

61 Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium

Plans & Goals

Executive Summary

The Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium (SCAEC) has six member agencies. Three are funded educational service providers: Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC), Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) and Petaluma Adult School (PAS). Three are unfunded members: Windsor Unified School District, Santa Rosa City Schools and Sonoma Valley Unified School District.

Allocations for the three service providers in the Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium for the 2022-23 fiscal year were agreed upon by the consortium members through a formal vote of the Oversight Committee on August 24, 2022 and are aligned with the goals and objectives in the annual plan and three-year plan for the consortium. The funding for the 2022/23 was split between the three service providers: Petaluma Adult School (53.30%), Sonoma County Community College District (38.97%), and Sonoma County Office of Education (7.73%). Each service provider has received the same percentage of the allocation for the last three years.

The SCAEC's vision is to provide free adult education classes and programs to residents throughout Sonoma County. Course and program offerings allow students to improve their English language skills, prepare for the citizenship exam, earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, and acquire workplace skills and training that can lead to in-demand, living-wage careers. In addition, the SCAEC works to remove barriers to education by connecting adult education students with the types of assistance and support they may need to successfully reach their educational and career goals.

Even though the majority of classes continued to be offered online in Program Year 2021-22, data from SCAEC educational service providers indicates that 7,869 students participated in one or more of the 450 course sections offered in ESL and citizenship, HSD/HSE, short-term CTE, and special education. In addition, SRJC was awarded a CAI grant to partner with Golden Gate Transit (GGT), the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1575, California Transit Works, and College of Marin (COM) to provide a pipeline of applicants, many from low-income communities in Sonoma and Marin counties to the GGT Bus Operator Apprenticeship Program at COM. SRJC's one-semester-long, pre-apprenticeship courses are aligned with and lead directly to the associated apprenticeship program at COM. Completion of both programs is expected to lead to a high rate of job placement at GGT and a living wage.

The primary goal for Program Year 2022-23 is to increase student enrollment in SRJC's ESL and HSE program areas by 10%. This will be achieved by offering in-person classes at all campus locations, as well as off-site locations in the community. In addition, both SRJC and PAS will be offering a variety of both in-person and online courses to allow students to pick the modality that best meets their learning style and fits into their schedule. Further efforts that SRJC will be making to increase ESL and HSE student enrollment include expanding outreach, holding large scale registration and orientation events, and having direct and sustained contact with students throughout the semester.

Regional Planning Overview

Implementation of SCAEC's 2022-25 three-year plan is focused on retaining students who entered adult education programs during the pandemic while simultaneously building back in-person programs so that more students can be served effectively and equitably. Towards this end, both SRJC and PAS will offer a range of ESL, HSD/HSE, and short-term CTE courses online and in-person. In addition, both agencies are again offering classes at offsite locations in order to re-establish their presence in the

community. Enrollment will be closely monitored to gauge student interest and needs, and adjustments made to course offerings as necessary. Finally, SCOE will return to providing its basic construction courses in a face-to-face format.

During the pandemic, much of the SCAEC's student outreach efforts were conducted online. Now that more large-scale, in-person events are being held across Sonoma County, educational service providers can return to their past practice of having information booths at such events to talk with residents about adult education opportunities. While these efforts will result in increased enrollment, it is hoped that other strategies will lead to increased transition rates. For example, SRJC will hold large-scale registration and orientation events which will include an overview of all adult education program areas, as well as break-out sessions focusing on specific areas of interest. In addition, adult education outreach specialists will work with ESL, HSE, and short-term CTE instructors to schedule presentations to inform students of the education and workforce opportunities available.

Two other strategies to be implemented in 2022-23 and expected to lead to short-term outcomes are direct and sustained contact with students, and a return to in-person CASAS testing of whole classes. Since its inception, SRJC's Adult Education Program has engaged directly with students, one-on-one, to assist with registration and certificate completion paperwork and provide support services to help students return to class. This type of contact will now be expanded to include SRJC's ESL and HSE programs in order to improve retention and certificate completion rates. (It should be noted that an increase in certificate completion rates is not expected until Program Year 2). Second, with a return to in-class instruction, SRJC's ESL program will once again be able to administer CASAS testing on-site. This will lead both to increased numbers of students testing and gains in educational functioning levels.

