	1,483	1,395
Capital	Hartford	3,573	4,003
Gateway	New Haven North Haven	5,739	3,718
Housatonic	Bridgeport	4,471	905
Manchester	Manchester	6,135	7,359
Middlesex	Middletown Meriden	2,286	1,601
Naugatuck	Waterbury	5,667	5,413
Northwestern	Winsted	1,569	8,467
Norwalk	Norwalk	6,036	1,531
Quinebaug Valley	Danielson Willimantic	1,714	2,135
Three Rivers	Norwich (Mohegan & Thames Valley)	3,660	2,198
Tunxis	Farmington Bristol	3,894	3,636
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>STATEWIDE</b>	<b>46,227</b>	<b>42,361</b>

Source of Data: Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges, Fall 2005 Credit Enrollment Report and Annual Non-Credit Report for 2004-2005

By statute, the mission of the community college system is to provide:

- occupational, vocational, technical and career programs designed for immediate employment, job retraining, or skill upgrading;
- general study programs, including but not limited to remedial, adult, and continuing education, to meet individual student goals;
- programs of study for transfer to baccalaureate level education; and
- educational programs centered on community services and life-long learning.

To carry out their responsibilities, community colleges currently provide two types of educational programs: credit and non-credit. Almost equal numbers of individuals participate in each program as Table II-2 indicates. In 2005, about 46,000 students (full-time and part-time) were enrolled in community college credit programs while more than 42,000 individuals participated in non-credit courses.

The colleges' academic credit programs lead to associate degrees or certificates and require a high school diploma or its equivalent for admission. Students enrolled in credit programs at community colleges as well as other higher education institutions, however, may not be prepared for college level work. In these cases, the community colleges, like many four-year colleges and universities, make developmental education courses available to help improve students' basic literacy skills. The community colleges also believe providing developmental education promotes their broad policy goals of access and opportunity.

According to the state Board of Governors for Higher Education annual report for 2006, in any given semester, almost one-quarter of the students attending a community college (23 percent) are taking at least one basic skills English or math course.<sup>12</sup> This appears comparable to a national statistic included in the same report that 29 percent of first-time college freshmen, on average, are enrolled in at least one remedial reading, writing, or math course. Developmental education placement policies and course content vary among the 12 community colleges. Program review staff intend to compile more information about these basic literacy skill services, in part to try determine the extent students coming from adult education programs are prepared for postsecondary level work.

Admission to non-credit courses at community colleges does not require a secondary school credential but there may be other prerequisites for some classes. The non-credit courses offered encompass a variety of instruction, from professional continuing education classes and computer skills training to recreational, cultural, or personal enrichment classes. However, all non-credit courses can be generally classified as either workforce or personal development.

Non-credit workforce development courses provide job-related education and training and may include basic literacy skills or English language instruction. Through their Business and Industry Services Network, the community colleges also develop and provide customized workforce development courses for local employers.

Personal development courses provide opportunities to learn new skills that may also improve an individual's employability or literacy level. In 2005, 52 percent of the 42,361 non-credit program students were taking courses related to personal development and 48 percent were taking workforce development classes. Program review committee staff is working with the community colleges to try to determine the extent adult literacy services are available through both types of non-credit courses.

## **Statewide Coordination**

Responsibility for coordinating adult literacy programs and services across the adult education, workforce development, and community college systems is not formally centered in any state agency at this time. The state education department is responsible for managing the adult education system and promoting consistency across those programs. Some broad policy coordination is achieved through the workforce investment planning activities of CETC and some service delivery is integrated through the *CTWorks* one-stop center network. At the

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<sup>12</sup> Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, Department of Higher Education, *2006 Report*, p. 104.

present time, there are also several informal efforts underway to better coordinate adult literacy in the state. Each of these formal and informal coordination activities is described below.

**State management of adult education.** The state education department, in overseeing all adult education programs, has standardized a number of operating procedures and policies across the system. For example, the registration process for all GED examinations in the state is centralized and managed by the department. SDE has also coordinated collection and reporting of performance data and created a statewide management information system for adult education.

Coordination of adult education programs is aided by fact that in many parts of the state, service delivery is regionalized through school districts' cooperative arrangements. The department's adult education bureau also seeks to coordinate policies and programs by working with the state adult education professional organization, the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE).

As Connecticut's lead agency for adult education, SDE periodically undertakes activities to improve, expand and better coordinate services throughout the state. One recent special project, the department's Workforce Education Initiative, is aimed at better connecting adult education programs with workforce development efforts. The initiative began in FY 03 as a two-year pilot program, funded with WIA incentive grant money, to develop a model for expanding adult education's capacity to provide workforce education services.

Many school districts' adult education programs have a long history of working with local employers to provide customized, on-site basic skills instruction, but the goal of the pilot project was to systematize services and create a workforce education network. The first step of the project was to develop and hold training programs for local adult education staff. The training focused on meeting local business needs for basic skill education services and using a workplace-based student assessment instrument (developed for Connecticut by CASAS) integrated with the SDE information system.

The first workforce education services (14 customized ESL programs and one on-site GED program) were implemented in FY 04. A formal evaluation conducted for SDE by an outside consultant found the model effective and recommended its continuation with some revisions.<sup>13</sup> The bureau is continuing to develop the program as a network of workforce education service providers called Adult Education at Work. Training in the model is provided through CREC and at present 22 local adult education programs statewide have completed the training and are part of the network.

In the 1990s, the state education department had initiated another effort to coordinate adult education with employment training. Under the Coordinated Employment and Training Opportunities (CETO) program, funding was set aside from state education, social services, and labor department sources, and from the regional workforce investment boards, to provide grants

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<sup>13</sup> Holt, Wexler & Farnum, *Building Skills to Compete in a Changing Economy: Connecticut's Workforce Education Initiative, 2002-2004*. A Report to the Bureau of Early Childhood, Career, and Adult Education, Connecticut State Department of Education.

for activities that supported the employability, particularly skills and training programs for adults. A portion of the monies allocated by DOL were used for vocationally focused remedial and adult education services for welfare-to-work clients participating in the CETO program.

In addition to pooling resources to fund skills and training activities, CETO used a single planning process and common request-for-proposal grant award procedure. A number of groups involved with adult literacy issues have cited the CETO program as a good model for stimulating collaborative planning and funding. The program ended in FY 00 due to changes in federal law concerning allowable activities under AEFLA .

**One-stop service delivery.** At present, the primary way delivery of adult literacy and employment and training services is coordinated in Connecticut is through the one-stop center network created in response to WIA. As required by federal law, the state's adult education system is a mandated one-stop partner. Each year, the State Department of Education develops memoranda of understanding with all five WIBS that outline the roles and responsibilities of the adult education in the one-stop center, such as providing initial literacy skill appraisals, GED readiness materials, and training on the CASAS assessment system.

Both SDE and DOL staff noted to program review committee staff that there is a long history of cooperation between the adult education and workforce systems in Connecticut, although relationships are stronger in some parts of the state than in others. At one time, a number of local adult education programs had staff on-site to help one-stop center personnel with skill assessments or service referral and sometimes, adult education classes would be offered at the center locations. Adult education programs have cut back on activities at one-stop centers because of budget problems at both the local and state levels. The State Department of Education, however, still contributes a portion of its annual AEFLA state leadership funding to support the infrastructure expenses of the one-stop center system. SDE staff also sit as members of each regional board.

**Statewide policy coordination.** The Connecticut Education and Training Commission, as noted earlier, is responsible for policy and funding coordination for all aspects of the state's workforce investment system including adult literacy programs and services. Representatives of each major state education system -- the commissioners of education and higher education -- are CETC members. Adult literacy is not CETC's primary focus but it is the only state entity with a specific statutory role in policy and program coordination across service systems.

Certain program coordination issues are also being addressed at present by an ad hoc group, the Statewide Workforce Coordinating Committee. The committee, which grew out of the education department's workforce education initiative described above, was formed by SDE in March 2005. Its members currently include: staff from the departments of education, labor, social services, and economic and community development, and the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and state community college system; and representatives from the regional workforce boards, adult education program providers, Literacy Volunteers, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), and the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF).

The committee began as a way for adult education, community colleges, and the workforce boards to work together to overcome fragmented, inefficient, and at times competitive, ways customized education services for workers were being delivered to local businesses. Its current mission is "... to create coordinated, regional, user-friendly systems that respond to employer needs with fast, flexible, and comprehensive education and training solutions."

The workforce coordinating committee members meet monthly and, through various subcommittees, are working on several tasks such as developing a strategic plan and a model for service delivery. Regional committees have also been established to foster better working relationships and coordinate policies among the stakeholders in local service delivery areas.

