



Bringing Resources to Nevada's Adult Education Community

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ABE: What it's all about

Editor's note: Thanks to long-time CCSN Instructor Dude Downs for this article idea!

Vision: Adult Basic Education is an integral component in Nevada's human service system, effectively responding to the needs of adult learners.

Mission: Our mission is to provide responsive, quality educational opportunities that will enable our students to achieve their work, civic, family, and personal goals.

At the heart of Nevada's Adult Basic Education system are the eight programs funded through the Adult Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). Between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005, these programs served (provided at least 12 hours of instruction to) 10,011* students, nearly 15 percent more than the previous year.

Eighty-two percent of these adults were ESL students. An additional fourteen percent, mainly native English speakers, entered at a beginning or intermediate literacy level. The remaining four percent were "adult secondary" level students, preparing to take the GED exam. The federally funded programs serving the south (Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln, and Nye counties) served 6,108 students; two Washoe-based programs served 2,688; Carson-based WNCC served 675 in seven counties, and Elko-based Great Basin College 540 in five.

To receive program funding, the state negotiates performance measures with the U.S. Department of Education annually; funding levels are contingent upon the state meeting those "planned" measures. Each program in turn negotiates its contribution to the Plan each spring, as part of the granting process.

Reflecting Nevada's inherent diversity — from the continually "fastest growing cities" in the south to the northern rural counties, from a continuous gaming boom to sometimes-busted mining communities — and challenged by federal requirements for standardized reporting of results, each player is unique and brings different strengths to the game.

Catholic Charities' ESL program is the most different from all the other programs, as it mainly serves refugees resettled from other countries (only ten percent of its students are non-refugees). The program's goal is to teach students enough English to meet its parent organization's mission — to get people employed within 30-90 days. The program provides intensity and duration of instruction — students study five hours per day over at least a two week period. All classes are multi-level; it's not unusual to have students who are illiterate in their native language seated next to medical doctors.

CCSN is the largest program in the state, and with the population in its four-county service area increasing an average of six percent annually for the past 15 years, the focus is to provide quality classes geared toward educational gain for as many students as possible. About two-thirds of its students are served at the main West Sahara site. The others are scattered among 11 sites,

Note: Fourteen of Nevada's 17 county school districts also serve adult secondary students through their Adult High School programs. During the 2004-2005 school year, 22,816 students were helped through these facilities.

Nevada's AEFLA-funded ABE programs

South		Students served (2004-2005)
CALL	Computer-Assisted Literacy in Libraries	1,502
CATH	Catholic Charities	617
CCSN	Community College of Southern Nevada	3,342
CMC	Churchwright Multicultural Center	647
North		
NNLC	Northern Nevada Literacy Council	967
TMCC	Truckee Meadows Community College	1,721
WNCC	Western Nevada Community College	675
Northeast		
GBC	Great Basin College	540
TOTAL		10,011*

Contact information:

www.literacynet.org/nvadulted/programs.html

* Figures are preliminary

(Continued on page 2)

ABE Programs *(Continued from page 1)*

including family literacy programs at two 21st Century Schools and one City of Las Vegas “Project Outreach” site. Of all programs, CCSN serves the highest percentage of lower-level ABE literacy students — 21 percent enter at the beginning and intermediate levels.

The Library District’s C.A.L.L. (Computer-Assisted Literacy in Libraries) program began in the mid-1990s as a one-on-one volunteer tutoring program for native English speakers. During the past five years, the program evolved to meet the needs of the southern Nevada “market.” Now, nearly all its students are ESL and the program offers most instruction via live classes at six libraries and four community sites throughout Clark County. True to its roots, technology remains an integral part of instruction — virtually every student gets significant exposure to computer hardware and software and some tutoring is still offered. C.A.L.L. is incorporating a family literacy component throughout its entire program.

Churchwright Multicultural Center, the state’s newest program, began in 2003 and is already the sixth largest of the AEFILA-funded programs, with classes serving all but the most advanced level ESL students. Staff expected one of its first outreaches to the community, a class at the North Las Vegas Library, to draw about 30 students. Two hundred and fifty people showed up, and CMC quickly found three additional sites. Drawing on the program director’s expertise in learning disabilities, CMC offers a specialized beginning literacy class and one-on-one tutoring to adults with learning disabilities. The program relies heavily on volunteers from AARP, HELP of Southern Nevada, local churches, and other community service organizations for help with office work and tutoring.

Like Churchwright, the Northern Nevada Literacy Council, headquartered in Sparks, is a community-based organization. Founded in 1973 to provide one-on-one tutoring by volunteers, it wasn’t until the late 1990s that the organization began to receive significant federal funding, allowing it to grow and provide classes by paid instructors. NNLC serves all levels of students, but “specializes” in lower level ESL, recruiting students into off-site conversation classes and then “matriculating” them to its main Greenbrae Drive site. The organization developed a pronunciation (phonics) curriculum currently being studied by University of Nevada, Reno’s Center for Program Evaluation and Partnership Development to establish that the curriculum is research-based. NNLC has also been exceptionally proactive in facilitating community projects for its higher level ESL students.

The Truckee Meadows Community College program, the state’s second largest, has a 23-year history of a solid

foundation, clear guidelines, and consistently high outcomes for every student level. ALL ESL instructors use the classroom-based state-sponsored curricula developed by the program. Literacy instruction for native English speakers, the majority with some type of learning disability, is delivered via small groups and one-on-one volunteer tutoring; the two coordinators of the literacy program are extensively trained in LD. GED students are served by both classroom instruction and tutoring. TMCC’s nine sites include three college facilities, two 21st Century Schools, and the Washoe County Jail.

Because they don’t serve college-level students, the AEFILA-funded programs are outside the norm in the Nevada System of Higher Education. However, the ABE program at Western Nevada Community College, headed by a one-time GED student, is highly integrated into the college. The program provides access to on-site childcare at the main campus site. WNCC provides staff development funds for its part-time teachers and college President Dr. Carol Lucey visits the program regularly. Counterbalancing this integration into Carson City’s mainstream is its service to six surrounding rural counties, where the program continues group instruction and managed enrollment. While it, too, serves all levels of students through its 12 sites, the GED component is extraordinarily strong. For 2003-2004 (the latest year for which data is available), 91 of its 797 students earned their GED Certificates — WNCC accounted for nearly one-third of all AEFILA-funded GED recipients. The program also has collaborations with Even Start in Lovelock, Fallon, and Carson City.

Great Basin College’s program, the state’s smallest, also focuses on GED and works closely with the college to move students into postsecondary education as well. In 2003-2004, 41 students received their GEDs and 54 transitioned into postsecondary education or training. GBC’s service area encompasses 45,000 square miles, a bit more than the 40,000 square miles served by the southern programs. However, with an average population of less than two people per square mile, GBC faces delivery issues different from the other programs and provides more individualized instruction. GBC offers services at 11 sites, including school facilities in Elko, Winnemucca; and Battle Mountain, off-sites in Owyhee, Wendover (one a 21st Century School), Wells, and Eureka (a 21st Century School); and Conservation Camps at Carlin and Wells.

Each of the eight programs differs from the others. And each contributes to Nevada’s adult education in a significant way, producing outcomes to help the state meet its performance measures — and as State Director Mary Katherine Moen says, doing the “holy work” that helps adult students meet their work, civic, family, and personal goals.



The bristlecone pine, Nevada’s State Tree, is hardy, drought-resistant, and determined to grow where other things cannot. “I chose the bristlecone pine as a symbol for Adult Education in Nevada,” said Mary Katherine Moen, Nevada’s Adult Education Consultant, “because it reflects tenacity, durability, and dedication to purpose.”

Upcoming workshops free to Nevada's adult educators

Reserve your spot now! Space is limited!