Finally, the SCAEC will implement a professional development plan to not only improve instructional consistency across educational service providers and within SRJC's ESL and HSE program areas, but also to re-establish a sense of community among faculty that was diminished as a result of the pandemic. A minimum of four large-scale trainings are planned for 2022-23. Two topics planned for the fall 2022 semester include using CASAS data to inform instruction and the use of common writing assessments to evaluate student readiness to progress. SRJC's Adult Education Program will also work with the ESL and College Skills department chairs to identify conferences and online trainings that would be of value to interested faculty. Having a robust professional development program not only improves instruction and, therefore, student retention, but also leads to greater job satisfaction.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

SCAEC educational service providers (SRJC, PAS, and SCOE) offer non-credit ABE, ASE, ESL, short-term CTE, AWD, and K-12 Success classes to address the educational needs of the region's population. Collectively, these agencies experienced a significant decline in participants when the pandemic hit and instruction went online. This decline is attributed to barriers often faced by adult education students, including a lack of access to technology, as well as adequate English language and digital literacy skills. In addition, not all subject areas, such as construction and landscaping, can be effectively taught in a remote environment. Finally, some students simply prefer an in-person instructional modality. As the region's educational service providers return to offering more in-person classes, the SCAEC has identified increasing the number of adult education participants as the most significant regional need in 2022-23.

SRJC is the region's largest educational service provider, so they experienced the largest decline in enrollment of all three agencies. In addition, it continued to offer mostly online-only classes through summer 2022. To increase enrollment in program year 2022-23, SRJC will:

- offer more hybrid and in-person classes while continuing with remote-only options, as well;
- partner with local community service agencies to provide off-campus classes;
- expand outreach efforts;
- hold large-scale registration and orientation events; and
- increase the number of participants in ESL and HSE program areas by having direct and sustained communication with students.

Because adult education programs, such as PAS, do not have the student enrollment requirements that community colleges do, PAS has been able to be more flexible in rebuilding robust enrollment. PAS returned to in-person instruction in 2021-22 while at the same time providing several online options in all program areas for students who could not physically return to class. As a result, enrollment in ASE classes returned to pre-pandemic levels. Enrollment in ESL and K-12 Success classes, however, did not similarly rebound. Based on student interest surveys from 2021-22 as well as student inquiries via website, email and phone, enrollment in all PAS program areas is expected to surpass 2021-22 and approach pre-pandemic levels for 2022-23.

SCOE offers classes in construction skills, which students learn more efficiently and effectively in face-to-face instruction. As a result, their participant numbers dropped when courses had to be moved online due to the pandemic. SCOE began the return to in-person instruction in the 2021-22 school year, which increased participant numbers. It is hoped that numbers will further increase in the 2022-23 school year.

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

Prior to developing the CAEP Three-Year Plan, the SCAEC surveyed and met with adult education stakeholders and students to gather information to evaluate, assess, and identify needs and gaps in educational and workforce services. In addition, data from the U.S. Census, Launchboard's Adult Education Pipeline, SRJC's Student Information System, and PAS statistics were analyzed to identify new and confirm anecdotal education and workforce service gaps.

Per the U.S. Census, there were 188,958 households and 488,863 people residing in Sonoma County. Of these,

- 25.9% of households in Sonoma County speak a language other than English at home,
- 11.9% of residents lack a high school diploma or its equivalent,
- 7.6% of residents under age 65 have a disability, and
- 7.8% of residents live in poverty.

These statistics clearly demonstrate the region's need for ESL, HSD/HSE, AWD, and short-term CTE program area classes, all of which educational service providers offer. Even pre-pandemic, Launchboard's Adult Education Pipeline indicates that participant numbers were only a small percentage of the County population that could benefit from education and workforce services. The transition to online-only instruction made necessary by COVID simply exacerbated the problem as evidenced by a 29.4% decline in enrollment from 2019-20 to 2020-21.