Although the committee is focused on employer needs and incumbent workers at this time, it expects to address job preparation and transition issues in the future. Recently, CETC, in response to a problem identified by one of its workgroups, asked the statewide coordinating committee to develop strategies for addressing adult-education issues facing low-wage workers. The committee presented its recommended actions, which are now under consideration by CETC, at the June 2006 commission meeting

**Community collaboration.** At present, there are at least two private groups in the state bringing together stakeholders in an effort to address issues related to adult literacy including coordination of resources and service delivery. One, the Greater Hartford Literacy Council, is a nonprofit organization established in January 2001 in response to recommendations of the City of Hartford Task Force on Adult Literacy. Its founding partners include the city of Hartford, Hartford public schools and Public Library, and Capital Workforce Partners, the region's workforce investment board. At present, its members include more than 100 organizations, businesses, and individuals representing 35 communities in the area. The council is part of Literacy USA, a national alliance of about 65 local literacy coalitions throughout the country

The council's mission is coordinate and promote literacy services in the Greater Hartford area. To date, it has sponsored research and produced several reports on the status of literacy in the region including adult literacy rates and literacy-related service needs, as well as a directory of adult literacy services available in the area.

The second group, the Coalition for a Working Connecticut was formed recently by representatives of a broad array of workforce investment system stakeholders, including nonprofit agencies, advocacy organizations, unions, and state and local education and workforce agencies. It's main purpose is to jointly promote state education and training goals, and develop solutions to increase worker skills and advance family self-sufficiency in Connecticut. Coalitions with similar membership and purposes are active in the other New England states at present.

The coalition is interested in work-related literacy issues from both the worker's and employer's view. It supports investment in both adult and higher education. One of the coalition's key initiatives for the upcoming legislative session is to seek substantial increases in current and future state funding for basic skills and English language instruction, including incumbent worker education programs for low-skill, low-wage workers.





## Section III

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### Funding

Funding for adult literacy services in Connecticut is available from several federal, state, and local government sources. A major fiscal resource dedicated to adult literacy services is the federal and state grant money and required local matching funds that support the state's mandated adult education programs. In FY 05, federal, state and local funds expended on the adult education system totaled approximately \$40.0 million. Another, much smaller source of funding aimed at improving the literacy skills of adults is the federal grant the state receives for Even Start Family Literacy programs. Total Even Start program funding for all services including adult literacy components in FY 05 was less than \$2 million.

Other public funding used to support and provide adult literacy services is less easily identified. For example, the federal workforce investment grant funding the state receives for employment and training programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth (WIA Title I programs) may, in some cases, be used for job-related basic literacy skills improvement, high school completion programs, and ESL courses for WIA clients.

Similarly, some of the state's budget for its welfare-to-work program, Jobs First Employment Services, can be allocated for services intended to increase participant employability by improving their literacy skills. In current fiscal year, for example, the legislature appropriated \$6.5 million for TANF Job Reorganization, which are activities intended to improve the state's federal work participation rate and include vocational basic educational skills training for JFES clients

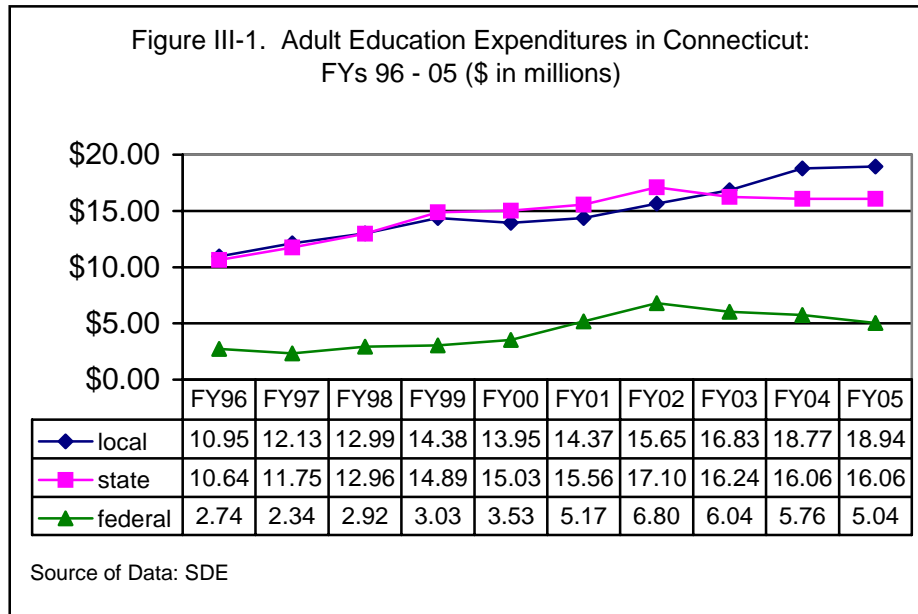
However, whenever possible both the WIA and JFES programs, as well as Even Start programs, try to rely on local adult education programs to meet their clients' literacy service needs since they are generally available at no charge. Program review committee staff is working with the state labor department and the regional workforce boards to develop information on resources within the workforce investment and welfare systems other than mandated adult education programs for adult literacy services

Committee staff is also working with the community colleges to determine what resources within that system are applied to adult literacy services. The direct costs of the college's developmental education programs are paid through user fees as are expenses related to the system's noncredit continuing education and customized training programs for business and industry. Support for the basic academic skills and ESL courses provided through community colleges, therefore, is likely to be primarily "in-kind," such as classroom space and general administrative functions (e.g., registration, scheduling, recordkeeping).

A preliminary analysis of funding for Connecticut's adult education system, along with a brief description of the federal and state grant funding process, is presented below. Further examination of adult education fiscal data, such as funding levels by provider, and data gathered on resources for adult literacy services other than adult education programs is being conducted by committee staff.

## Adult Education Funding

Federal, state, and local levels of government contribute funds to support Connecticut's system of mandated adult education programs. Federal AEFLA grants, state adult education grants, and local funds expended on the adult education from for each year between FY 96 and FY 05 are shown in Figure III-1.



As the figure shows, state and federal funding levels peaked in FY 02 and have since flattened or dropped off. The federal trend reflects, in part, special, one-time bonus funding Connecticut received in FY 02 due to previous good performance on adult education activity measures. Decreases in state funding are related to poor fiscal conditions. Budget deficits in Connecticut in recent fiscal years led the legislature to reduce or cap appropriations for many state programs including grants for adult education. In contrast, local funding for adult education has steadily increased in recent years to at least maintain the same overall level of support for the system. Since FY 03, local funding has been the largest source for adult education.

Figure III-2 presents total funding levels for the state's adult education system, in both actual and inflation-adjusted (2005) dollars, for each year from FY 96 to FY 05. Except for one year (FY 00), the system experienced small annual funding increases through FY 02, even adjusting for inflation,. Since that year, adult education programs in Connecticut have essentially been "flat funded" and, when adjusted for inflation, there has been a decline in financial support.

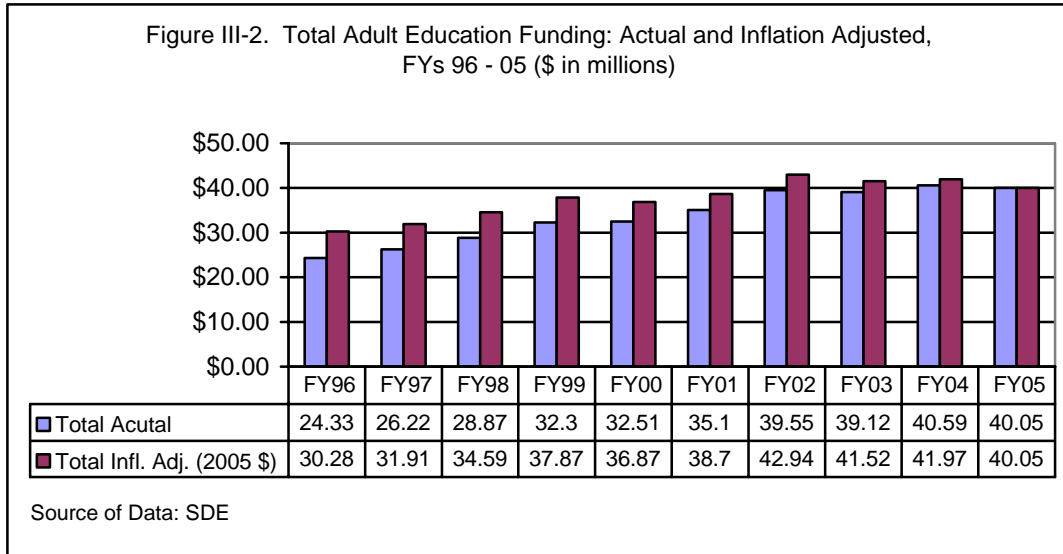
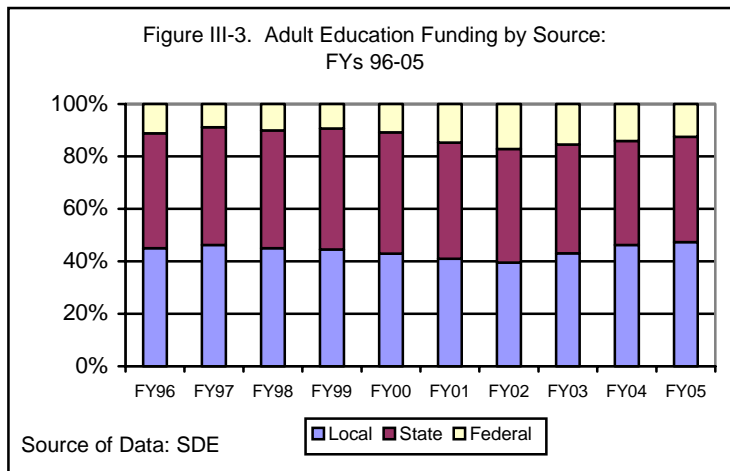


Figure III-3 shows the portion of adult education system funding from each government source for the 10-year period ending in FY 05. The state and local shares of funding for Connecticut's adult education system funding have been relatively equal over time, averaging about 44 percent each, while the federal contribution has averaged 12 percent of total funding. However, as the figure indicates, local government funding has been the largest source for the system in the last three fiscal years and has accounted for an increasing percentage of total expenditures (43.0, 46.2 and 47.3 percent, respectively) each year.



In comparison to other states, Connecticut state and local governments provide a high level of financial support for adult education. Eligibility for federal AEFLA grant funding requires a minimum 25 percent match from state and local sources although the majority of states, like Connecticut, provide a much greater portion. Based on FY 02 comparative data, the most recent available, Connecticut, at 85 percent, was one of 12 states at or above 74 percent, the national average for state and local share of adult education expenditures. The nonfederal share of adult education expenditures ranged from the minimum 25 percent (in six states) to 90 percent (in Florida).

Comparative data also show Connecticut, like most states in the Northeast, provides more adult education funding on a per participant basis than most of the country. Table III-1 presents

the total dollars spent per adult education program participant in FY 02, the most recent available information, for each state in the Northeast and for the U.S. on average.

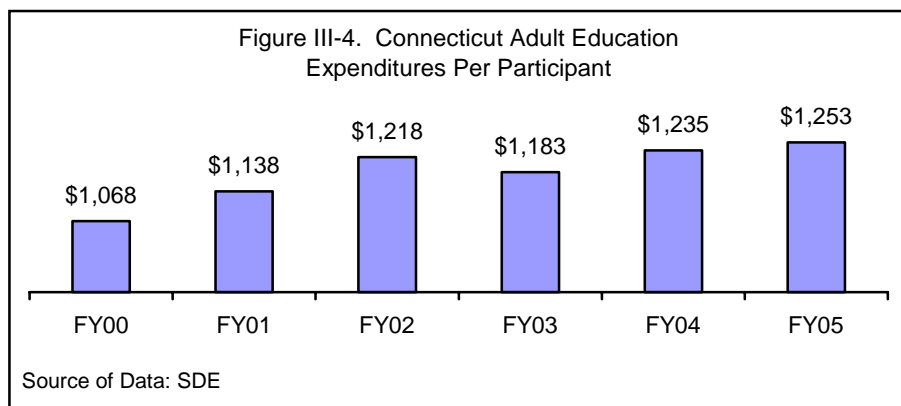
<b>Table III-1. Total Adult Education Spending Per Participant: FY 02</b>	
	<b>Total Spent Per Participant</b>
<b>U.S. Average</b>	\$803
<b>Northeast Region</b>	
Connecticut	\$1,260
Maine	\$1,361
Massachusetts	\$1,904
New Hampshire	\$616
New Jersey	\$1,067
New York	\$830
Rhode Island	\$1,140
Vermont (U.S. Highest)	\$2,683
<b>U.S. Lowest</b>	
Georgia	\$208

Source of Data: U.S. Dept. of Education AEFLA Program Facts, December 2005

Connecticut, at \$1,260, had the fourth highest adult education spending level in the region and seventh highest in the nation. Vermont, at \$2,683, was first in the region as well as in the nation. New Hampshire, at \$616, had the lowest per-participant spending in the region and was the only Northeast state below the national average (\$803). The lowest spending state in the country in FY 02 was Georgia (\$208).

Trends in Connecticut's total adult education spending per participant between 2000 and 2005 are shown in Figure III-4.<sup>14</sup> Over the six-year period, the expenditure rate grew about 17 percent, from \$1,068 to \$1,253. However,

annual increases have varied from 1.5 percent to 7.1 percent and per pupil spending actually declined between FY 02 and FY 03 (2.9 percent) and FY 00 and the prior year (2.3 percent).



**Federal grant.** Federal funding for adult literacy activities under AEFLA is allocated to states according to statutory formula. State administering agencies are then required to distribute the bulk of the federal funds received to eligible local providers of adult education services on competitive basis.

<sup>14</sup> The FY 02 amount in the figure differs from that in Table III-1 because the national comparative data is based on reported spending (estimates) at the time while the Figure III-4 data are actual expenditures finalized by SDE.

In Connecticut, the State Department of Education receives Connecticut's AEFLA monies and uses a request-for-proposal process award federal funds to local providers for what it calls Program Improvement Project (PIP) grants. It is the department's policy to use the federal funding to: supplement state and local support for adult education programs; enhance services by expanding the numbers and types of local providers; and support the state's priority funding areas. The present priority areas are: workplace preparation; workplace education; family literacy; transition to post-secondary education and training; technology implementation; English language acquisition; and the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (an Internet-based, on-line learning system for adult education participants).

For FY 06, 34 adult education providers received a total of just over \$3.8 million in federal AEFLA funding from the state education department for 92 different Program Improvement Projects. The typical PIP grant amount was \$50,000 and individual grants ranged from \$10,900 for an English language acquisition program at the East Haven Adult Education program to \$250,000 for the consortium of providers developing the adult virtual high school. Most of the PIP grant recipients (25) were local school district adult education programs and RESCs, and 9 were CEEs and other types of providers. Of the 71 current adult education providers in the state, 37 received no federal funding in FY 06.

As noted above, under the federal Workforce Investment Act, states are eligible for additional federal funding – incentive grants -- when performance targets for all WIA-funded programs are exceeded.<sup>15</sup> Based on its 2001 performance, Connecticut received an additional \$1,652,500 in federal funding for 2002. A portion of this bonus funding was allotted to the State Department of Education for development of its workforce education initiative. The state adult education and other WIA programs reached all federal goals again in FY 2004. In April 2006, Connecticut was notified it was one of 23 states eligible for an incentive bonus and will be receiving additional \$637,907 in WIA funding.

**State adult education grants.** State law requires local school districts to provide mandated adult education services free of charge and a portion of the cost is then reimbursed according to a sliding-scale formula based on relative municipal wealth. Districts determine how much local funding will be allocated their education programs each year, submit their program budgets to the State Education Department and apply for their state reimbursement through the department's grant process.

At present, the state share of mandated adult education program expenses ranges from 0 to 65 percent of eligible costs. In the past, the reimbursement rates were higher (30 to 70 percent) but due to state fiscal constraints they were reduced to the current levels in 1992. Appendix H shows the preliminary FY 07 reimbursement percentages calculated by SDE for each district.

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<sup>15</sup> While the state's adult education system has met or exceeded its federal performance goals every year, federal law requires all WIA-funded programs in a state (e.g., Title I employment and training for adults, dislocated workers, and youth and Wagner-Peyser labor exchange employment services overseen by DOL) achieve their targets in order for a state to receive an incentive bonus.

Under the adult education grant formula, the wealthiest districts, which are at the lowest percentages, receive little or no state funding. For example, in FY 07, Greenwich is at the 0 percent rate and two other communities (Darien and New Canann) are at rates less than 1 percent. Districts in poor cities (e.g., Hartford, Norwich, New Britain, Waterbury, Windham, Bridgeport, New Haven), as expected, have the highest reimbursement rates.

State adult education grant payments in FY 05, the most recent data available, are shown for each district in Appendix I. In that fiscal year, grant amounts ranged from no state aid in Greenwich to over \$3.3 million in Hartford. The median state grant payment was \$8,950 and 19 districts received less than \$1,000 in state adult education funding. As Appendix I also shows, the local share of state and local actual expenditures on adult education ranged from 44 percent in Norwich and Windham to 100 percent in Greenwich and New Canaan, and averaged almost 70 percent, based on FY 05 data.

As discussed earlier, beginning in FY 03, the funding level for the adult education grant has been capped so the legislature has not appropriated the amount required to meet the total payments to towns authorized under the grant formula. An analysis by SDE, summarized in Table III-2, below, indicates state grant funding to adult education program providers was reduced by about 5 percent to more than 18 percent a year between FY 04 and FY 07 because of the cap on appropriations.

