

14 Desert Regional Consortium

Plans & Goals - Consortium Approved

Executive Summary

Desert Regional Consortium (DRC) Board members represent adult education institutions from throughout the Coachella Valley and bring a deep understanding of the diverse population they serve. The initial push to expand access to English as a Second Language (ESL), High School Diploma (HSD), High School Equivalency (HSE), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Citizenship (CIT) programs has been successful. These classes, including Spanish or dual-language options, serve the most basic underlying academic and linguistic needs of the region. The regional framework, along with the intent to share resources across historical boundaries, allows the DRC to expand and adapt programming based on current and future needs, as opposed to specific institutional budget priorities and limitations. The DRC has found creative ways to leverage CAEP funding in order to provide critical student supports and overcome barriers to access. The 2020-21 program year will focus on increasing student achievement and opportunity in our region, with a focus on supporting college and career transitions. The new challenges will be to migrate classes to an online platform to accomplish these goals. The DRC aims to work together to ensure that more students obtain employment in the industries for which they have trained, to ensure that more students earn high school diplomas (or equivalent) throughout the region, and that more students are empowered to earn certifications for job skills and workforce readiness. Beyond this, the DRC aims to increase the percentage of students who persist in working towards associate degrees for transfer or 4-year degrees. Members aim to increase the number of students who obtain a measurable skill gain, as assessed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS). Finally, the DRC will collaborate in the 2020-21 program year on developing a collaborative online pilot to support adults in gaining CTE and basic literacy skills through the pilot program. Using local labor and employment data, as well as surveying the needs of our students, the DRC will develop an online pilot program(s) to train adult learners for high-demand jobs while developing these learners' basic skills and level of literacy.

Regional Planning Overview

The DRC has worked collaboratively to develop a three-year plan that focuses on the collective strengths of our agencies and meeting ongoing and future regional needs. Our shared vision is to empower adult learners throughout the Coachella Valley as they pursue their educational and vocational goals. We work towards this vision by collecting and assessing data about regional needs, identifying areas of opportunity, and collaborating to maximize our agencies' shared impact. Planning activities have included assessing regional adult education agency's capacity, assessing programs and support services, and gathering data about our community and our learners. Further, the DRC surveyed the economic outlook for the Coachella Valley, including individual cities and the region as a whole. The DRC identified both challenges and opportunities in the region and created a plan for achieving short and long-term goals. The DRC also seeks partnerships and collaborations within and outside of the consortium to support student achievement. The DRC meets monthly to share best-practices, update one another on progress towards our shared goals, and to plan future initiatives. One continued best practice is to regularly analyze our collective CASAS data across the consortium, and to compare data collection and analysis strategies. These insights have helped us to identify student goals and barriers to achievement. We will continue to center student and regional data in our planning efforts. Further, we collectively engage regional data about the labor market, employment trends, and the economic future of the Coachella Valley. Scheduled Meetings will continue to have presentations from local stakeholders who share an interest in developing local residents' economic and academic opportunities. As our current Three-Year plan did not include transitioning seat time classes to an online platform in total, the DRC is not only developing strategies to meet this challenge via the Internet, but also moving all classes to an online presence.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

