

## 05 Greater Opportunity Through Adult Learning

CONSORTIUM APPROVED

2023-24

### Plans & Goals

#### Executive Summary

Our second annual plan is consistent and aligned with the overarching three-year plan. The primary focus of our consortium is to continue supporting adult learners in advancing towards their academic goals and/or employment.

The past year was filled with both achievements and challenges.

#### Achievements

Our various members continue to make great strides in career education.

Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE) continues growing their program offerings and enrollments. This includes: Medical and Dental Assisting and continual growth of their newest offering, Building Trades and Pre-Apprenticeship Program (BTPA). Students that have graduated from the BTPA Program have successfully found employment in this career sector.

They have also added a Career Advancement Charter (CAC) High School Diploma site at the Probation Service Center, offering Spanish literacy classes in Watsonville, ongoing professional learning opportunities and the first Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program at the Rountree Correctional Facility.

Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education had their WASC mid-cycle review in March 2023. This review identified the following school strengths:

- An Administration who supports WASC staff members with encouragement, and opportunities to grow professionally and personally
- Partnerships with organizations which provide students with possible career opportunities
- Strong District support for the Adult School program.
- A collaborative and supportive staff who are dedicated to each other in order to create a learning environment that empowers all students to excel in CTE pathways and offers students a variety of career options such as CMA, CNA, Pharmacy Tech, Medical Terminology, and Dental Assistant.

In order to provide the region's ELL population with greater access to CTE pathway options, WASC continues offering courses in Personal Care Aide, Green Building and Welding Fabrication using the IET model of contextualized ESL for specific careers. Additionally, in response to the increasing shortage of healthcare workers in the region, WASC has added two new Health Career Education Pathway classes: Certified Health Aide; and Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse Aide.

WASC also offers the Building Trades Program Pre-Apprenticeship class, which aligns with Multi Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), and the Cosmetology Program is now on the Eligible Trainer Provider List for CalJobs and WIOA scholarships.

Cabrillo continues to develop more noncredit certificates and onboarding to credit pathways for adult learners. Spring 2023 Cabrillo offered its first noncredit courses for job readiness in the local corrections facility, Rountree. Students completed two Noncredit Certificates while earning hours for reduced time. In Summer 2023, Cabrillo started offering a Construction Energy Management certificate with IBEST support, as well as other popular courses such as Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Computer Applications and Business Technology courses (CABT). For the coming academic year, Cabrillo is slated to offer more than 30 Career Education Noncredit Certificates composed of over 100 Career Education Noncredit courses. This largest noncredit offering is designed to lower barriers for adult learners and increase job readiness. It also welcomed two new equity minded deans whose areas serve adult learners. One oversees ESL and the other is the new Dean of Career Ed. & Workforce formerly known as CTE.

The consortium now has a dashboard, consolidating data from all members. It has resulted in a comprehensive overview of our collective information. Notably, this tool has enabled a breakdown of data by geographical regions, specifically the north and south within our service area. While the sustainability of the dashboard remains uncertain due to ongoing reporting complexities, its creation stands as a significant achievement from members' collaboration

### **Challenges**

ESL Curriculum alignment continues to be a challenge as many roles impacting this work have changed in the past year including: changes in the consortium staff and key positions at the member agencies. The work does not fall directly in any one person's role/skills set and continues to be much more of a group/collaborative effort. Thus, with the consistent challenges of pandemic, fire, flood, retirements, and role changes the curriculum alignment continues to be delayed for more time sensitive items.

Even though the state of emergency ended in February, 2023, our region has continued to be impacted by weather related issues including flooding, which had a significant impact on the community, specifically in the Watsonville area where many of our students reside.

Data sharing and comparison continues to be problematic since the data collected varies across consortium members. The accuracy of the data, and the differences of reporting between the different systems is impeding the consortium's ability to have in-depth discussions centered around data.

### **Regional Planning Overview**

The various members continue to broaden their current program offerings trying to address the workforce and educational needs in the area. Not only are they expanding their program offerings, but they also seek ways to make them affordable and accessible. As a consortium we collectively understand that our students face several challenges when it comes to accessing their education including time to attend, money to cover fees, language and social barriers.

All members offer courses throughout the community trying to reach as many students as possible. This also requires flexibility in regards to when and how the courses are offered. The consortium will continue to work in outreach and retention across the county. All members now offer registration fairs while using a combination of mailers, radio, tabling, social media, etc. We continue to look for new and innovative ways to connect with our potential students in the most accessible ways possible.