<b>Table III-2. State Adult Education Grant Funding: Requested and Available, FY 04 – FY 07</b>				
	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05</b>	<b>FY 06</b>	<b>FY 07</b>
Amount Requested	\$19,101,486	\$19,699,598	\$19,109,510	\$20,015,913
Amount Available	\$16,064,500	\$16,064,500	\$18,616,580	\$18,616,580
Projected Difference	\$3,036,986	\$3,635,098	\$1,006,246	\$1,952,232
State Funding Reduction (approximate)	15.9%	18.45%	5.13%	9.49%

Source: SDE, Bureau of Early Childhood, Career and Adult Education (September 2006).

In response to state funding reductions, towns must either reduce their budgets for adult education or make up the difference with local resources to maintain their planned level of services. The funding situation for towns is complicated by the fact they receive their state adult education reimbursement grant in two payments, with the second occurring near end of school year, usually in May. If towns receive notice the final amount they will receive is less than originally projected, little time remains in their own fiscal years to find additional local funds to cover costs incurred by the adult education program. This funding uncertainty makes it difficult to plan and deliver services and has resulted in program cut-backs in some communities.

## Section IV

### Adult Education Participants

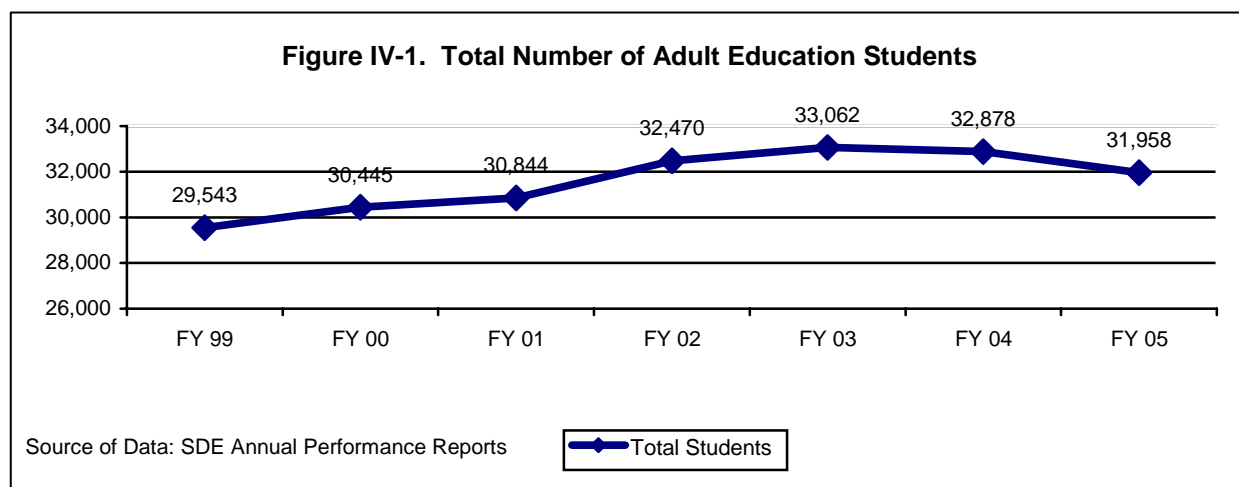
The State Education Department adult education program database contains extensive demographic, program participation, and student performance information by individual. A profile of the population served by the adult education system in Connecticut is provided in this section. Initial analysis of selected student outcomes statewide is also presented. Program review committee staff expect to develop demographic and outcome information by adult education program provider for further analysis.

### Adult Education System Population

The total number of adult education participants served during each of the past seven fiscal years is illustrated in Figure IV-1. In accordance with federal data reporting standards, only students attending an adult education program for at least 12 hours in a fiscal year are included in the data. As discussed below, more than 80 percent of adult education students in Connecticut attend class for 12 or more hours. However, this leaves one in five students that are essentially dropping out of adult education programs.

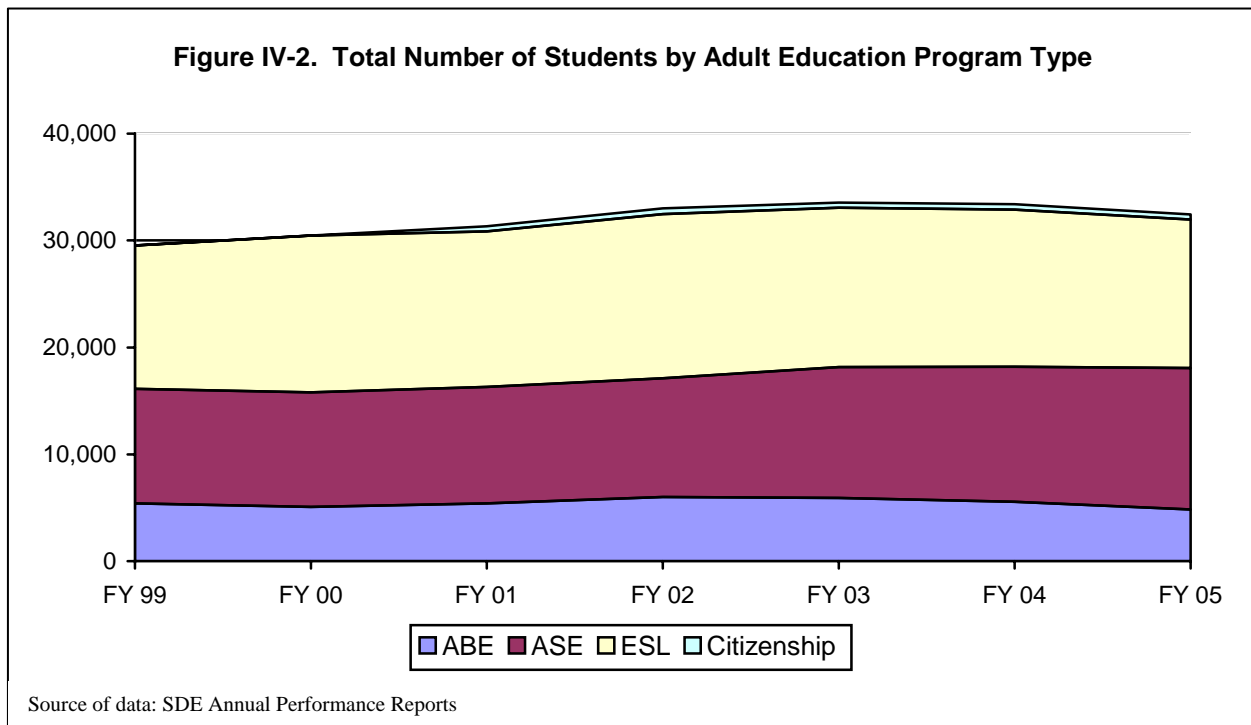
The total student population is calculated based on the number of students attending Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Citizenship for at least 12 hours during a specific fiscal year. (Students enrolled in Citizenship classes were not included in Figure IV-1 because data for that program for FY 99 and FY 00 were not available.)

Since FY 00, more than 30,000 persons have attended adult education programs in Connecticut during each fiscal year. As Figure IV-1 shows, the total adult education student population grew from 29,543 in FY 99 to 33,062 in FY 03, representing an 11 percent increase. During the past two fiscal years, however, the total student population decreased. There was a 3 percent decrease from FY 03 to FY 05, when 31,958 students attended adult education programs.



The increase in the total number of students from FY 99 to FY 02 was the result of increased federal, state, and local funding for adult education programs. SDE attributes the decreasing student population in FY 04 and FY 05 to the cap on state adult education funds and the subsequent reduction in local school district funds. As a result, there are fewer students attending adult education classes, and for fewer hours, especially in the Adult Basic Education programs. SDE also believes there are fewer adult education sites due to combining or eliminating classes.

Figure IV-2 illustrates the total number of students attending ABE, ASE, ESL, and Citizenship programs. (The total number of students enrolled in Citizenship programs in FY 01 through FY 05 was obtained for the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission’s 2006 *Report Card for Employment and Training Programs*.) In general, the number (and percentage) of students attending by program category has remained stable since FY 99. Students attending ESL classes consistently represented the majority (approximately 46 percent) of the total student population. More than one-third (about 36 percent) attended ASE classes and another approximately 17 percent attended ABE classes.



The greatest percent of adult education students, about 45 percent in Connecticut and nationally, attend ESL programs. Connecticut, however, has a larger percentage of the student population enrolled in ASE programs, whereas on a national level more adult learners are attending ABE programs. Seventeen percent of the state’s student population is enrolled in ABE programs as compared to the national rate of 40 percent, and 38 percent of the students are enrolled in ASE programs as compared to the national rate of 17 percent.



## Adult Education Student Profile

State Department of Education demographic data on the adult education student population were used to develop a profile of the students attending adult education programs. The following student profile is based on demographic data from the past seven fiscal years, FY 99 through FY 05.

The overall profile of adult education students in Connecticut has remained consistent. There have been minor fluctuations in terms of the race and ethnicity, gender, and age groupings of the students, but to date none appear to be significant or to indicate a change in the trends. These minor changes are explained below in the context of anecdotal evidence and conclusions drawn by SDE. However, to date SDE has not found any of the changes reflected by the student data to be significant enough to alter its adult education mission, policy, procedure, or funding practices.