Since 2014, the DRC has made substantial progress in rebuilding and bolstering the region's adult education system. The DRC Leadership Board has grown into a functional and collaborative body that has been able to form lasting and beneficial partnerships. The DRC's efforts the past few years have increased accessibility to adult programs through impactful and innovative programs and services. While the DRC has addressed many of the adult education system's immediate needs, there are still challenges and gaps for the Consortium to focus efforts on moving forward. The following initial recommendations are intended to inform the DRC's planning process for adult education programs and services. They are also meant to support ongoing activities to strengthen and expand the region's adult education system. These recommendations and strategies are based on Resource Development Associates Needs Assessment findings, CAEP priority areas, and best or promising practices. Each of the recommendations fall into three categories: 1. Expanding adult education programs and services. 2. Strengthening adult education partnerships. 3. To increase DRC capacity, the goal of these recommendations is to provide the DRC Leadership Board with an initial framework to continue to address the region's gaps and barriers, leverage the Consortium's resources and strengths, and implement lasting changes to the region's adult education system. In addition, streamlining of course offerings to reduce redundancies and make clear, marketable pathways for students. DRC Board members discussed identifying course sequences that DRC institutions can share, instead of duplicating efforts by having similar classes offered at each location. For example, ESL courses could be split, with the lower course levels offered by CVAS and more advanced levels offered by COD. Identifying additional pathways across institutions can be a beneficial strategy for sharing resources and supporting students who wish to advance their education, potentially even to a four-year degree. The process of identifying additional pathways should include students, teachers and faculty perspectives to best standardize curriculum and instruction. Additionally, DRC members are leveraging resources like career counselors to help students identify and navigate these pathways. Continue growing CTE course offerings that align with the region's economic needs. A review of the projected economic and employment trends, as well as the region's economic priorities, indicates that the DRC is considering the following CTE activities to best align with the region's economic needs: 1. Create offerings for supply chain management, logistics, technology and renewable energy fields. 2. Explore possibility of CTE or short-term CTE programs for information technology and computer science. 3. Expand offerings for healthcare and construction fields. 4. Maintain offerings for administrative/office skills and real estate fields. 5. The use of multiple measures to include TOPSPRO data, ASAP attendance data, graduation rates and CTE certificate completions, survey student data will be used to measure student progress. In addition, data will be disaggregated to faculty, staff, students and administration. The DRC primarily serves largely a Hispanic and low-income communities, especially in the more eastern and western areas of the region. Communities to the east include a large non-English-speaking migrant population. Sixty-nine percent of teachers noted a very common reason for student enrollment was to improve English skills in order to better communicate with others. Twenty-four percent of students surveyed felt that a lack of English-language skills was a barrier to attendance; however, the ESL population is diverse. There is a noticeable population of professionals who have immigrated to the U.S. and just need to hone their English-language skills. Many students need childcare and other supports, including financial supports, to be able to attend classes. Adults with disabilities often need specialized supports and, depending on the type of disability, this may include equipment, modified curriculum, and/or specialized instruction. Students are juggling multiple jobs or working to find a job in a region with highly seasonal employment options. Many DRC members described both the urban and rural populations as "transient;" thus, personal information can quickly become outdated and outreach efforts or attempts to provide educational continuity are difficult. The Desert Region is also large and there are many sparsely populated areas. Whereas, transportation options have been limited throughout the region, the new challenge due to the Coronavirus-19 National Emergency eliminates transportation issues and highlights the strength of our current Internet, software, online courses and infrastructure as the new challenge to provide adult education for our adult students.

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

After a two-year study by Resource Development Associates, provided the DRC, in October 2017, with an adult Education Needs Assessment. The assessment identified that DRC adult learners encounter a wide array of barriers and challenges to achieving academic or career success. The DRC will continue to use CAEP funds for programs and services that support smooth transitions, accelerate progress, and mitigate barriers for adult learners. The DRC will continue investing in transition services, such as counselors and advisers. It has established regular cross-agency meetings for transition and student support staff to coordinate services. The DRC is working to help accelerate student progress by aligning and articulating courses from adult schools to community colleges, developing resources for students (e.g., an inventory of CTE and academic course sequences), and integrating workforce skills into ESL and ABE curricula. The DRC will be meeting to collaborate on how best to utilize online tools to deliver instruction.

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

DRC members have adopted or augmented new systems and technology depending on their own individual needs. Several data personnel across DRC institutions noted that CAEP reporting requirements motivated institutions to grow their data capacity and staff resources, as per RDA interviews. All data staff interviewed noted the adoption or imminent adoption of new technology at their institution. The California Department of Education now requires all CAEP members to report a variety of student information (e.g., attendance, testing, demographics, and student goals) via TOPSpro Enterprise. As an adult school, CVAS was already compliant, while others have worked over the last couple of years to enable a smoother interface with TOPSpro Enterprise. The data was used to maintain the Professional Learning Community model: Standards Based, Data Driven and Results Oriented. The consensus among data personnel was that data capacity will continue to grow as institutions are expected to meet both new CAEP requirements and more sophisticated data needs, such as sharing data with other DRC members or tracking students through various programs and employment. In addition, RCOE SCE is required to collect completion, placement, and licensure student outcome data as part of their Annual Institutional Report. This data is collected from all comprehensive, short term, and job upgrade courses. To maintain its Council on Occupational Education (COE) Reaffirmation accreditation status, benchmarks must be maintained. Therefore, the DRC is highly confident measuring effectiveness across all DRC members and identifying additional gaps to be addressed or positive practices identified. Metrics for effectiveness and increasing capacity include increased graduation rates, GED completion, industry certificate completion, attendance data, and common member TOPSPro data. Maintaining regular calendared consortium subcommittee data meetings for the purpose of increasing data integrity, data-driven decision-making, and strategic program improvement. An emphasis will be to address CTE gaps and increase enrollment in ABE, ASE and ESL programs consortium wide. In an effort to ensure educational integrity and effectiveness, the DRC will require that all student programs be offered through agencies accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and/or other recognized accrediting institutions.

