

Senate Bill 307 and Rider 45 State Fiscal Year 2020 Adult Education and Literacy Report to the Texas Legislature

Background

Senate Bill 307, passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013), which added §315.002, requires that the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) report education and employment outcomes for the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program by December 1 of every even-numbered year. Rider 45 of House Bill 1, passed by the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2019), requires TWC to report to the legislature on adult literacy activities and performance measures. Rider 45 further requires that the report “identify the types of literacy programs conducted by providers and the measurable outcomes on literacy performed by the program.”

AEL Grantees

On July 1, 2018, TWC awarded multiyear grants to AEL providers, funded with federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds, as authorized under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA defines the types of organizations eligible to apply for AEFLA grant funds. Currently, TWC contracts with 37 core grantees to provide AEL services. These grantees comprise sole and consortium entities, which include 19 colleges, seven education service centers, five independent school districts, four local workforce development boards, and two nonprofit organizations. Twelve of the grantees are organized as a consortium and contract to provide AEL services with other eligible organizations such as colleges, school districts, nonprofits, and education service centers. A list of the 37 AEL core grantees is provided in Appendix A.

AEL Activities and Reporting Requirements

During each AEL Program Year (PY), which runs July 1 to June 30, AEL grantees are assigned enrollment and performance measures to meet both state and federal accountability measures. Enrollment targets, which are state measures, are linked to types of AEL services provided to adult learners participating in the program. Enrollment targets are applied to the following services:

- Intensive AEL services, which include workplace literacy programs, services for internationally trained professionals, and transition to re-entry and post-release services for justice-involved individuals
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) services, which provide basic skills instruction in reading, writing, and math, contextualized to support workforce training
- IET services with Civics (IET Civics), which incorporate a civics component for English Language Learners participating in an IET program

It is important to note that not all AEL participants enroll in the AEL services described above; some participants enter the program to receive Adult Basic Education (ABE) services only.¹ AEL grantees enroll participants in the most suitable AEL service based on an individual's personal and career goals and readiness through a comprehensive intake process. From August 2019 through September 2020, 16.8 percent of AEL participants took part in intensive IET and/or IET Civics services. All AEL participants, however, received basic skills instruction in math, reading, writing, and/or English.

Regardless of the services that AEL participants receive, grantees are required to measure the skill advancements of their AEL participants. These skill advancements, or measurable skill gains, are federal performance measures reported to the US Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) each year in October for the previous program year. Participants achieve measurable skill gains through the following:

- Pre- and posttesting using assessments approved by TWC
- Obtainment of a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE)
- Successful enrollment in postsecondary education

Literacy Gains

In order to show a gain in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, an AEL participant is pre- and posttested using an OCTAE-approved assessment for English Language Arts, English Language Proficiency, or Mathematics. Of the AEL participants pre- and posttested in PY'19–PY'20 in English Language Arts or English Language Proficiency, 86.73 percent² showed an educational functioning level (EFL) gain. An EFL gain, a subset of measurable skill gains, shows that a participant made upward progress in reading, writing, speaking, or listening.

A list of TWC-approved assessments used to measure a participant's success in completing an EFL gain is provided in Appendix B.

Curriculum Alignment with the Content Standards

TWC requires all AEL grantees to develop coursework and select a curriculum that aligns with the statewide AEL academic content standards. The standards provide AEL instructors a clear foundation for the rigor required in Mathematics, English Language Arts, and English as a Second Language.

In addition to selecting a proprietary curriculum, AEL grantees are required to develop a curriculum to meet local needs, supplement gaps in the selected curriculum, and provide

¹ ABE services are activities and instruction provided across a continuum, from preliteracy and basic literacy through elementary levels, culminating with competencies equivalent to the end of eighth grade. Instruction includes reading, mathematics, communication skills, social studies, physical sciences, health, digital literacy, and career and college readiness competencies.

² National Reporting System Table 4a for PY'19–'20

additional supports to participants, including those with learning disabilities.³ A distance learning curriculum is also selected to provide instruction in online settings.⁴ Grantees receive guidance and support—both in selecting and developing a curriculum and in ensuring alignment with content standards—through training provided by the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL).

In 2017, TWC funded an initiative to align the Texas AEL Content Standards (Standards 2.0) with four industry clusters: advanced manufacturing, construction and extraction, health care sciences, and transportation/distribution/logistics. In 2018 and 2019, TWC, in coordination with its statewide professional development AEL contractor, TRAIN PD, and the American Institutes for Research, implemented a Standards 2.0 training rollout. From January to May 2019, Standards 2.0 trainings were provided to AEL administrators and instructors via webinars, face-to-face trainings, and regional training events.

In fall 2020, TWC began planning the next phase of content standards enhancement, the Standards 3.0 project, which adds Family Literacy and Civics Education benchmarks to the Standards 2.0. TWC will develop training around implementing these benchmarks in the adult education classroom and, through TRAIN PD, will hold virtual or face-to-face regional training events in late spring 2021.

Reading Instruction within AEL Programs

Because the majority of AEL program instructors are certified teachers—active and retired—who live in or near their AEL service areas, they bring knowledge and expertise gained in K–12 and higher education classrooms to their adult education classrooms. When planning for and providing reading instruction, these instructors rely largely on the content standards and on the program’s curriculum. They also rely on their education, training, and experience to inform how they work with adults who, for various reasons, need to improve their reading skills. There is also a substantial number of AEL program instructors who do not hold teaching certifications but do have extensive experience in adult education and stay current with the AEL program’s training requirements.

AEL instructors use various approaches to reading instruction. These approaches include traditional forms of reading instruction, such as phonics, linguistics, and multisensory, that enable adult learners to develop strategies to improve literacy skills. Through these strategies, adult learners are given the tools to accomplish key reading tasks such as improving decoding skills, increasing fluency, building vocabulary, and checking for comprehension.

³ Proprietary curriculum selected for face-to-face instruction includes publications from Cambridge University Press, Kaplan, McGraw Hill, New Readers Press, and Steck-Vaughn.

⁴ The Approved List of Distance Curriculum for Texas Adult Education is posted online at <https://tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/initiatives/distcurriculum.html>.

In some instances, reading instruction is completed within a contextualized framework in which reading tasks are geared toward texts specific to a particular occupation. For example, AEL participants in a health care IET build reading skills by using materials such as intake forms and technical manuals. In other instances, AEL participants take part in reading instruction in which the goal is to improve reading skills in general—perhaps to prepare for a high school equivalency exam or to engage their children in reading activities at home.

Performance Measures

Adult Education and Literacy State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020

Participants Served (Sep19–Aug20)	Number
Number of AEL Participants Served	67,275
Number of AEL Participants in Career Pathways Courses	11,318
Integrated Education and Training	7,358
Work-Based	1,062
ESL Professionals	2,362
Re-entry Corrections	876
Number of Distance Learners (any AEL students with more than zero proxy hours)	20,054

Outcomes	Numerator	Denominator	Rate
AEL Participants Employed and/or Enrolled in the 2nd Quarter after Program Exit (exiters Jul18–Jun19)	23,089	66,899	34.51%
AEL Participants Employed and/or Enrolled in the 2nd-4th Quarters after Program Exit (exiters Jan18–Dec18)	20,780	24,617	84.41%
Percent of High School Diplomas or HSEs Issued to Adults as a Result of Program (exiters Jun19–May20)*	3,634	5,518	65.86%
Percent of AEL Participants Who Completed the Level in which They Are Enrolled (participants Sep19–Aug20)	21,558	67,275	32.04%
Credential Attainment Rate for IETs (exiters Jan18–Dec18)	625	1,546	40.43%
Credential Attainment Rate for Non-IETs (exiters Jan18–Dec18)	1,560	4,068	38.35%

*The deadline for exiters to obtain the HSE was August 31, 2020.

Number of AEL Participants in Career Pathways Courses by SFY	
SFY'17 Sep16–Aug17	9,337
SFY'18 Sep17–Aug18	9,621

Number of AEL Participants in Career Pathways Courses by SFY	
SFY'19 Sep18–Aug19	11,185
SFY'20 Sep19–Aug20	11,318
Unduplicated Total for SFY'17–'20	35,500
SFY'21 Sep20–Aug21 (projected—Avg of SFY'17–'20)	10,365
SFY'22 Sep21–Aug22 (projected—Avg of SFY'17–'20)	10,365
Projected Total SFY'17–'22*	56,230

*The SFY'21 and SFY'22 totals were added to the unduplicated total for SFY'17–'20 to calculate the projected total for SFY'17–'22.

The number of AEL participants with proxy hours greater than zero for SFY'20 is 18,393.

The number of official distance learner participants for SFY'20 is 1,846.

Appendix A—List of AEL Core Grantees

- Amarillo College
- Abilene Independent School District
- Angelina County Junior College
- Austin Community College
- Brazos Valley Council of Governments
- Brownsville Independent School District
- Central Texas College
- Community Action, Inc., of Central Texas
- Dallas County Local Workforce Development Board
- Denton Independent School District
- Grayson College
- Grayson College (Collin County)
- Houston Galveston Area Council
- Howard College (Concho Valley)
- Howard College (Permian Basin)
- Laredo Community College
- Literacy Council of Tyler
- McLennan Community College
- Midland College
- Navarro College
- Odessa College
- Paris Junior College (North Central)
- Paris Junior College (Northeast)
- Region 1 Education Service Center
- Region 2 Education Service Center
- Region 5 Education Service Center
- Region 9 Education Service Center
- Region 17 Education Service Center (Permian Basin)
- Region 17 Education Service Center (South Plains)
- Region 20 Education Service Center
- Southwest Texas Junior College
- Tarrant County
- Temple College
- Texarkana College
- Victoria College
- Weatherford Independent School District
- Ysleta Independent School District

Appendix B—National Reporting Approved Tests for Use in AEL Programs

OCTAE determines which tests AEL programs may use to report performance through the National Reporting System.⁵ Each December, TWC must submit to OCTAE the names of the tests that will be used in AEL for the following program year. OCTAE must approve this policy each year.

Test Name	Type of Test	Content Domains Tested	Approved by TWC for use in Texas?
Tests of Adult Basic Education 11&12 (TABE 11&12)	Adult Basic Education	Literacy/English Language Arts and Mathematics	Yes
Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading GOALS	Adult Basic Education	Literacy/English Language Arts	Yes
Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test— College and Career Readiness (MAPT–CCR) for Reading	Adult Basic Education	Reading	No
Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test— College and Career Readiness (MAPT–CCR) for Mathematics	Adult Basic Education	Mathematics	No
Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Math GOALS Series	Adult Basic Education	Mathematics	Yes
Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Literacy	English as a Second Language	Reading and Writing	Yes
Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Plus 2.0	English as a Second Language	Speaking and Listening	Yes
Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Life and Work Listening	English as a Second Language	Listening	Yes

⁵ The Federal Register Notice, Tests Determined to Be Suitable for Use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education, may be accessed at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/07/2020-17301/tests-determined-to-be-suitable-for-use-in-the-national-reporting-system-for-adult-education>.

Test Name	Type of Test	Content Domains Tested	Approved by TWC for use in Texas?
Assessments (LW Listening)			
Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Reading Assessments (Life and Work, Life Skills, Reading for Citizenship, Reading for Language Arts—Secondary Level)	English as a Second Language	Reading	Yes
Tests of Adult Basic Education Complete Language Assessment System English (TABE CLAS-E).	English as a Second Language	Reading and Writing; Listening and Speaking	Yes