In general, the following characteristics describe the adult education student population in Connecticut during the past seven fiscal years, while more detailed analysis is provided below:

- Most (69 percent) adult education students are identified as belonging to a minority race or ethnicity; and Hispanic or Latino students represent the largest percentage (about 40 percent).
- More than half (52 percent) of the adult education students are between the ages of 25 and 59, which can be considered the prime employment years.
- One in five adult education students are between 16 and 18 years old and, therefore, legally entitled to attend public school (unless expelled).
- Female students comprise a slight majority (53 percent).
- The fastest growing segment of the adult education student population is Hispanic/Latino persons between the ages of 45 to 59 enrolled in English as a Second Language programs.

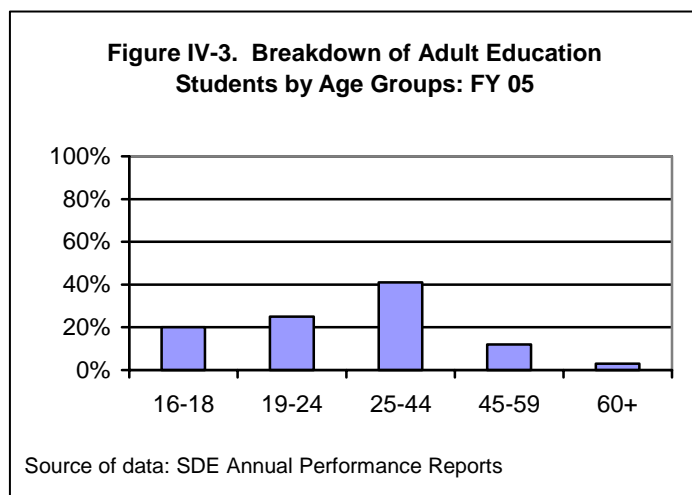
**Race and ethnicity.** As shown in Table IV-1, since FY 99, the racial and ethnic breakdown of students attending adult education programs has remained relatively unchanged. The majority of students (69 percent) are identified as members of a minority group: African American (black), Hispanic or Latino, and other groups (i.e., Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander). Less than one-third are Caucasian (white).

Based on the data, the Hispanic/Latino student population has gradually increased while the Caucasian population has decreased. SDE believes there has been an actual, although small, increase in Hispanic/Latino students from Central and South America (e.g., Brazil, Ecuador), most of who are enrolled in English as a Second Language classes.

Table IV- 1. Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Adult Education Students									
FY	Caucasian (White)		African American (Black)		Hispanic/Latino		Other*		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
FY 99	10,367	35%	5,817	20%	10,869	37%	2,490	8%	29,543
FY 00	10,960	36%	5,905	19%	11,204	37%	2,376	8%	30,445
FY 01	10,281	33%	5,882	19%	12,306	40%	2,375	8%	30,844
FY 02	9,768	30%	6,710	21%	13,512	42%	2,480	8%	32,470
FY 03	9,342	28%	6,869	21%	14,337	43%	2,514	8%	33,062
FY 04	9,442	29%	6,885	21%	14,279	43%	2,272	7%	32,878
FY 05	9,011	28%	6,798	21%	13,980	44%	2,169	7%	31,958

\*Other race/ethnicity category includes Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander.  
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports

**Gender and age.** In each fiscal year there is almost an equal division between male and female students, with females a slight majority. In FY 05, for example, females represented 53 percent of the total student population.



Similarly, during the seven fiscal years under review, there has been no significant change to the student population when examined by age groupings. FY 05 data, which is presented in Figure IV-3, are used to illustrate the breakdown by age groups.

In FY 05, more than half (52 percent) of adult education students are between the ages of 25 and 59, which can be considered prime employment years.

Table IV-2 shows trends in the adult education student population by age group as measured by percent change each year. Analysis of the data shows:

- Adult education students between the ages of 25 to 44 represented the single largest number of students.
- However, students in the 19 to 24 and the 45 to 59 age groups showed the most growth; each increased about 20 percent between FY 99 and FY 05.
- Adult learners in the 45 to 59 age group showed the most consistent growth pattern, experiencing a small (1 percent) decrease in only one fiscal year (FY 04).
- The student population in the 19 to 24 age group experienced overall growth (about 20 percent between FY 99 and FY 05), but showed increases only in the FYs 00, 01, and 02 followed by declines in FYs 03, 04, and 05. This age

group experienced the greatest growth in a single year, increasing 15 percent from FY 01 to FY 02.

- Between FY 02 and FY 05, the number of students in the 16 to 18 age group increased by 12 percent, while the number in most of the older age groups declined or showed a small percentage increase. The State Department of Education reported the increase in youth has been predominately in the ASE programs, especially the adult high school credit diploma program.
- Over the seven-year period, there has been a sizeable decrease (25 percent) in the adult education student population who are 60 and older.

FY	16-18 Yrs		19-24 Yrs		25-44 Yrs		45-59 Yrs		60+ Yrs	
	#	% change	#	% change	#	% change	#	% change	#	% change
FY 99	6,103		6,700		12,586		3,075		1,079	
FY 00	6,340	3.9%	6,818	1.8%	13,072	3.9%	3,183	3.5%	1,032	-4.4%
FY 01	5,979	-5.7%	7,165	5.1%	13,351	2.1%	3,426	7.6%	923	-10.6%
FY 02	5,759	-3.7%	8,216	14.7%	14,020	5%	3,556	3.8%	919	-0.4%
FY 03	6,165	7%	8,460	3%	13,873	-1%	3,705	4.2%	859	-6.5%
FY 04	6,411	4%	8,248	-2.5%	13,721	-1.1%	3,656	-1.3%	842	-2%
FY 05	6,430	0.3%	8,045	-2.5%	12,989	-5.3%	3,687	0.8%	807	-4.2%

\*Growth is measured as the percent change between each fiscal year. A positive number indicates an increase and a negative number indicates a decrease.

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports

Table IV-3 shows the number and percent of adult education students in the three program areas by age group. (FY 04 data were used to allow for comparison to the national data.) Connecticut's trends for enrollment by program area by age group were found to be consistent with national trends.

In summary:

- Most students (67 percent) were between the ages of 19 and 44.
- Age distribution varied across the three adult education programs.
- Relatively few ABE students were from the youngest age category; most (70 percent) are between the ages of 19 and 44.
- ASE students tended to be younger: 71 percent were between the ages of 16 and 24.
- ESL students tended to be older: 74 percent were between the ages of 25 and 59.

<b>Table IV-3. Adult Education Enrollment by Program Area by Age Group: FY 04</b>											
	<b>16-18</b>		<b>19-24</b>		<b>25-44</b>		<b>45-59</b>		<b>60+</b>		
<b>Program</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
ABE	928	14%	1,632	20%	2,278	17%	616	17%	122	14%	5,576
ASE	4,993	78%	3,942	48%	3,055	22%	570	16%	67	8%	12,627
ESL	490	8%	2,674	32%	8,388	61%	2,470	68%	653	78%	14,675
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,411</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>8,248</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>13,721</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>3,656</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>32,878</b>

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Report: FY 04

**Employment status.** At the time of their enrollment, adult education students report on their employment status and goals. Table IV-5 shows the number of students who reported being employed or unemployed at the time of their enrollment over a four-year period. The unemployed students are further broken down by those who reported having the goal of obtaining employment versus those not seeking to enter the job market.

For all four fiscal years about 43 percent of students reported being employed while attending adult education programs. About one-third were unemployed and seeking employment, and approximately 23 percent were unemployed but not seeking employment.

<b>Table IV-5. Student Employment Status On Entry to Program</b>									
<b>Status</b>	<b>FY 02</b>		<b>FY 03</b>		<b>FY 04</b>		<b>FY 05</b>		
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Employed	14,388	44%	14,155	43%	14,297	43%	13,847	43%	
Unemployed/Seeking employment	9,989	31%	11,402	34%	11,385	35%	10,724	34%	
Unemployed/Not seeking employment	8,093	25%	7,500	23%	7,196	22%	7,387	23%	
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	<b>32,470</b>		<b>33,057</b>		<b>32,878</b>		<b>31,958</b>		

Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports

## Adult Education Student Performance

Program review committee staff analyzed Connecticut's adult education system results as measured by the five NRS core adult education student performance measures: (1) educational gain; (2) high school completion; (3) transition to postsecondary education; (4) obtain employment; and (5) retain employment. The analysis, which is presented in detail below, generally found:

- Connecticut has met or exceeded the average standard for all core measures except for the number of adult education students transitioning into postsecondary education.
- Overall, adult education student performance has been relatively constant.
- Most ABE and ESL students achieved some educational gain and of those students almost all advanced at least one performance level.

- Very few ABE and ESL students (less than 5 percent) dropped out.
- Adult education students attended on average 85 hours per fiscal year.
- On average, ASE and ESL students with higher proficiency levels attended more hours than their counterparts with lower proficiency levels; the pattern was opposite for ABE students -- lower proficiency level students attended on average more hours than higher proficiency level students.
- Only about half of the students awarded a GED diploma prepared for the exam through an adult education program.
- The number of adult education students transitioning to postsecondary education and training programs is small, typically less than 100 per year.
- Adult education students with a goal of employment were more likely to be employed than those students participating in adult education for educational enhancement purposes.

**National performance statistics.** The U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) annually produces a report to Congress that provides performance analysis on a state-by-state basis as well as an aggregate national rating for each of the core NRS measures. In its most recent report (for FY 2004), OVAE found:

- 43 states met or exceeded the national average educational gain for ABE programs and 39 states met or exceeded ESL educational gain averages;
- 40 states met or exceeded the national average for high school completion;
- 43 states met or exceeded the national average for students transitioning into postsecondary education and training;
- 40 states met or exceeded the national average for obtaining employment; and
- 41 states met or exceeded the job retention national averages.

In FY 04, Connecticut met or exceeded the national average for all core measures except for the number of adult education students transitioning into postsecondary education and training. As will be discussed below, Connecticut did not receive a sufficient survey response rate from its adult education students to allow OVAE to validate the data for this measure. While Connecticut did not meet the standard based on federal reporting requirements, the actual number of adult education students who did transition into postsecondary education programs may have, in fact, met or exceeded the federal target. SDE is working to improve its data reporting for this measure.

**Measuring educational gain.** As discussed in Appendix D, the NRS defines educational gain for ABE and ESL programs as the percentage of learners who complete one or more educational function (or proficiency) level as measured through a standard assessment process.

NRS further requires that the assessment procedures each state establishes identify an ABE or ESL student's initial educational functioning level and measure gains (level

advancement). Students must be assessed at intake (pre-tested) to establish a baseline and after a certain period of instruction to measure gain (post-tested).

For students enrolled in Adult Secondary Education GED, credit diploma, or external diploma program, the student's entering educational functioning level is determined based on the high school credits earned prior to enrollment. In accordance with changes taking effect in FY 06, however, Connecticut is implementing a standardized initial assessment process for all ASE students.

**Entering educational functioning level.** Table IV-6 sets out the NRS educational functioning levels for ABE, ASE, and ESL programs. It also shows the total number of ABE and ESL learners entering within each educational functioning level, based on intake assessment scores, and ASE students, based on earned high school credits.

<b>Table IV-6. Entering Adult Education Students Population by Educational Functioning Levels</b>				
<b>Levels</b>	<b>FY 02*</b>	<b>FY 03</b>	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05**</b>
<b>Adult Basic Education</b>				
Beginning Literacy	693	679	848	823
Beginning Basic Education	689	660	839	874
Intermediate Low	1,902	1,634	1,640	1,367
Intermediate High	2,734	2,948	2,249	1,734
<b>Adult Secondary Education</b>				
Low	9,397	10,533	10,164	10,400
High	1,700	1,697	2,463	2,807
<b>English as a Second Language</b>				
Beginning Literacy	1,716	991	1,000	1,013
Beginning	4,293	4,425	4,309	4,033
Intermediate Low	4,495	4,416	4,366	3,990
Intermediate High	2,534	2,674	2,615	2,640
Low Advanced	2,317	2,405	2,385	2,201
High Advanced	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32,470</b>	<b>33,062</b>	<b>32,878</b>	<b>31,882</b>
*First year reporting based on performance levels.				
**Beginning in FY 05, to protect the confidentiality of U.S. Department of Education data and tabulations containing information about individuals, table and report values from 1 to 5 are suppressed. The value of the total of any column or row is suppressed if the column or row contains a suppressed value. Therefore, the totals for FY 05 are underrepresented.				
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports				

The entering education functioning levels of adult education students has remained constant during the four fiscal years shown in the table. The most change occurred in ABE functioning levels. SDE attributed the slight drop in the ABE functioning levels in FY 04 and FY 05 to the state cap on adult education funds that effectively resulted in fewer adult learners being served. SDE believes it is not necessarily indicative of students enrolling with lower educational functioning levels.

<b>Table IV-7. Adult Education Students Pre- and Post-Tested</b>				
<b>Pre- and Post-Tested?</b>	<i>FY 02</i>	<i>FY 03</i>	<i>FY 04</i>	<i>FY 05</i>
YES	50%	56%	62%	63%
NO	50%	44%	38%	37%
TOTAL*	21,373	20,832	20,251	18,743
*Student totals include ABE and ESL students but not ASE students.				
Source of data: State Department of Education				

**Testing.** The OVAE has a target for the percentage of students pre- and post-tested, which is 50 percent. As shown in Table IV-7, at least half of the enrolled ABE and ESL students were post-tested in each fiscal year under

review. The percentage has been increasing over time with the greatest percentage of students being post-tested in FY 05.

**Educational gain.** Data regarding education gains is compiled only for those students taking both the pre- and post-tests. Figures IV-4 and IV-5 illustrate the performance gains of ABE and ESL students based on the difference, if any, between the pre-test baseline scores and post-test scores. The data are tracked by the program and by entering educational functioning levels of the student population.

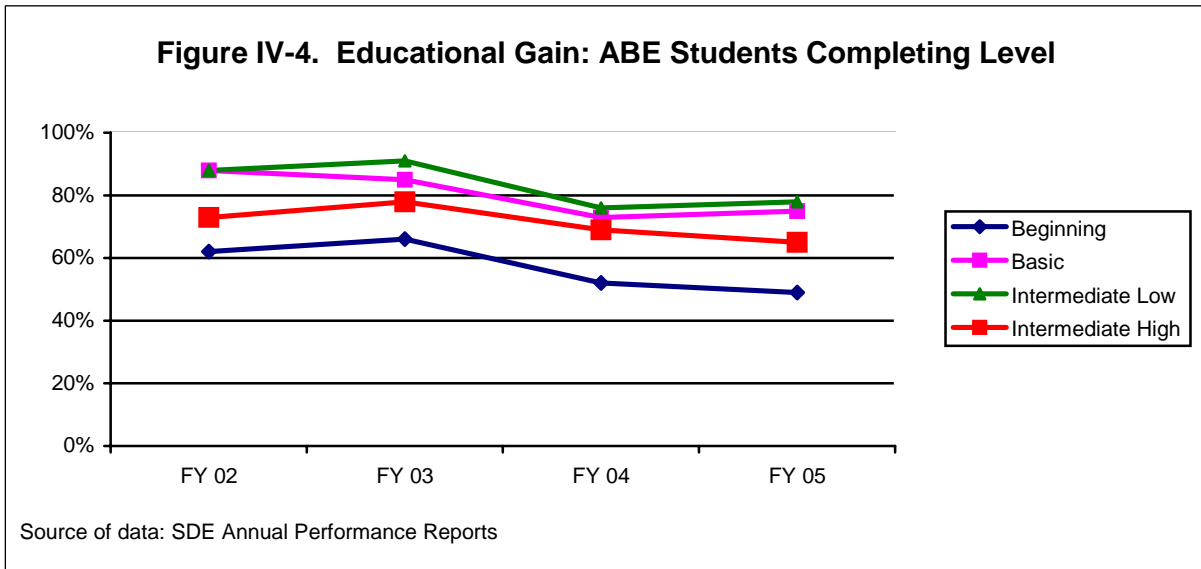
Federal law requires states to report performance not only by the total number of students who complete an educational functioning level, but also by those who separate from the program before completion, and those who remain within their entering educational functioning level. Information on gains from those making gains as well as those who drop out and those who do not complete a level is summarized by program below.

*Adult Basic Education.* Figure IV-4 shows that during the past four fiscal years, most students in each of the ABE levels (about 75 percent, overall) showed educational gains by achieving post-test scores that allow them to complete the NRS level in which they were initially placed. Further, almost all ABE students who completed a NRS level (on average, more than 95 percent) advanced one or more educational functioning levels based on post-test results.

