

NEVADA

Connections

Produced by Community College Southern Nevada to connect resources for Nevada's adult workforce

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ABE programs developing accountability system

In preparation for expected changes in legislation affecting adult education, administrators of Nevada's federally funded adult basic education (ABE) programs have been working on developing a statewide accountability system for adult basic education. Such a system will focus on meeting national, state, program, and individual goals. It will also help program directors streamline reporting, share information, and improve their programs.

Here is a brief summary of that work from Vicky Ramakka, Adult Education Consultant for the Nevada Department of Education.

What is the goal of these ABE programs with respect to accountability?

VR: Our goal is to build a performance-based adult education system that uses competency-based instruction to produce outcomes essential for learners to succeed in society.

What do you mean by performance-based?

VR: Performance-based education focuses students, teachers and funding agencies on the outcomes or results a program intends to achieve.

And what is competency-based?

VR: Many outcomes for adult education revolve around increasing learners' competencies in the basic skills necessary to effectively function as worker, citizen and family member. Competencies relevant to the learner and the program's objectives are selected as measures of performance. Competency-based instruction means that these delineated competencies

are the basis of instruction.

CASAS has identified a list of 300 specific competencies considered necessary for adults to function as worker, citizen and family member. Upon entry, students are assessed and placed in one of four levels defined by functional skills (what a person can or can not do), rather than grade levels. Progress is measured by post-tests (the CASAS system draws from a test-item bank of more than 6,000 validated test items directly measuring the 300 competencies).

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Nevada's federally funded ABE programs are implementing the Life Skills portion of CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System), a competency-based system that links curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Results are reported on a common numerical scale, which has become a widely used means of reporting learning outcomes.

Continued on back page

Accountability *(Continued from page 1)*

How far along are we in implementing CASAS?

VR: ABE programs have widely implemented CASAS pre- and post-testing and have made major changes over the past two years to shift from academic skills-based instruction to life skills competency-based instruction. This year we are pilot testing the CASAS TOPSpro computerized student progress tracking system, with the aim of producing standardized statewide reporting.

What is our next step?

VR: With our improved accountability system, we will be better equipped to address the requirements of the new federal legislation being proposed this spring and meet the needs of Nevada's adult education students.

Editor's note: The February issue of PaperPak contains several thoughtful articles on accountability issues, including an interview with Bill Spady and several short ERIC pieces on performance assessment. Copies are available from Charley Gregg at CCSN, 651-5583.

Nevada to share in welfare-to-work grants

U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis M. Herman recently approved \$3.4 million in federal funds to be used to help Nevada's welfare recipients move into the workforce. The money will go to the Division of Welfare, which will sub-grant it to Private Industry Councils (PICs), which will in turn sub-grant the funds to local service providers. For RFP info, contact the PIC director:

+ Northern Nevada: Job Opportunities in Nevada (JOIN), Tina Nappe
785-6106

+ Southern Nevada: Nevada Business Services (NBS), Richard Blue
638-8750



2nd Annual Literacy Awards Luncheon — Friday, May 15, 1998
Nevada State Library & Archives, Carson City
Emmy Bell 687-8340 or (800)445-9673

Summer Institute for Adult Educators — Three days during 2nd week of June
Great Basin College, Elko — Linda Zaczek 897-7684

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