Gaps In Service

New Strategies

Strategy #1

The DRC has made great progress in developing resource-sharing agreements between specific members to expand the regional AE system. The consortium has benefited from examining additional strategies such as developing a shared process to develop articulated curricula and share resources for students across different agencies. Increased coordination of counselors has resulted in an exchange of best practices that has benefited the consortium as a whole and has contributed to a more consistent student experience. While the DRC has moved toward collaboration as it has expanded the geographical reach of programs, it is still working to reconcile historical or traditional boundaries between providers with current and future capacity needs. In the past, organizational red tape and system misalignment among DRC members has hindered program and service coordination. This contributed to inefficiencies such as duplication of administrative efforts and transition barriers for students. The move to a more fully integrated, regional AE system has eliminated previous gaps in service areas. Regional unemployment data and community input is examined on a quarterly basis to ensure classes are placed in the locations of most need. In an effort to ensure educational integrity and effectiveness, the DRC will require that all student programs be offered through agencies accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS-WASC). The County Office of Education (RCOE) adult education program serves the incarcerated students in the region and is partnering with College of the Desert (COD) on a CTE Culinary program at John D. Benoit Detention Center (JBDC), the new jail which is slated to open in Indio in 2020. The Coronavirus pandemic has slowed progress on the opening of the jail and the start of the new joint program. However, when the new correctional facility opens and programs are phased in (tentatively during 2020-21), the CTE Culinary program will be offered. Implementing programs such as this at the jail facility allows the consortium to help to close gaps in services in the community.

Seamless Transitions

New Strategies

Strategy #1

In an effort to seamlessly transition students from Adult School to College, the DRC has helped develop a one of a kind innovative regional partnership. Through this partnership with the City of Coachella and the Coachella Valley Adult School, College of the Desert has committed to offering a guaranteed two-year General Education (GE) schedule at the Coachella Library. Upon completion, students earn a Certificate of Achievement and meet the GE requirements to transfer to the University of California, the California State University, and many other four-year institutions. Through this partnership, 35 students will receive access to key academic and student support services such as financial aid, registration support, online counseling, and free 24/7/365 online tutoring services to help them achieve success. The convenient Monday and Wednesday evening schedule allows students to work or pursue other endeavors during the day. Enrollment preference is given to recent Coachella Valley Adult School students for the full two years. College of the Desert has offered a special Edge-pLEDGE college bridge transition program for Coachella Valley Adult School Students. In order to ensure students have a seamless transition, College of the Desert has included a special web portal on their web page to assist Adult School students in their application process. Additionally, College of the Desert has committed to offer Adult School students with laptops and wireless Internet hotspots to ensure their success. DRC Consortium members will coordinate adding transition counselors to assist adults and create a pathway to higher education possibilities. The DRC will establish transitional support collaboration between member agencies for the purpose of guiding students through post-secondary college and career educational pathways. Creating smoother pathways for students to achieve their educational and vocational goals may include improving communication and outreach, hiring cross-agency personnel to support student success and achievement, and collaborating to create student-centered college and workforce readiness training. The Desert Regional Consortium will improve transitions for incarcerated students as well. Through the education programs that RCOE provides at John Benoit Detention Center (Indio Jail) and the Day Reporting Center, the consortium supports students reentering society, seeking work, and applying for college. The consortium will continue to fund the high school equivalency and CTE programs that give the incarcerated students improved opportunities to continue their education and to find employment in the region. The consortium members will continue to plan collaboratively to provide support for incarcerated students returning to the community.

Student Acceleration**New Strategies****Strategy #1**

In an effort to accelerate the workplace transition of English as a Second Language students, the Desert Regional Consortium has begun to develop short term Integration of Education and Training programs. These programs allow English Language Learners to co-enroll into CTE courses and ESL classes allowing students to obtain industry recognized certificates at accelerated rates. The first program developed is a Hospitality Industry Professional Training for English as a Second Language students. The pathway consists of a series of training that build on pathway specific terminology and certifications and ultimately lead to a career in the thriving Coachella Valley Hotel and Hospitality Industry. The three main courses are Guest Service Gold, Banquet Server Training and Culinary Knife Skills. Additionally, the Desert Regional Consortium has developed an Administrative Office Professional career pathway for English as a Second Language students. The pathway consists of a series of sequenced classes which build on pathway-specific terminology and certifications and ultimately lead to an administrative assistant position in an office and/or home-based business. An identified DRC strategy which has worked well is short-term CTE courses: CVUSD, DSUSD, PSUSD Short-Term CTE: Computer Operator/Business Applications, Microsoft Certification, Real Estate Licensing, Notary Public, and Multiple online courses. RCOE short term programs Medical Assistant Boot camp, and Administrative Office Professional Boot camp; and Comprehensive Programs, Administrative Office Professional, Registered Dental Assistant, Pharmacy Technician and Medical Clinical Administrative Professional courses are all designed to accelerate students into the workplace. All programs except Registered Dental Assistant are 630 hours or less.