There is a lot of momentum around short-term Career Technical Education (CTE) programs with high employment potential and pre-apprenticeship training, which is a priority in the three year plan. We plan to continue in this second year of the plan with the proper mapping and alignment of the various initiatives.

Aside from the innovation in the CTE area, classes for immigrants such as ESL and citizenship continue to be offered with great success. At the same time Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Diploma (HSD) and High School Equivalency (HSE) continue to expand in the area with both of our members offering programs in different instructional modes: direct instruction, independent learning lab and hybrid instruction. Spanish GED classes are also offered at our WASCAE locations.

All of these great efforts have to be coordinated and shared among the members. The work of the consortium is not organic yet, but the members continue to improve in their shared communication mostly through the regular board meetings.

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## **Meeting Regional Needs**

### **Regional Need #1**

#### **Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Adult learners encounter significant barriers when attempting to attend school. These obstacles include factors such as restrictive work schedules, low wages, and the need for childcare support. As a result, these students require adaptable programs along with wrap-around services.

These barriers carry multifaceted implications. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous courses shifted to online platforms, a trend that persists, particularly in certain ESL levels and specific courses, notably at the Community College. The predicament lies in finding an equilibrium between course formats that best serve students, considering their limited availability, while also factoring in completion and retention rates. During COVID (2022), 75% of students indicated in the student survey that they wanted courses in-person. However, this preference may have shifted due to exposure to alternative formats, potentially influencing preferences based on the flexibility they provide.

Low wages require many students to juggle multiple jobs, thereby impacting their ability to pursue an education or engage in credit programs with associated financial costs. This is why our programs need to be as flexible as possible, as students may initiate classes but subsequently need to adjust their schedules or stop attending due to fluctuating availability. Additionally, the repercussions of low wages extend to fundamental student needs, including food security, housing stability, and a host of other challenges stemming from financial limitations. These are challenges of which we need to be aware and provide assistance whenever possible. During the community focus groups, 57% of students indicated that they would like to get a better job.

Lastly, the persistent need for childcare remains an ongoing obstacle. The high cost associated with childcare poses a barrier for parents or caregivers, impeding their ability to attend classes or seek full-time employment. This challenge is intricately intertwined with the two previously described. Proving childcare is also a recommendation as part of the surveys and focus groups done during the three year plan.

#### **How do you know? What resources did you use to identify these gaps?**

In Santa Cruz County, approximately 66,745 people over 18 years old speak a language other than English at home according to the 2020 US Census. Current census data indicate 32,512 adults in the county speak English “less than well.” In addition, enrollment data trends also provided important insights.

Additional data and supportive information came from:

- The Community Needs Assessment.
- Consortium members data, survey and focus groups.
- Santa Cruz County Labor Market

#### **How will you measure effectiveness / progress towards meeting this need?**

The consortium will continue to monitor the data presented here and note the increase and/or decrease in the number of students who progress, transition or earn a degree or certificate or High School diploma/Equivalency using CASAS and local MIS. Specific outcomes will include:

- Increased enrollments in all program areas especially ESL and CTE
- Graduation rates
- Students will graduate from high school with increased math and English proficiency, improv

## **Address Educational Needs**

### **2023-24 Strategies**

#### **Strategy Name**

Math courses at the adult school

#### **Activity that Applies to this Strategy**

Pathways & Noncredit Development

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Success: Participants Who Earn a Postsecondary Credential (AE 625 - Overall)
- Transition: Participants with Transition to Postsecondary (CTE) (AE 636 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

With the recent changes around noncredit and pre-transfer math offerings at the community college level, Cabrillo and WASCAE are collaborating to guarantee that students in the area continue to have access to math classes that prepare them for transfer level math. Several technical careers also require students to demonstrate Intermediate Algebra competency. At the same time, students returning to school after a long break or those taking algebra for the first time need access to these pre-transfer level math classes. Through this collaboration, students will continue to have access to these critical courses.

The pilot program will feature a math class offered by WASCAE at the Carrillo campus. Its goal is to acquaint students with the college system and its resources, facilitating a smoother transition from pre-transfer math courses to transferable college-level math courses.