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

Participants are defined as students receiving 12 or more hours of instruction. All three education service providers record student information and track hours of instruction in TOPSpro Enterprise. Key data points are then uploaded from TOPSpro to Launchboard so that the SCAEC can evaluate and assess progress towards increasing student enrollment. In addition, SRJC can create attendance reports using its internal Student Information System.

Regional Need #2

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

In addition to a decline in participants, the SCAEC also identified a 36.3% decline in students making gains in Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) between 2019-20 and 2020-21. While a portion of this decline in EFLs can be attributed to the overall

decline in enrollment, the number of CASAS tests administered in SRJC's ESL classes was also significantly reduced during COVID for a number of reasons. First, testing remotely proved to be much more cumbersome and inefficient as compared to in-person testing. Rather than hire more proctors, the Adult Education Program and the ESL Department decided to test only classes in which students were also completing EL COAAPs as opposed to testing all no credit ESL classes as had been done in the past. Finally, not everyone who was slated to take a CASAS test was able to do so because of a lack of access to or issues with technology, including stable internet connections.

With a return to in-person instruction, SRJC will once again administer CASAS testing on-site during regularly scheduled class times. This approach allows a single proctor to administer the test to an entire class at one time. Students taking online classes and who live in the Santa Rosa area, will be given the option of taking the test at SRJC's Southwest Center on select dates.

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

Gains in EFLs are measured by increases in students' CASAS test scores within an academic year. TOPSpro is used to manage student test data which is then uploaded to the Launchboard where the decline in EFLs was measured.

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

Effectiveness will be measured by an increase in EFL gains over the prior year. Educational service providers will also assess their effectiveness by comparing agency data to statewide data as reported on the NRS.

Address Educational Needs

2022-23 Strategies

Strategy Name

Increase the number of participants

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Direct and sustained contact with students

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- All: Adults who Became Participants (AE 202 - Overall)

Strategy Description

To increase participant numbers, all SCAEC education service providers will be optimizing instructional modalities and course offerings to address student demand and interest. In particular,

- SCOE will return to offering its construction skills course in a face-to-face format;
- PAS solicited input from students to develop a class schedule with both online and in-person options; and
- SRJC is offering a range of classes on all three campuses, as well as at off-site locations in the community, while still retaining online options for students who prefer that modality.

The objective of this strategy is to increase the number of participants receiving education and workforce services by engaging students who prefer face-to-face instruction, while at the same time retaining those students who prefer the online modality.

SRJC will be implementing two other strategies to address adult educational needs, barriers and gaps in the 2022-23 program year: expanding outreach efforts and having direct and sustained contact with ESL and HSE students.

In preparing the CAEP Three-Year Plan, the SCAEC discovered they are serving only a small percentage of the Sonoma County population who could benefit from participating in the educational and workforce services provided. One way to address this gap is to expand outreach efforts in order to increase enrollment. In the past, adult education Outreach Specialists have successfully used social media, in-class presentations, and flyers to build enrollment in short-term CTE programs. These strategies will be applied to ESL and HSE. Outreach Specialists will also work with community partners to inform their clients of non-credit opportunities in their service areas. Furthermore, with a return to in-person community events, Outreach Specialists will have an opportunity to talk with attendees about non-credit programs; a successful strategy prior to COVID. Finally, professional promotional videos are being created for noncredit ESL, HSE and CTE programs for use on social media.

The activity identified above, direct and sustained contact with students-- is associated with SRJC's second strategy aimed at improving retention in their ESL and HSE classes. Since its inception, it has been the practice of SRJC's Adult Education Program to engage with students enrolled in their short-term CTE classes. This engagement includes using texting applications to remind students of a class' start date and time, and inquire if they need directions to the class' location. As the semester progresses, Outreach Specialists and student employees reach out to absent students so that they can help them return to class by answering questions or putting them in contact with other support services if necessary. While this practice of supportive and sustained student contact leads to higher retention rates, it has not been consistently applied in SRJC's ESL and HSE program areas. Expanding this strategy to include all adult education students at SRJC is expected to result in a 10% increase in ESL and HSE participants in 2022-23.