Professional Development

New Strategies

Strategy #1

During the 2020-21 school year the Desert Regional Consortium will build on their previous successful PD events with a joint training event sponsored by the California Department of Education. The DRC in partnership with CDE and CALPRO offered Instructors a three-part hybrid professional development entitled Community of Practice: Optimizing ESL Instructional Planning: Management, Monitoring and Reflection in Coachella. This training was intended for instructors of adult English as a Second Language (ESL) of all proficiency levels. This training presented an optimal process for instructional planning through management, monitoring, and reflection. Strategies and activities focusing on these three processes were introduced and immediately implemented in the classroom. Participants are supported in integrating the activities and materials into their instructional practices in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom. Over 40 ESL instructors (from CVUSD, DSUSD, and PSUSD) completed the training. The DRC will continue to engage in available Professional Development resources from CALPRO, OTAN, CAEP, and CASAS –both in-person, online (synchronous and asynchronous) and in hosting local events for the benefit of the entire consortium (i.e., localized workshops). Possible topics may include data-driven decision-making, equity-minded practices, growth mindset practices, and raising awareness about the needs and motivations of adult learners. During 2019-20, the DRC members benefited from the opportunities to collaborate at professional development events such as the CAEP Summit. Keeping in mind that the COVID-19 crisis has perhaps permanently changed professional interaction norms and may have an impact on funding for conferences, the DRC will continue to invest time and energy in professional development activities that will strengthen the efficacy of their work and the unity of the consortium. During 2020-2021, the DRC may participate in more online professional development activities rather than in-person training, but it will continue to ensure that the programs have access to current information, partnership opportunities, and best educational practices.

Leveraging Resources

New Strategies

Strategy #1

DRC will partner and consult with Local WorkForce Development Board and Riverside County Agencies to improve student transitions into the workforce. Additionally, the three Coachella Valley K-12 school districts (Desert Sands Unified School District, Palm Springs Unified School District and Coachella Valley Unified School District) will continue to maximize resources by utilizing the instructors and administrative staff from College of the Desert and Coachella Valley Adult School. Given the high unemployment rate that has transpired as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the DRC will collaborate and to create shared goals. DRC will create a shared workforce employer advisory with Riverside School of Career Education. The Desert Regional Consortium will continue to leverage the resources of Riverside County Probation to offer adult education programs to adults on probation. RCOE will partner with Probation to provide educational services at the Day Reporting Center in Indio, including a full-time teacher, high school equivalency and online job training. As a member of the multidisciplinary team at the Day Reporting Center, RCOE will continue to collaborate with Probation on a program that provides behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment support, job training, social services, and job permit testing for adults who are trying to make positive changes in their lives. In addition, RCOE will continue to leverage the resources available through its partnership with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department to fund the education program at the Riverside County jails.

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 Desert Regional Consortium members unanimously approved the DRC Three-Year Plan, which contains various ongoing/new programs, as well as pilots to be implemented. Funds were allocated for administering existing/new school sites, purchasing required administrative reporting software/hardware, staffing, maintaining faculty, providing counseling,

professional development and upgrading/replacing equipment. The DRC annual plan reevaluates and focuses on specifics of the Three-Year plan to be accomplished. As the DRC proceeds, additional adjustments will be made to our Three-Year Plan to deal with unplanned changes. The current challenge is the National Emergency with the coronavirus pandemic. New challenges to the DRC are dealing with school closures, social distancing, migrating to online delivery and seeking strategies that were not considered at the time of the writing of the 3-Year Plan. Nonetheless, the DRC is committed to completing the objectives stated in the 3-Year Plan.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2020-21.

All CAEP funds from present and prior years are used to fund DRC adult education programs. If a member is unable to use all their funding, the DRC will meet to determine additional needs and to determine how to expend said funds to address any pending needs. MOUs are created between members after a unanimous vote for the expenditure of unused funds.

Certification

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06/16/2020 01:59 PM PDT

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06/18/2020 03:11 PM PDT

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06/17/2020 02:05 PM PDT

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06/16/2020 11:07 AM PDT



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