<u>Title, date, place, and contact</u>	<u>Workshop presenter/objectives</u>
Phonics Understanding for Beginners 11/19/05; Las Vegas Nita Russell-Latham, Catholic Charities 775/693-6761, jlatham@catholiccharities.com	Ann DeOnis. Inspect the basic principles of the English language. Uncover methods, approaches, and activities that work with adult learners. Analyze how skilled readers use phonics in conjunction with other strategies and skills — context clues, background knowledge, word structure, etc. — to make sense of print.
Meaningful Activities for the ESL Classroom Designed To Get Students Up, Moving Around, and Interacting 11/19/05; Sparks Rex Newell, Northern NV Literacy Council 775/356-1007, instructorcoord@nnlc.org	Maxine Frauman-Prickel. Experience interactive classroom strategies to prepare students for effective communication inside and outside the classroom. Develop a bank of teaching strategies that require little or no time in teacher preparation. Address cultural perceptual blocks or biases that may impact communication inside and outside the classroom.
Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: Strategies for Motivating and Retaining Adult Learners 12/10/05; Las Vegas Fay Savedra Gamboa/Cynthia Pierrott — CCSN 702/651-4722 or 702/651-4531 fay_savedra@ccsn.edu or cynthia_pierrott@ccsn.edu	Lennox McClendon/Kathi Polis. Examine the latest research on student persistence to determine factors that promote retention. Explore a variety of instructional and programmatic strategies to address those factors. Outline a student persistence plan to pilot in your local program.

Research related to upcoming workshops

Study shows adults with dyslexia can improve with phonics-based instruction

Phonics-based instruction can change brain activity in adults with dyslexia, resulting in significant improvements in reading, according to findings from a recent collaborative study by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and Georgetown University Medical Center.

“With about 112 hours of phonic-based instruction, adults with dyslexia had significant improvements in reading and changes in brain activity while reading,” said Lynn Flowers, Ph.D., senior researcher from Wake Forest Baptist. “We know that dyslexia is not something children outgrow, and our findings suggest that it’s never too late for instruction to overcome this disability.”

The researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) – which shows brain activation during a task – to verify whether adults with dyslexia process language differently from typical readers. The testing – performed while participants completed a phonics task – showed that several areas of the brain, predominantly on the left side, were less active in participants with dyslexia. These areas are associated with processing phonetic sounds and recognizing familiar objects.

The researchers then tested to see if instruction in phonics would improve reading ability and produce changes in brain activation. Test participants made gains of between 6 and 23 percent in text reading, phonetic awareness and the ability to decode the written word. FMRI testing revealed that improvements in reading corresponded to increased activity in areas of the brain associated with phonetic processing, being able to associate a symbol with a sound, and being able to recognize whether a string of letters represents a word.

Phonics-based instruction was chosen for the research because it has proven successful in children. According to Flowers, researchers are now working to see if a less intensive program will have the same benefits. She recommends that adult dyslexics who want to get reading instruction select a phonics-based program that focuses on the structure of language and how language works. It should also involve multiple senses, including how a letter looks, sounds, and feels.

A full report on the study was published in *LDA Newsbriefs*, Volume 40, No. 6, Nov./Dec. 2004.

Retention, persistence ... what's the difference?

Learner retention is an ongoing challenge for adult basic education programs, in which high attrition is common and accountability pressures are strong. Recently, researchers called on the field to rethink the concept of retention from the learner's point of view.

(Continued on page 4)

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Retention/persistence *(Continued from page 3)*

Comings, et al. (1999) proposed the term persistence because adults can persist in learning through self-study when they stop attending program services, sometimes returning to a program (not necessarily the one they dropped) after a lapse in attendance.

Thus, while the term retention defines this phenomenon from a program's point of view — the program wants to retain its students, Comings and Colleagues (1999) prefer the term persistence because it expresses the students' point of view — students persist in learning, inside and outside of a program, until they have achieved their goals.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) began a three-phase study of the factors that support and inhibit persistence in 1996. The first phase interviewed 150 adults and tracked their persistence in pre-GED classes (Comings, et al., 1999). The second phase studied the efforts of five library literacy programs as they attempted to increase student persistence over a three-year period (Comings et al., 2004). The third phase will test the recommendations developed in the first two phases. Information on these studies is available at <http://www.ncsall.net/>; click on "Research," then on "NCSALL Research Projects," then on "Adult Student Persistence."

Persistence: Adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to programs as soon as the demands of their lives allow.

A rise of just one percent in a nation's literacy scores yields a 2.5 percent increase in labor productivity and a 1.5 percent increase in GDP per person. —"Literacy scores, human capital and growth across 14 OECD countries," *Statistics Canada*. June 2004.

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