Finally, Petaluma Adult School will continue to provide a wide range of wraparound services to support the school community and adult education students at its Family Resource Center located on the McDowell School campus. These services help students overcome barriers such as childcare, access to state and federal benefits, food insecurity, mental health resources, and immigration services so that they can access education and workforce services.

Improve Integration of Services & Transitions

2022-23 Strategies

Strategy Name

Improve transition rates

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Direct and sustained contact with students

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Student Barriers: English Language Learner (AE 305 - Overall)

Strategy Description

The Launchboard's Transition to Postsecondary data indicates a transition rate of 15% for 2019-20, a decline of 7% from the prior year. Both sets of transition rates are unacceptable and several causes and strategies have been identified to address this

gap. Because the SCAEC will begin laying the foundation for increasing transition rates in 2022-23, no strategies will be fully implemented or results anticipated in the upcoming program year.

One strategy that can be implemented sooner rather than later is for SRJC student support staff to schedule presentations in adult education classes to inform students of the full range of program areas offered: ESL, HSE, and short-term CTE. This can benefit adult education ESL students, in particular, as many often lack a high school diploma or its equivalent and make less than a living wage. Similarly, student support staff can hold workshops in transition-level classes in an effort to increase students' transition from noncredit to credit. In these workshops, students will be allowed to see and ask questions about credit coursework in a familiar, low-stakes environment. When students have a face and contact information for someone who can assist them with the transition process, they are more likely to follow through on taking that next step.

Another path to helping students transition from noncredit to credit programs is through the HSE Dual Enrollment program provided under SB 554. PAS currently has an agreement with SRJC to provide free credit classes for their qualifying HSD students, but no students have yet been referred. SRJC needs its own HSE Dual Enrollment program. In 2022-23, the Adult Education Program will work with other noncredit stakeholders to apply for and develop a plan for SRJC's HSE students. These types of programs are effective because they provide a bridge to credit programs and address financial barriers to education.

A third strategy to improve transition rates is to expand the level and types of support services dedicated to noncredit programs at SRJC. A variety of student support services are currently available to noncredit students on Petaluma, Santa Rosa, and Southwest Center campuses: counseling, career development, financial aid, tutoring, and disability resources. Unfortunately, the staff in these departments are not necessarily familiar with the needs of nontraditional, noncredit adult education students. In addition, support service staff visit on- and off-site classes only upon request and are not regularly available in the evenings and on weekends when students are. Dedicating student support services to noncredit, adult education program areas requires buy-in from SRJC administrators. To attain this buy-in, SRJC's noncredit stakeholders need to develop a coordinated strategy to inform administrators how their programs speak to the College's vision, mission, and values, and the benefits of making meaningful investments in noncredit. In 2022-23, SRJC will take the first step in implementing this strategy: identifying its noncredit stakeholders and establishing a noncredit stakeholders committee.

The final strategy is associated with the activity identified above: direct and sustained contact with students. SRJC noncredit programs offer a number of short-term certificates that can be completed in one to three semesters. These certificates show students' progress or achievement along a pathway towards career development and college preparation, and can lead to improved employability and wages. In 2020-2021, SRJC's Adult Education Program awarded short-term CTE certificates to 156 completers. ESL and HSE certificate completer numbers pale in comparison. To address the gap in completers across program areas, the successful practices employed by the Adult Education Program need to be applied to ESL and HSE. Beginning in 2022-23, Outreach Specialists also will track ESL and HSE students' progress towards earning certificates in these program areas and assist them with the application process, if necessary. While no outcomes are expected from this activity in this program year, the number of ESL and HSE certificate completers is projected to increase 25% in 2023-24.

Improve Effectiveness of Services

2022-23 Strategies

Strategy Name

Provide Professional Development

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Professional Development

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- All: Number of Adults Served (AE 200 - Overall)

Strategy Description

Ongoing professional development is a key component of effective adult education and workforce programs. Targeted professional development improves the quality of instruction which can result in higher levels of student attendance and persistence, and the achievement of more educational outcomes. Instructional training that has a positive impact in the classroom and on students can include using CASAS to inform instruction, sharing of best practices, norming of writing assessments, attending conferences, participating in online workshops, and engaging in small group discussions of scholarly research-to-practice articles.