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### Strategy Name

English as a Second Language Curriculum Alignment

### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Consortium members will align their ESL curriculum

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Progress: Participants with Educational Functioning Levels Gains ESL (AE 400 - ESL)
- Student Barriers: Low Income (AE 310 - Overall)
- Student Barriers: Low Literacy (AE 311 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

ESL alignment is much needed at the consortium to allow students to move from one agency to another without having to take placement tests or being confused regarding next steps. The current members do not have a map that allows proper guidance for students. This would prove helpful to coordinate our class offerings, and allow the transition specialists and students to understand at what point they can transition to other programs that align with their educational needs.

This will also aid with the current limitations of student placement at the college level. Cabrillo is limited in what it can "recommend" to students based on the AB705 and AB1705 legislations, which has become a major obstacle. For context Assembly Bill 705 "dramatically changed the student assessment and placement system used in the California Community Colleges for English, mathematics, and English as a second language, as the implementation of the bill has shifted the primary basis for placement to students' high school performance."

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### Strategy Name

ESL Contextualization for CTE Courses

### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Improve contextualized class offerings IELCE

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Transition: Participants with Transition to Postsecondary (CTE) (AE 636 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

The consortium has already made some progress in this area, but the need is significant among our student population. ESL contextualization in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for adult learners is immensely beneficial because it aligns language instruction with practical, real-world skills. This approach tailors language learning to the specific content and tasks of the CTE field, making the material more relevant and engaging for students. By integrating language skills with the technical knowledge required in CTE, ESL contextualization not only enhances language proficiency but also equips adult learners with the communication abilities needed to succeed in their chosen vocational paths. Contextualization enhances comprehension, retention, and application of language skills, as learners can grasp the nuances of tone, usage, and cultural appropriateness. This approach also fosters engagement and motivation, as learners see the immediate value and utility of the language in their daily lives, whether it is for communication, work, or social interaction.

Our current CTE offerings in languages other than English, such as Spanish, are limited. Implementing contextualization presents an opportunity for us to accommodate students and enable their active participation in our program offerings.

Some of the current models have proven to be expensive, limiting its expansion. Alternative models are currently being explored.

## Improve Integration of Services & Transitions

### 2023-24 Strategies

#### Strategy Name

Improvement of Referral System

#### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Data Informed Decision Making

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Transition: Participants with Transition to ASE (AE 500 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

The transition specialists across the agencies continue to collaborate regularly. The consortium currently utilizes CommunityPro Suite (aka MyJourney aka Parin), which has been implemented to assist with coordination and reporting across the various members. This includes the submission of referrals and aids in the dual enrollment process for adult learners at Cabrillo. The consortium continues to work on the full adoption of this tool. The transition specialists will evaluate the challenges and benefits of this platform as well as consider alternatives in order to identify the best approach to support students.

#### Strategy Name

Expansion and Integration of Transition Specialists

#### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Maintain Transition Specialist

#### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Progress: Participants with Educational Functioning Levels Gains ABE (AE 400 - ABE)
- Transition: Participants with Transition to Postsecondary (CTE) (AE 636 - Overall)

#### Strategy Description

According to the three year plan, all members now have a transition specialist. This model has now expanded to include two transition specialists from Santa Cruz County Office of Education. Cabrillo also added the new position of Adult Learner Student Support Specialist, which overlaps with the work done by the transition specialists. This position was mentioned as part of the three year plan.

Now that these positions are in place, we have the opportunity to continue enhancing the work of the transition specialists as well as aligning practices to provide better support to the students.

A good example of integration involves the attendance of Cabrillo's Career Education Noncredit Academic Specialist at transition specialists meetings. This valued collaborator offers timely updates on current and upcoming course offerings, along with delivering training and sharing best practices for onboarding new staff members, including the Adult Learner Student Support Specialists.

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#### Strategy Name

Resource sharing and awareness

#### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Data Informed Decision Making

#### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Progress: Participants with Educational Functioning Levels Gains ASE (AE 400 - ASE)
- Transition: Participants with Transition to ASE (AE 500 - Overall)

#### Strategy Description

Staff across all member agencies address a wide array of student questions and needs. Enhancing student support requires maintaining efficient collaboration in sharing information and resources. Adopting a strategic approach is essential, especially considering the diverse range of needs that extend beyond the scope of transition specialists, such as legal advice, immigration services, and various non-educational concerns. Effective communication and resource sharing among key positions within member agencies, including transition specialists, are a must to effectively tackle these challenges.