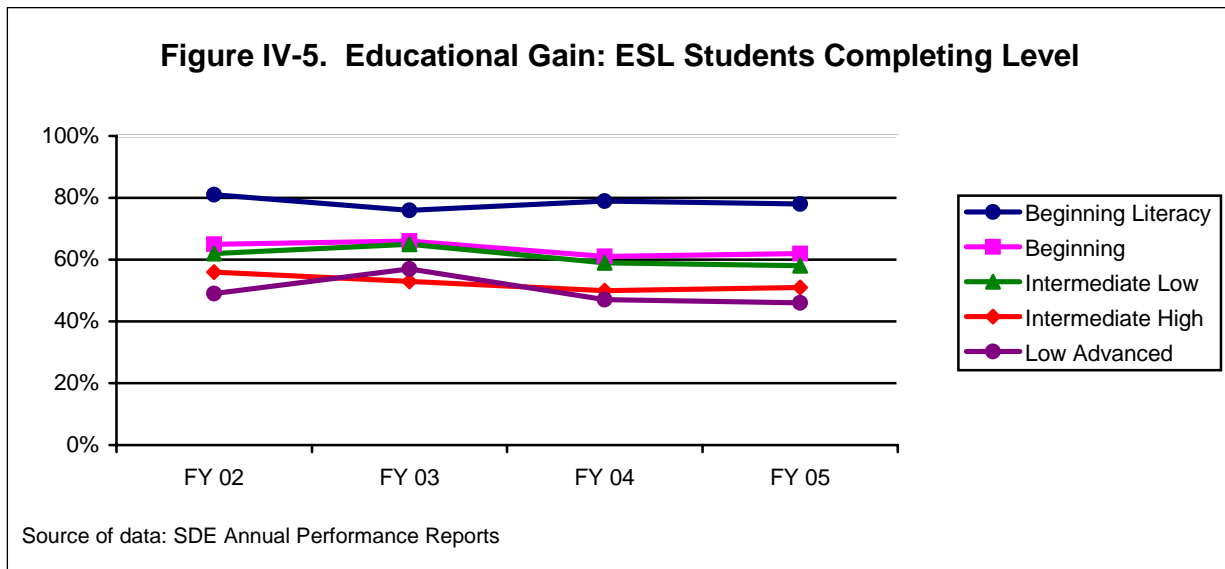
Students must score at least one point more than the maximum score for a level to advance to the next highest level. Fewer than 5 percent of ABE students post-tested at the maximum score for their level and were ineligible to advance to the next proficiency level and so remained in the level in which they were initially enrolled.

Less than one-third of ABE students did not achieve sufficient educational proficiency at the time of a post-test to advance to the next higher level. These students had post-test scores within the range of the level in which they were initially placed, meaning they continued to attend at that level. These students, however, may have showed some gain, but not enough to advance to the next NRS level.

Overall, less than 3 percent of the ABE students dropped out (separated before completed) before completing the ABE level in which they were enrolled.



*English as a Second Language.* Figure IV-5 illustrates the educational gains achieved by ESL students who completed a level. The educational gain trends for ESL students are similar to those for the ABE students. In general, most ESL students within the five educational functioning levels showed educational gains by completing a level.<sup>16</sup> Of those completing a level, a large majority, 80 percent, advanced one or more levels.



<sup>16</sup> The ESL high advanced level is not included because there were no students in that level during the fiscal years under review. SDE historically does not serve students in the highest level. Students at this level typically are well educated in their native language and require very technical skills training. These students generally are referred to the state's community colleges for instruction. In fact, the adult education systems in most states do not serve this population and as a result this level has been eliminated by OVAE beginning in FY 07.



At the higher ESL levels (intermediate high and low advanced) less than half of the students complete a level at the time of post-testing during a given fiscal year. Again, very few ESL students (less than 2 percent) dropped out before completing a program. According to SDE staff, many of these students were not literate in their native language, yet must achieve specific levels of proficiency in the English language and other educational skills to advance in adult education programs.<sup>17</sup>

**Hours attended.** The number of attendance hours for reporting purposes is not a federal core measure. However, it is an unofficial indicator of performance tracked by SDE.

In general, over the past seven fiscal years, most enrolled adult education students, at least 80 percent, attended class for at least 12 hours. In fact, during FY 05, 85 percent of adult education students met the NRS participation standard.

Table IV-8 sets forth the average number of hours students attended adult education programs during the past four fiscal years.<sup>18</sup> All adult education students (who attended at least 12 hours per fiscal year) on average attend 85 hours per fiscal year. The average attendance hours varies by program category and educational functioning level.

<b>Table IV-8. Average Hours Attended Per Student by Entering Educational Functioning Level</b>				
<b>Entering Educational Functioning Level</b>	<b>FY 02</b>	<b>FY 03</b>	<b>FY 04</b>	<b>FY 05</b>
<b><i>Adult Basic Education</i></b>				
Beginning Literacy	98	95	85	88
Beginning Basic Education	108	100	86	92
Intermediate Low	90	81	63	64
Intermediate High	111	100	80	75
<b><i>Adult Secondary Education</i></b>				
Low	92	96	100	98
High	179	174	156	145
<b><i>English as a Second Language</i></b>				
Beginning Literacy	60	51	56	58
Beginning	67	62	66	65
Intermediate Low	64	61	59	63
Intermediate High	76	68	67	70
Low Advanced	65	68	68	66
High Advanced	0	0	0	0
<b>ALL LEVELS TOTAL AVERAGE</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>
Source of data: State Department of Education Annual Performance Reports				

<sup>17</sup> SDE staff believe ESL students are, in general, very motivated students, although they attend, on average, fewer class hours than ABE and ASE students. While these students may remain in an educational functioning level for longer periods than other adult education students, they tend to continue in an adult education program and eventually achieve the proficiency needed to advance.

<sup>18</sup> The total number of attendance hours was divided by the total number of students within each educational functioning level to calculate an average number of hours per students.

ASE and ESL students with higher proficiency levels tended to attend class for slightly more hours per year than students in the lower entering educational functioning levels. For example, in FY 05, high-level ASE students attended class an average of 145 hours compared to 98 hours for students at the lower ASE levels. ESL students with highest entering educational functioning level attended for 66 hours compared to 58 hours for ESL students with lowest proficiency.

Among the ABE students there was an opposite pattern. Lower functioning level ABE students attended for an average of 90 hours in FY 05 whereas the higher functioning level ABE students attended for 70 hours.<sup>19</sup> Higher functioning ABE levels, in general, require less remedial instruction than the lower levels, but are still in need of very basic educational skills.

SDE attributes the slight drop in the number of student hours attended in FY 04 and FY 05 to the state cap on adult education funds that resulted in a decrease in available services and the total number of students enrolled. ABE classes showed the largest decline in student hours over the last two fiscal years.

**High school completion.** The NRS core measure for high school completion rate is the percentage of adult learners with a high school completion goal who earned a high school diploma or recognized equivalent (GED). Table IV-9 shows the number of GED, credit diplomas, and external diplomas awarded to ASE students during the past four fiscal years.

Table IV-9. High School Completion Credentials Awarded to ASE Students								
	FY 02		FY 03		FY 04		FY 05	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
GED	3,479	70%	2,697	64%	2,841	58%	2,949	59%
Credit Diploma	1,391	27%	1,411	33%	1,907	39%	1,889	38%
External Diploma	135	3%	115	3%	128	3%	141	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,005</b>		<b>4,223</b>		<b>4,876</b>		<b>4,979</b>	

Source of data: State Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education and Nutrition Programs

The majority of students over the past four fiscal years have been awarded GED diplomas. The State Department of Education reported, however, that only about half of those students earned their GED diploma after preparing for the test through an adult education program, while the other students passed the GED test without preparing through adult education programs. Because SDE administers the GED testing program, all students earning a GED, whether they prepared for the test through an adult education program or not, are included in the data.

The number of GED diplomas awarded dropped from 3,479 in FY 02, when almost 70 percent of ASE students awarded a diploma earned a GED, to 2,697 (58 percent) in FY 03. SDE attributed the decrease to a new, more rigorous series of the GED test introduced in January 2002. As a result, fewer students successfully completed the GED test in FY 03. The number of

<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, the entering educational functioning levels were grouped as lower and higher. ABE lower entering educational functioning levels included beginning literacy and beginning basic education and the higher levels included intermediate low and high. ASE was already grouped as low and high.

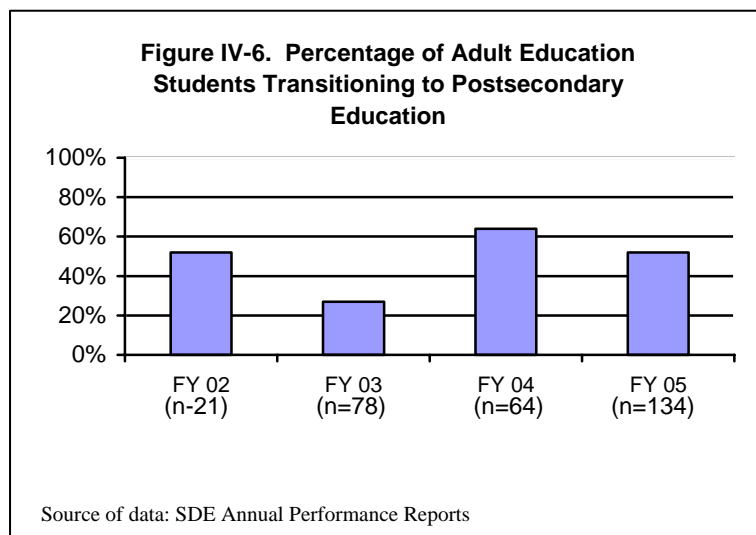
GED diplomas awarded did increase in FY 04 and FY 05 following changes in the ASE program curriculum.