The Adult Education Program Director will work with SRJC College Skills/Tutorial and ESL Department Chairs as well as the PAS Principal and SCOE administrator to identify and prioritize professional development needs for each program area. The goal is to provide relevant training across agencies to promote continuity and consistency of instruction. Once the administrators identified above have developed a list of training topics, instructors will be surveyed to identify their areas of highest need and interest.

In addition to larger-scale, in-person events, SRJC's Adult Education Program Director will provide opportunities for instructors to participate in other types of professional development, such as attendance at conferences, participation in CalPRO workshops, and small group discussions of relevant research-to-practice articles. Instructors will need to request prior written approval from the College Skills/Tutorial and ESL Department Chairs in order to participate in these types of trainings.

Instructors will need a semester or two to incorporate what they've learned in their trainings to their instructional practice. In program year one (2022-2023), SRJC plans to hold two professional development events on the topic of using CASAS to inform instruction; one event will be for ESL instructors and the other for HSE. This particular event will lead to increased numbers of participants improving by one or more educational functioning levels by program year 2. Participation in other professional development opportunities will lead to an overall improvement in instruction which will, in turn, lead to increased numbers of participants across all program areas.

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.

The Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium (SCAEC) is comprised of six members, three of which are service providers. This consortium is direct funded, and it is the goal to continue with this model. All the service providers agreed that the current direct funded model works well, and they are not interested in reverting back to the fiscal agent model.

The allocation percentage for the three agencies has remained consistent over the past seven years, with approximately 38-39% going to SRJC, a little over 53% going to PAS, and close to 8% going to SCOE. The allocations for each service provider

might vary depending on the annual allocations to the consortium, but the percentage of the split will remain the same for the next three years.

SRJC will use most of its CAEP funds to pay for a full-time Adult Education Program Director; three full-time Outreach Specialists; one full-time Testing Technician; one full-time Administrative Assistant; two to three student employees; curriculum and professional development for no-credit ESL, CTE and HSE instructors; program and classroom supplies; marketing; and equipment, such as laptops, keyboards, and mice.

With the 2022-2023 allocated funds, PAS will continue to offer ESL and Citizenship classes in person and restore the full number of hours for each class and section to pre-pandemic times. PAS will expand the hours, days and locations for our HSD and HSE (English and Spanish) to include a new site at the Hanna Boys Center in Sonoma, bringing the total ASE sites to six located in four Sonoma County cities. They will continue to offer HiSET testing and recently added three more test sections to meet the demand. Instruction will continue primarily in person with additional virtual classes to support learners who benefit from online instruction. With regard to parent education (K12 Success), PAS will continue to offer and expand the hours/days for AVANCE, Pasitos, Primeros Pasitos, Ready for Kindergarten and Abriendo Puertas.

Their award-winning Family Resource Center will concentrate on wrap-around services and supports for their Sonoma County students as well as developing collaborations with multiple business and social service partners. A new area of education development for the current and upcoming years is English and Newcomer classes for the refugee populations in our area, including Afghans and Ukrainians.

With the 2022-23 allocated funds, SCOE will continue to offer construction courses in two areas of the county: Sonoma and Santa Rosa. They are looking to expand their offerings to include two Advance Construction courses, complemented by skill-specific clinics each semester. When possible, these courses will be scheduled so that students completing SRJC coursework can matriculate into the SCOE courses. Courses will continue to be held in both Sonoma and Santa Rosa to serve students in or near the community in which they live.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2022-23.

The three funded service providers will use any carry-over funds to meet their agency’s responsibilities for the provision of consortium supported programs and services. CAEP funds not spent within the year they are allocated are rolled into the subsequent year’s budget to ensure continuity of staffing and services to adult education students.

The director of the SCAEC reviews the financial reports for the 3 services providers on a quarterly basis to monitor the rate of expenditure to make sure that all allocated funds are spent in a timely manner and adequate carryover funds are available for subsequent years.

Certification

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