## Improve Effectiveness of Services

### 2023-24 Strategies

#### Strategy Name

Better onboarding practices for students transitioning to College or returning to College

#### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Increased Access & Onboarding

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- All: Adults who Became Participants (AE 202 - Overall)
- Student Barriers: Low Income (AE 310 - Overall)
- Student Barriers: Low Literacy (AE 311 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

Transitioning between consortium members can pose challenges, and these challenges are particularly pronounced when students move from institutions like SCCOE or WASCAE to Cabrillo College. The enrollment process at the College involves numerous and diverse steps, which differ from the procedures students encounter when entering the other two institutions. This contrast encompasses more steps, additional information collection prerequisites, and greater navigation between the California Community College system requirements and the specific college prerequisites.

The transition specialists assist with this process as much as possible. The consortium and Carrillo have done a good job at supporting new college students. The process is smoother and more consistent with the use of the in-house noncredit application, easy to use ESL self-placement, and enrollment support from the transition specialists.

However, the use of this in-house application has turned up a particular challenge when a student continues to the next class and tries to navigate the system independently. We are looking to use referrals and other support measures to bridge this gap going forward. This gap has proven challenging when students are returning students and are expected to navigate the system on their own. This often occurs when they go through the process on their own without a proper referral.

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### Strategy Name

Summer cohort program

### Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Pathways & Noncredit Development

### Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Success: Participants Who Earn a Postsecondary Credential (AE 625 - Overall)
- Transition: Participants with Transition to Postsecondary (CTE) (AE 636 - Overall)

### Strategy Description

Students not only need to learn to navigate higher education institutions and its various components, but they also lack a support system that can increase their feeling of belonging. In order to create a space that better prepares students to navigate college and meet peers with shared experiences as adult learners, the transition specialists want to collaborate and develop a summer program that seeks to cohort students transitioning from SCCOE and WASCAE and who will start attending Cabrillo.

The proposed model would include an English bridge course and a potential one-unit course designed to familiarize students with essential student platforms and resources crucial for successful navigation of their college journey. A counseling piece is also a priority. These ideas mark the initial stages of our planning. We are enthusiastic about the prospect of partnering with representatives from WASCAE, SCCOE, and Cabrillo College to gain a comprehensive understanding of the necessary components.

Our intention is to establish a first-year pilot program that will continuously enhance over time.

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### Strategy Name

Faculty collaboration

**Activity that Applies to this Strategy**

Professional Learning Communities

**Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy**

- Progress: Participants with Educational Functioning Levels Gains ABE (AE 400 - ABE)
- Progress: Participants with Educational Functioning Levels Gains ESL (AE 400 - ESL)
- Transition: Participants with Transition to ASE (AE 500 - Overall)

**Strategy Description**

There is a need for faculty collaboration across the different member agencies. It will be ideal to provide a better sense of the work at the consortium level, share best practices as well as increase collaboration that will benefit the work of the consortium and students' success as they transition from one institution to another or attend them both simultaneously. A potential starting point could be the summer cohort as indicated in strategy number two.

The original learning community was conceptualized for the Adult Education ESL/Learning Center departments (WASCAE) to create a series of common formative assessments to inform instruction and improve students' learning. However, we believe this similar space and format can be utilized to explore other collaborations that can help students in other ways. Overall, the goal remains the same and that is to increase the number of students making level gains and create bridges to workforce training and educational pathways to the local community college.

**Fiscal Management**

**A narrative justifying how the planned allocations are consistent with the annual adult education plan which is based on your CAEP 3-year plan.**

All spending across our consortium is consistent with CAEP Fiscal Guidance and AB 104. The consortium Director reviews member spending by major object code before certifying expenditures on NOVA. Regular consortium board meetings provide governance around policies and procedures.

Additionally, each member provides regular written and verbal updates at every board meeting, ensuring that the board, other members, and community stakeholders are informed about the work, progress, and challenges of each agency. These updates are precisely structured and align with the three-year plan.

**An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2023-24.**

All members are aware of the 15% carryover limit, and they will make the corresponding adjustments to stay below the percentage. Given the recent rises in employee compensation and the introduction of new program offerings, there will be an associated increase in expenses for our larger member. It is anticipated that this increment will effectively offset any substantial carryover. The remainder of the funds will continue to support services provided to the students as well as implementing new strategies.

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