The number (and percentage) of credit diplomas awarded increased during the past two years. Almost 40 percent of ASE students meeting high school completion requirements were issued a credit diploma in FY 04 and 05. This was up from about one-third of students in FY 03 and less than 30 percent in FY 02.

**Postsecondary education.** Another core federal performance measure is the percentage of adult learners who establish a goal to continue their education at the postsecondary level and who entered postsecondary education or training after completing an adult education program.

To collect these data, SDE surveys adult education students with a goal of entering postsecondary education to determine whether they in fact did so. OVAE requires a 50 percent survey response rate for the data to be valid. Until FY 05, Connecticut did not meet the NRS survey response rate for national comparison purposes.<sup>20</sup> According to SDE, Connecticut achieved a 66 percent response rate in FY 05 due to its increased follow up efforts.

Figure IV-6 shows the percentage of students with the goal of transitioning from an adult education program to a postsecondary program who achieved that goal each year from FY 02 through FY 05. The measure ranged from 27 percent to 52 percent.



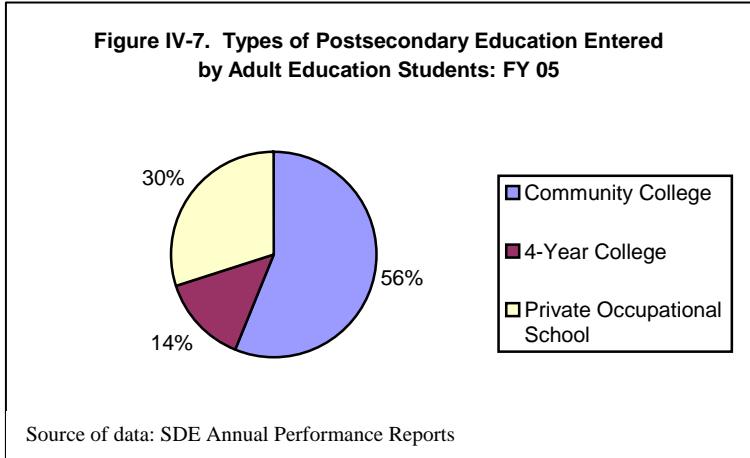
The total number of students represented in Figure IV-6 is small. SDE staff believe that the actual number of adult education students transitioning to postsecondary education programs is higher, but do not have data to support that contention at this time.

Beginning in FY 05, SDE collected data on the types of postsecondary education programs in which adult education students enrolled. As shown in Figure IV-7, more than half (56 percent) of the

students who had the goal of entering postsecondary education transitioned from an adult education program to a community college.

Performance data on adult education students transitioning to postsecondary education programs from adult education programs are not systematically compiled at this time. SDE can not, for example, readily provide information on the number of students who complete postsecondary education programs or the degrees, certificates, or licenses earned.

<sup>20</sup> In FY 02, SDE has a 22 percent survey response rate, 49 percent response rate in FY 03, and 32 percent in FY 04.



**Employment.** There are two core NRS measures related to employment: (1) the percentage of unemployed adult learners with an employment goal who obtained a job within one quarter after exiting adult education programs; and (2) the percentage of adult learners with a job retention goal who entered employment within one quarter after exiting a program and were still employed in the third quarter after program exit.

SDE and the state Department of Labor work collaboratively to gather and analyze data for the two NRS employment measures. SDE compiles a database of adult education students with employment goals and that is matched to information in the DOL employment system by social security numbers. (Students who do not have or do not provide social security numbers cannot be included.) DOL provides SDE with data on whether students entered employment or retained employment. Aggregate, but not individual, wage data are also provided.

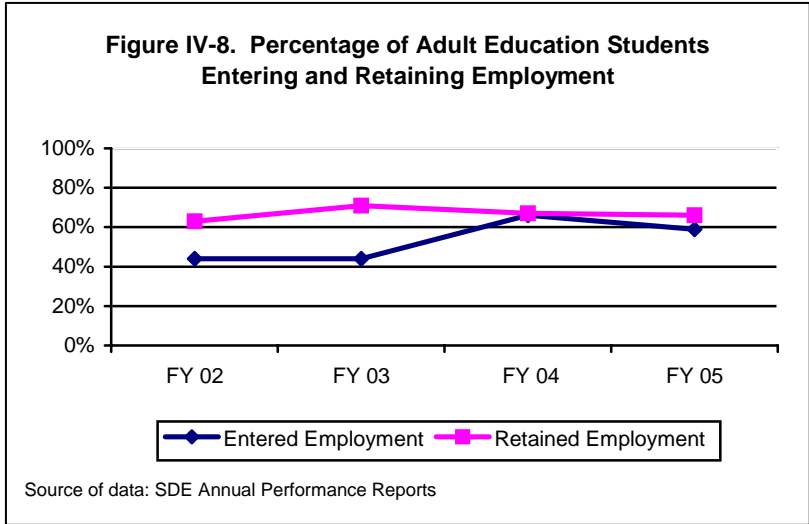


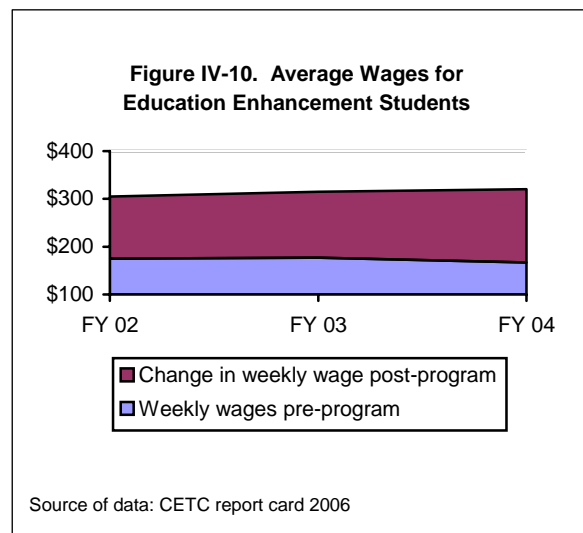
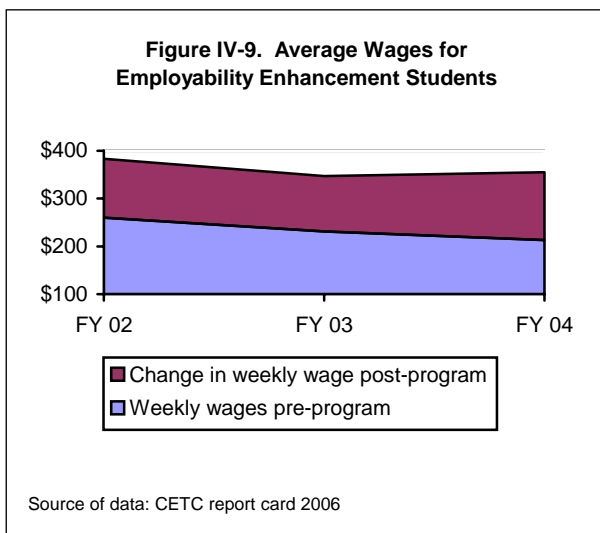
Figure IV-8 shows the rates for the percentage of adult education students with a goal of employability enhancement who entered employment or retained employment if they were already working. The percentage of students employed increased during the past two fiscal years. As shown, more than half of the students with a goal of employment were hired for work, which is up from 44 percent in FY 02 and FY 03.

The percentage of adult education students with an employment goal who retained employment has remained relatively unchanged during the past four fiscal years at about two-thirds of the students.

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, as statutorily required, reports on the results of all state workforce development programs including adult education programs. Its annual *Report Card for Employment and Training Programs* includes information on average wages of participants by program. Trends in wages earned by adult education students for FY 02 through FY 05 reported in the 2006 report card are shown in Figures IV-9 and IV-10. The data were analyzed separately for students with employment goals and those with educational goals.

Overall, during FY 02 through FY 04, CETC found students participating in adult education program for employability enhancement were more likely to be employed pre- and post-program than those students participating for education enhancement. The CETC report also showed:

- In FY 04, employability enhancement students were earning an average of \$355 per week after completing an adult education program as compared to an average of \$320 per week earned by education enhancement students.
- Upon completion of an adult education program, both groups, on average, increased their weekly earnings. Education enhancement students had a higher average wage increase than employability enhancement students: \$153 per week in FY 04 compared to \$142.
- However, the average weekly wage for both groups was below the self-sufficiency threshold for a single person, \$390 per week, used by CETC.<sup>21</sup>
- In FY 04, 62 percent of the employability enhancement students were employed upon admission to an adult education program whereas half of the education enhancement students were employed.
- Six months after completing an adult education program, 82 percent of employability enhancement students had retained employment compared to 78 percent of education enhancement students.



<sup>21</sup> See CETC, *2006 Report Card for Employment and Training Programs: Covering Programs July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2005*, (June 2006), p.4.