

Creating Pathways for Adult Learners

A Visioning Document for the Illinois Adult Education and Family Literacy Program: Continuing Our Work to Meet Adult Learners' Needs

Illinois Community College Board

http://www.iccb.org/pdf/adulted/Adult_Education_Strategic_Plan_11-12-09_Final.pdf

Our Vision:

We envision Adult Education as the foundation of a career pathways system that prepares adult learners for economic self sufficiency.

To achieve this vision, we will partner with adult education learners and key stakeholders to provide a clear direction, quality instruction, and targeted support for achieving learner goals through further education, occupational training, and/or sustaining employment.

Consistent with the career pathways model outlined by the Center for Occupational Research and Development¹, the Illinois Career Cluster Model, and other pathway models, our vision calls for:

- Multiple entry points for various functioning levels of adult education learners that are aligned to clearly identified benchmarks and credentials, certifications, and/or degrees that lead to employment in high-growth, family-sustaining jobs, including middle-skill and emerging 'green' jobs;
- Stackable certificates at non-postsecondary and postsecondary levels that allow adult education learners to progress through the career ladder with tangible evidence of work readiness;
- Options for accelerated learning so adults can move ahead as quickly as possible;
- Industry-focused curricula that prepare participants for employment and career advancement in designated industries;
- Personal and academic support services essential to learner success;
- Exposure at all levels that further education/training and family sustaining jobs are a possibility;
- Transferrable workplace skills, such as critical thinking, financial literacy, life skills, and study skills, integrated at all levels; and
- Partnerships with community and government agencies that can maximize the resources necessary for a seamless career cluster framework.

¹ Hinckley, Richard and Hull, Dan. 2009. *Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education*. Center for Occupational Research and Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Assessment, Curricula, and Instruction

Adopt aligned assessment, curricula, and instructional practices that prepare adults for family- sustaining jobs and career advancement.

Recommendation 2: Support and Follow-Up Services to Encourage Access and Retention

Provide comprehensive student support to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress that promote smooth transitions within and between educational/training providers and into the workforce.

Recommendation 3: High-Quality Teaching and Professional Development

Ensure that all adult educators have ongoing, specialized professional development in the career cluster framework to deliver high-quality instruction and to use classroom support that fosters learner persistence.

Recommendation 4: Partnerships

Build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with key partners to identify regional skill needs and design and provide career pathways programs that meet those needs.

Recommendation 5: Research, Data, and Accountability

Continue to expand and strengthen the state's accountability system to document, evaluate, and improve student and program outcomes on a continuing basis.

Recommendation 6: Program Design

Design pathways for adult education learners interested in employment or further education, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry.